

Carl Hau: Das Todesurteil

Translation of "The Death Sentence"  
by Mark H. Baker

1. The Arrest

7/1

At 11 o'clock, I arrive at the Hotel Cecil in London. No one met me at Charing Cross train station, although I telegraphed my arrival time from Brussels.

7/2

In the office, my mail was handed to me which had collected during my five day absence. I telephoned my wife who was in our apartment upstairs. She met me at the elevator.

7/3

She looked disturbed. She held two telegrams from Baden-Baden. One told of a misfortune happening to her mother, the other asking her to come as quickly as possible to Baden-Baden. Signed: Olga. What did I think of that (she asked).

7/4

I couldn't make any sense of it. I couldn't tell her that I had seen her mother in good health just 24 hours before. Something could still have happened to her since then.

7/5 - 8/1

What to do? Should we cancel our reserved cabins for the end of the week? We had once already delayed our departure from Liverpool by eight days, because I needed to return to the continent. There was no more time to lose; I was already expected in Washington. Therefore only in extreme emergency would there be further delay. To obtain more information, we'd wait one or two days. The steamer left Saturday, today was Wednesday.

8/2

Tea was served in the living room. The atmosphere was oppressive, exchanging ideas about what could have happened in Baden-Baden. The nurse brought the baby in to greet the returned father.

8/3

A knock. Begging pardon, the hotel director stuck his head in asked to see me outside for a moment.

8/4

Three men from Scotland Yard wished to see me, he said as we walked. And truly, in the hall stood three individuals, two younger and an older one, who approached me with that well-known "police-face". introduced himself as Inspector Smith and asked if I were the Mr Stan from Washington, for whom he had an arrest warrant.

8/8

Mr. Ester from Washington? No. I am not he. Suddenly the hotel director had to be shown that he had said it was all a mistake, and found it impossible that the hotel's registration should be so compromised. He would complain to the Commissioner and even go to the Home Office.

8/6 - 9/1

None of this bothered Mr. Smith. He ascertained my name and said it must have been a mistake of the official who received the telegram requesting my arrest. I reminded him that warrants were to be interpreted very strictly and a mistake of letters was impermissible. He considered this and asked how I knew English law so well. Well, an American lawyer must be aware of English law, so, an American lawyer. He stood in thought, circled by his two satellites, the director beginning to complain again. I thought this matter would soon end, until I ruined everything by asking where the telegram came from. Actually the inspector shouldn't have said, but answered in a small voice: "From Germany. From the State Attorney's Office in Karlsruhe."

9/2 (dialogue)

"What?" I called out, "from Karlsruhe? I just came from there."

His face brightened. "You've just arrived from the continent?"

"Yes."

"And you were in Karlsruhe?"

"Yes."

9/3

"Then you are without question the man we seek. No, there can be no doubt. I must arrest you. If you wish to protest the warrant as it now is, I will leave you in the protection of my companion and obtain one with your correct name."

9/4

I then said I would accompany him to the police court at Bowstreet, where everything could be cleared up within 24 hours. He was satisfied and allowed me to say farewell to my wife. He even allowed me to go alone, although he couldn't know if there were a second exit from that room.

10/1

The goodbye was short. I told my wife to come to the police court the next morning, took the child and kissed it for the last time.

10/2

In the hall the director begged the man to remove me as discreetly as possible; he apparently imagined they would drag me in chains through the lobby, as they took criminals to Tyburn sentenced before. Mr. Smith reassured him that he knew how to handle a gentleman, winked at his companions to keep a respectful distance and hid me to his side with an "if I may, milord." As we

descended the stairs, he even started a harmless conversation.

10/13

I had an interesting meeting in the lobby. An acquaintance from Washington, whom we'd run into in London, and with whom we planned to return to Washington, greeted me loudly, stating: "Finally back from the continent? Looked all over for you. You're going with us to the Alhambra after dinner?"

10/14 - 11/1

I refused with thanks. Not possible this evening, as I am otherwise engaged. Mr. Smith had stepped politely to the side, and couldn't suppress a smile as he heard these words. The American looked at both of us again and noticed that something was wrong. I was tempted to tell him that I would actually be in police custody, just to see the expression on his face, but then I thought better of it, and simply said goodbye, saying that I would hopefully see him the next day. Strangely enough, I did see him again, not the next day, but a few days later under conditions that neither he nor I could imagine at that moment.

11/2

We got into the wagon and drove through masses of people to the place where a great part of English criminal history had occurred, only known to me through books.

## 2. Bowstreet

12/1

The first time I read of Bowstreet was in an essay of Macaulay's, a vivid scene like so many in the work of this historian which remained in my memory. Bowstreet later took its place next to The Tower, Newgate, and the Old Bailey - names with special meaning in English legal history. They capture the imagination, these gray edifices, unweathered by the haze of human guilt and misery.

12/2

A group of vagrants and drunks waited in a room filled with horrible smells until some officer wrote out an entry in the large book. From time to time a dark uniformed Cheron led a small collection of delinquents across the Stye, where iron doors closed with a dull thud behind them. Accompanied by howling and teeth gnashing. The expression of the officer remained objective throughout. If force were needed, he remained as gentle as possible. I observed all this with great interest.

12/3 - 13/1

Finally my turn. Personal information was ascertained. Mr. Baker snatched my hand and turned me over to the supervisor, who led me to a cell and locked it. Now I had time to consider my situation.

13/3

The next day, I was in the office of the State Attorney's Office in Karlsruhe. I was sitting at my desk, and the door opened. A man in a dark suit and a white shirt entered. He was looking at me with a serious expression. I felt a sudden chill. He spoke to me in a low, steady voice. I tried to keep my face calm, but I could feel the sweat on my forehead. He continued to speak, and I felt a sense of dread. He then turned and walked away. I sat there for a long time, trying to understand what had just happened. I felt a sense of foreboding, and I knew that my life was in danger.

13/3

How did I come into this company? My first belief that this was all a mistake gradually changed the night before last. I was sitting at my desk, and I felt a sudden chill. I tried to keep my face calm, but I could feel the sweat on my forehead. I then turned and walked away. I sat there for a long time, trying to understand what had just happened. I felt a sense of foreboding, and I knew that my life was in danger.

13/4

How did State's Attorney's Office in Karlsruhe know my London address? They could have only gotten it from my mother-in-law. Or my sister-in-law Olga.

13/5 - 14/1

What were they trying to lay on me? It must have been something enormous, otherwise they wouldn't have ordered the arrest by telegram. Perhaps the confusion with the Parisian telegram? But that was not punishable. Even less so the concealment of my trip to Baden-Baden. No, it must be something else. But what?

14/2

An incident that occurred some months earlier came to mind. When I was directing the negotiations with the Turkish government in Constantinople, I became aware that I was being spied upon. I could get nothing out of the director of the secret state police, the Farim-Pasha. I figured he arranged this comedy to extract some pakeheesh (bribes). As the harassment worsened, I went with the American ambassador to Jildis to complain. That helped. Later I learned I had been implicated in a letter as an agent of the "Young Turks" and the postmark was Baden-Baden.

14/3

Conceivable, then, that an enemy sat in Baden-Baden. Conceivable that he was now trying a second time to trip me up. Perhaps he made a deceitful complaint at the Karlsruhe State's Attorney's Office. Well, that could be cleared up quickly.

14/4 - 15/1

I waited impatiently through the morning. Soon came the dawn, and

The supervisor let me out to wash myself, brought coffee, and then led me through the long halls to the courtroom. I was hurried over to the Gallery of Westminster, a friendly, bearded man named Beet. Mr Beet took me into his office, asked me to be seated, and said he was sorry to see me in such an awkward situation. He hoped (15/1) that this would all be cleared up as a mistake. Mr Smith from Scotland had been by earlier and had hoped to speak with me. He would be here any minute. He offered his room for the interview. I thanked him and asked him to show my wife the same kindness upon her arrival. He assured me of this, and that our conversation would be undisturbed. No one other than he would be present, and he kept a discreet distance, since it was nobody's business what a married couple would say under these conditions. I was somewhat wary of this humane offer, but I was reassured if my mistrust after seeing his trustworthy face. No, this man had no hidden motives.

15/2

We conversed a while, and I asked which judge would handle my case. The Chief Magistrate himself, Sir Albert de Rutzen. An old gentleman of over 70, with great regard due to his rich wisdom and imposing character. I remembered that I had once read a book of his on international law.

15/3 -16/1

A court usher came and led me to a small hall with a few people in it. On the front bench sat the three men from Scotland Yard; Mr Smith had a small bag of mine next to him. An old man with sharply defined features and penetrating eyes sat at the judge's bench. He looked me over and said: "You have been arrested at the (16/1) request of the State's Attorney's Office in Karlsruhe, and are accused of shooting your mother-in-law to death on November 6th in Baden-Baden. If you choose to comment on this charge, you may, but I must warn you that whatever you say can be used against you."

15/2

Deathly quiet in the hall. His eyes bored into mine, as if he would uncover my secret thoughts. I took this with great calm. As unbelievable as it was, the declaration didn't shock me, but simply gave me a dull feeling of amazement. How absurd! It must be a mistake.

16/3 (dialogue)

"You were in Baden-Baden on the day in question?"

"Yes."

"Did you have that bag which the Inspector is holding in his hand there?"

"Yes."

"A loaded revolver was found in that bag."

16/4

I reached. I always took a gun with me on my trips to the Orient. But I had never used it. I mentioned this.

16/5

Mr Smith ascended the witness stand and raised the revolver with the comment that it was loaded in all five chambers. Then the court clerk, at whom the weapon was coincidentally pointed left up screaming: "Mylord, Mylord, tell him to be more careful with the pistol. If it had just gone off, I would have been hit directly."

16/6 - 17/1

Sir Albert smiled and calmed the frightened little man, (17/1) who refused to return to his seat, never taking his eyes from the blue steel. Only after the Inspector returned the death instrument to the bag would the clerk seat himself and take his pen.

17/2

"I am no child, that I would let the revolver discharge," said the witness. "And it is true that this revolver hasn't been used for a long time. The specialist sees it as being improbable that this has been fired recently."

17/3 (short dialogue)

"How can he know that?" asked the judge.

"It isn't possible to completely clean away the traces of a shot, Mylord."

17/4

The judge turned again to me. I spoke, saying I was prepared to let myself be turned over to the authorities in Karlsruhe, in order to clear up this mistake as quickly as possible. But Sir Albert shook his head. "It won't work. I can only give you over to them if the evidence solidly proves your having committed the act. We must therefore wait for the extradition papers, which I will check over thoroughly. Your arrest will be maintained for eight days. As you know, you have the right of Habeas Corpus. Speak with your attorney, if you wish to make use of it. The case is adjourned."

17/5

This adjournment, typical in such cases, meant I would be returned to this court in a week, and the arrest warrant would be maintained for another eight days; this would continue until the extradition papers arrived.

18/1

I was led back to the Chief Jailer's office. My wife came to me, hugged me, in her eyes the question: What is it? Mr Bush removed himself from our vicinity. We sat at a sofa in the corner, and I

told what happened in a few words.

18/2

My wife couldn't believe it. "You're to have shot my mother?" But why? That's madness."

18/3

"Yes, but maybe there's method to the madness. Someone from the State's Attorney's Office must have denounced me, to get me out of the way. One thing is certain: your mother has been shot."

18/4

She considered this, weeping. "Poor mother! She had no enemies. Who would do this?"

18/5

"I have no idea. Go to Baden-Baden right away and find out what you can. If you can't find out anything, get the best detective in Germany."

18/6

"But why do they believe you did it?"

18/7

I shrugged. "Leave with the next train and send news. Then come back here."

18/8

She quickly looked at the jailer, rifling through files, ignoring us. We spoke in low voices. "Will I be able to speak to you again here?"

18/9

"Either here or the investigations-prison. Either way without listeners. Good thing this happened to me in England; on the continent you wouldn't have been allowed to see me."

19/1

After we talked a bit more, we said goodbye to one another. We didn't know how we would see each other again. She told me to be patient, even if it took several days. But it didn't take several days, but rather seven months.

19/2

As soon as she left, Mr Smith returned, shook my hand and took a seat beside me, laying the bag with the fatal revolver on the table in front of him. We began to talk about it. He asked first if I would discuss it, and that I could refuse, and that it was his duty to tell me that anything I said could be used against me. I had heard this phrase for the second time this morning. It was a basic principle of Anglo-American law: that the accused was innocent until proven guilty, and this proof was to be obtained

without the "Insulation system" used on the continent.

19/3

I assured him I was willing to discuss the case. I had bought the revolver a year ago in Constantinople and always kept it with me. One must always be prepared to use such a weapon in the Orient.

19/4

The inspector agreed. "But why did you take it when you returned to the continent?"

19/5

"Because it was already in the travel bag."

19/6

"Did you have other baggage?"

20/1

"Yes, a small crocodile suitcase. They must have seized all the luggage. My wife's, too?"

20/2

"God forbid, how would we come to that? Beside the bag and suitcase, just the large trunk and the cabinet-trunk. We were searching for the package for the 5 bullets loaded in the gun."

20/3

"Aha!" I smiled. "you thought one was missing. You don't seem to trust your specialists. But I give you my word, no shot has been fired from this gun this year."

20/4

"Maybe. That still wouldn't prove that you didn't do it?"

20/5

"Certainly not. I could have bought another weapon for the deed in London and then thrown it away on my return. I advise you to investigate that possibility."

20/6

He didn't appreciate my irony. He would know what to investigate. "Why did you return to the continent?"

20/7

I waved him away. "My dear inspector, I'm afraid I'll have to owe you that answer. That is my own private affair, about which I feel no one needs to be concerned."

20/8

"Not even the German court?"



- 17/1 The warden read the decree which commuted the death sentence against me to life in prison. He looked at me and awaited a comment -- I was silent.
- 17/2&3 "Say something!" He had shown me goodwill during pre-trial custody; we got along. During the main trial he was a witness and said he'd seen me pacing nights in my cell instead of sleeping. proof of a guilty conscience, maybe thoughts of suicide.
- 17/4 He said I was to be transported to another prison -- and by carriage, not train.
- 18/1 A first class burial, I said. He didn't like my sarcasm.
- 18/2 He shook his head and fingered his gold watch chain and said it was hard to deal with me... I had hurt myself by my behavior toward the court officials... "as ye sow so shall ye reap.."
- 18/3 He left after I said nothing. I took one last walk in the courtyard and went by the scaffold, wondering if my blood would flow there. But I was not to be executed. It took six weeks to decide my guilt, with only circumstantial evidence and room for mistakes. But if now there was only a life sentence, there could be a pardon and retrial and things could be worse than the first time around. The first trial was bad enough. But with my bad health, I probably wouldn't last that long anyway. In those days there was usually a waiting time of 25 years before a pardon could be granted.
- 19/1 The old guard said it was nice of the grand duke to pardon me... I don't remember what I answered.
- 19/2 Later the warden said I should be glad to still have my head. He thought I was guilty and wouldn't survive prison; after a year or two I'd be dead and forgotten. "Do you want to make a confession? It's never too late."
- 20/1 He sat there giving me looks that were hard to take... The district judge -- without the revolution he would have been attorney general, but now he can't reach the top of the ladder.
- 20/2 I was chained and sat in the wagon across from two policemen. I gave only one-syllable answers to their attempts at conversation.
- 20/3 We drove through the leaf-strewn fall streets, and children ran along behind us. I thought of a child yet to be whose father was a murderer and mother committed suicide.
- 20/4 The smell of my coat reminded me of an earlier trip one year ago -- since then a fall from the height of life to the deepest depths -- reminded me of a day last October. I'd wrapped the same coat around the beloved woman.
- 21/1 The wagon rattled up to the prison, a high-situated, walled building, and through the gates to the steps. I entered and went through several doors and hallways to the reception cell where the two police escorts left me.
- 21/2 Half an hour later the head guard came, looked me over coldly and left. An important man, as I was later to learn. There was also another important man, head of supplies including clothing issue where I now went. It took forever, with endless questions to answer.
- 22/1 This finally done, I was led to my cell. The young guard explained things to me and gave me some encouragement, and then I was left alone, sitting and brooding.
- 22/2 In the evening the head guard came with his notebook and asked if I was settled in -- too early for that. He advised a careful study of the house rules in order to save myself lots of trouble.
- 22/3 The soup at seven o'clock tasted good. How could I eat under such circumstances? It wasn't "proper," but I'd've eaten more if available.
- 22/4 At exactly eight o'clock the inmates were to be in bed, so I went, but couldn't sleep. I

- felt a sting, with itching and scratching and swelling. Then several more stings-- a whole swarm of bedbugs. I sought refuge on the table.
- 23/1-8 They found me and stung again. I started to lose patience, it got to be too much. A voice inside said "Enough!" "Nonsense!" said another. "Who thinks about suicide because of some bedbugs?" "Some? Thousands! My resistance is at its end." "Mine isn't." "Remember what all you've been through. Arrest in London, horrible accusation believed by all..." "Not all-- some didn't."
- 24/1-5 "Whoever after knowing me for years could believe me capable of such a thing has done me an injustice. Where were those who didn't believe I could do it?" "This bitterness is past." "One doesn't forget that. Also the long waiting time in London, the pretrial wait, the trial, sentencing-- and now? What do you want me to wait for?" "For the day of being cleared." "HA! It will never happen. Even so, you could never forget the suffering of this one year. It will never happen. Face the facts: sentenced to life in prison and poor health. Your hopes will vanish one by one. Isn't it better to face death now with all your faculties? Or are you afraid that that would confirm your guilt?"
- 25/1-5 "No, not that. But I'm not nearly so far gone as all that." "But civilized people cannot last long in prison, no doubt of that. Or are you an exception?" "We'll see. I can observe people here, too, like always." "Good luck. Here they don't hide behind masks." "Enough! Deep down I know I will survive this. This is only one act of my life's drama. Another will follow."
- 25/6 Only the measured steps of the guard could be heard, along with the steeple bells and the rain against the window. On the walls were the shadows of the window grating-- 20 little squares. 20 years?

## Chapter 2 First Impressions

- 26/1 I frequently saw and soon got to know my cell guard, the young man who first explained to me many things I needed to know. There was a certain antagonism between him and his immediate supervisor. Besides, the young guards banded together against the older ones whom they suspected of giving the younger ones the hardest work but at year's end kept for themselves bonuses won at the expense of the prisoners' work. The prisoners worked for the state, not companies, and at the head of the system was an accountant who was the most powerful person in the prison.
- 26/2 After the breakfast soup, the foreman gave me my work which was to paste colored strips onto cardboard boxes. He was nice enough, but kept his distance and never looked anyone in the eye. I was to be an apprentice for 3 months without pay then could hope to earn 5 Pfennige ("pennies") a day, later up to 10 a day. At the end of the year it would amount to a tidy sum since I had no expenses.
- 27/1-4 "You mean I can't buy anything?" "No, not at first. After 10 years the prisoners can be allowed to buy certain groceries." "10 years, huh. Let's hope I make it." "Why not? There's a man who's been here for 40 years now and has the nicest life and doesn't even want to get out anymore."
- 27/5 I soon sat at my table, with paste, paper, and boxes at hand and worked.
- 27/6 The young guard came in and said, "Get ready for the courtyard. When the bell rings I'll open up, and you put on your cell number and cap. Walk 5-7 paces behind the man in front of you." We went down some stairs across the way to a building that looked like a combination of 20 bear cages. In the middle was a tower from which one could go through 20 doors to as many individual cages, one prisoner each: triangles with a short baseline and long sides. The baselines were of iron rods, the sides of 2-3 meter high walls; at the point of the triangle was the entrance. The guard could see each cage from the center tower and the walk could begin. It was a couple dozen paces around the inside of the cage. The cap with blinders the prisoners had to wear (so as not to be able to recognize each other) could be removed in the cages. The caps gave the prisoners a grotesque appearance, and the uniforms did not fit anyone well. Apparently outward appearance was not important. Not much could be seen/found out of anyone because of the uniforms, but the walk did allow some observations to be made of the others. My cell neighbor, for example, walked like a seaman, and tried on the first day to make contact with me.
- 28/1 The walk lasted an hour and then back to the cell. The guard said: "Now it's to the doctor. Cell number and hat like before; you must do that each time you leave the cell. Out in the corridor, place yourself where told, facing the wall, and always a couple paces from the next man. Go in when it's your turn, take off your cap, and put it back on when you're done. Stand against the wall until I get you."
- 28/2 The doctor's assistant told the doctor my name who then looked me over with great attention. He was a large man with eyes that let one have confidence in him from the first, speaking briefly and gently. ...which diseases had I had, if my health had suffered during the long trial, how my nerves were, appetite, sleep? And then a careful examination. He smiled and said that the quiet and regular routine of prison would probably help restore my frayed nerves. "Maybe it's a good thing for you that fate has taken you from the rat race of the world to this quiet place. If you have inner peace, you can take the loneliness. Or are you afraid of loneliness?"

