Christ in the Communist Prisons

Also by REVERENND RICHARD WURMBRAND

CHRIST ON THE JEWISH ROAD

TODAY'S MARTYR CHURCH TORTURED FOR CHRIST

WURMBRAND'S LETTERS

CHRIST IN THE COMMUNIST PRISONS

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Chapter One

THE first half of my life ended on February 29, 1948. I was walking from our home to my church nearby when a black Ford braked sharply beside me and two men jumped out, seized my arms and shoved me into the back seat, while a third, beside the driver, kept me covered with an automatic. The car sped through the cold, gray streets of Bucharest and turned in through steel gates in Calea Rahova street.

My kidnappers belonged to the Communist Secret Police and this was their headquarters. Inside, my papers, my belongings, my tie and shoelaces, and finally my name were taken from me. "From now on," said the official on duty, "you are Vasile Georgescu."

It was a common name, easy to forget. The authorities did not want even the guards to know the identity of their prisoner, in case the secret should leak out and questions be asked abroad, where I was well-known. Like so many others, I was to disappear without a trace.

Calea Rahova was a new jail and I was its first prisoner. But prison was no new experience for me. I had been arrested during the war by the Fascists who ruled in Hitler's day, and again when the Communists took over. There was a small window high in the concrete wall of the cell, two plank beds, the usual

bucket in the corner. I sat waiting for the interrogators, knowing what questions they would ask and what answers I must give.

I know what fear is well enough, but at the moment I felt none. This arrest, and all that would follow, was the answer to a prayer I had made, and I hoped that it would give new meaning to my past life. I did not know what strange and wonderful discoveries lay in store for me.

My father had a book at home which advised young people how to plan a career as a lawyer, a doctor, an army officer and so forth. Once, when I was about five, he took it down from the library shelf and asked my brothers what they would like to be. When they'd chosen, my father turned to me, the youngest child. "And what will you be, Richard?" I looked at the title of the book, *A General Guide to the Professions,* and thought about it for a while. Then I replied, "I'd like to be a general guide."

Since then almost fifty years have passed, fifteen of them in prison, and I have often considered those words. It's said that we make our choices early in life, and I know no better description of my present work than that of "general guide."

The idea of becoming a Christian pastor was, however, far from my thoughts, and from those of my Jewish parents. My father died when I was nine, and our family was always short of money, and often of bread. A man once offered to buy me a suit of clothes, but when we entered the store, and the tailor brought out his best, he said, "Much too good for a boy like this." I still remember his voice. My schooling was erratic and uninspiring, but we had many books at home. Before I was ten I'd read them all and became as great a skeptic as the Voltaire I admired. Yet religion interested me. I observed the rituals in Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches, and once in a synagogue I saw a man I knew praying for his sick daughter. She died the next day, and I asked the rabbi, "What God could refuse such a desperate prayer?" and he had no answer. I couldn't believe in an all-powerful being who left so many people to starve and suffer, still less that he had put on earth one man of such goodness and wisdom as Jesus Christ.

As I grew up, I took my pleasures where I could, determined to make up for lost time. Entering the business world of Bucharest, by the time I was twenty-five I had advanced to the managership of an import-export firm with plenty of scope for financial chicanery. Now I had money to burn in the brothels and nightclubs of "Little Paris," as they called the capital. I didn't care what happened so long as my appetite for fresh sensation was satisfied. It was a life many envied, yet it left me deeply dissatisfied. I knew it to be counterfeit and that I was throwing away something in me that was good and could be put to use. Although I was sure there was no God, I wished in my heart that it might be otherwise, that there should be a reason for existence. One evening, I wandered idly into a church and joined a group of worshippers before a statue of the Virgin. Though I tried, too, to join them in their "Hail, Mary," I felt quite empty. I said to the image, "Really, you're like stone. So many plead, and you have nothing for them."

After my marriage I continued to pursue other women. I didn't ask myself if it was honest. I *wanted* to hurt everyone. Cheating, lying and pleasure-seeking formed the substance of my days.

When I was twenty-seven the combination of early privations and later excesses brought on tuberculosis, at that time still considered a dangerous disease. The doctor sent me to a sanitarium, deep in the countryside, and there for the first time in my life I rested. Looking out at the peaceful woods, I began to review my disordered past. My mother, my wife, so many innocent girls had wept for me. I had seduced, slandered and connived, and all for nothing.

In that sanatorium I prayed for the first time in my life, the prayer of an atheist. I said something like this: "God, I know that You do not exist. But if by any chance You do, which I deny, it's up to You to reveal Yourself to me; it is not my duty to seek You."

My whole philosophy had been materialistic until then, but my heart could not be satisfied with it. I believed that man is only matter and that, when he dies, he decomposes into salt and minerals. Yet I had lost my father, and had attended other funerals, and I could never think of the dead except as people.

It is always the beloved person who remains in the mind. Can we be so utterly mistaken?

My heart was full of contradictions. I'd spent