- 29/1-2 "No, just the opposite." That is good. Only after 3 years can you request non-solitary confinement. Only due to bad health can I recommend early release to the other prisoners; I hope that's not necessary. The better prisoners prefer to remain in their cells-- you can decide for yourself for what reasons. If the food doesn't agree with you, I'll see what I can do. And now I wish you courage and perseverance to survive your difficult penalty." I wanted to shake his hand, but that was out of the question; I bowed in thanks and left.
- 30/1 With time I learned of the goodness of this man to spend his whole life as a prison doctor and in spite of disappointments to be always ready to help. It was almost a kind of sport for the prisoners to feign illness to come to him with something. Most he saw through, but gave them a little something anyway, admonishing them for what they'd done. Many never tried to fool him again, but even if they did, the doctor would rather give unneeded help than mistakenly send someone away truly in need of help. Of all the prisoners I later came in contact with, there was not one would have failed to recognize this quality in the doctor.
- 31/1 This noble man died a year before the war began, and when the clergyman announced it, the prisoners broke out in sobs and tears that lasted several minutes.
- 31/2 An hour after I was with the doctor, I was in front of the "conference," 8 people around a table. The administrator, a real bureaucrat, read my judgment and commutation and told me to behave myself and not ask for special treatment. Next to him sat a junior bureaucrat, the doctor, the two clergymen, the two teachers, and the bookkeeper-- of these no one said a word.
- 31/3 This "conference" met once a week to discuss matters. If the presiding director was not a strong personality, it was like a constitutional monarchy with advisors; this was the situation at my arrival. His successor was like an absolute despot, and the third more like a president. I was therefore able to experience all three forms of government, so to speak, and see the advantages and disadvantages of each.
- 31/4 At twelve o'clock lunch was given out. In the corner of the cell was a cupboard of sorts, 5 shelves high. The bottom one held the dirty water, the next a water-filled wash basin, the third was closeable with dishes and utensils; the fourth shelf held the water pitcher, and the top shelf was for books, etc. At mealtime, one folded down the table and handed the bowl out through an opening in the door and pulled it back filled. There was soup and vegetables, alternate days meat, too. Every morning 750 grams of black bread, Tuesdays and Fridays at 4 o'clock some butter or cheese. In the evening there was soup again like in the morning. I had no trouble at all getting used to the food.
- 32/1 The junior bureaucrat visited me afternoons. At first he maintained a distant attitude, but after seeing my correct conduct, he was less reserved. He had followed my case and asked for more information in some points. He wondered if I believed in the success of a retrial. By the current animosity of the circle of judges I had little hope of it. But that couldn't stop me from trying to do all I could to reverse the wrong judgement against me.
- 32/2 "Strange. You defended yourself so half-heartedly and now you're so stubborn. You're a puzzle to me. But I'm too much a lawyer to be able to think you innocent. You may not be as guilty as the court says, but you're no robber and murderer. I'm not speaking officially now. Do you think you can survive the punishment?"
- 33/1-5 "Yes, I do." "How long?" "As long as it lasts." "25 years?" "That too."
- 33/6 He then proceeded to tell me how an educated person should handle himself in prison. Avoid contact with the others, keep contacts with the officials to a minimum, take up

- handicraft activities (he suggested woodworking) and take it as far as possible.
- 33/7 I thanked him for his advice but said I didn't agree in one point: I wanted to get to know as many other prisoners as possible.
- 33/8 "Ha! And then later write a book. No, better to forget it. In three years you'll be able to request non-solitary confinement, but you can count on being beaten by them. They'll smell a spy in you-- or are you ready to howl with the wolves?"
- 33/9 "Not like you mean. But I have already learned to get along with this new situation and believe that I can get along with them, too."
- 34/1 "Impossible. And don't expect to meet any interesting people here. I've seen their files and know there are only base types here."
- 34/2 "Maybe in the files, but not living reality. Almost every person is interesting. The study of those gone astray is a thousand times more interesting than that of the so-called successful (unless some tragedy is hidden there)."
- 34/3-4 "So you consider the prisoner in the next cell more noteworthy than me?" "More interesting without a doubt. An exact knowledge his inner-self would be very valuable and perhaps shed light on some problem of criminality, whereas to know more of you would be unfruitful. No disrespect meant, of course."
- 34/5 Piqued, the junior bureaucrat ended the conversation. I got to know several of his kind during the years. None had an especially good grasp of his duties. They came and did their not much envied duty and went on. It could have been a tring of great worth for them, but none had the necessary feeling heart as well as the smarts for that.
- 34/6 On the next morning was my first trip to church: religious training. A guard cried out: Catholics, church! After going up many steps, I ended up in a wooden "crate" which was so short I had the choice of kneeling or sitting. There was an opening in the front through which I could see several more such "crates," but only from the back so not to be able to see those inside. There was an altar and pulpit flanked by guards to the left and right. At first I fought for breath in the crate, but then I felt a furious anger that people could treat their fellow human beings in such a way, and that in a Christian church.
- 35/1-2 Next to the altar were two Bible passages: Come unto me all ye who travail and I will refresh you; take my yoke upon you and learn from me... and: God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son... Above the altar was a picture of the Saviour, unending kindness in his countenance and arms stretched out to one who with regret, shame and trust looked at him as his redeemer; in the background the sea foamed against the cliffs. Such a contrast between the way Christ treated the wayward and the Christian state of today dealt with its wayward ones.
- 36/1 The clergyman appeared, knelt before the altar, an organ played, and the priest mounted the pulpit. In his face was the redness of health and great inner peace. He spoke entirely extemporaneously, about John the Baptist, I think, since it was Advent. I expected instruction with questions and answers, but I liked what he said. I can get along with him, I thought.
- 36/2 And I was right. When he came to visit me after some time, he had such goodwill that I trusted him completely. In long discussions he learned about my trial and was convinced of my innocence, shook my hand, and wanted to help me as much as was in his power to clear my name. In time he spoke with people of my innocence with whom it would have been better to say nothing. For that he received a sharp reprimand and was more careful. He was an upright man who thought life simpler than it probably was. When I later got to know some of the other prisoners, I was

- often amazed to see how well he had seen through their masks.
- 36/3 The first book I got I devoured, and the time flew while I was reading. Luckily the library had a fair number of good works. One got a few books every two weeks and attention was paid to what one asked for. The most popular were illustrated magazines and Karl May books. [trans. note: Karl May was a popular author of Westerns in Germany and is still read today.]
- 37/1 When Christmas came I had accustomed myself to life in prison and thought I had a good picture of the people there but in fact had no idea of what went on around me. It took years before I even became aware of my ignorance.

### Chapter 3 Solitary Confinement

- 37/2 After my sentencing someone asked me if I thought I'd entered a monastery and said that I had it better than monks. Outwardly perhaps, but it's one thing to voluntarily enter a monastery and quite another to be forcefully put into prison. Some prisoners tried to artificially create a religious state of mind to better endure their sentence, but not one was successful in it. Nor was imprisonment a blessing to any one of them, nor did any survive it without some damage or injury.
- 38/1 Most of the inmates risked making some sort of contact with anyone possible, even if it meant punishment. They would make any excuse to talk to the guard a few extra minutes or to the officials who came by. It got worse and worse until they were thought to be crazy. Some even tried to fake craziness in order to get out of the cell. Those most afraid of solitary were the habitual thieves. But they also were the best at getting by-- they had enough connections who would smuggle food, books, letters, and newspapers to them. The connections were usually prisoners who did cleaning in the various floors and who were trusted by the guards.
- 38/2 One of the most interesting prisoners was "Vinegar." At least that's what we call him because that's not his real name and that's the word he says at every opportunity. I don't want to reveal his identity because he's still alive-- I want all the people to remain anonymous, because names don't contribute anything to the matter at hand.
- 39/1 At first "Vinegar" wanted nothing to do with me, but later I won his confidence by my patience and then he opened up his soul to me. He felt himself falsely accused of a crime which could not permit him to ever be considered blameless again. He didn't blame the system-- false witnesses had caused justice to miscarry-- but blamed his friends and relatives who had considered him guilty. He didn't endure solitary at all well and wrapped himself tighter and tighter in resentment and contempt of people. Neither the work he did nor the books he read were of pleasure to him. For a few years he threw himself into the learning of English and French, but later he gave that up, too. The emptiness of his cell fully spoiled his life. He resisted the doctor's advice to leave his cell but later did leave. He refused to see any but one side of humanity, the animal side. "People are beasts," he usually said to me. "You, too?" I asked him; "Me, too." "Me, too?" I asked him; "You, too." "Thanks," I said. He was not without thoughts of his own, and whenever I found him in a good mood, I asked him to tell me of his earlier life, just to escape the present for a moment. He must have once been a happy person, and now thanked prison life for his revelations about people.
- 40/1-5 "What were you earlier?" I asked him. "A fool who didn't see the basic truth." "I assume you mean that all people are beasts." "Of course. Do you want to prove

- otherwise?" "I wouldn't think of it. But why didn't you see that before? What did solitary have to do with realizing that?"
- 41/1 "It sharpened my eye for my own beastliness. When you're alone you can really observe yourself and think about it. People are not so dumb that they can't see how badly they've overestimated their own personality. They think they're alright, but that nobody else amounts to much is something they already know. They just haven't had the luck to meet an exception yet-- that's the big mistake everyone makes."
- 41/2-3 "But history shows there are truly good people." "Vinegar! History is bunk."
- 41/4-5 "Weren't Jesus and St. Francis good people?" "Don't know, never met them. I only know what people tell about them, and what people tell are lies."
- 41/6 "Can't argue with that logic. But if not the past, what about the present. You haven't tested everybody, you only know a few, so you can't make a statement about everybody."
- 41/7 "Vinegar! Everyone I've met was a beast, therefore all are beasts. If you don't agree, just bring one who isn't and I'll change my mind. But you can't do it." --
- 42/1 In the next cell was a clergyman serving 8 years for indecent assault. He was in his early 30's when he came, but now looks like an old man. He tried studying language, but now only the easiest of reading was palatable to him. He always had the guard ask me if I had any books for him to read. I gave him what I had, and he read them in no time, wanting more. He would argue with the priest about his latest sermon so loudly that I could understand every word. One morning they argued about St. Paul, and the priest got so angry he slammed the cell door shut and uttered something very much like a curse. My cell was next on his rounds, and despite wanting to talk about something else, he went on about the clergyman next to me, saying there's nothing to be done for him, etc. I allowed as how I considered him to be only average and that solitary had worn him down. He was afraid to leave his cell and was a victim of the present judicial system. Indeed, upon his release, he had to spend the rest of his life in an institution, vegetating away.
- 43/1 The farmers from the Black Forest had it especially difficult in solitary; there seemed to be quite a number of them in for committing incest. They kept to themselves because they didn't fit in at all and considered themselves to be better than the other inmates. I spent some time with one of them in the hospital, one who had become child-like. He hoped I could give him some advice. He told me of his background and how his wife had died, leaving him only with a somewhat retarded grown daughter who always let the boys of the village have their way with her. He eventually did the same until she finally bore a child. There was much ado in the village about who the father could be until finally the police arrested him and he confessed everything immediately. Since he showed no regret, he received harsh punishment. But he was incapable of regret. I asked him if he was sure that the child was his. He proudly answered that it was, the spitting image. He wanted to go home as soon as possible so I helped him write a plea for mercy, and his sentence was reduced. He went back home, but it wasn't long before he was in the poorhouse-- he simply couldn't work anymore.
- 44/1 When I think about those few instances in which solitary didn't harm the prisoner, I come up only with cases where the person had unusual willpower or was especially suited for loneliness. An example of the first was a young salesman who after 10 years' solitary soon became a well-to-do man. While in prison he learned several languages and very thoroughly, too. He did become sickly towards the end, but managed to overcome it.

- 45/1 An example of the second kind, of one especially suited to loneliness, is that of myself. I had never been alone much before and when the cell door closed behind me, I had to ask myself: how will you deal with the loneliness? The curiosity was just as great as the uncertainty. It took quite some time for ties to the outside world to be completely severed. My lawyer came for several years, preparing for a retrial. Others came, too, and it was a long twilight before the night. When I was finally all alone, I realized there really weren't any problems to overcome.
- 45/2 I've already mentioned the impression of the first book, a rather ordinary one; it's impossible to describe what I felt later with the really great books. For the first time I read every line that Goethe wrote. Those were holidays of life the days I spent reading Wilhelm Meister, etc. Next to Goethe was Shakespeare, and then Spinoza. They were the three stars of the first magnitude.
- 45/3 After a few years I decided to translate Ihering's "The Spirit of Roman Law" into English. I received permission to have it published in New York. I worked for five years on it, and when it came time to send it to the publishers, my superiors had reconsidered and decided not to allow publication. Why not? Probably so that the newspapers wouldn't get new material for articles about me and my case. But even that couldn't detract from my satisfaction with the many hours of work I had done which carried its own reward: satisfying days and nights blessed with refreshing sleep. I can see myself sitting at my work bench, pasting strips of paper on boxes with a copy of "The Spirit of Roman Law" behind the boxes and paper and pencil in the half-opened drawer. Suddenly in the middle of searching for just the right word-- a dozen synonyms come to mind, but not one really able to do service, the the usable, needed, irreplaceable word stubbornly hiding itself, not wanting to come across the threshold of consciousness-- suddenly a key rattles in the door and the drawer is closed before the door opens, and the prisoner is at his work with a devotion that must make the best of impressions. Those were hours that had brought a lot of satisfactor.
- 47/1 Every year at the beginning of summer I got from the library the trilogy "Piccolo mondo antico," "Piccolo mondo moderno," and "Il santo." I made my trip to Italy, so to speak. There is a special affection for these books which brought back memories of sunny days spent in the south. In them was that yearning put into words, the yearning suppressed for the whole year.
- 47/2 It is evening. The work things are taken away, and the bed folded down. Half an hour later milk and blackbread are given out. Through the open window come the fragrance of lilac and the sound of playing children. Twilight sinks down on the house of silence. Night comes, a starry June night. One lies in bed but cannot sleep; so lonely is one. The world appears to be so far away and unreal-- a dream. What does one have to do with the guards around, the others snoring, the solid citizens in the beer garden listening to the city band? One has a premonition of them more than hearing them.
- 47/3 "Consider well that sweet love laughs for you." Only in my dreams.
- 47/4 Perhaps this night will give me such a dream. Everything erotic has moved back into the world of dreams; awake it must not be prominent. But dreams compensate for that, and in such color and intensity that never appears outside.
- 48/1 "What do you miss the most in your loneliness?" the head of the board of trustees asked me once. He often visited me and was now sitting across from me after having told me about the newest Zeppelin airship and how he thought it had opened a new chapter in history. When I wondered how this helped mankind and did not react with



enthusiasm to the fact that people could now travel through the air, he remarked how fast one's spirit was blunted by loneliness. I couldn't think of an answer to his earlier question: 'nothing' would have sounded like bragging, so with a friendly smile I said 'genus femininum.' I immediately shook my head smiling, and he observed that he didn't want to be indiscreet. In order to say something, I mentioned I'd like to hear some good music again. He nodded his head and then asked if piano music couldn't be heard from the house on the other side of the fence. I said yes and went on to describe how bad it was. I noticed how long his face had become, and he said that it was the piano playing of one of his married daughters who lived there. We were both silent, and he got up and left.

## Chapter 4 Non-solitary Confinement

- 49/1 It was the law of the land that no prisoner could be kept against his will longer than 3 years in solitary confinement, something which the leadership of the prison considered a restriction on their power. Therefore prisoners were told that non-solitary was not something to be desired and that prisoners who had some decency still left stayed in solitary and would be helped on an individual basis, if not, that wouldn't be possible.
- 49/2 That sometimes worked, but with one group it worked not at all: the habitual criminal thieves. Almost all of them had a remarkable shyness or anxiety about solitary. They could not find the work distracting enough to keep their minds and thoughts occupied, and they'd go crazy. There was a herd instinct among them to come together in some group.
- 50/1-2 After 3 years one either went into the "hall" or got a trustee post. The hall was a long, narrow room on the ground floor where the prisoners worked with paper or tobacco, about 12 to a table. A guard sat at the head of the table, and the big iron stove gave off a comfortable warmth. Only a few work-related words were spoken sometimes, otherwise it was forbidden to speak except at meal times.
- 50/3 At the other end of the table sat the trustee, in this case an arsonist by profession. He was a hard working sort, but if he got into an argument with his boss, he'd burn down his house at night. He would serve his sentence and be released, and all would be well until the next time he got into a dispute and burned down someone else's house. He was well-liked by both the inmates and authorities alike.
- 51/1 Next to him sat the Bavarian. He would soon celebrate the 100th in-house punishment; not bad for being in only 6 years. He was not a bad person but was hated by the guards because he told them exactly what he thought. He also knew how to use his fists. He'd end up in the tower, appear a few weeks later, somewhat humbled, but would soon be back to his old form.
- 51/2 The Bavarian was especially nice to his neighbor, Christopher, a wretched fellow who gave the impression of being seriously ill. He was a lifer and had 10 years behind him already, and his end was near. The tubercular ulcer on his wrist foretold what kind of end it would be, and all the other prisoners watched it to follow the progress of his illness. One said another year, one said in a couple weeks they will be cutting him up in anatomy class. Christopher was resigned to his fate, but hearing the word 'anatomy' sent him into a rage. He had enough money saved from "Dsmmt!" cried the Bavarian. "It's a sin and a shame!" The guard gently reprimanded him for his outburst, and after some further grumbling, all was quiet.
- 52/3 At the far end of the table was a young, good-looking man who didn't say much and who was treated with some respect by the others. He was said to come from a good family and to be innocent. He was convicted of murdering a young girl, said to be pregnant with his child.
- 52/4 On the other side sat two Frenchmen who robbed a mailman. The one, Alphonse, was older and got anyone who came into contact with him into trouble. The other, Gaston, was younger and irresponsible, but not without his good points. Gaston murdered the German language but never tired of telling his stories about adventures in French prisons, etc. He only badmouthed the German courts because they had sentenced him and his friend to 8 years for stealing 16.50 marks from the postman.

- "That's a year's mark between the two of us! C'est trop fort!"
- 53/1 at 12 o'clock the trustee went to get the meal. Faces brightened: there was bread soup and herring salad. After a short grace, the most important act of the day began which was completed without a word. Only the Sevastian had something to say: he couldn't find a single piece of herring in his herring salad. Suddenly the door flew open and the warden was announced by the head guard.
- 53/2-5 Heavy steps in the hallway and the feared one enters. It's no longer the constitutional monarch in charge; now it's the despot. All leap to their feet, and the guard stands straight as an arrow. "Thirteen men working paper in the hall, sir." "Everything in order, guard?" "As per order." "Anyone have anything to say?" No, not a one. The warden gets a plate and spoon and tastes the salad and says it tastes wonderful and that the people on the outside would lick their fingers after eating it. "Nothing better or healthier than a herring."
- 54/1 A general smile of thankful agreement from the prisoners and especially from the guard. But from the Bavarian, "What good is the best and healthiest herring if none of it is in my salad?" The despot frowned and called over his shoulder as he went into the next room, "The man will be brought to me immediately." "As per order, sir."
- 54/2 The Bavarian disappeared behind the door, and the others prisoners continued with their meal, as ordered, but also pricked up their ears in order to perhaps hear something from the next room. The exchange was heated and ended as expected with the Bavarian getting 3 days' "dark confinement." A few minutes later he could be heard being led away and frankly expressing his views about several of the prison officials.
- 54/3 But that didn't help, and he had to go to the tower. The trustee ate the rest of his herring salad.
- 54/4 & 5 The rest of the day was uneventful with work stopping at 6:30. The rest of the bread was taken from the shelves to be eaten. An exchange of words took place between the older Frenchman and his neighbor, a small fat man with pig's eyes. The fat one's bread-- almost 1/2 a loaf-- is missing, and he accused the Frenchman who then talks a streak of French. The guard hurries to determine what's up, and the fat one insists no one else could have done it. He's one who can never get enough and had 15 minutes' time this afternoon when he could have taken the bread. Alphonse admits he's always hungry and had the time in the afternoon but would never steal from a comrade. "Did you see him take the bread?" "No, I didn't see it, but..." "Shot up! Did anyone else see anything?" No one had. The accuser and accused each as untrustworthy as the other, no one saw anything, no evidence-- nothing more to do. The fat one threatens to go to a higher authority... "You can go to hell for all I care. No one believes you... You just want more bread... Shame on you for accusing a fellow prisoner." The Frenchman smiled a greasy smile, and the guard said, "No smirking from you. You're certainly capable of such a thing. And isn't it interesting how good your German can be if you want. But as soon as I order you to do something, it's 'Nix comprend.' Just you wait. Enough now. Everyone get ready to go back to the cells."
- 56/1 Alphonse takes on a look being offended and not understanding and sets out with a shrug of the shoulders; he's satisfied with the outcome of things.
56. 2 Much more sought after than work in the hall is a place as house or field worker

But sometimes it's a long wait for an open position. If someone applies for such a position from the hall, he has to sign a statement agreeing to give up one year of the non-solitary time that's due him. The people hate to do this and consider it a lessening of their rights.

56/3 if there is an opening for a trustee, there is great anticipation until the new person is announced. Then one day is heard, "Stooped-over Kaspar is the new trustee on the 4th floor of the 4th wing. He deserves it-- already served 5 years and has 5 more to go, if he can only manage the work." The work isn't really hard, but sometimes really dirty and disgusting. Kaspar, happy about his long-awaited promotion, packs his belongings and head off to his new position. He has to pay his dues to the guard-- stay clean and avoid all contact with the prisoners. It sounds easy but is hard to do. Keeping clean is ok, but how can he avoid all contact; afterall, he left solitary in order to have some companionship. His guard is a decent sort and says, "The 11th commandment is 'Don't let yourself soften up.'"

57/1 At first Kaspar doesn't look at the others. There are about 20 men there, some who keep to themselves. But most are willing to flirt a little with him. The guard and others from the other floors help him: number 26 is a cad-- he's already gotten a trustee into trouble as thanks for bread he gave him; 30 plabs everything to the priest, 31 is ok and to be trusted in anything, and so on down the line. Kaspar knows something about human nature and after a while is a satisfactory overseer in his little realm. The prisoners are also satisfied with him because he lets the hungry ones have a littel something from the leftover food.

57/2 One of his important priveleges is that he is allowed to give out the leftover food. Actually, according to the letter of the law, the guard is supposed to do this, but he doesn't have lots of time and gladly delegates this duty. The trustee has extra bowls, etc. in his cell, enough to hold a supply of food. Naturally at first he eats more than the normal ration of food, but still there is some leftover. Kaspar is a gentleman and passes it out to those needing it without compensation. Most of the other trustees demand some kind of barter payment-- a mirror, comb, a piece of their own soap, or a pencil; if someone is really poor, he will trade butter or cheese or meat, little delicacies that are not as filling for him as a bowl of peas or lentils. Such trading is of course forbidden, but it is impossible to wipe it out completely. Once in a while an especially bad case will be severely punished, such as when a trustee takes advantage of the predicament of the hungry ones. Something like that causes bad blood, of course, which sooner or later would be avenged. Other wise it's harmless.

58/1 Kaspar also bartered, but thought it unfair to take something of value from a hungry fellow inmate.

58/2 On the outside, Kaspar had been a heavy smoker, but as long as he was in his cell, he had to do without smoking. Now he was able to get tobacco since one of his people in the hall worked tobacco. He was able to have it smuggled to him and lay next to the airshaft in his cell at night and smoked one cigar after the other.

58/3 The one who delivered the tobacco was a real fan of Kary May and had the trustee tell him whenever a copy of one of his books came onto the floor. So one day Kaspar tells him that 33 has Satan and Iscriot. That's good because the other fellow hadn't read this title yet. "What does he want for it?" "Cigars-- 3 a day. You can have the book for one week-- it's a real thriller." "OK. I'll put the tobacco in the usual spot. Can he be trusted?" "Of course, otherwise I wouldn't have said anything. And he wants

- the good stuff." "That he can have."
- 59/1 One day a field worker, Gabriel, a real gem of a man, was transferred to Kaspar's floor, and better care was taken of him than anyone else: he polished his boots, supplied him with tobacco, anything. Why all the fuss? In the summer and fall, the field workers brought in all kinds of tasty things-- apples, plums, cherries, pears, even peaches and grapes. And Kaspar had become a gourmet; he didn't like the soup and vegetables anymore. Now he could enjoy the high life. And not only fruit did he bring. Hardly a week went by without Gabriel working in the fields or gardens of the officials, too, since most of them did gardening on the side. Gabriel was trusted by the guards, a friend of the wives, mending their garden tools, etc., and his services became indispensable. Is it any wonder that all manner of good things were given him-- sausage and ham, eggs, cheese, and the like? And Kaspar had his share of it all.
- 59/2 Kaspar was much envied and had already survived several attempts to bring about his fall. But he survived thanks to his carefulness and the good will of the guard. Other trustees wanted to trade with him, the kitchen workers, for example. He turned them all down since by now he had gained enough knowledge of all the workings in the prison that he knew the advantages and disadvantages of each position. In the kitchen, one could eat his fill. Kaspar could, too. Sometimes they got some of the special food prepared for the sick ones, etc.; Kaspar did, too. There were two kitchens, one on the ground floor which was a damp, smelly place where the vegetables were cleaned and the potatoes peeled. The upper kitchen was a spotless place shown to the visitors and where the officials sometimes ate. It was good work at the stoves and kettles, but the head cook was not a good person to work for. Kaspar decided to keep his post.
- 60/1 Only in the spring when the sunny days returned did Kaspar toy with the idea of working in the fields. He saw the field workers go out in the mornings, happy, and come back in the evenings, tired and hungry but satisfied. They breathed the air of freedom all day. Their brown faces never had the melancholy look of those in their cells, it was hard work, but one got used to it. Kaspar knew Gabriel, the head of the field workers, well enough to find out from him the factors that were for and against working in the fields. The field guard had a reputation of being treacherous, but Gabriel said one could get along with him if one knew how. But there was one job Kaspar had seen more than once from his window. Excrement had to be pumped out of large collecting pits and carried to the fields in tubs. After such a day Gabriel stank to high heaven. He told Kaspar that he'd get used to this work, but Kaspar didn't believe he could ever get used to work like that. He would rather stay where he was. Gabriel, used to such dirty work since childhood, shook his head at such fastidiousness.
- 61/1 But one fine spring day, an irresistible urge to move about in the freedom of the fields caused Kaspar to change his mind and apply for field work. But when the guard entered his name on the list, Kaspar avoided questions about what he might want. The head guard took his request without saying a word. Kaspar already felt pangs of regret: had he done something stupid? He needed to talk to someone about it, so he went to his guard who complained mightily about Kaspar's decision. The guard had become used to Kaspar and didn't want to lose him. Kaspar went back to his cell, his tail between his legs; it was too late to withdraw the request. In the afternoon Kaspar was told that his request had been turned down-- he had to serve

at least 4 more years of his sentence before he could be considered for field work. "Be glad that it turned out like it did," his guard said to him. Kasper was glad. And in the evening he was even happier when the workers returned and filled the floor with that certain "farm" smell.

## Chapter 5 Courtyard Stories

- 61/2 Around 5 am one mid-summer's morning an older guard and small group of prisoners marched into the courtyard to a shed next to which long rows of wood lay stacked. The guard gave the usual spiel about rules and punishment and then gave out tools to start the work of chopping wood.
- 62/1 A little way from the wood cutters was another group to work on mattresses. One prisoner who had been paper hanger and saddle maker was made foreman and got two people to train. Of the other four, three did tasks like removing the old stuffing, washing the outer covers, etc., while the other one ran the sewing machine.
- 62/2 Just beyond the prison wall could be seen a fruit tree behind which the sun came up. There were many longing glances taken at the little piece of visible freedom and many deep breaths of the fresh air -- quite a change from being cooped up in a cell. But it was quite a pain knowing one was cut off from this freedom, too.
- 62/3 The foreman of the mattress detail -- he was called the master -- had two prisoners under him, a young business man and me. Since we were able to talk, we quickly got to know each other.
- 62/4 When prisoners come together, usually the talk starts with why one is in prison. The truth is seldom told -- either one shoves the blame onto others or else tells his own version of things so that it appears different than it really is. The most openness is usually shown by the incorrigible ones.
- 63/1 The business man told of some kind of fraud, the master of falsifying a will. He went to lengths to explain to me why this happened. It was the will of his sister whom he had taken care of for God knows how many years. He did everything for her, and why? Because she had property and money. And then she left the greatest part of her estate to a cloister. How could he let that happen to him? I asked him if it didn't bother him, a good Catholic, to go against the church like that. Baloney! He claims to go to church and all, but too much is too much. Didn't the good fathers have enough without taking away money he needed for his family and had earned? All that he'd had to put up with, and now they came and wanted the money he had sweated blood for. No, too much is too much.
- 63/2 No, too much is too much. He repeated that over and over. I said he shouldn't have gone after the religious establishment, did he expect to get absolution for it later? The priest at confession would have demanded he give the money back anyway. And the the falsification would have been for nothing. He then closed his eyes and said he couldn't think it through just then, maybe later, but please don't think he'd be so dopey as to falsify the will and then go confess later and make it all for nothing.
- 64/1 I later heard the solution to the puzzle: he knew an old priest in the next town who was almost deaf but still heard confessions.
- 64/2 Except for his small weaknesses, the master was a good man; one could learn from him. The business man didn't have that in mind, but he did earn the displeasure of the master by his indifference to the art of mattress making. The master wondered just what the business man thought, was he too good to learn honest work? He

should follow my example, somebody with an education even, and pay attention like I did when the master showed me something -- if I kept it up, he'd make a very good journeyman out of me. But the business man would never amount to anything his whole life long. "You'll see; I'll get rid of him."

- 64/3 And that's just happened. At his next opportunity the master took the guard aside and finally convinced him to talk to the head guard the next time he came for inspection. This he did and convinced him to allow a change of personnel. The business man was sent of the wood choppers, and the master got an older man, Fridolin, who had been in prison over 20 years and who was a good sort. His face was lined and he walked stooped over, but his spirit had not suffered. He always spoke to the point and did his work in a way that made the best impression. The guard (called Black Bruno by the other guards) had a liking for him, too. With time it was apparent that the guard treated us -- the master, Fridolin and me -- with more respect than the other mattress workers, never mind the wood choppers with whom he was very strict. Fridolin also had a very close relationship with the man at the sewing machine who once told me in private that he was accused only of "a so-called morality offence" of which he did not think himself to be guilty. His close relationship with Fridolin was a puzzle to me and brought only a suggestive smile from the master when I mentioned it to him. I would find out in time; I was still too new in prison to know all that went on, he said. Just keep my eyes open and I would learn. He said he would try to smooth the way in getting to know the others better.
- 65/1 As we sat at the table working on the mattresses, the warden appeared, in a rather good mood, and had a few words with each of the prisoners. He called me to one side to ask how I liked the outdoor work, etc. It was strange, but when the man tried to be congenial, there was an uncomfortable feeling. It was better when he raged. When he left, Fridolin said that he was in such a good mood because the Austrian successor to the throne had been killed in Sarajevo and there would probably be a war. He said he knew these things because he'd read them in the newspaper and would bring one for me to read tomorrow. The warden had also been given the title of 'privy councillor' because of his service in the prison. "The damned soul killer!" Fridolin said. I warned him to be careful since the guard was only a few steps away, but he said all the guards think the same, maybe even hate him more than we do.
- 66/1 He brought me a newspaper the next day and promised to see to it that I got more of them as well as books, all to be delivered via our trustee. He also had several French things of the guard which he was binding in his cell. I was astounded that he could read French; he couldn't, but the pictures made it clear what the material was about.
- 66/2 I hadn't read any French for ages and was happily surprised to see what names were on his list: Stendhal, Balzac, Barben d'Aureville, Flaubert, as well as some obscure pornographers. As luck would have it, not long afterwards the guard was especially interested in what kind of books were in my footlocker. He took some out and I could just imagine the pretty scene if he had come across his "Diaboliques." When I asked him if he was interested in some newer French novels, the hypocrite assured me that he preferred Montaigne and Montesquieu.
- 67/1 Soon afterwards it was announced that from now on, the prisoners were to address the warden as "Herr Privy Councillor."
- 67/2 Fridolin decided to trust me more and more after I had done some favors for him and proved myself to be trustworthy. One day he said to me, "You have been wrongly

judged in our circles up till now. The assumption that you were on the other side was natural. We took your friendliness to us as calculated; many thought you were a spy for the officials. We have done you wrong; you will have to admit that our mistake was excusable." "Of course; that was to be expected." "There is a rumor that after your release you want to write a book about your imprisonment."

(66)

I shrugged my shoulders and said, "After my release? You know I've got a life sentence." "I think you will have a second day of mercy... or you could escape. No? I myself broke out once without any outside help. You would need outside help of course. But tell me, do you really intend to write a book?" I didn't want to lie: "It's not exactly out of the question." "I understand. But you don't have to mince words with me. As far as I'm concerned, you can have all the support you need-- and you'll need it, too. As far as what goes on here in the prison, you haven't even scratched the surface yet. Your eyes still have to be opened. You've no doubt noticed how gently Bruno handles us three." "Yes, I have; no doubt that's because he gets along well with you and the master." Fridolin laughed. "It's not as sentimental as all that. Our master made a leather school satchel for Bruno's son not long ago. Without the normal paperwork being done. Without the usual payment. Bruno stole the leather from supply. A few weeks ago I bound a magazine; you know, Professor Aschaffenburg's work about criminal psychology. There was an article in it about the relations between guards and prisoners that said that only things necessary for prison business are talked about between them.

(67)

Nothing beyond that is said. The example of quiet fulfillment of duty that the prisoner has daily before his eyes is the best example for him. So much for theory. Real life looks a little different." He saw my amazement and continued: "You might think it's an exception; no, just like our master makes school satchels for Bruno, the machinist over there makes shoes for his boys, I bind books, frame pictures, mend a thousand things for him that cost him nothing or next to nothing. Every once in a while he has the desire to show his gratitude with a few apples or a piece of wurst." "Or a newspaper that he buys for you." "Buys? Ha! He swipes it from the conference room upstairs." "That really is an educational example to follow. But Bruno is no doubt an exception," I said. "No exception," he replied, "but the rule. There are only a few guards here who are clean in this respect. Even some of the officials do the same. Some become quite well-to-do, buy houses or land. With what? Not with the lousy bonuses they get at the end of the year."

69/1-2

I expressed my surprise that no one got caught. "Not surprising. First of all they carefully choose people they know can keep quiet; it's almost always habitual thieves. They have no reason to betray anyone; it suits them just fine. If one of them does say something, it's to get back for some unfairness. But who's going to believe them? Or any of us? We're only believable if we accuse ourselves of a crime. The guard denies everything if he is accused, brings along a colleague to corroborate, and the accuser winds up in the tower for slander. He never does that again, and the others see what happens and learn their lesson from it. Steal and let steal. Why should it be different inside the prisons than outside?"

70/1

I said it ought to be different. A prison is a moral institution whose purpose is made illusory by the goings on described by him. He exaggerated, no doubt. The whole thing seemed monstrous and unbelievable to me.

70/2

That upset him and he held forth for quite some time, quoting from his extensive experiences, mentioning a hundred different details, all in order to convince me. He



went farther and put Bruno at his beck and call for a couple hours, having him fetch thread, needle, even going away for a while with a "beat it, Bruno, we don't need you here." And he came and went, grumbling and upset, but not daring to say a single word about anything.

70:3 The machinist had been watching and came over to find out what was going on, and when he heard, he confirmed his friend's story. As for himself, he hated these kinds of get-togethers, but once he had taken part in them, he could not get himself completely free of them again; at least he accepted no payments for what he did. The others made fun of him for it, too.

70:4 That evening in my cell I thought over what I'd heard. Some of it could be  
71:0 discounted -- to be sure, but the rest was essentially correct -- an odd carrying out of justice. I had noticed the closeness between certain guards and prisoners before, and now I knew why. Should I try to do something against this evil? To prove a guard guilty would be very difficult, if not impossible. And if proven guilty, what then? The others would just be more careful, and I would bring myself into a very dangerous situation. I knew enough to realize that the worst thing a prisoner can do is to win the enmity of the guards. Better to have the higher officials for enemies than the guards who you see every day and who can make life hell. I had to count on many more years in prison; did I want to get into such a hornet's nest? Besides, all this had been told me in confidence. And I was just an object of the justice system anyway. I hated it, or at least the spirit behind it. It had sentenced me to a life sentence and cut me off from society. What sort of duty did I have to do for that very system which had cut me off?

71:1 Enough! What did these things have to do with me? Let things stay the way they are -- they suit each other just like they are.

71:2 I kept what I had learned to myself, which had unexpected consequences. One evening a guard whom I got along with rather well appeared at my cell and asked for a favor -- to draft a joint will for him and his wife. Why me? He and the others would have asked me to do things for them before, but hadn't trusted me, didn't know how I'd react. But now it was known that Fridolin had filled me in and would vouch for me. And since I had indeed kept quiet, he decided to be the first to ask something of me since we got along as well as we did. At first I didn't know what to do, and then I laughed. An honor to be on the "inside." Of course I would be discreet. Of course I would write his will. Of course I would be ready to offer my knowledge of law to him and his colleagues. He happily shook my hand and gave me paper and pencil to write down what he said. A few days later he stopped by to pick up the finished product and asked what he owed me. I humorously told him that since I was licensed to practice law in the US and not in Germany, I couldn't legally get any kind of payment from him. He once more shook my hand and promised to recommend me to the other guards. And he must have done it, too, since before long I had a flourishing practice now and then when someone would come to me with some unfair business. My anger would get the best of me and I'd throw him out. One young guard came to me and was ready to commit perjury in order to reduce by half his child support payments. He decided not to and was later very happy about it.

73:1 When we were finished with the mattresses, we were sent to help those pulling weeds. There was an interesting guy there with broad shoulders and a gorilla's face. There was something mysterious in his past, and he claimed to be Austrian. One assumed the name he had given was not his real one, but no one could find out anything about his past. He liked to brag that all the judges and district attorneys to the world couldn't worm anything out of him. His speech was more Hungarian-like than Austrian, and when I told him that, he did seem to have lived in Hungary for several years. He spoke with cynical openness about his crime. He'd gotten drunk

and broke into the home of a woman nearly 60 years old and raped her. He got 10 years for it - much too little. After he served his time, he'd get out - go home, place else and satisfy his beastly needs once again until perhaps one day he'd feel the hangman's rope around his neck.

73/2 After he'd heard that I'd been to Hungary several times, he like to talk to me about his experiences there, according to him, in the most beautiful country in the world.  
74/1 What kind of experiences, one can imagine for oneself. His last job there was with a count as stable groom. And the countess knew how to appreciate him, too. An excellent woman, but like all others, a little strange. Try to figure it out: in the day, she never wanted to see him; at night, when she let him into her bedroom, everything was pitch black. Incomprehensible, isn't it.

74/1 Erdolin asked him what was incomprehensible and took a small mirror out of his pocket and gave it to him saying, "You poor slob, take a look at your face, and if you still don't get it, you're an ass." He sat there for a while, and when the fullness of the insult had sunk in, his eyes flared and the Austrian would have liked to throw himself at the insulter. But the others held him until Bruno came and had him hauled away.

74/2 His replacement was a young man with an assuming expression. And he told baldfaced lies. He could also tell dirty jokes with such a virtuous face that the guard, from a distance, must have thought he was praying the Our Father. He also knew how to make friends with people, including a hand to get rid of friendship with me. My greatest coolness toward him seemed only to fan the flames of his friendship higher. He confided things to me that made my head swim. And then he wanted to be even closer and claimed to have been born near my birthplace where he had several highly esteemed relatives, possibly even related to mine. And how he wished he could have had the benefit of my legal council at his trial in which case everything would have turned out differently. And now a good fortune had brought us together, not just good fortune, but rather kismet. It was written in the book that he was to be my saviour. As soon as his term was up, in just a few short years, he would free me. He already had the plan figured out: on the appointed night, I was to just crawl through the hole made in the window bars, down the waiting ladder, a few steps across the prison yard, up and over the wall with said ladder, down the other side to the waiting car, and leave everything else to him. I asked him if he would do that out of the goodness of his heart or would need some sort of payment. Well, mostly out of friendship, but thought that his services wouldn't go unrewarded. "How much?"

75/1 "Hundred thousand marks." I laughed and said I was insulted at the paltry sum he placed on my freedom. He then came closer and told me that he, like several others, knew that a half million marks were waiting in a Berlin bank for the one who freed me, but being a modest man, he could live well from the interest of just one hundred thousand.

75/1 Erdolin smelled a rat and warned me about anything to do with "Herr Münchhausen" (a figure in German literature well-known for his lying). That day we were on a small rise by the shed and could see the entire work place. Bruno had the day off, and his substitute kept near us, so we couldn't talk much. But at one opportunity, "Herr Münchhausen" came up to me and asked if I, too, noticed now the new guard smelled of alcohol. I hadn't. Another guard came along who was known to be a drinker, and the two of them disappeared behind the shed for several minutes. When Jura returned, he was whistling and came sauntering up to us and made a joke about

- "Herr Münchhausen" who flared up and was promptly taken away.
- 76/1 The next day I was called in front of one of the prison officials who had a stenographer there, too. He was charged to investigate the accusation made by number 453 against Guard Wolfzahn pertaining to drinking schnapps. I was called as a witness because the guard was said to have schnapps on his breath. Was that correct? I acted like I couldn't say much about the matter. Second question: Did I see Wolfzahn drink from the bottle of the other guard? No, I didn't. Third question: Was it even possible to see what went on behind the shed from where we were? No, it wasn't. The official nodded in satisfaction and let me go. I saw the others outside the room and had to wait until they had all been questioned. Finally the two guards were questioned, and the accusation was declared unfounded, and the accuser was punished with 14 days' "confinement in darkness" for slander.
- 77/1 It was soothing to Wolfzahn that the slanderer was taken past our work area on his way to the tower. Münchhausen marched by with head held high and said that vice got off free and virtue was suffering. For this statement of more or less truth he sat another three days in the tower.
- 77/2 The master said that's how it was in the world nowadays, but Fridolin found no sympathy for Münchhausen, and besides this was prison where the prisoners never got a break.
- 77/3 As soon as he had the chance, Fridolin made the same offer to free me. And his plan sounded like it could work, but without demanding any money. He wanted me to only promise that I'd do something for him once I got out. He was surprised when I told him that I placed no value on getting out of prison. My goal was clearing my name, and I could do this only if I got out legally. I didn't want to be a fugitive. I usually didn't talk about such things, but I wanted to be honest with him. I added that I hoped the matter would not be discussed again between us. He reluctantly agreed, convinced that I must know how futile it was to expect a retrial.
- 78/1 In Münchhausen's place came a young Italian by the name of Marco Visconti who could speak almost no German and understood only a little. He was well liked by everyone due to his quiet, friendly being. How his eyes glowed when I spoke to him in his mother tongue. The three years of solitary already completed had been hard on him as well as being his first time in prison. From talking with him it was hard to believe ~~that~~ he could hardly read. His only reading in the past three years had been an old volume of Italian poetry, etc., from the middle of the last century. For him it was a gift from heaven: it was his first insight into the literary treasure of his people, before he hardly read anything but newspapers. Could it be possible that this person who had traveled through half of Europe as an artist didn't know what the capital of Montenegro was or that the sum of the angles of a triangle equaled that of two right angles? Here was someone of the twentieth century who was still almost convinced that the sun moved around the earth. I don't know what landed him in jail, he didn't talk about it, and I didn't want to ask him.
- 79/1 I gave him "Le mie prigioni" to read which he did with great interest and was moved very deeply to learn that someone could endure prison with such heroic valor. And a compatriot, too, whom he now gave the reverent and thankful love that only a serious reader is capable of. Silvio Pellico would have found more joy and pride from this than all the praises of the critics of the century. I couldn't let him return the book to me since it meant so much more to him than it did to me.
- 79/2 He had memorized the finest passages from the Divine Comedy, and it was a real

- pleasure to hear him recite from it. It was wonderful how a simple man had picked out the best parts of Dante, one of the most educated of people.
- 79/3 Visconti would never tire of reciting a little poem about the futility of life: the past is nothing, only in our memories; the future is nothing, only in our hopes; only the present is, but with a breath it disappears into the bosom of nothingness. So what is life? A memory, a hope, a point.
- 79/4 These couple of verses weren't much, but for this Italian circus rider swallowed up into a German prison they had great meaning-- they were the sum of his life's philosophy: una speranza, una memoria, un punto.

## Chapter 8 Church and Clergy

- 80/1 we were called to church four times a week. Sundays was High Mass, Wednesdays "quiet" Mass, Fridays religious training, Saturdays singing instruction. Every two weeks there was also Vespers at one o'clock; nobody liked that because it disturbed the midday rest.
- 80/2 Everyone had to go to church. If one didn't want to, he had to make written application to be excused. The application was reviewed by the prison officials who decided whether or not to grant it. Quite often it was decided to have the prisoner continue going to church; it couldn't hurt. A change of religious denomination was not allowed until after the revolution when there was a new constitution. There was no longer any official pressure, and all applications to be excused were automatically granted. Most wanted the freedom to choose from one time to the next whether or not to go to church, but that was not allowed. It became the practice to tell the guard that one didn't feel well if one didn't want to go to church; one could then stay in the cell for that time and go the next if desired.
- 80/3 Catholics were given the opportunity to receive the Sacrament 3 to 4 times a year. The Protestants went to communion at Easter and Christmas. This of course was completely optional.
- 81/1 There was confirmation twice during my stay, once in the first and once in the last year. The first time it was a bishop who was tactless enough to direct his sermon directly at me. He said there was recently an English writer who was delivered into prison by the hand of God but had also received the inestimable grace of conversion. The tear-streaked face of Christ appeared to him, and the layer of ice around his earthly heart melted and he once again was a child of God. The bishop hoped that at least one among those in front of him would experience the same thing-- it was clear he meant me. I complained to the prison chaplain about this at his next visit, and once it had been explained to him who Oscar Wilde was, he felt I should feel flattered to be in such high literary company. But even a bishop can slip up sometimes.
- 81/2 Shortly before the war an official of the cathedral appeared in the prison reportedly to check on the quality of our church singing. I had the honor of him visiting me in my cell and never felt so much like the object of curiosity; I'd had many visitors to my cell before, even a crown prince of Prussia, but never with this same feeling. He even had me show him my collection of books. When he saw my Plato, Spinoza, Locke, Hume, and Kant he expressed his opinion that I had chosen for myself a philosophy of negation, and as a remedy he suggested St. Thomas Aquinas. I countered saying I didn't need an antidote, and besides, I didn't have the theological training for St. Thomas Aquinas.

- 82/1 The next day it happened that as I was in the prison yard, the prison councillor came by and suddenly stopped. At first he made small talk with me but then mentioned that I'd had an important visitor yesterday. I told him of the churchman's reading, recommendations, he said I should read whatever I wanted; after all, we're not in the Dark Ages here, and by the way, he had a new book about Spinoza and would see to it that I could read it, if I were interested. I politely declined and said that I preferred to read Spinoza himself and not what others had written about him; I could draw my own conclusions.
- 82/2 Even when I was still in solitary I could tell that a lot of nonsense went on concerning courtship if a guard was on duty during services who would turn a deaf ear, the most unchurch-like conversations would pass from box to box. Once I heard my neighbor talking to his saying he was glad to be getting out next week and would be on his way to Hamburg.
- 83/1-12 "Are you going by way of Frankfurt?" "Yes." "Could you visit my wife; she lives there." "What does she carry on with?" "Well, you know, she gets along as best she can. She's a pretty young thing-- you can imagine how she carries on." "Yeah, well I won't have much money when I get out-- won't be able to start much, you know." "Well, I've got some news that I really want her to have so I'll write her a letter and you can smuggle it out and give it to her-- that way you won't have to pay." "That would be fine. But how do I get the letter out?" "That's easy. You paste it to the sole of your foot. I'll get the paste for you." "And if they still find it?" "Don't worry. I'll word it so only the person it's for can understand it. Promise you'll do it." "All right. One good turn deserves another."
- 83/13 The prisoners can be divided into three groups depending on their attitudes to the church and clergy. First the hypocrites who exaggerate, they ask the priest for holy water, have pictures of saints on their cell walls; they fail to fool anyone and are hated by gods and men. Then they change over into group two, the largest group: they go to services because a clergyman is a useful, influential person. He sits on the prison council, his word had weight at the ministry. (Without his help there is little hope for a plea for mercy. Before the end of the war there were relatively few pleas of mercy, and they were completely out of the question for the habitual criminals.) If one of the prisoners from group two were asked why he went to church, he would say it's good behavior to go to church and that it's not good to waste the good will of a person who could help you, and when you get out, it's the clergyman who gets a job for you (probably the most important point). This was not the case for all the clergymen; one clergyman steadfastly maintained that helping some one get out or finding him a job had nothing to do with that person's religious outlook. That was no doubt the policy of the prison, but most inmates still thought 'better safe than sorry' and the clergyman is only a person after all and cannot get rid of all human prejudices, he certainly won't help someone who never goes to church as much as a good Christian. So, it's off to church; besides, it does a body good to get out of the cell and talk a little with others and once in a while hear something new. As far as the sermon goes, just let it be.
- 85/1 This is the largest group. The third has only a few members, those who have the courage to confess their convictions without worrying about the consequences. Nothing thrived in this swamp of a place so badly as manly openness.
- 85/2 No, it may well be that there were a few who went to church services because it was their strong desire to do so, but I did not find any among the hundreds of

- prisoners I got to know.
- 86/3 Of the inmates about two-thirds were Catholic, one-third Protestant, the same proportions as in the rest of the country. The Protestant minister, who had been in prison service for a long time, had no illusions anymore and kept his activities to a minimum. Up until the revolution the prisoners found this rather comfortable. When the Catholics and Protestants talked about this, the following could generally be heard: You Protestants have it easy -- your minister never gets on you to go to services, etc. At that time when a conversion took place, often a Catholic did so out of convenience. Catholicism was at a low point then, the Center was the strongest party in the country, but the government was liberal -- no sympathy from above for the Catholics. The first prison director was Catholic, the second was not. Officially there was parity between the two, but what influences of incalculable effect the governing body had would make for an interesting study. The influence of the Catholics sank from year to year, and it even went so far that at the start of the war, the priest was "persuaded" to leave the prison and seek a position in a village parish.
- 86/4 After a few months his replacement arrived -- a completely different type of person: doctor of divinity, witty speaker, a modern man. At first I got along well with him but had the feeling it wouldn't last. He soon began to talk about my case and ask questions demanding of a trust I wasn't ready to give him, with always sharper words exchanged, until one day he declared that there could be no question about my guilt. He viewed it as his task to get me to confess to it; I owed it to the fairness of God and man alike. I rebuked him with words just as sharp, what I owed God was my business and I would tolerate no one's meddling in it, and that I also didn't think much of man's fairness, and that it owed me so much, it would never be made up to me in a life time.
- 86/2 From then on there was a feud between us, of course not carried out in such brutal form as the then on-going world war. After quite some time there was a relation not unlike that on the eastern front just before the cease fire. He made no more demands for my confession, but there came to light a fact which he had earlier keep secret. The same district judge who had been over me in my pre-trial (held since became a junior official in the ministry) was a relative of his. I said to him that now I understood, his "cousin" had prejudiced him against me and that that was not a good way to form an opinion. I said he should try to forget all that and review the facts of the case and then we could discuss it. He had a complicated nature and was moody, sometimes showing a hard, outer sharpness and sometimes a tender sympathy. He explained this contradiction saying he had been born too sensitive and had to protect himself with this hard outer shell. Often he wanted to take back something he had said earlier. From the beginning I had the feeling that he wasn't suited for prison service, and the longer I knew him, the stronger this feeling grew.
- 87/1 He was not liked in his official circles. The prisoners didn't like him because of a suspicion of his religious superiority which left them feeling separated from him, while the uneven nature of his character was a hindrance to the respect he needed. These people who themselves had failed at life usually have a fine sense for character weaknesses; only mature, secure people should deal with them. Fridolin's comments were typical. "He is very learned, but he is no man." He was downright hated by the guards. That's because the behind-the-scene dealings couldn't be kept secret from him for long. He felt the blame was with the guards and strongly
- 88)

criticized them, which they did not like. They usually had the support of the other officials on their side. Once the administration even said that a lot of those working in the prison belonged behind bars themselves. That was too much; it was treason. But how to take revenge? Their insulter was higher up in the chain of command than they were and well regarded by the administration; how to get around him? A committee sent to check into the matter made things even worse, and it looked like the priest was preparing some sort of general house-cleaning action. It looked like the end was near. But some god-- which one is hard to say-- came to their rescue and felled their oppressor from his high place into the deepest depths.

89/1 One day one of the guards came by a cell door that was ajar, and wanting to find out who opened it and looked inside. There was the priest with the inmate standing in front of him, naked. The guard took off immediately.

89/2 He of course didn't keep this to himself, and soon there was the rumor going around that "the Catholic priest 'Eulenburgs'." [Note: Prinz zu Eulenburg was of the nobility and at the beginning of the century, he was caught up in a scandal because of his homosexual behavior. His name came to be a verb meaning to partake in such sexually oriented activities. The word is no longer in use.] The guards exchanged what they had seen, one this, one that. The prisoners were told if they spoke against the priest, it wouldn't be to their disadvantage. The one inmate involved suddenly had an abundance of extra food, tobacco, etc., but the whole thing didn't seem quite right to him. Others had fewer reservations; one asserted the priest had kissed him, others different things.

89/3 The time finally came. After one of the prisoners got out, he brought charges against the priest who, after a hearing and trial, served eight months in jail.

89/4 It took almost a year to find a replacement for the priest. If the authorities had been less lucky, it might have been impossible to repair the damage done; but the new priest had all the necessary qualities: first of all, he was a real man-- a volunteer for the army, and later a division chaplain; ardent but not stingy or petty; gifted with much human understanding as well as with a goodness which didn't allow the word of disappointments to bring him from the indestructible optimism with which he did his duty. He helped newly released prisoners find jobs, housing, and clothing after the war the was a more relaxed attitude about early releases, and even habitués were given a chance to try. He helped dozens of them get out. In church he often told of how those he'd helped get out early had paid him back by running away from their positions and how that sort of thing made it difficult not only for them, but also for those of us who would follow.

89/1 The Catholic priest's influence grew and the of privy councillor, who'd died, had been replaced by a new man, a practicing Catholic and the complete opposite of the one he replaced. Being Catholic was now a big plus. The Center had also become the governing party since the revolution and had filled positions in the justice ministry. The Protestants complained about their minister who still went about his duties in lackluster fashion-- he does nothing for us, never helps us get out early, never helps us get out on good behavior, and once one of us is finally out, he never does anything to help.

89/2 Among those who'd become deprived during the war and ended up in prison was one whose outer appearance and manners pointed to better origins even though in moral aspects he was worse off than most of the rest. He was from some big city somewhere, and life in prison didn't agree with him at all. He wanted out so he could



enjoy his youth. At first he acted like he was crazy, causing a lot of trouble for everyone and finally was brought to the insane asylum. Once he was found out not to be crazy, he was brought back and realized that the way he'd been acting wasn't the right way to do things. One day he asked me if, due to the new constitution in which freedom of religion was guaranteed, it might be possible to change religious denominations. I looked at him and said, "You don't want to become Catholic?"

91/1-6

"Why not?" I let him know what I thought about such a thing and said, "But you don't believe in anything." "I believe it's better to kiss the girls out there than to lie here in a cell at night, sleepless, and satisfy myself." "But this belief isn't enough for a change of religious denomination." "The others don't believe any more either. They just go to church to get some advantage from it. We sit in the same wooden boxes, see the same guards, the clergymen do just about the same things. But if I can get out a few years earlier as a Catholic, I'm a fool not to jump at the chance." "Don't you have any idea how vile such conduct is?"

92/1

"Maybe, but you do what you have to do. But did I create this situation? Aren't those in charge convinced that religion is a good thing for us? Who set things up the way they are? You lawyers. You think religion must be kept in order to better control us poor jackasses. Thank you very much. But I don't want to be a jackass; I want to turn the tables and pull a fast one on them. I don't consider myself one iota worse than those who forced me to go to war. Tit for tat."

92/2

He went about his plan thusly: after he'd asked for positions that would give him the most contact possible with the other prisoners, he asked for and was gladly given permission to go back to solitary. Once there he began his religious conversion, being careful not to let it appear too over zealous or that he suffered from religious mania. The officials now rejoiced with the angels of heaven about this man doing penance. The protestant minister remained cool. The prisoner then complained to the director about the little support he got from his minister, and the director, who harbored no suspicion, apologized for the minister, saying he had too much work to do, another prison to take of, etc. But he would certainly pass along the complaints. No, he said, he'd lost his trust in him and wanted to speak with the Catholic priest. Things took their course, and he was finally allowed to covert to Catholicism.

93/1

The guards and inmates who knew the good-for-nothing had a good laugh over it all. He himself gave me looks of merriment and cast his eyes to the ground with a smile. But would he have the patience to play out his charade?

93/2

He didn't. Life in the cell was too boring, the Catholic regimen too demanding, and not having cigarettes in the cell was too much. He had to get out. The arguments of the officials and the priest that only life in solitary could lead to lasting improvement were for naught. He finally got himself a trustee's position. The evil spirit returned to him, bringing along seven others, all of them worse.

## Chapter 7 School and Teachers

- 93/1 One of the first officials to visit me after my imprisonment was the Protestant teacher, an old man of friendly bearing with over 30 years of prison duty. He brought along a volume of Lessing, expressed his sympathy, and said he believed I would be able to get my case reviewed. He wasn't so convinced of the infallibility of judges as others might have been and preferred to make his own judgments about someone, but only after he'd spent enough time with him. He had followed my case closely and wasn't convinced of my guilt-- nor of my innocence.
- 94/1 In fact he never did treat me like one who was guilty. I have his goodness to thank for many hours of lively discussion, and his visits were always a pleasure; he shared a lot of his rich background and experience with me. No other official knew as much of the dark side of the prison as he did, but he never let that interfere or cast doubts over the possibility for improvement of even the most incorrigible prisoner. The problem of carrying out penalties was purely one of personality; the outer form was rather immaterial. Therefore he didn't consider it so bad that the present system was apparently so faulty.
- 94/2 Unfortunately he soon had to retire due to ill health; his successor was a younger teacher, striving and capable, but only a teacher. He never tried to get any closer to the prisoners than that. One hardly ever heard anyone talk about him-- he aroused neither feelings of hatred nor of love.
- 94/3 The Catholic teacher was completely different. Several weeks passed before he saw me for the first time, and then he was very restrained. If his younger Protestant colleague tended toward the liberal side, he was characterized by a strict, almost fanatic orthodoxy. For him religion was the yardstick for everything. He rated the prisoners according to their attitude toward religion, which made him many enemies.
- 95/1 There were 2 hours of instruction every morning during the week. There were six different levels; in the first were the illiterates. It was required to attend the prison school up until 35 years of age, except in cases where the instruction appeared to be of little or no use. Such was my case, which I didn't like at all. My petition to be able to go to classes was rejected. In vain I tried to convince the director, clergy, and teachers to let me attend, but it was always: "You've had enough schooling; you can't learn anything more here."
- 95/2 Only after I found support in one of the ministry officials did resistance slacken. This dignitary appeared one day at my cell, embodying the whole power of the state but still filled with mercy, affable yet condescending. "If you have a request that I can grant and that is in keeping with your sentence, please tell me. We try to combine justice with humanity." I told him of my desire to go to school. "School? But you're already a university graduate. What do you want from a prison school?" "School would be a diversion for me." He wrinkled up his eyebrows and said, "You feel the need for one?" "Certainly, sir. You'd feel the need, too, if you'd sat at this table for a year and pasted cardboard boxes together." He considered for a while and then nodded his approval. I thought of the verses in Homer which inspired Phidias to his Zeus statue:

Thus spoke and nodded with black brows Kronion;  
 And the ambrosian locks of the ruler flowed forward  
 from his immortal head; the heights of Olympus trembled.

- 96/1 I was in the fifth level at the beginning of the next term. There were the same wooden boxes here, too, just like in the church. The teacher was opposite us, and I could see nothing of the other prisoners, just hear their voices.
- 96/2 The lessons were lively, with math, geography, history, and reading being done, and not just stories or poems, but also plays with the parts assigned. Later there were small essays with critiques and discussions about them, with freedom to express various ideas. Only religion was to be left alone; if some forgot, he soon found himself no longer in the class.
- 96/3 Passionate debates were the order of the day. On the one side was the staunch defender of strict Christian morals, on the other the opposite. The dialectics were not to be scoffed at either. It was interesting when the debate degenerated into a personal dispute. If the moralists kept the upper hand, the prisoner would get angry and hurl insults at his opponent. If he didn't know how to defend against weak points in his argument, he made the other one feel like a prisoner, a con, a criminal. From one side it was: you speak well, don't need to steal, the state pays you to talk a blue streak to us; from the other: you attack right and morality, not as if you were convinced of it by theoretical studies but because you are a criminal who wants to hide your depravity from yourself and others by means of pseudo-arguments.
- 97/1 For example: Minna von Barnhelm was read, and the prisoners had more sympathy for the scoundrel innkeeper and the teacher more for the honest and true, if somewhat rough, servant, Just. It didn't take long for the prisoner who talked the best to speak for the prisoners against the position of the teacher.
- 97/2-5 Student: "What kind of miserable character is that Just who crawls like a dog before his master?" Teacher: "Loyalty in service was always one of the best qualities of the German race. Even one of the oldest of our literary works, the Nibelungenlied, is a glorification of that-- loyalty to the death. What could be more beautiful than that?" "That must be a real dummkopf who'd go to the death for another one. 'The shirt is closer than the jacket.' The servant, Just, hangs on to the major because he's an animal without understanding. But the innkeeper knows how to deal with people; that's why he's amounted to something in the world." "Yes, a scoundrel and a liar. A fine example of his class."
- 97/6 At this point another prisoner spoke up and objected to the defamation of a class of people to which he had the honor of belonging. Only a one-sided, naive teacher would assert that all innkeepers were scoundrels and liars. There were honorable men, himself included, among the world's innkeepers. After all, he was neither a scoundrel nor a liar and was in prison only because of committing incest which could happen to anyone. The teacher remarked that the exception proves the rule and that he hadn't wanted to attack anyone's honor. That settled that, and the student began to speak again. "The innkeeper was a scoundrel and liar-- so what? Everybody is."
- (98)
- 98/1-6 Teacher: "You don't mean to say that all people steal?" "Almost all. Some don't have to because they were careful in the selection of their parents. But actually these are thieves, too, since possession or property is theft." "Don't come up with such sayings which you picked up somewhere but haven't digested. I'd like to see what kind of world it would be with only

- thieves in it. You yourself wouldn't want to live in such a world. You yourself can only live in a world where there are not only scoundrels like you but also honest people who work. Human society cannot exist on the basis of thievery. The Lord God knew well enough why he gave the commandment 'Thou shalt not steal.'" "I wasn't there when that was supposed to have happened, but in any case, no where does it say 'Thou shalt not lie'?" "Don't you know the eighth commandment?" "Of course. 'Thou shalt not bear false witness.' That's not the same as 'Thou shalt not lie.' The state also forbids perjury. It has to, too, or else it would be the end of it's administration of justice. But does it really forbid lying?"
- 99/1-5 "The state forbids lying whenever someone else is wronged by it." "Fine. But if someone isn't wronged by it? Take the lie of Tellheim to the widow of his comrade. That was certainly a good deed." "A lie can never be a good deed." "Let's say I'm a doctor and my patient is critically ill. He asks if he will die, and I know if I tell him the truth, he will lose heart and really will die, when perhaps a lie will save his life-- don't I have to lie?" "No. One must never lie. You wouldn't be bound to tell the truth if the patient couldn't tolerate it, but it is never your duty to lie. Find a compromise. None of the examples people come up with to justify a lie are valid. It's still 'Thou shalt not lie.'"
- 99/6 The student: "Ok, then, go farther than God in whom you believe and the state that you serve. Both simply forbid lying in that it harms someone else. Someone said it is easy to preach morals, difficult to prove them. But it's not only difficult to prove your morals, it's downright impossible. Go ahead and condemn lying; people will continue to lie. What a sad life without it-- how far would we get if we always told the truth? Isn't lying a larger part of art? All successful human undertakings have truth as well as lying, and in an auspicious mixture of truth and lying lies success. Naked truth is a figment of fools' imaginations. The rest of us let ourselves be called liars, but those who call others liars are themselves liars."
- 100/1-2 Teacher: "You're getting too brazen-- are you calling me a liar?" "Well, now honestly, sir, haven't you ever told a lie?"
- 100/3 There was laughter which the teacher would not stand for. He declared the discussion ended and gave a short epilog which was nothing less than flattering for his adversary. That way he had the last word. [Referents in text not clear.]
- 100/4 It also happens that a prisoners who wants to be especially in good favor will give a speech he knows to be to the liking of the teacher. This speech has a lot of morality in it and starts off with a few rather large compliments to 'the noble friend of mankind who leads us through the portals of wisdom into the paradise of virtue.' The other prisoners' silent looks punish him for his shoddy convictions and when no one takes part in the discussion, the affair turns rather boring. It's odd that the teacher is so open to such a thing. Afterwards the teacher sends some "good book" or the other to the hypocrite, who probably would've rather had a copy of a Karl May novel to read.
- 100/5 Once the junior official appeared quite unexpectedly to observe the class session and stayed until the end. He said not one word even though the opportunity was offered to him several times. A while later when he was visiting me in my cell, he brought up the subject of school. "Tell me, why do you go to the school? You must be bored to death." I denied that I was bored and mentioned the need for diversion. "What do you actually think of it?" I was careful in my answer and praised that which was praiseworthy

- (101) and was silent about that which wasn't. He countered that the whole thing wasn't worth anything-and that it was there only to make these dangerous, antisocial elements even more dangerous in that the advantage society had from their ignorance was just being lessened. Just the opposite should be done. If they go to school a few years, they not only go about their crimes more carefully but are also much more difficult to catch.
- 101/1 "Aha," I answered with a laugh, "there goes the future district attorney. But I'm afraid that you overestimate the public's interest in making your job easier. It's already been made much too easy for you, and now you want to keep the poor devils stupid, none of whom are your equal anyway. No, that is neither fair nor sportsmanlike. Wouldn't it be more satisfying for you to bring in a real sinner after all the excitement of an even match instead of getting a confession from such a sheep-like person with whom your superior intellect can play like a cat with a mouse? And don't forget what a good opportunity the school affords for the moral betterment of the prisoner."
- 101/2 "Don't talk to me about moral betterment. That's stuff for classroom discussion. We in the business know that a criminal cannot be made better morally. Those are wasted words spoken about that. 'Velle non discitur.' Nobody's ever been made better by preaching. Oh, I'll admit that sometimes someone who's gone astray by chance and whose character is basically sound can be turned around by a soul-shaking experience or maybe under the spell of a exemplary person. That might happen much more seldom than one thinks. But to get up in front of people and say 'Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not kill, and if you do, you'll be locked up in this life and burn in hell in the next--' no, it's not as simple as that. If that helped, we'd all be angles. But for now society still needs judges and district attorneys."
- (102) "And prisons." "Yes, and prisons in which the enemies of society can be made harmless. At least the incorrigible ones-- and most of them are. There's no use to hide from this fact."
- 102/3 "If you are right, the carrying out of sentences as it's done today is the most impractical setup in the world. It's too bad that the state has stopped eliminating the parasites by hanging them or whatever and now spends so much money on prisons with the result that it not only chastises criminals but also breeds them."
- 102/4 At the end of the year a school official came to give exams. The best students were rewarded with money or books. I asked one of them who had won a nice book as a prize if ten marks wouldn't have been better. No, because in prison he would have nothing from the money, and once he was out, it would be gone just like that. But the book was of lasting value.
- 102/5 I interrupted him. "Don't talk to me about 'lasting value.' That kind of talk is for the teacher. You can cut off my little finger if you actually read that book from beginning to end."
- 103/1 "Oh, no, Herr Doktor; you misunderstood me," he said with a grin. "If I keep the book and land up somewhere else, say in a Prussian or Bavarian prison, then it's a valuable proof of previous time served and that makes a good impression. Because in the front of the book it says I got it for hard work and good performance. And I'll have to know a little something about what is inside, too, because someone might ask me about it sometime. Nothing helps if the damned thing is so hard to read."

## Chapter 8 War

- 103/1 During the night of July 31st, people were awakened by the sounds of unusual noises-- the sound of loud voices, closing doors, felt slippers and boots on the floor, and of the watch on the Rhine. It was easy to guess what it meant: the long awaited and prepared for war was finally here. The rest of the night was spent considering the possibilities of the future.
- 103/2 The next morning when we were again at mattress repairing, we found out there was for now only a declaration of war against Russia; France was included in the plans, too, but no one thought about an invasion of England. The privy councillor assured us that this time the lot of them would be taught a lesson and he turned back fully the objection that England's entry into the war as an ally would affect its outcome, disregarding them militarily helpless. They had no army, those shopkeepers. Now it didn't matter who had the biggest mouth, but who had the strongest battalions. The thing would go well, and he expected each prisoner to do his part to ensure victory, in which case an amnesty could certainly be figured on. He would give further details later.
- 104/1 As soon as he left, everyone was talking about how the war would change our lives and what we might expect from it. Only Fridolin wasn't taken up in the discussion. He later told me in private, "The fools are letting themselves be taken in. If they knew what was waiting for them, they'd howl with their tails between their legs. Germany will lose the war, lucky for the world, but not for us. Before peace is declared, we'll all starve to death. What do you think?" I, too, expected nothing good. He continued, "Now the newspapers will go up in price, but I'll see to it that you're kept supplied. The trustee will put it in your cupboard while you're in the yard."
- 104/2 The work was finished on the same day, and we were back in our cells. The younger guards came to say their good-byes, all of them ready to go and certain of victory. They were sure they'd be back in a few months, by Christmas at the latest. Only the married ones were in a depressed mood. Civilians came from the city to take their places; they were called the "relief." Most were older workers, not especially skilled, and were happy to have landed a job with the government. They weren't ready to work themselves too much, got on the friendly side of the prisoners, and didn't pay too much attention to details.
- 105/1 Many sewing machines were rounded up, and it was said that the entire prison was to be occupied with military coat sewing. First came the appeal: Volunteers! who wants to be a tailor for the Fatherland? I told the guard that I'd prefer to continue pasting boxes together, whereupon I was informed that everyone else to a man had volunteered-- I joined ranks with the patriots. One of the relief, an older, dirty, hunched-over little man who was very talkative, announced that he was to be my sewing master. He was honored as he'd heard a lot about me; we would become good friends. If he could ever do anything for me, etc... In a matter of a few weeks he had a sure-fire escape plan for me; cost: ten thousand marks. He'd also smuggle letters out for me. I graciously declined everything. The man now doing police service on our floor was a splendid old man with a white beard who had served 35 years already as a guard in a small jail. He had already retired, but now with the outbreak of war, after he'd sent his two sons off to the front, he placed himself at the service of the state once again. He was an honorable old man with the heart of a child and was the only guard I got to know who was never made harder or worse by such long contact with

- prisoners. An exception and a wonder. When asked why, he said he could never bring himself to treat roughly one of those put in his care; again and again he had seen how God had punished cruelty against defenseless prisoners: as a young man he had been assigned as a guard to a central prison whose director was infamous for cruelty to prisoners and who ended up being punished with starvation by God, just as he had let many a prisoner starve; another director threw himself from a window because of embezzlement. "Even the privy councillor is being punished. His daughter is suffering from a bone disease in her leg. If he doesn't watch out, God will get him, too. You'll see."
- 106 )
- 106/1 Every few days I found a newspaper in my cell, sometimes one from Frankfurt. The rapid advances of the German army through Belgium and northern France confused even Fridolin, the skeptic. He wrote me that the dunderhead Germans might win after all, and closed with the question, where is your John Bull? I told him to just be patient. John is a slow one and has to rouse himself out of his indolence, but then he clamps down with his teeth and won't let go until the enemy is brought down. He's never lost a war, and won't lose this one either, even if it takes a little help from his brother Jonathan.
- 106/2 At the beginning of September Fridolin wrote to me that he was sure that Germany would win and would I please write out a plea of mercy for me, hoping that after the war they would be lenient with him. No matter how hopeless the situation looked, I couldn't refuse his request. But I made him promise to destroy my rough draft as soon as he was done with it.
- 107/1 To my regret I soon learned that he didn't keep his promise. On the same day that Antwerp fell, my cell was searched high and low, and all my books were taken. I stayed there alone and full of misgivings.
- 107/2 What happened? Fridolin's friend, the machinist, was ready to get out, one quarter of his sentence commuted. Fridolin arranged for Bruno to get the last books he bound to the machinist and hid a letter in one of them which contained some none too discreet things about the prison and about Bruno. The machinist didn't find the letter, but the official who checked through his things before he was released did. The junior official immediately started an investigation, and Bruno didn't come out looking too good. In fact he was arrested. And it didn't help any that all manner of things were found in Fridolin's cell-- food stuffs, books, newspapers, cigars and of course the original draft I had sent him. He was too lazy to copy it over and destroy the original. My handwriting was recognized. The trustee tried to win points, too, by making sensational revelations about "the intimate" relationship between Fridolin and me.
- 107 The junior official went about his investigation with a vengeance, as though he would stamp out all corruption in the prison. But very soon after the start of his investigation, suddenly no one could remember anything at all any more, even after hours of cross examination.
- 108/1 One evening I got news through the grape vine that the next morning I was to be questioned about all this. Everyone knew I was in the know, and they expected me to be deserving of the trust placed in me. I responded: discretion is a matter of honor.
- 108/2 The interrogation lasted only a short time. After a few preliminaries, the question was asked whether I knew anything about what went on in the prison, and I answered "yes." The stenographer was dismissed and I was told "Now that we are alone, you can speak freely."
- 108/3-7 "I'm sorry to disappoint you, but I cannot say anything more about the matter." "But you said you knew..." "Yes, some from my own experience,

- some from rumor, but I am not in a position to say anything further."  
 "Why not?" "I am not in a position to say anything about that, either."
- 108/8 The junior official's face fell, he shook his head and tried in a most charming manner to get me to talk.
- 109/1 Finally I told him to let it be. He already had what could be expected from the situation and to leave well enough alone. Any further results would be only short lived at best. It's best not to stir up a hornet's nest; the prison officials were satisfied and the public, too, so why make trouble.
- 109/2 He was thoughtful, said nothing more, and let my refusal to answer be put in the record.
- 109/3 After a few days the privy councillor himself came to me to try his luck. He complained how difficult it was to govern such a situation-- he was sitting on top of a volcano. If he only were, I thought, far away in Mexico or India. I told him I had nothing but sympathy for his situation, but unfortunately I could not say anything further. He changed keys from major to minor. He ranted and raved, and it got on my nerves. He finally said the affair would be brought to a court of inquiry, and they would certainly have ways of making stubborn witnesses talk. Meanwhile he'd have to punish me for breaking house rules but would keep it to a minimum and only have all my books taken away-- except for a New Testament in English.
- (110) Gray autumn days rolled in; I sat at my work table and sewed and froze. No one dared venture in to see me since the "hand of the master was hard on me." There were no more books except for the English New Testament which I read for the first time with any care. It helped my English but not my mood. The 7th of November approached in grayness, the day of my arrest. Was it really 8 years ago? How clear everything still was in my mind's eye. Once again I relived the fateful hours of my last day of freedom. That reality was gray in gray, too. The trip from Ostende to Dover over the gray, rain-swept sea; I was on the top deck and watched the mainland fade away-- sadness and longing in my heart-- Dover, the stormy docking place, the long wait in the train. Suddenly the rain quit, and the sun came out and shone on the fields and gardens. Then came ladies and gentlemen dressed in red from a fox hunt, riding on horses-- the young couple in the front decided to race against the train which slowly overtook them. Dusk, fog, Charing Cross, a cab to the hotel, Big Ben striking six. And then the last minutes at tea with wife and child. Sudden strike of lightning, numbness, horror.
- 111/1 I sat at my work table and sewed on buttons. Stitch by stitch, knot, break the thread. Yes, let's break off this train of thought (thread). [Play on words in German with "Faden abreißen" in both sentences.]
- 111/2 From what everyone was saying, the war wasn't going so well anymore. The reports of victory were fewer and fewer, and there was no more talk of an early peace. The guards who'd gone off to war wouldn't be back by Christmas, some of them would never come back.
- 111/3 At the end of November I was taken before the court of inquiry. This time they weren't so pleasant with me. It was particularly upsetting to the judge that I wouldn't say anything about what I knew. If I were afraid of the other prisoners taking revenge against me for saying something, they would simply transfer me to another prison. I refused. "But you're a lawyer! You must want to see justice carried out." I couldn't hold back and said with noticeable bitterness that I had lost all trust in said justice and wanted nothing to do with it. We were just as far apart as at the beginning, and the



- judge snapped his books shut and said, "Well, if you won't talk now, you'll just be called up as a witness. And you know the penalty for perjury."
- 112/1-3 "I won't take an oath." "You're not allowed to do that. You know that's punishable by law." "Six weeks in jail, as best as I can remember. So lock me up for 6 weeks in jail; it will be a nice change. But you won't do that or give me an oath for the simple reason that you won't summon me. There would be an incredible scandal if someone buried alive in prison would suddenly reappear in the courtroom and was required for justice's sake to tell of his experiences there."
- 112/4 With that the torture was ended-- torture? Well, in a way. Of course only a watered down version of that used in earlier centuries by Justitia to easily win her ends.
- 112/5 Bruno was sentenced to a year in jail, the 2 junior guards got off more lightly. All three were sent to the front instead of serving their time. Fridolin got an extra year and a half added to his sentence, and the machinist had his early release of 2 years rescinded besides having 9 months added on extra. That was hard for him since he had been all ready to get out. Was this administration of justice right?
- 112/6 If a guard and a prisoner both cheat the treasury, who has the larger guilt? Whose decision was greater? A thief behind bars is supposed to be made better. A state institution entrusted with his betterment tries to mislead him with thievery. If he says yes, he has certain advantages; if he says no, he makes the one in charge of him an enemy who can get back at him in many different ways. And why should he say no? He's already marked and has no reputation to lose. Embittered against society and its ways, he considers its honesty and candor to be masks ("two-faced"); doesn't he now again have proof of his convictions? Even the officials in the prison are swindlers. And they really don't need to do anything like that either, since they are paid a decent wage by the state. They truly are the ones who should be ashamed, those who wear the uniform. But they steal anyway. So why shouldn't the one who's been written off by the state also steal. Where everyone steals, he alone cannot. And now an evil coincidence brings them both before the judge's bench. And see there, the one seduced gets the severity of the law, and the seducer gets by with as good as nothing. Why? Because one crow won't pick out the eye of another, as Fridolin puts it.
- 113/1 I, of course, was not invited to the trial; I sewed away on the army coats, one of which was perhaps destined by fate to go to the trenches to the defender of the Fatherland, Bruno. If it had been revealed to me which one, I would have sewn the buttons on especially tight and with special love. I usually read in the New Testament a chapter or two. My appetite for something less pious grew greater and greater. I could have gotten newspapers and magazines again, because the others were ready to show me their thanks. But I wanted my own books; my interest in the war had disappeared almost completely. The new clergyman who was there gave a long presentation in church about the war situation from which it could be learned (if one ignored all the fanfare) that the situation in neither the east nor the west was particularly good. The clergyman's excessive warlike convictions lead to scorn from the prisoners. Soon no one believed his reports of victory anymore.
- 114/1 Some time before Christmas I quite unexpectedly got a copy of "Hochland" from the prison library. I couldn't believe my eyes. The old guard assured me that the closeness of Christmas had no doubt softened the hard hearts. I looked through the book and enjoyed the pictures, looked for the article whose title promised the most, and the sewing work was forgotten. When I

was eating, our stern master brought a man I didn't know to see me. He was introduced as the new ministry adviser. He was a congenial and open man and asked about all sorts of things, including my lhering translation. I took the opportunity to complain about the revocation 5 years ago of permission to publish it. He consoled me with the advice to wait a while longer; now such a thing was out of the question, maybe after the war. It couldn't last too much longer. As they left, our tyrant held up without a word the new book so the adviser could see the title. "Ah, Hochland. That's very good; you'll be satisfied with that?" Naturally I was satisfied, very satisfied.

114/2 How could I not be satisfied with this Christmas present from the privy councillor who had been made milder by the approach of the Feast of Love-- or was it the approach of the ministry commissioner? I thought one should strike while the iron is hot so I asked him on his return visit if he would

(115) have my books brought back. But I'd gone too far. He let me have it with both barrels. Where did I think I was, in some library? Or a sanitarium? I was in prison! And he wanted to bring that to my attention in case I hadn't already noticed. He had treated me with good will before, but I had thrown that away by my behavior in an grave matter whose importance to him I knew very well. I had not behaved like the upright person he had always considered me to be, but I had taken the side of the swindlers. He would never forget that as long as he lived. He was furiously disappointed in me. And I could count on no more favor from him, either-- that was gone forever.

115/1 Indeed, I didn't get my books back until after his death. His successor had my box of books placed in my cell the day before Christmas. This really was a Christmas present, the best I had ever had.

## Chapter 9 Famine

- 115/1 The bread ration was cut by two thirds in the spring of 1915; meat was seen more and more seldom; the vegetables had hardly any fat [sic] any more, and the soup was only water.
- 115/2 Everyone had reached their lowest allowable weight in a few months, and hunger was a steady guest in the cells. You could think of nothing else but the gnawing pain which was somewhat relieved 3 or 4 times a day by a few spoonfuls of warm food. But it always came back doubled as if trying to make up for what it had missed. You had to try to go to sleep right away after the evening soup, but even so, after a few hours, you would wake up with pangs of hunger. After midnight you'd lie doubled up with pain, counting the hours struck by the clock until morning. It was strange that you never got used to hunger-- it was always there, day after day.
- 116/1 We were now weighed every month with the results written down for the doctor, but kept secret from us. If someone complained of weakness, the doctor would check the list and say, "You've lost only a couple kilos this month-- what do you want? That's not much compared to others; I can't promise any extra food." Of course it wasn't surprising that someone of only skin and bones would lose no more than a couple kilos in a month. But if someone lost so much weight that the doctor took notice, then the prisoner got a little extra food for 4 weeks-- a quarter liter of milk per day or half a liter of vegetables. If the prisoner was very lucky, he got some marmalade with the strict warning not to eat it all at once. Of course no one did and then paid the price with a terrible stomach ache. One trustee had saved up enough extra marmalade and bread to have a nice celebration on his birthday. The orgy almost cost him his life.
- 116/2 Complaints about the food situation were a daily matter. The usual answer was that "We can't give out more food than we have. We get only so much. People out of jail are hungry, too; only the war profiteers and swindlers eat enough. Anyone who is a patriot is hungry for the Fatherland." If the prisoner complained too much he usually ended up in the tower.
- 117/1 "The more of this lot who die off, the better for the state," said the director in a meeting when a few voiced the opinion that it couldn't go on much longer like this.
- 117/2 The Catholic priest was the only one of the officials who still made regular cell visits, but he, too, stopped because of all the complaints: "I'm their caretaker of souls, not bread." Then there was no one to look after us. If the old doctor had still been alive, he would not have let us starve so miserably. But he'd had a stroke a year before the war began, and his successor soon died, too, leaving hardly anyone else but military doctors, and they didn't have much time for us.
- 117/3 One day the privy councillor was made a colonel by His Majesty. We'd heard rumors that uniforms were being made up for him, but hadn't believed it. But he was reactivated, and there was a sigh of relief in the prison; better times had to come now. He was to have been put in charge of a POW camp, but ended up going to the front, where maybe the French would have the courtesy to shoot him dead.
- 118/1 In his place came the director of the other prison in town. Our hopes were not filled, even though the food did improve for a while. But gradually things sank back to their former state, and in the winter of 1916-17 they got worse than ever before.
- 118/2 I was no longer able to leave my cell after the weather got cold. If I went to the prison yard, I fainted and had to be carried back. The doctor finally allowed me to stay in bed. The winter very harsh and lasted until the end of April. When the first warm days finally did arrive in May, I spent half an hour in the sun in the prison yard which did a world of good for me.

- 118/3 In the middle of the summer I was told to go back to work on the mattresses. I said I was too weak for that and was told to do as best I could-- it would be good for me. God, what a pitiful group I found, all of them skeletons, with a few candidates for death among them. And what hunger we had. I can still see the hollow, sunken eyes and how the men slowly, slowly pulled back and forth on the saw, ready to fall to the ground. No matter how strictly the guards forbade the eating of grass, hunger had the greater sway, and many did. Finally it was even allowed to take some back to the cells to mix in with the food. I tried it only once; it was but a drop in the bucket, and my aversion to it was too great. It was remarkable how empty the mattresses were. The missing sea grass had found its way into the food bowls.
- 119/1 What a picture it was, afternoons as we sat by the shed, unable to work anymore. Every few days a long, black painted box was carried by, being brought back from the 'anatomy.' There were 2 such boxes, both filled with sawdust. The corpses were laid in without any kind of shroud. The state couldn't afford that any longer, although it wouldn't have cost much since the bodies were so thin. Once the rumor went through the prison that someone had hanged himself, but no one believed it-- no one had that much energy. Besides, death came by itself, for some as a release. I can recall only one who worked in the prison yard, his body swollen from too much water, who tried to defend himself against the Grim Reaper. Our ears were constantly filled with his misery-- he had only a little more than a year before he got out, and how hard a death it would be to die in prison so close to his release. He asked a dozen times a day if we thought he would survive; of course we said he would. Then he would be still for a few minutes, and a faint gleam would come into his eye as he longingly looked over the wall to the green hill beyond. He would constantly go to the doctor to ask for extra food, or ask everyone for anything left over. Who had anything extra? A few inmates with digestive problems had a little which was brought to him. He ate it all with such greed, as if to say to death, "Just wait-- I'll elude you yet." But death was stronger. After battling through the night, death had the upper hand.
- (120)
- 120/1 There was old man who had already spent more than 40 years in prison who died too. We were saddened by that, hoping to celebrate his 50th anniversary. Whoever had lost resistance because of age or illness died.
- 120/2 I was able to stay on my feet until the beginning of October before I had to stay in bed. It occurred to me to write my will, and when I started, the doctor came and remarked at my good health. He wanted to have me sent to the hospital. I asked why, since I could starve just as well in my cell. I would get better care in the hospital, he said-- I don't need care; I need food. He couldn't help with that, but said I should just go to the hospital.
- 120/3 My news quarters were quite roomy compared to my cell. There were 3 beds, 2 of which were unoccupied. I lay in the other and froze, despite the weight of the wool blankets on me. The tile stove in the corner was now just ornamentation since there was no more coal to burn in it. My room door was left open most of the time, and the trustee came in often to talk. He had shot his wife after he discovered her in the act of adultery. Because he had spent a couple hours wandering the street like a crazed person between the time of his discovery and the time he shot her, the court thought he had had enough time to come to his senses and not kill her. Therefore he got 12 years in prison for his deed. Because he was a good craftsman, he had been able to work his way into the trustee position in the hospital. He needed nerves of steel and had seen a lot in the last summer, finally washing and laying the corpses in the caskets. Many things had fallen into his hands, including a manual and some notebooks about accounting. He had the great idea to teach himself accounting, and then when he got out, he could open a small business and keep the books himself. But it just didn't work with the math, and he came across too many
- (121)

unknown words. Studying was hard for him in any case, and now he was simply too old. He wondered if maybe I could help him. I really wasn't up to teaching, but I liked him and admired his ambition and energy, and so we started with the multiplication tables. It was very slow going and most difficult to teach him anything, but once he learned something, he never forgot it. His thanks were touching and had to be limited to words for the time being.

121/1 That changed in November when the potato and carrot soup appeared. Oh potato and carrot soup, you helper in direst need, never in my life was any food as welcome as you. You saved me from starvation. Your pretty yellow color, your nourishing smell, your filling consistency are all unforgettable for me. Only a poet could do justice to your attraction. Please pardon the prosaic description that I give. What did this potato and carrot soup consist of? Why, potatoes and carrots of course. Also a little water and fat. Later there was milk, too, when it became nectar and ambrosia in one.

122/1 In the morning the trustee (along with the guard) brought me a bowl of this food of the gods; when I had finished, he brought me another, this time without the guard. Sometimes he brought me a third, again without the guard. But then I was finished and lay there exhausted, feeling like a boa snake that had just swallowed a whale. Curious, I asked the trustee why there was now this abundance. He didn't know, but the kitchen always gave him a few liters too much. The guard? He knew, too, of course, that the trustee brought extra soup to me but had nothing against it. His own opinion was that the higher authorities had arranged it all. I put it out of my mind and let myself be fed. In a very short time I gained 20 pounds.

122/3 It was finally time to heat the buildings again, but of course they couldn't heat a room for just one person so I would have to be put in a larger room with a dozen others. I wasn't too keen on the idea because of the extra soup. The trustee assured me he'd find a way around it, and so I was brought into the other room. There were 7-8 beds along the walls and a large tile stove in the middle of the room along with

(123) a few tables and chairs. There were many windows with lots of light streaming in, but the only place where it was warm was in the immediate vicinity of the stove. Those who were able would stand around it or lean up against it with their backs. There was one upholstered chair, used on a first come, first served basis. It was very popular and the cause of many sharp exchanges of words. It couldn't be decided how long one could stay in it or could claim it. Did someone give up his right when he stood up, and could he give his right to another? There was an old drunkard there who had rheumatism and he would get up very early in the morning and crawl to the chair, make himself comfortable, and when the others were done with breakfast, he would auction off the right to sit in the chair to the highest bidder. It wasn't food or tobacco that was offered, but salt. The old man suffered terribly from doing without alcohol and had found a substitute in salt water, the saltier the better. His allotment was much too small, of course, and the only thing he had to 'pay' for the salt with was the idea of the right to sit in the chair. After a while the other prisoners didn't want to go along with this arrangement anymore.

(124) The old man was so upset with this that he crawled back to his bed and began to wail and moan so much that one of the prisoners went for the guard. When he heard the awful sounds, he thought the old man's time had come and gave him an injection of morphine. The other prisoners stood around and enjoyed the spectacle until it appeared that the old man's time was indeed up. No doubt the guard, who had no medical training, had given too strong a dose. But someone who had spent 50 years earning his schnapps by chopping wood wasn't so easy to do in. The old man survived the operation and swallowed many a liter of substitute alcohol, since from then on, he got as much salt as he wanted, free.

- 124/1 Next to the lover of salt was a large, strong man called Black Albert with a bad abdominal inflammation. The doctor couldn't understand why nothing helped, why his patient didn't get better. But this was the situation. Those who could stand had the task of gluing together sacks. The original paste was made of some sort of flour, and when the authorities found out that the prisoners ate this paste in huge quantities, they had petroleum mixed in with it to make unpalatable. This worked with all the prisoners except Black Albert, who continued to add the paste to his vegetables. He called his fellow inmates sissies for letting a little petroleum stop them from eating the paste. The other stared in disbelief when Albert ate his paste with an expression of enjoying a real treat; finally one of them couldn't take it any longer and reported what was going on. The doctor stormed in one morning and laid into his patient, "You shameless beast! Now I know why none of the medicine has helped you, you omnivorous thing, you paste-eater! Now I'm going to prescribe the strongest of mixtures, and you are to go swallow them, something that no 'street stomach' could tolerate. I'm just surprised that you haven't died already. If you weren't so sick, I'd have you put in 'the hole' for 14 days." Black Albert answered coldly, "In times of need, the devil eats flies." [German idiom indicating extreme need.] The doctor continued in a milder tone, "Yes, you'd eat flies, too, if you could get any. Are you training here to sometime join the circus as a glass and nail swallower? I'll see to it that this nonsense stops."
- (125)
- 125/1 December brought news of a cease fire on the eastern front with the hope of peace at hand. Our house tyrant who was no longer a colonel but once again privy councillor gave us a patriotic speech with such things as 'the war is half won; now we need to gather all our forces in the west to defeat the enemy there, too. The Fatherland needs every last man. It could be that the call will come here, too; you could redeem yourselves by a hero's death on the battle field, even though that would be an unearned honor.' But it was hoped that we would show ourselves worthy of it anyway. The speech caused no little excitement. Some welcomed the chance of a hero's death. After all, it would be better to be ripped apart by a grenade in the trenches than to starve in prison. Besides, it might be possible to survive the war. But most said bitterly they would rather starve than fight for the state that they hated with all their hearts. A little later a list was made with everyone's mental and physical qualifications for army service, including language abilities. And indeed a few prisoners were said to have been let out and put in the ranks of the army, some who handled themselves quite well, so that in a longer lasting war probably many more would have gotten out.
- (126)
- 126/1 In February they brought a very sick man into the room, one in his best years, a factory worker. He didn't have long to live, and they put up a screen around his bed. His wife made her last visit; she was struck with grief and had brought a jar of honey along as a last gift of love for him. His only concern was whether or not he would be allowed to eat it. The doctor agreed, but the director said 'no.' The last words of the dying man were to curse the hard-hearted ones.
- 126/2 The horrible death struggle of the man so upset me that I wanted to leave the hospital. My request was agreed to immediately. The director suggested that I learn book binding, which agreed with me for several reasons. My cell was soon filled with magazines, brochures and books that I was to prepare for the binder. No more complaints about a shortage of reading material. If it hadn't been for the hunger, I would have felt very satisfied.
- 126/3 On the last day of May the director appeared to see how I was doing in my new trade. He was rude and looking to scold as usual. In spite of the progress of his suffering his energy didn't wane. He was just as hard on himself as others and did his duty up to the last hour.

126/4 Early the next morning one of the guards came to my cell and happily reported, "Do  
you already know-- the old dog is dead! Last evening at 9 o'clock." "Who?" "Who  
(127) do you think? The slave driver-- now he's burning in deepest hell." The news  
shook me. I said we shouldn't speak badly of the dead. After all he had his good  
points, too. I found no agreement there. There was a flood of curses for the  
deceased one: everyone-- the whole prison, guards, officials, inmates-- all had to  
suffer under that tyrant. He left no one in peace; he was a bloodhound, a murderer  
of souls. If there was no hell, one would have to be created for this devil. What a  
vast amount of hate this man had sown! If the guards spoke about him like this,  
what must the prisoners have to say about him?  
127/1 What they had to say was heard that evening. After supper was finished and the  
prison was quiet, suddenly a cry of triumph broke out. A jubilation and cry of  
curses echoed through the building, indescribable. The commotion lasted for  
several minutes, without any opposition from the guards. That was the obituary  
that the prisoners gave for their jailmaster.

## Chapter 10 Revolution

- 127/1 As autumn wore on the clergyman came more and more often to my cell. His attitude toward me had changed and he was looking for a discussion about my trial. One afternoon we had that discussion, and at the end, he offered me his hand, expressing regret that he had earlier done me an injustice. He now believed my innocence.
- 127/2 Suddenly we heard of a newly formed government of the German Reich on a parliamentary basis and of the exchange of diplomats between this new government and Wilson-- there was no clue of its collapse. If we heard today that everyone able to bear arms would be sent to the front, tomorrow we heard that the German army was as good as beaten and peace was at hand and there was no point in fighting any longer. Some guards spoke their minds, and one of the older ones who was near retirement used the opportunity to vent his resentment and said, "Do you know who's fault the war is? The learned people. Do you know who lost the war? The learned people. And do you know who has to watch out now? The learned people." He gave me such a dirty look, as if to lay blame for all this on me. I laughed at him and said that without "the learned people" nothing could happen in the world-- not even a revolution. Yes, yes; he agreed there had to be a revolution but thought it should have to begin by making all "the learned people" shorter by one head's worth, except maybe those who had something to do with him-- they were needed.
- (128) Then came the 9th of November; rumors spread that power was now in the hands of the Reds-- the tables would be cleared now and too bad that the old privy councillor wasn't still alive. He'd have been the first to hang.
- 128/1 The prisoners awaited their release by their brothers on the outside. It didn't happen, but those military prisoners were released.
- 128/2 There was talk of an amnesty, and the prisoners and guards fraternized, and discipline went by the boards. The new director knew better than to try to enforce discipline and was soon aided by the flu.
- 128/3 I was also stricken by the disease, as was our doctor. When I reported my illness, he said he, too, was suffering but wasn't able to rest because he had to tend to his patients. Two days later he was dead. Few of the prisoners died from the flu, even though we had suffered through years of starvation. I, too, almost died; after the orderly left me on the evening of the third day I lost consciousness. Around midnight I came to again and could feel my heart getting weaker and weaker. It was a slow and altogether painless transition. Why struggle? Or why not? Had I survived all these years to die so close to my release? There was always reason to hang on to life. What I needed was a heart strengthener. I tried to sit up in bed to ring the call bell, and it took my last bit of strength to do it. It seemed like hours passed before the orderly came, but he did give me digitalis when I asked for it and trustingly left the rest of it with me. A strong dose helped me through the critical night.
- 129/1 But it was weeks before I could get out of bed. The director brought me encouraging news. My defender, a leader of the social democratic party, was busily engaged in trying to arrange my release. I had also been sent messages of sympathy, including packages of food which unfortunately could not be given to me-- house rules. He regretted it all the more since my condition was in great need of something extra. In any case he would do all he could to help out. Indeed I did receive sick rations and milk.
- 129/2 When the terms of the amnesty were known, there was great disappointment. Released were only those with one year of time or less remaining to be served. Everybody else got nothing. People thought that to be unfair.
- 129/3 Shortly before Christmas my lawyer paid me a visit. How much I owe this man! Innumerable times he visited me in prison, encouraged me, lightened my imprisonment by lending me books. An attempt for a retrial submitted a few years after my incarceration had been turned down, but still he didn't let my hopes fall; he discussed again and again the ways we could still reach our goal. Now he came filled with confidence that he would succeed in getting a pardon. Then afterwards it would be easier to clear my name. There was a new spirit in the German Reich. Many things had to change.
- (130) Even if I was skeptical concerning hopes for the future, I still liked to believe that my prospects had grown better. I counted on success in my striving for a pardon.
- 130/1 In January a relative visited me and brought along a package of things that had little chance of being delivered to me. My cousin paid his respects to the director, and due to his powers
- 130/2
- 130/3
- 130/4



- (131) of persuasion, he was able to get the things in to me. I was astounded at the contents: there couldn't have been so many good things left in poverty-stricken Germany. Real foodstuffs, not substitutes. Wonderful! And what wonderful things they did for my body: it simply blossomed.
- 131/1 Try as one might, it is impossible to keep contraband a secret, and soon the news leaked out. The director didn't feel it fair to deny the other prisoners something he had allowed one. Soon packages were coming into the prison like manna into the desert. I myself got so many that in the course of the summer I had regained my normal body weight. But then this blessing suddenly stopped. Someone had reported this breaking of regulations (which apparently not only disrupted the fulfilling of sentences but also placed the whole of the state's order in question) to the ministry, which in turn hurried to put a stop to it all. It was announced from the chancellory that in the future no more packages were to be delivered.
- 131/2 Meanwhile the provisional government informed my lawyer that a final decision had to wait for the final government to be formed in April once the new constitution was finalized. Then things began to happen, with the conference instructed to take a position in regards to my appeal. They were unanimously in favor of it, but the court and district attorney were not, as expected. The final decision lay with the ministry.
- 131/3 Without any request from me the clergyman asked to speak personally with the minister. He did and was attentively listened to. The clergyman explained how 5 years ago when he started, he was convinced of my guilt and made no attempt to find out otherwise. When he'd had a chance to get to know me better, he started to doubt my guilt, and finally was convinced of my innocence. Therefore he felt it his duty to do what he could to help me regain my freedom. Would the minister do his part, too? His reply was that as a young lawyer he was at my main trial and had the impression that although there were some problems with form-- the president of the court was very nervous and biased and the state's attorney was an ass-- he was not convinced that any material injustice had been done me. Besides now it was not a question of my guilt or innocence, since it was not a matter of a retrial, but rather one of a pardon. He would check into it and decide to the best of his ability.
- (132) The clergyman told me right away on the next day about his conversation while it was still fresh in his memory. It was of course of great interest to me what the minister had said about the jury and the state's attorney. The difference between formal and material injustice was too subtle for me. If in such a procedure, where there is no talk of conclusive proof, a formal injustice was committed against the defendant, then the probability is great that a material injustice will also be found.
- 132/1 During the summer there was much talk of reforms to come about because of the revolution. The new people's government was to right the wrongs of the system and the existence of the prisoners was to be made more humane. Ideas were worked out and individual points were discussed with trusted, informed people. I, too, had the honor of being asked about various things. More distinct differentiations were to be made in the future between first time offenders and habitual criminals. A system of privileges was to be worked out with inmates moving higher step by step until before the last step of release there was a gradual transition to freedom. There was no misunderstanding that there was an element of humanity in the plan. But it seemed to me that all these superficialities didn't really touch on the heart of the matter. I felt more radical measures were necessary. But I declined to be more specific or write out my thoughts. As long as I was still in prison I wanted to keep my criticisms to myself lest they appear improper and the necessary distance not be kept.
- 132/2
- (133) There ended up being much ado about nothing. [Literally "After the mountains were in labor all summer, they bore a mouse."] The first reform was ceremoniously announced in church: blinders would no longer be worn. It would be left up to the individual to decide whether or not to wear the face mask. Only a few decided to keep wearing one, but these few soon had to bow to peer pressure or give in to the persuasion of the officials so that it could be reported that 'the face masks have been done away with to the great satisfaction of all the prisoners who have greeted this new regulation as a sign of a new time and a new spirit.'
- 133/1

- 133/2 But it wasn't so easy to satisfy the prisoners. We had expected more, above all an improvement in the food situation. As long as there was a war, we viewed it as something unavoidable. But that was supposed to be different now; an air of revolution was spreading.
- (134) There were reports of the storming and plundering of a large prison in a neighboring city, and people maintained that something similar was in the offing for us, too. The movement needed recruits, and where better to find them than here. Inflammatory writings were circulated with the help of sympathetic guards, and even a few precautionary measures were taken such as the setting up of machine guns, but it was an open secret that little would be done against any attack. Those who returned from the war had no desire to shoot at fellow citizens. Among those who talked to me was one worth noting. He was a very nasty fellow, brutal, mean, unbelievably cheeky. Up until the revolution he was an extreme social democrat, something that had almost cost him his guard uniform more than once because the privy councillor didn't have much time for such nonsense. And now that his party had won power, he went about like a bloated bull frog, sassier than ever. And as radical, if not anarchistic, as he was before, he now went about as though a member of the government itself. Just let them come, those Spartans-- he'd tell them where to get off. With just one machine gun he'd send them running in every direction. I gave him ample opportunity to expound his politics so I could study him in greater detail, like one studies a poisonous reptile. He once told me he'd been to the ministry to ask for a bureaucratic position. According to him, several of the ministers were most anxious to do him a favor.
- (135) When one of them asked him why, he replied that he'd injured his arm while serving at the front, and since it hadn't healed right, he couldn't use it properly to defend himself like he might need to now and then when working with prisoners. Whereupon the minister smiled in sympathy and assured that as soon as they could get along without such an able person as he, they would transfer him to a less strenuous post.
- 135/1 But nothing ever came of the transfer. He was dismissed from his job after a few years, unpopular with co-workers and superiors and hated and despised by the prisoners.
- 135/2 When the cold weather set in again, there was another shortage of coal, and not all the cells could be heated. It was decided to put all the prisoners in rooms or halls during the day. That was not without danger considering the mutinous mood among the prisoners; it was not, however, difficult to control. I was given the choice of staying with the other prisoners or going back to the hospital-- I went to the hospital.
- 135/3 I shared a room with a young business man who was recovering from a lung ailment and who had a prisoner with a life sentence as an aide. The young man came from a good family and made a good impression, but was one of the moral wrecks of the war. After spending time in Russia, Serbia, and France, up to all kinds of no good, he finally ended up in prison after having been betrayed to the police. He came down with pneumonia in prison, had barely survived, and was now recovering. Morally, too. The severe illness had made him more serious and awakened good intentions. The director, doctor, and priest all promised to help him be sent home after his recovery. He had a bride who was a strong support for him.
- (136) We three got along well. Evenings we sat around the tile stove-- there were no lights-- and the young man told war stories. The things the 20-year-old had been through. Before I had known war only from books, but now I saw its real face. How could the judges judge this person who'd become depraved in the war according to the letter of the law which was meant for normal times? The state had torn him away from his family and tossed him into the whirlpool of a long, brutal war for which his character had not yet developed. And then the state had thrown him into jail, the most certain guarantee of all that he would not have any decency or honor left after his 10 years were served. Was that justice?
- 136/2 Meanwhile my appeal had gone to all the authorities and a decision was due. As far as I could tell, the members of the state ministry were divided in their opinions and everything depended on the point of view of the justice minister. One evening the priest came to us in a hurry and said *the* important man was coming to visit at any time now. We hurriedly dressed again and waited for hours in the darkness until steps and voices were finally heard in the hallway. The guard opened the door and set a lantern on the table, and three strangers plus the director and the priest came in. One of the strangers went to the patient with the lung ailment and spoke affably with him while the second remained outside the circle of light and scrutinized the room and its occupants. The third-- oh, wonder, isn't that
- (137) my old friend from the preliminary trial jail, now the important one in the ministry? Yes,

- indeed. He came up to me and bowed slightly and said, "Good evening. How are you?" I was filled with bitterness upon seeing this man, the only one for whom I felt any hatred after all these years. With difficulty I, too, managed a slight bow and said, "Fine, thanks." He must have seen in my eyes that there was no congenial conversation to be had with me, and with a few questions turned to the director, who hurried to answer them. Thus I stood at the foot of my bed, calm on the outside, but boiling on the inside. The second man said not one word. After a few minutes they all left, talking softly for a few minutes in the hallway.
- 137/1 They took the light along and left us in the dark-- about who the minister was, too. But I had noticed when they left that the smaller one was given precedence by a gesture due only a minister, and for me the question seemed to be solved. The young businessman was delighted with affable manner in which he had been spoken to and regretted that it had not been with the "big one." This man certainly would have approved his release. I comforted the young man, saying that if he hadn't been the "big one," he certainly was an important person, probably also in the ministry council and probably the one who had the say in matters of mercy cases.
- 137/2  
(138) As I later found out the minister had asked the director out in the hallway if I were a bit of a psychopath, having noticed my big eyes in my pale face. Both the director and the priest emphatically answered "no, he's sound both in body and mind;" then the minister said, "Well, then he can no doubt endure a few more short years."
- 138/1 A few short years-- ~~what~~ was that supposed to mean? In my case this had been decided in the ministry. There was a new regulation in place to be used in deciding about the release of those serving life sentences. The pardon should be granted no later than 25 years, but only after 20 years, and the 5 war years counting as 7.5 years due to the unusual suffering and deprivations that had come with them. The prerequisite was of course that the prisoner had behaved himself well and that there was some assurance that he would do all right once released. Since these prerequisites were fulfilled in my case, my release had been set for April 15, 1925, in about 5.5 years.
- 138/2 I did not hide my disappointment when the director informed me of the ministry's decision. To call 5.5 years "a few short years" sounded like sarcasm. They in the ministry no doubt reckoned with the "dry guillotine" doing its work anyway in that amount of time. The director tried to see the good side of the matter and was very sorry that his efforts had not resulted in my immediate release. But in any case something had been accomplished-- at least my release was set for April 15, 1925; it couldn't last any longer than that, and maybe the remaining time could be even shortened a little more.
- 138/3 He was right after all; something had been accomplished. The sentence before without an end now had one, and anything with an end is short.
- 138/4  
(139) So I went to church services on Christmas Day in a less gloomy mood than ever before. Oh, these Christmas days in prison. No words can give any notion of what that means. To the right and left of the altar stood Christmas trees with lighted candles. It really is Christmas, even in prison. But it is not Christmas in the hearts of the unhappy ones who look with burning eyes out of their wooden boxes at the brilliance of the candles.
- 139/1 I covered my face with my hands and thought about how many more of these Christmas days I had left: 6 of them. And how many already past? --13. What an enormous sum of sorrow! Why does one hold fast to life? The first tones of the organ, more powerful and festive than usual, broke in on these thoughts. The prelude is over, a short pause, and then-- what comes now is not the usual rough singing of the men but soft, well-trained women's voices singing a Kyrie, so bright and pure, so joyful and confident-- never before had this room heard such sounds. This is also a result of the revolution, a more impressive one than the doing away of the face masks. Tears came to my eyes for the first time since I had been in prison.

## Chapter 11 The "Street Caretaker"

- 139/1 There was one position in the prison which had 3 advantages, and each were of importance to me. No one had it as good as the street caretaker; you heard that over and over again. First he was able to stay outside all day long; second he was not guarded and had free run inside the walls; and third he had admission to the kitchen and didn't go hungry. You can imagine how envied that post was. It had never been given to one serving a life sentence, and since I was no longer doing that but had only 5 years, I wanted to devote myself completely to the study of the penal system. I applied for the post and got it.
- 140/1 One fine May morning the guard opened my cell door which was now to remain unlocked during the day and gave me free run. For the first time in 14 years my every step was not watched-- a rather unusual feeling. I went into the prison yard and made a tour around the inside perimeter. There were flowers in bloom in the garden which I stopped to smell and birds in the trees celebrating their 'honeymoon.' The sky was so blue and the sun so bright. I still couldn't enjoy everything without some inhibition, but a great part of the burden fell from my heart and there awoke ideas and hopes which had long slept. Suffering is good because it makes one susceptible/receptive. How very differently now my eyes drank in the golden abundance of the world! Didn't the beauty of this hour wipe away the ugliness of many years? Petrarch said, "mille piacer non vaglion un tormento" (a thousand joys have not the worth of a single pain). That is not right; one single great joy compensates for a thousand pains.
- 140/2 I was the junior street caretaker, and the first street caretaker showed me the duties of my new job. They consisted mainly in keeping the paths in repair, removing the grass growing between the cobblestones, sweeping clean certain places every day, and other similar jobs. The most important tools, symbols of the job, were a broom, shovel, and wheelbarrow. My colleague, a genuine Cologne chap, got me started on a job on one of the paths and left with the remark that he'd be right back-- he had to talk to the woodman about something. I got to work, but after just a short time my arm and back muscles hurt and the sweat sprang from every pore, and I had to take refuge from the strong rays of the sun. My body had grown soft and couldn't take much; it took weeks and months before I could get used to my changed life style. So I went to look for the woodman who was in a small shed at the end of the second wing of the building where wood needed for the carpentry shop was kept. There was a conversation going on in the shed, and when I opened the door, I saw my colleague and the woodman sitting on a pile of lumber. Introductions, curious sizing up, and mistrust. The conversation was not resumed. Footsteps were heard outside, and in a flash my colleague had put in his and my hands brooms that were standing at the ready. We both disappeared out a back door before a guard from the carpentry shop came in the front looking for some wood needed in the shop. I was told we had to avoid being caught like that with the woodman. The shed was a very nice, cool place to be, but we had no business there. Luckily it was not easy to be surprized, but caution was required in being there and in going in so that the guard on the wall wouldn't see anything. This guard on the wall who made his rounds every quarter hour-- every half or full our in the heat of midday-- was our worst enemy; we had to keep a constant eye on him. This wasn't necessary for some guards whom he'd
- (141)

- point out to me later because due to certain reasons they wouldn't report anything. Due to certain reasons? We exchanged a knowing grin. So I wasn't as green as he had thought? No, not so green; that was soon determined, and my colleague was soon more trusting. He hadn't liked my being named junior street caretaker but had feared it because I would disturb his routine and cause all sorts of unpleasantness. Most of all he was afraid that I wouldn't keep quiet. I gave reassurances, even references, one of whom was a guard who was a friend of my new colleague. Our relationship was soon a most pleasant one. On the same afternoon we smoked the peace pipe at the woodman's; that is they did, since I was excused as a nonsmoker. Later my colleague went with a guard into town to get meat and vinegar, and I had to share the extra piece of sausage that the butcher always gave them, but didn't have to share the schnapps from the vinegar dealer, since it couldn't be so easily divided in two.
- 142/1 Toward evening when we were done with the yard work, we went to the kitchen where I was greeted with a lot of curiosity by those working there. "Ah, that's him!" one said. Even the chef came to see me after which we went downstairs to the lower regions.
- 142/2 Inmates sat on benches peeling potatoes. Everywhere were baskets, sacks, benches, a long, dirty table in the corner, in another the potato machine; the floor was wet, and it smelled like everything imaginable. Next to the room was a hallway in which the prison cats lived (one of them ready to give birth) and two storages areas, one for bread and another one. After we had helped with the potatoes for a while, the cook brought down a kettle with food, and not ordinary food. It was the leftovers from the guard and hospital food. Then began the feeding of the animals-- and that's just how it looked: the handing out of food with growling and snarling. To see this greasy, smacking, complaining lot made the food stick in my throat.
- 143/1 If one saw a prison as a boil on the body of society, then the kitchen was the place where the foulness came most into view. Those who worked there gave way to themselves. Even though there were two guards, one for upstairs and one for downstairs, at certain times of the day, especially after the noon meal, only one was on duty, and he often preferred to take a nap after eating over guarding the vegetable cleaning process in the foul smelling hole downstairs. Those were the hours in which the leading "thinkers" among the prisoners got together to vent their opinions, etc. Most of the trustees also helped in the kitchen, and that's where trustee "newspaper" was put together, where the newest rumors were started, and where every event in the whole prison was mentioned. It was amazing how all these things became known despite official secrecy and isolation. Tales of rule-breaking were told and new ones planned. They sang, shaved each other, played, argued, beat on each other, lied, and cursed. If anyone would want to get to know the prison system how it really is and not how it's portrayed in books, this was the place to do one's studies.
- 143/2 Dear reader, please take a seat on the chair in the corner where the guard is supposed to be; he's up snoring in his private little room. Let me introduce everyone: The one with the red hair who is hacking turnips to pieces is the leader of the pack. That's what he's called by the guards and the prisoners. He is responsible that the potatoes and vegetables are ready at the right time, but his title, like many others, is without meaning because he has of course no authority over his fellow workers. The

- (144) constitution down here is a purely democratic one: he orders, and the others do what they want to. Somehow everything gets done on time, and even if it doesn't, it's not so bad. First the head of the kitchen comes down to rant and rave, and then the head guard-- excuse me, since the elevation of rank following the revolution now the inspector -- of the household comes down and rants and raves even more, and finally some poor scapegoat is "taken off to the temple. The leader or capo has to be on the good side of his superiors but also of his own; otherwise they will make short work of him, either deposing him or seeing to it that he is punished somehow. He has to play the spy a little for his superiors, but not too much or else he will gain the revenge of his own men. All of them are into something-- this one steals bread, that one fat; this one steals herring, that one sugar while another smuggles tobacco. There is never any lack of material for betrayal. It takes a capo with some organizational talent to build up a group that stays together, firm and true in the face of the common enemy. But as soon as the kitchen master sees that, he has the capo put back in his cell as soon as he can and sees to it that someone already proven in denunciation replaces him. But if a capo has served his kitchen master well for a time, he is promoted to upstairs duty which is more lucrative.
- 144/1 The red-haired capo whom I just introduced is one of merit and distinction. He has a way of acting like he is a little mentally disturbed so that the other prisoners find him harmless. He never commands, but uses jokes and nonsense to direct the others or pretends to let them "discuss" how to go about their duties, all the while directing the outcome to his liking and avoiding the much disliked use of commands. So his fellow inmates tolerate him well, but his superior is also satisfied with him.
- (145) Every once in a while he will report some petty theft to the kitchen master, a few stolen herring, for example, who will confiscate them but not bother to report the matter due to its harmless nature. The capo will then tell the person who stole the herring in the first place that some scoundrel has eaten his herring-- nothing to be done for it. However, when it comes to the big operations that are carried out with the help of a skeleton key in the storage rooms, not a peep is to be heard from him as he valiantly takes part.
- 145/1 The dark one on the first bench is Hans, a Swabian. He leaves in a few weeks. He's a worker in a shoe factory and a communist. His brother is a big shot in the party, and he feels called upon to rail against the "capitalists" whenever the discussion turns to that topic. At the beginning he was prone to direct such talk at me personally, but I was able to change his mind by listening to his speeches with great approval and with the fact that all my capital wouldn't even buy a pair of shoes, to say nothing of a shoe factory.
- 145/2 Next to Hans is his friend, a big man. He seldom opens his mouth to say anything but can do unbelievable things if he opens it to put in a spoon.
- (146) His undivided attention is directed to satisfying his endless hunger. He had himself transferred to the kitchen because that's where he can best do that, although he can't stand the foul air. The others have respect for him and leave him alone ever since he threw two of the trouble makers into a huge vat filled with dirty water.
- 146/1 One of the men, Schorsch, is an illustration of Lombroso's theory of the born criminal-- father a drinker, mother a whore. He was 10 the first time he appeared in court for stealing. He was then sent to a reform institution where he starved, stole, was beaten, escaped, caught, returned,

- beaten again, until he was ready for his real career as a burglar. He was a strange man with an unusual, dry, matter of fact way of telling about the most horrible events, as if he were speaking as a disinterested third party. He hated people and whenever he had the chance to do damage, he did it. But he bought his mother a nice head stone with stolen money. He was married to a much younger and very pretty woman, as he said, and whom he loved very much. That's why he's in prison now for procuring. He had brought a good friend home, and the three of them sat down and at the friend's expense got so drunk that he ended up under the table. Whereupon his friend and wife went to bed. That's how he told the story; he was unjustly convicted. Now he's found out that the friend has set himself up in his place in his house with his wife and lives from the money she earns-- by means of her charms. And Schorsch wants revenge, not because of his friend, but because of his wife who's forgetful of her vows. With the worst of curses he's threatened time and again to strangle her. The others try to talk him out of his Othello-like desires. One of the others, Scheele, declared it to be the height of nonsense to kill a chick who lays such nice golden eggs because of a trifle that could be taken care of with a little whipping.
- 147/1 Scheele was a pimp by profession and therefore an authority in this question. One could search a long time for an uglier person. A shudder ran through me whenever he fixed his one eye on me and the other was looking off into the corner. Nothing but filth came out of his horrible frog-like mouth.
- 147/2 The complete opposite in human nature sat across from these two, a pale boy whose eyes were cast down on the knife he was using to peel one potato after the other. He was barely 20 years old and in prison for repeated counts of theft. Soon after he came to prison he had to be removed from his cell because of suicide attempts. Some evil genius had sent him to the lower kitchen. One of the inmates from the upper kitchen, already punished 3 times for crimes of morality, had made a disastrous friendship with him and was physically and morally ruining him.
- 147/3 In the noon break the men arrange themselves on the benches and talk about crimes. The air is close; the black cat sits on the table and purrs. The trustee from the tailor shop comes by and tells the latest. "Old Michael, who's had so much guard duty in the kitchen, came in and wanted his bag lined with a piece of rubber-- 'Why, for heavens sake?' 'Well, there are too many grease stains on it now, and when I want to take a piece of meat or fat home from the kitchen, well, you know...' " Howls of laughter greeted his story. So it was agreed that the next time he had duty in the kitchen, a conversation would be started about all the different materials that could be used to line bags with. That way he'll know for sure that they knew and will act accordingly.
- (148)
- 148/1 Another trustee came and told of a beating that happened that morning. There was a lifer who was not liked by the prison personnel for a long time now due to his sassy, cocky nature. The privy councillor, if he were still alive, would have put a quick end to the matter. But the new director is not one to use physical means, but rather starts an investigation. One must be careful. But sooner or later he would get what he has coming. It seems that this lifer hated the prison doctor with a passion, and when he made his rounds that day with his guard assistant, he told him in no uncertain terms to go to hell. The doctor was not about to put up with that and was going to set the prisoner straight, but had the cell door slammed

- shut in his face. If the old doctor had still been there, he would have gone on about his rounds, reported the matter, and the lifer would have been punished. But the new doctor was young and new to prison ways.
- (149) Not wanting to let the prisoner get away with that, the doctor ordered his assistant to exact revenge for this treatment. The man went bravely into the lion's den but beat a hasty retreat when a bowl came flying at his head. He called for help, and reinforcements came with rubber cudgels and many dogs. The lifer was brought more dead than alive to a special cell where he got another beating as a farewell and was left lying there. At first his bellows of anger, then of pain filled the entire prison.
- 149/1 Such occurrences upset most of the prisoners to an unbelievable degree. They felt as if they had been beaten, too, even those who were not of a "gentle" nature and had been in many a fight on the outside. Schorch blanched with rage, and grinding his teeth, swore that the first guard to do something like that to him might just as well make out his will. The first chance he got after his release, he would beat that guard to death. The others agreed, with the exception of the capo who said the lifer got what he deserved.
- 149/2 Among the trustees is one who stands out, red-faced and who takes his place on the bench like one who is convinced of his own importance. He's called "clothes pin" by the others and is a very important man for the supply master. He's in charge of handing out clothing and laundry, and issues clothes to those arriving and leaving. Most weeks he spends more time outside the prison than inside, going along with guards and officials, not eating prison food because of the many better offers he gets, reads the newest newspapers, smokes genuine cigarettes, not the home rolled ones made in the prison with wrapping paper and bad tobacco, but real ones that cost money. In short, he is a big man whose position is unassailable. Didn't he just a short while ago weather a storm that had uprooted so many others? A storm that did in even a veteran guard of 30 years service? The old guard had made embezzlements with the help of his trustee until a dispute caused the affair to be reported. The guard was fired, investigations held which trapped others, and even the clothes pin was in some danger. But powerful friends protected him, and when the storm blew over, there he was, stronger than ever. The others were much more respectful of him now, like little dogs around a huge, powerful one. No one was so quick to contradict him either when the discussions turned to political or other topics, no matter how stupid his views were. But this great man did have one weakness, as do all great people. Goethe wrote that great people were always bound to their century by some weakness. But it was a positive weakness that bound those people. It was a difficult to understand the pride that held him-- of what kind? Was it his outstanding spiritual qualities which held him above others? Was it the way he cared for the clothes he was responsible for? No, it was about the extraordinary strength he had in his civilian job as furniture mover. He could carry a chest on his back down flights
- (151) of stairs, a chest that two of his co-workers couldn't manage. And the way he impressed the women who saw him. When he moved such a chest for Herr President, and Frau President saw him, she was so impressed that she had a bottle of wine served to him and would even talk with him. And woe unto any of his listeners who dared to express a doubt about how heavy the chest might have been.
- 151/1 The strong man is in an especially good mood today and has news about an long-awaited amnesty. There was immediate lively discussion about



whether one could believe it this time or not. One trustee was sure; he'd heard something from an official he cared not to mention. Forty percent reduction of the term-- not bad. What about the lifers? Pardoned with fifteen years. All eyes looked to me, and Hans said, "Did you hear, Herr Dr? You get out now, too. I'm glad. You know what? You should come to Stuttgart with me and meet my brother. The party can use people like you." "My dear Hans, that would be very nice, but I don't believe there will be an amnesty." The clothes pin looked insulted and said he'd read it in the newspaper-- it was being discussed in the Reichstag. I shook my head, and he took me out into the hallway and showed me a newspaper which mentioned something about an amnesty for political prisoners. They all looked expectantly at me when we returned-- so, nothing this time, too?

- 151/2 "Yeah, well, that's what I thought," Schorsch said. "They'll let us sit and starve; the Reds aren't good for anything either. Before the revolution they promised us the sky, but now where they're in office, they won't lift a finger for us. It'll never change."
- 152/1-2 "Oho, who says it won't change?" asked Hans. "Once *we're* at the helm, it will be different. We'll open up all the prisons." "In a pig's eye. Where will you put all the rascals? You can't just let them run around free," said the clothespin.
- 152/3 Hans thought for a minute and then explained that they will find a way. But this much is certain-- all the prisoners will be freed who were jailed by the old government because they were all sentenced unfairly. As soon as the new order is in place-- not on the old basis of brute force and social injustice, but on brotherly love and equal rights for all-- a new spirit will come over people and district attorneys and judges and prisons can be done away with. Nobody will have to steal anymore.
- 152/4 No one shared in this optimism; it could be read in all their faces. Schorsch spoke for them all when he said that stealing is a personal matter. One doesn't steal necessarily because one has to. And what about other crimes, morality crimes for example, or murder? No, it would never work without prisons, but more humane conditions could be had in them. People should demand it; that much could be expected from the new government. But they've done nothing. Or was getting rid of the blinders supposed to be something?
- 152/5 One countered that some things are better. At least now there is some hope for shortened sentences. That was never the case before. There was a prisoner on one of the floors who was in for 12 years for stealing during the war-- much too much; you know how it is in wartime, after all. But his sentence has been reduced by half on account of the efforts of the Catholic priest who even went to the minister and influential representatives. That never would have happened earlier. Six years cut off!
- 153/1-4 "Phooey! Six years cut off? Do you really think he won't serve them? If not this time, then next time." "Well, of course, if he takes the blame for something..." "You idiot! If he takes the blame for something! What's he supposed to do, live off his retirement?" "Well, he can work. The priest did find him a job."
- 153/5 "Don't talk nonsense. Nobody lasts long in such a job. No one who's a prisoner wants to be watched over his shoulder or exploited for work at half the usual wages. And if he takes off, they get him and put him back in jail-- I'd rather steal again. They wanted to cut off a few months of my term, too, but I'll do without it. I'll serve my time. If they really want to

give me a few months off without any conditions, I'll take it. But the state doesn't give anything-- what it gives with the one hand, it takes back with the other. And which petitions do the director and priest approve anyway? Those of the biggest scoundrels and hypocrites. Then they go on to the state and the courts, and they decide based on how they happen to feel at the time. There's a district attorney in Freiberg who agrees to all petitions and one in Pforzheim who never does. One orders one year of probation and another ten years. No, stay away from me with all that-- there's no justice in it."

## Chapter 11 The "Street Caretaker" Part II

- 154/1 Meanwhile, one of the workers from the kitchen upstairs had come down and heard Schorsch's talk. He's an Alsatian and according to the peace treaty agreements should have been released long ago. But every step taken has been thwarted by the authorities, and he has become very embittered. "Justice!" he says with scorn. "I'd like to know where that is to be found in Germany. They're completely arbitrary, these bureaucrats, just like before the war." "Is it better in France?" someone asks. "That's what I mean to say. I'd rather serve 2 years there than 1 year here." But the capo maintained that everyone in the world knows how orderly the Germans are. "Some order. From the outside it looks great, but on the inside everything's topsy-turvy. Like here. Everything appears to function like a well oiled machine, but those of us in the know realize how very rotten something in the state of Denmark is. Today for example, the affair with the food for the board of trustees. They came to check on the quality of the food, but naturally it was known that today was the day, and that the food would be extra good. The tables were set like in a restaurant, and the gentlemen were astounded at the wonderful preparation of the meal. It's surprising they don't question how good it is. If anyone on the outside knew, there'd be a revolution. I'd have like to
- (155) rubbed their noses in the sauerkraut and turnip dishes we had yesterday and the day before. And then afterwards they make their nice report to the ministry: everything in the best of order. The tables nicely set, and the street caretaker even provided a bouquet of violets." Everyone laughed. The Alsatian looked at me and asked, "Why violets? Was that meant ironically? We also bloom here in seclusion." "Not at all," I said. "I don't have such ulterior motives. Just following the orders I got. There's nothing else but violets. Did they satisfy the officials?" "Don't worry. The most distinguished one of them took a bouquet and raised it to his nose and delighted in its fragrance. If he'd known who brought them in, he would have taken them along as a souvenir."
- 155/1 "You're rather cheeky," the clothespin said to the Alsatian. "What was that story you had the other day about the inspector?"
- 155/2 "He can go fly a kite. The head chef takes some of the meat for the prisoners and uses it to improve the food of the personnel. Of course with the knowledge and approval of the inspector. But naturally the higher-ups must not know anything about it. Just then when the cook is finishing the meat, the administrator comes by and asks what kind of meat that is. The scaredy-cat won't say anything. Result 1: the inspector and head cook have a schnapps, and one not too small, either; result 2: some fine soul let the inspector know who let the cat out of the bag, and he wants to blame me. I answered that if he or the head cook wanted to
- (156) put me under pressure or have me thrown back in my cell, I could reveal some very interesting things. He quickly pulled his claws in again, and the two of them couldn't have been nicer to me. And I know that every word I say down here will get to their ears, too. What do I care. I feel sorry for the one who is their spy. When I find out who it is, I'll beat him blind.
- 156/1-2 Everyone there was quick to agree with him so as to avoid any suspicion that he might be the one. As soon as the Alsatian left, everyone let him have it. No one would dare talk that way to his face but compensate for it by wallowing in such insulting words behind his back. Meanwhile the

- siesta time is over, and the little group disbands with everyone going about his business.
- 156/3 Now it's time for the street caretaker to sweep the area to the right and left of the entrance on the inside of the prison wall. To the right is a window of the room where visitors wait until they are taken in for visitation. For each male visitor, there are at least 3 female visitors, wives and mothers of the prisoners. Before they go in they appear uneasy and anxious; when they come out, they are crying. A lot of suffering. Now and then there is a "sinner" who is all dolled up and struts up the steps throwing flirtatious looks at the prisoners. The window of the visiting room is on the left. One afternoon I saw a very pretty young woman who
- (157) was dressed very modernly go in, her defiant black eyes looking around her. The guard watched her go in, and so did I. As I swept the left side I suddenly heard voices grow louder, the sliding of a chair and a noise that could only be a slap in the face-- and then another. Immediately afterwards the young woman came out with both cheeks red and eyes filled with tears. The guard who had accompanied her during the visitation tried to console her, but had no success. She angrily stomped her well-shod foot and declared that she would never visit him again. A few days later I saw the man and reproached him for treating his wife so badly. He was still infuriated about the "person." He said she had a job in Ludwigshafen in a French office and that her fine clothes had been paid for by one of the officers who had taken his wife on a trip to Paris. He'd heard all that from a good friend. And now the "person" was so brazen as to wear the proof of her unfaithfulness before his very eyes and on top of it to lie and say that they had been paid for with money earned honestly. If it only hadn't been a French officer, he might have overlooked the matter; after all, he's not petty and knows the world and women, but this was too much for him. "Are you such a great patriot that you cannot allow the Frenchman to appreciate your pretty wife?" "Patriot! What do I care about that? It's just that these guys are syphilitic to their bones. I get out in half a year and I told her that if she has caught something, I would break every bone in her body and send her to hell, no matter how much I like her. She's not a bad woman; she just has this damned passion for fine clothes, which of course I can no longer buy for her since I'm sitting in jail. All the dangerous things I've risked to be able to please
- (158) her. I myself don't have so many personal needs and didn't need to steal. Everything for her. That's why she shouldn't do something like that to me."
- 158/1 Another time I witnessed a tender good-bye as I was going by the door of the visitation room. A woman in an expensive fur was saying her farewell to a prisoner: "Be patient, dear; better days will come," he said to her. "I'll wait for you even if it takes 20 years," was her reply, given with the mien of a Penelope. When she walked by, I was enveloped in a cloud of perfume. She had come from Berlin to visit her "groom." She also smuggled in a rather large sum of money to him which he used during his term to make things better for himself after he'd found a guard who'd bring him things in exchange for payment. There were no such visits by "brides" before the revolution, but now the new democratic spirit wasn't so puritanical.
- 158/2 The visitation guard was especially popular because he wasn't a stickler for regulation and was friendly to the visitors. It was especially difficult for him to be strict with the "fair sex" and he would often look out the window if the couple embraced. The barrier separating the prisoner

- from his visitor was long since removed; the people now sat across from each other at a table or even beside each other.
- 158/3 The visitation guard was the one in charge of the clothes pin, and there was a relationship between the two that seemed to me not to be in the best order. I had developed a fine feeling for such things and didn't need much time to establish, for example, that there was something going on between a given guard and his trustee. Later I was once assigned a good-for-nothing as a street caretaker helper who was a close friend of the
- (159) clothes pin and who often was in on deals with him. He could not keep his mouth shut and bragged to me about the cleverness they used to conduct their business. They carried on their business for years, and the trustee was let out early for good behavior after having served most of his sentence. But his followers didn't last long, and one got the impression that this guard had changed his ways. His Nemesis struck late, but hard.
- 159/1 Two upper officials were arrested because a released prisoner had told of their activities-- embezzlement, as usual. There was once again a big investigation in the prison, once again a great panic for those involved in wrongdoing. Would they be found out this time?
- 159/2 I was meanwhile helping out in supply, and just at the time of the investigation. One day the guard and I were alone in the supply room. He was sitting at a table, completely devastated that he'd have to be questioned the next day. I tried to encourage him, but he only groaned from time to time and looked at me like some kind of strange animal. He said nothing, went about his business very mechanically, did his final night duty, went home and put a bullet through his head.
- 159/3 "We don't know why he took his life," the clergyman said at the grave side. It could be that he didn't know, but those others who standing there with many thoughts going through their heads knew.
- 159/4 And the investigation? It produced nothing incriminating against the one who'd committed suicide. Strange. One had to assume that he reached for his pistol in a fit of mental derangement. The two officials were sentenced to a few months in prison. That was it. Much ado about nothing.

## Chapter 12 Two Executions

- 160/1 In May of 1922 as I was doing my street duty across from one of the walking cages, I noticed a prisoner in chains who was accompanied by 2 guards as he was led to the cages for his exercise time. One of the guards kept constant watch on him even after he was closed in the cage, and that was unusual because even when there were dangerous prisoners among us, they were never watched while in the walking cages. This prisoner was large, thin, and in his mid-twenties and wore his hair uncut. He walked with measured step and closely observed his surroundings-- a newcomer. I thought about asking the guard for some information about the new prisoner, but when I saw his expression and saw that he, too, was being watched from a window, I realized that information would have to be gotten from another source. This is what the information was.
- 160/2 The man is a convicted double murderer sentenced to death. He is said to have attacked and robbed two university graduates from a neighboring university city. But in spite of the discovery of the murder weapon and property stolen from the two victims, he still claimed he was innocent. He is a communist, and because the state feared that his party members would free him from the local jail, they had him transferred to the prison. It was common belief that he would be executed, but no one thought it would take place at the prison-- it was common practice to hold the execution in the same city where the crime was committed.
- (161) 161/1 The prisoner sentenced to death has become the most important figure in the prison, and little by little the details are learned. He is confident that he won't be beheaded because of the circumstantial evidence. He still claims he is innocent and blames his conviction on the betrayal of a young woman who was his girlfriend; he behaves himself and knows how to win the sympathy of the guards and officials. He is a free thinker and is not moved by the words of the clergyman. His relatives are just as convinced of his innocence as his party is; he is seen by them to be a victim of class justice. An attempt to free him appears to be a possibility, and many of the prisoners hope that in such a case, the whole prison will be emptied.
- 161/2 May and June passed with great tension, and the Reich's court rejected his appeal. Even though that was to be expected, it still caused an increase in the tension, and everybody in the prison debated whether or not he would be executed. Almost all the guards and prisoners are convinced that a person cannot be executed because of circumstantial evidence. It was the opinion of the people not to send anyone to their death if they might be later proved innocent-- better to let a guilty one slip through

than to execute an innocent one. A "justice murder" is a grisly thing.

162/1

One day in late July I met a strange procession leading from the holding cell. It was led by one of the inspectors; then came the young man in chains, followed by 2 guards. I saw in a flash what was going on. I had seen the pale, young man several times in the prison yard, and when he went past me, he cast a silent look at me as a kind of mute farewell. I was so shaken by this that I hurried back to my cell and spent several hours before I could regain my composure.

162/2

They set up the "blood scaffold" behind the wood shed, a place that couldn't be seen from any of the windows. None of the prisoners were allowed out of their cells. The condemned prisoner spent his last day in the holding cell, constantly watched by a guard in the cell and another one in the hallway. Many of the officials visited, and his clergyman talked with him late into the night, not about religious things, but about his experiences on the battle field. For his last meal he requested a meat dish which was brought from town as well as wine and cigars.

162/3

I lay awake for a long time that evening and fell asleep only around midnight. I was awakened by the clock bell and jumped out of bed and listened. I could hear nothing but ~~the~~ sound of the clock bells which went on for minutes that seemed like hours. When they stopped, there was still not a sound to be heard except for a finch greeting the summer day. It seemed as though it sang today like never before. Then I heard the rolling of wagon wheels outside, and as I looked out, I saw a coffin being taken away, accompanied by 3 guards in a lively discussion, just as if they'd been to the theater. The coffin was curiously short.

(163)

163/1

Behind came other guards and then officials in Prince Albert jackets and top hats. Along the top of the prison wall was the marching sound of the extra forces who'd been brought in to guard against possible attacks by the communists. After a quarter hour all was quiet once more. The sparrows were noisy, and the sun shone as if nothing had happened.

163/2

My cell wasn't opened until 9 o'clock, and I went straight to the wood shed. There was nothing to be seen, all traces removed. I talked with the wood man whose cell was not far from the place of execution. What he reported was later added to by others.

163/3

The condemned man was awakened at 4, dressed, and taken away in an automobile in the company of the clergyman. When they drove past the main gates he said, "I had hoped these would open one day to give me my freedom, but they've led to my death." The car <sup>went</sup> slowly along the prison wall to the place of execution. He jumped down from the car, moved his head quickly to toss his hair back, and walked up to the scaffold. One of his judges read the

- (164) death sentence to him, and he asked to say a few last words. He wanted to thank the officials and prison workers for the humane treatment he'd received. He said he's dying not as a murderer but as a human being. He was just as innocent as this one, holding up a crucifix in his right hand. But when he wanted to say more along these lines the district attorney brusquely cut him off and gave the order, "Executioner, do your duty!" The executioner went about his business, and the bloody drama was over in a minute.
- 164/1 When the soldiers were seen on the prison wall, they were greeted by the prisoners with cries of "Bloodhounds! Murderers! Beasts of the state!" The execution itself caused a tremendous excitement.
- 164/2 As time went by, the story spread that the executed man had been innocent. It was as if he was given a halo. Moving stories from his past <sup>were</sup> spread and believed by many. Everyone spoke of the manly courage he faced death with. They spoke ill of the communists who'd been too cowardly to try to do anything for their comrade. It was said his brother, who'd visited him on the day before his execution, had told him not to give up all hope. There might be a change at the last minute. And then the cowards didn't dare try anything. But if anyone asked what could have been done considering the armed soldiers and machine guns on the prison walls, they had no definite answers. Something surely should have been tried. But nobody knew what.
- 164/3 Later the rumor was that the real criminal had gone to America and confessed on his death bed. It was in the newspaper-- it must be true. And the officials and especially the district attorney hadn't even allowed him his last few words. This new story spread very quickly through the prison, along with outrage at the injustice done. But even after it was shown to be false, there still remained something of an effect behind. The halo had grown a little larger.
- 165/1 I later asked a lawyer who'd been at the execution if the words of protest might not have had some sound of truth in them. "Well, maybe." "Would he have spoken an untruth about it just minutes before his death?" "Why wouldn't he?" "What would be his motive?" "I don't know- can't know. The man was guilty. There was never more convincing evidence. If we cannot convict on the basis of such evidence..." "I know that argument. But what about the words 'I'm just as innocent as this crucified one.'" "A lot can be said about that. For instance, one could say that there was no affirmation of innocence there." "Now I'm curious." "Well, was Jesus innocent? Wasn't he really an instigator, a betrayer of Judaism, a blasphemer, guilty according to the laws of Moses?" "So, then you think this man of the people, a blacksmith, was capable of such subtlety in the face of death? Maybe if he'd been



- a lawyer. But only a lawyer could come to the conclusion that his words were so meant."
- 165/2 A little more than a year later, after assurances from everyone that there would never be another execution here, there was once more a man in chains within the prison walls. Another young man, in his early 20's, but this time the tension in the prison was not so intense. This time the chances for a pardon also appeared to be better. This was not a
- (166) double murderer, but only a single murderer. The man is convicted but hasn't yet made any confession or admission. Nor has he put in for a pardon, because he is convinced that because of his youth and the times, his conviction wouldn't hold. After all, others had done what he'd done and hadn't been decapitated for it. Why should he be? He was very obstinate and wouldn't see the Catholic clergyman. He told one of the guards who'd advised him to seek the help of the priest to put in a good word for him that he didn't need that, especially the help of a clergyman. The guard told him to be careful-- it concerned his head, after all. He wouldn't believe it. Besides, the worst of it would go fast.
- 166/1 Almost all of the prisoners felt sure that he would be executed and that it would take place in the prison yard. This kind of talk upset only a few of the prisoners, especially one of the trustees who been sent a complete set of Ibsen's works. He couldn't calm himself and spoke bitterly against the death penalty in general and in particular it being carried out inside the prison. What would he do? Something, he'd do something as a protest; he wouldn't quietly let them do something like that.
- 166/2 The man was informed one Saturday night in November that he would be executed early on the following Monday morning. The young man broke down completely. Gone was the obstinancy. He clung to the clergyman like a drowning man and wouldn't let go. He gave a repentant confession.
- 167/1 On Sunday the clergyman requested that a fellow human in special need be prayed for. Most of the prisoners there knew who he meant, and the Lord's prayer was said with unusual seriousness. The clergyman spent the rest of the day with the convicted man and would have liked to do something to save him. Some of the officials were prepared to ask for a pardon, but the district attorney was not. First of all it was too late; second the will of the people must be carried out. Those of the region where the crime had been committed demanded atonement for the crime. He felt one should let justice take its course. And now that the prisoner had confessed, everything was in best of order. The clergyman should make it his task to prepare the man for his last walk.
- 167/2 All night long those prisoners whose cells were near where the clergyman and the convicted man were heard their praying which was seldom interrupted. The condemned man

- kept his attention on the hereafter. He declined his last meal and received the sacrament at about 3 o'clock.
- 167/3 The clock struck 4. At about 4:45 I heard steps and voices outside. This time the scaffold was put up in the immediate vicinity. I looked out and saw a few guards on the wall as lookouts. Down below in the fog more and more people hurried to the place of execution; slowly it grew lighter.
- 167/4 Five o'clock. The clock struck, and steps were heard coming closer. The poor sinner came closer, surrounded by a ring of guards, dressed in black, bareheaded. Near him was the clergyman. "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen." Past. I see nothing more.
- (168) 168/1 A voice lifts itself, monotonous. The judgment is read. One, two minutes of time sneak by on lead soles. Then-- a bone-chilling, dull blow; the blade falls. The blood pours, rushing into the sack. Deathly silence.
- 168/2 The clergyman spoke, but only a few words reach my ears. It seemed like I heard "scaffold" and something else. After about ten minutes-- they seemed like hours-- I stand numb and watch as the executioner's helper unstraps the corpse and puts it in the coffin and the executioner takes the cut off head out of the sack. Like a bolt it strikes me that the man had worn his hair cut short-- where would he grab a hold of it? Dreadful, dreadful.
- 168/3 I reel from the chair and throw myself onto the bed.
- \*
- 168/4 I was counting laundry later the next morning when the priest came by dressed in his robes and accompanied by an assistant and two censer-swinging altar boys. His usually red-cheeked face was pale, and his head hung low. With difficulty he moved one foot in front of the other, and his face showed signs of the hard spiritual struggle he'd been through in the last 24 hours. He later said, "I saw many terrible things during the war, but nothing was as difficult as this execution." It was only his moral strength that had allowed the convicted man to hold himself together until the execution. He supported, almost carried him on his last walk. The unlucky prisoner held his hand even after he was strapped onto the plank, and the blade hit not only the neck of the murderer, it also struck the nerves of the clergyman.
- (169)

- 169/1 Even though the clergyman had enjoyed respect and honor in the prison before, now both had increased. He explained it as being a religion that showed its origins with God by its ability to extend such comfort and strength under such difficult circumstances. One skeptic however said that this case wasn't interesting because God was shown in this religion-- any other Christian religion would have done the same-- but because once again one could see how forceful a strong personality can be. The remarkable thing was that a strong person could make a weak one strong for a little while by means of nothing but faith.
- 169/2 The Ibsen trustee quit the church for a while after the execution as a protest against the "butchery." He wanted nothing to do with a religion that sanctioned such things. He told me of his action the first chance he had and was surprised that I didn't agree. "Your method is illogical and foolish," I said. "How so?" he asked. "Illogical because the church has absolutely no guilt in the fact that there is still the death penalty today." "But it allows it." "What can it do? The state won't let it take part of the state's affairs. Do you think it would do any good if the entire clergy in all of Germany would sign a petition and send it to the Reichstag demanding the abolition of the death penalty? Some of the clerics are probably still in favor of it. It is not a sign of moral or intellectual inferiority if one believes things won't work without the death penalty. Everyone has the right to form their own opinion. And as soon as there are enough against this punishment, it will be done away with. That's why you act illogically when you want to make the church responsible for these executions. It has just as little responsibility for them as the men's choir to which you had the honor of belonging or the Ibsen group you intend to join. But apart from that and more important is the fact that your behavior must be labeled as foolish." "Why?" "Don't ask dumb questions. You intend to put in a petition soon. Further explanations are superfluous. Think it over again."
- 170/1 He did think it over again, and not long afterwards when I went past his cell, the letter "C" was once again hanging on his door.
- 170/2 After this second case it was clear that the government would not take into consideration the objections of the city and prison officials, but would continue to regularly have executions in the prison. It wasn't much more than a month before the next death candidate was delivered. I happened to be there at the time.
- 170/3 A small, emaciated man came, or rather, was pushed in, still practically a boy with a feeble-mined expression on his face, taking no note of his surroundings. He would occasionally let out a heavy sigh and lament, "Oh, dear God." When he was undressed, many multicolored weals could be seen on his skin. He must have been horribly beaten.
- 170/4 While the supply worker was still trying to tell the young man to stop with the stupid games and act like a sensible man, one of the officials came in and with hands on hips stood before the young man and read him the riot act. "You good for nothing jerk. Don't kid yourself-- you can't get anywhere here with your game playing. Oh sure, you'd like it to first murder a few people and then come here and play insane and let yourself be fed in some nice institution the rest of your life. No, my good man, that won't happen. We know how to deal with the likes of you. So look here--" He made an easily understood gesture with his right hand, but the young man held his head bowed down and mumbled, "Oh, dear God." That enraged his tormentor even more. He finally made it clear that it wouldn't be too many weeks before they made him shorter by a head. "You should be struck dead like a mad dog."
- (171)
- 171/1 He was put in one of the holding cells where he squatted on the floor and left untouched food that was brought to him. He ate nothing for several days. When he was checked on, he had dumped the food out and was playing with the fragments

like a small child. The doctor came in the afternoon and ordered him taken to the mental ward.

171/2

"The poor guy really is round the bend-- anyone can see that," said one of the trustees. The guard shrugged his shoulders. "Don't be so sure-- that can be faked in order to save his life. Anyway, they will have to watch him closely in order to decide." "And if the doctors declare him to be sane after a certain number of months, will he be executed?" "Of course he will, even if years go by." "And if the learned men cannot come to an agreement? They can't be absolutely certain whether or not he is crazy." "They'll come to an agreement."

171/3

The case didn't appear to be a simple one. The learned ones were still not in agreement when I left <sup>the</sup> institution half a year later.

## Chapter 13 Release

- 172/1 I had been street caretaker for 4 years now when I was told that my mother had submitted a new petition for my release that had chances for certain success. No one had believed I would last so long at this post. I often thought of going back to the solitude of my cell, and many things were done to ruin relationships with other people. Again and again I had resisted this up to my last half year which began April 15, 1925. I wanted to use these last 6 months to sift through my impressions, take leave of my dear books, and prepare myself for "a normal return into civilian life," as it was official called. I had mixed feeling about this return to civilian life. The main thing was that I would be free wage a fight for my rights and was determined to do so with all means available. It would of course take years-- but afterwards? What should I do when the battle was over? Let's say I won: The stigma of being a criminal would be officially removed, and I could start over with a clean slate. And the past 18 years-- could they be erased like the false judgement? My health had not been damaged during that time, just the opposite. But it wasn't so easy to say the same about me mentally. Advantages and disadvantages were about equal. It didn't appear that I was unfit for a battle for my existence. If the inner incentive were present, I would make it again in the world. Perhaps it would re-appear during the coming years in my fight for my rights.. The incentive that drives people to get riches and happiness appeared to me to be senseless. It wasn't worth it to do that. I knew that only too well from before. I had no desire for these problematic things that one can want when one is young and has illusions.
- (173) Let's say I lost: Wasn't it possible that the courts would close themselves to my attempts? How difficult it is to once more take up a closed trial. And to find a completely unbiased judge would not be easy. And I couldn't count on a completely unbiased judge either, because I could tell from many little signs that the same spirit that had caused my false judgement was in those circles. I often thought of what the justice minister said: There might have been problems of form, but there were no material problems. That was something that said little in favor of my efforts. And if I were now turned down in all my attempts and used up all my legal remedies? What then? Then I could live among people as a forgiven criminal. Whenever I thought about that I was in danger of losing my self-control. No more thoughts about that!
- 173/1
- 173/2 The rumor spread among the prisoners that I was being released. Many wished me luck and asked with curiosity what I had in mind to do once I was free again. Everyone who talked to me assumed that I would leave the prison with a happy heart. "Now you've survived-- better days are coming for you. Soon you will have forgotten those difficult times which are behind you." That's the kind of thing I often heard. One of the older guards who'd known me for years said, "I want to wish you only one thing-- that you succeed in your resumption of life, because otherwise it would be best if you came straight back to us." "If I didn't feel it would work, I would rather stay here."
- 173/4  
(174) I knew since the beginning of August that my time was nearing its end. Towards the beginning of the month I was taken to the director and was told of a directive from the ministry that I was to declare whether I was ready to accept the conditions of my possible release. What kind of conditions? Well, the general, usual conditions were that one behave himself, not get into trouble with the authorities, pay his taxes on time, not fall into drunkenness, and the like. I was ready to accept these conditions-- anything else? The director shrugged his shoulders-- It was not possible to say now what the ministry might add to them,

but in any case it would not be anything unacceptable for me. I left the office somewhat distrustful.

174/1

What were they offering? They knew very well that I intended to pursue the reopening of my trial after my release; of that there could be no doubt. They wouldn't dare to try to prevent me from trying to reopen my case with such a condition just before my release. That would make the worst of impressions. Besides it would be a legal anomaly. So that was out of the question. Maybe they would demand of me that I leave the country. But that, too, was not probable, since they knew that the woman, my mother, who had personally entered my petition had expressly told the minister that I would go to her home to live. The minister had agreed to that. Maybe they would make conditions about where I could live. But that, too, was hardly possible, since no one could know in advance if I could find employment in the little town where my mother lived. The more I thought about any conditions in this light, the worse the situation appeared to me.

174/2

(175)

Meanwhile I made preparations for my departure and packed my books and sent them home. The necessary clothing was arranged. I went around absent mindedly, doing only the most necessary things. In the hot noonday breaks when things were quiet, I went up to the roof and looked out on the world. Behind the prison there was a road that went along a hill through fields and vineyards. It was a friendly piece of nature. The fruit laden trees, the yellow wheat fields, the green vines-- I drank it all in with my eyes. I couldn't get enough of it. There was some laundry laid out on a meadow to bleach in the sun, and a young girl went about her business with a sprinkling can that glinted in the sun. How nimble and busy she went about her chore-- was she pretty? She was too far away to distinguish her features. There were vehicles hitched to oxen traveling on the road, slowly, and women sitting on them in brightly colored scarves, the men walking along side in even steps, whips cracking. Jokes and laughing made their way up to the gray form at the attic window.

175/1

That was the world into which I was now supposed to return. It was nice, this world. To be able to walk through the woods again, bunches of blueberries, high reaching beeches, rustling of the tree tops-- what a delight that must be. Or to be on the river in a bark with my fingers dipped in the cool water. Not to mention the sea! The first time I see the sea again, I will have to hold my heart tightly in my hands-- otherwise it will burst. Yes, the world was beautiful, and the thought of being able to once again enjoy its pleasures is intoxicating. But-- but the people...

175/2

Evenings when I was alone in my cell in the darkness, I would put my chair up to the open window and look out into the secretive summer night. How indescribably wonderful was the starry sky. How aromatic the air. How I liked to listen to the monotonous chirping of the crickets; whenever it stopped for a moment, how soothingly did the silence embrace the soul. It was silly to worry.

176/1

A few weeks passed, and on Monday, August 26, I was called to the director's office. After a few minutes I was told to go inside where the director, his adjutant, and a state's attorney who was now doing duty in the prison were waiting. The director was on vacation, but since happened to be in the area, he wanted to be present for my release. He had a paper in his hand and said he was happy to be able to tell me that my pardon had gone through the ministry successfully; he hoped that I was happy, too, and that I shouldn't let my happiness be diminished by the conditions that they thought were necessary to give to me. They were conditions that one would have to label as unusual. He was charged with securing my signature to a declaration that said I would promise not to do two things after my release. First, I was not to attack a

- certain person who had played an important role in my trial, and second, I was not to give a sensational account of my trial and imprisonment. Both conditions were for a period of 6 years. Was I ready to sign such a statement? I thought about it. I wouldn't bother with talking about the first condition. But the second point was dangerous. What is sensational, and who decides? The ministry, of course. When I aired my doubts, the director said that they wouldn't interpret the meaning so narrowly that my hands would be too tightly tied. He felt that they wanted only to guard against excesses, against exaggerations. Well, ok, but one was still allowed to speak the truth? But what if the gentlemen would find my description to be sensational? What then? Then the release would be revoked and I would be re-incarcerated. For life? No, for the rest of the 8 months that were still left until the 15th of April. If I waited until that date, would I be released without condition? The director said he was convinced of that because there was nothing in the ministry's order for my release that mentioned any special conditions. But that's not absolutely certain? In his opinion it was completely certain.
- (177) 177/1 It didn't appear that way to me. What would stop the ministry from demanding the same conditions then as it did now? Especially if by hesitating to sign now I gave away my intentions to do just what the ministry wanted to avoid. But then, too, how could I disappoint my mother who was so longingly waiting for me by such hesitating?
- 177/2 After thinking it over a little, I said I was ready to sign and asked for permission to telegraph my mother so that she could send somebody to get me. The director already had paper and pencil in hand for the telegraph when the state's attorney spoke up. A delay of my departure is not allowed. An immediate release was ordered in the ministry's decree. He couldn't take responsibility for me even for an extra half day, because if something happened to me during that time, he'd be in hot water for it. For God's sake, I cried-- what's supposed to happen to me? Nothing happened to me in this prison for 17 years-- why would it on the last day? You never know. Better safe than sorry. He suggested that I travel today as far as, say, Frankfurt, and and wait in a hotel there until someone could pick me up. The police in Frankfurt would be notified to leave me in peace. He recommended to me Hotel Such-and-Such, right in the vicinity of the train station. I could look around Frankfurt some in the afternoon, go to bed in the evening, and then be picked up the next morning. "Thanks," I said, "but I don't feel any particular urge to see Frankfurt; I'd rather wait here until I'm picked up. And besides, I ask you to please realize that it's not such a easy matter for me now to go out alone into the world which is different and where I might have trouble getting around." -- "For heaven's sake. You made much different trips than this one to Frankfurt before." "Before I hadn't spent 18 years behind prison walls. Herr Director, please be so good as to keep me locked up a few more days."
- (178) 178/1 The inspector-- the only one to hold this office in all the years I was here whom I had respected: a straightforward man, strict, but just and well disposed-- intervened now and said half laughing that I was the only one he'd ever seen who wanted to stay one minute longer than absolutely necessary and that I should leave.
- 178/2 The director was looking thoughtful; the argument of his adjutant seemed to have no effect on him. I feared that I was to be forcefully put outside the prison gate. I thought of a plan and asked for 24 hours to rethink the conditions of my release. Meanwhile the telegram could be sent. Everyone was agreeable to that suggestion, and I was taken back to my cell.

- 178/3 It was clear that I could do nothing else but sign. I had to choose the lesser of two evils. I could, of course, survive the 8 months to my release in April, and if it had been completely certain that there would be no conditions attached to my release then, I would have preferred to wait until then. But now it was as if I had a chain on my leg by which they could pull me back into prison whenever they wanted, and next year they could put on another one just as well if they wanted. I no doubt must get used to the idea of wearing this chain for 6 years. (179) True, it was not a chain of iron or steel, but an elastic one that was in my power to stretch out so far that eventually these gentlemen would pull on it in vain. As long as I was in their clutches, I could not hope to find peace; but their power reached only to the border.
- 179/1 I was also determined to write the book, no matter what the risk-- and in a way that suited me. I wouldn't write it to cause sensation, but if somebody wanted to cry "sensation" about it, it would be all the same to me.
- 179/2 Monday and Tuesday went slowly by. I gave the rest of my things to the trustee; he was especially happy about the fine razor. During the noon break on Tuesday, an older guard, one whom I had known for a long time and got along with well, came carefully into my cell. He felt it necessary to say something more to me before I left. He was afraid that I might expose him in my book-- even without intention. "For God's sake, sir, please be very careful-- you know how easily someone in the know can figure out who you are talking about-- even without names. "Rest assured, I will take care that no one is harmed because of me." "Yes-- but can you do that?" "I think so." "Do you really have to write the book? You're going back to America soon and will certainly have other things on your mind than the prison." "That may well be, my friend, but in any case I will write the book first." "Oh, great-- and we have to sit here and take the rap for it. That's not nice of you-- we always treated you well." "Yes, you have-- Why? For purely humanitarian reasons? Probably not. I'm not bound by anything for that reason. But you can be satisfied that you have my pledge (180) that I will hang a veil of Christian love over everything that you would want to be kept quiet. I have no wish to take revenge on anyone. The individuals mean nothing to me-- it's the matter itself. But you don't understand that. Here's my hand on it: nothing will happen to you." Somewhat reassured he started to leave. At the door he turned to me and said, "I could understand it if you wanted to expose Schulze or Lehmann; they have always been an enemy for you. They deserve to get something. What do you think?" I laughed. "Oh, no-- that's not the deal we decided on. What's fair for one is good for the other. The veil I just mentioned covers all or no one. Shame on you for being so uncooperative!" He left grinning.
- 180/1 Someone-- I couldn't see who-- opened the peek hole in my cell door and whispered: departure today at 3 pm. A little later I was once again taken to the director's office. This time only the adjutant was there. He told me a sister of my mother was coming to get me, and that they had decided on the hour of my departure. They had originally chosen a train at 3 o'clock. When my aunt left, a guard had asked her when I was leaving and she'd told him without giving it much thought. But later she thought it over and became suspicious and came back to talk with the adjutant again. It appeared that he was to keep the time of my departure a strict secret. He had reason to believe that by 2 o'clock reporters and film cameramen would be outside the main gate and would make me the target of their attention. That had to be avoided at all costs. Therefore he agreed with my aunt that we wouldn't go on the 3 o'clock train but on one leaving (181) 2 hours earlier. I would be taken at 12 to get my clothes.



- 181/1 Thereupon I signed the statement of conditions, and the man wished me all the best for the future and dismissed me.
- 181/2 Another endless, long hour of waiting. Then a guard came, and we went to supply. I took off my prison clothes and put on the other things that were ready for me. Up until this moment my mood had been neither good nor bad; I felt only a huge amount of tension. But now a deep sadness overcame me and then after I had forcefully shaken it off, a fury like I had never felt before in my life. And I was embittered to the utmost that I had to play the game of putting on a happy expression. I wanted to scream, to lash out-- but had to take the good wishes of the supply workers who assumed only that I felt nothing but joy at my re-won freedom. My hands trembled with anger so that I couldn't tie my shoe laces. The trustee did it for me and said: he can't do it out of sheer joy. I couldn't get my tie done right, and the guard did it for me and said, "Yes, it's no wonder that he can't do it himself in a moment of such joy." Everything was finally done, they held a mirror up for me: I saw a strange figure in a dark suit, a pale face with burning eyes. So that's what a lifer looks like on the day of his release.
- 181/3 The director came in then and everyone else left the room. We stood across from one another for the last time. I pulled myself together and said a few words of thanks. I respected the man himself, but at this moment I could see in him only the organ of that force which had torn me out of society 18 years ago and had unjustly sentenced me, had buried me alive for half a lifetime and now out of mercy let me go again, covered with the moral stigma of having been a prisoner. Out of mercy! The thought was unbearable. Oh, if only I could have thrown the gift of freedom at their feet!
- (182)
- 183/1 From what the director said to me in these last minutes I remember only: "Draw a line here and attempt to forget the past. Even if you don't succeed in clearing your name, there are still a lot of wonderful things left for you." Words that awoke no stirring in me. I would never be able to forget. And if I wasn't successful in clearing my name, then there remained only this for me: the way out.
- 183/2 The old inspector accompanied me to the gate and with heart-felt words of farewell shook my hand. Then the heavy iron door opened, and I walked out.
- 183/3 Downhill, between gardens and towards the road. A fine, mist rained down; the flowers were fragrant; midday calm. Down below I turned around. One last, long look at the house of death, and then I trod the path into a free, wide, destiny-rich life.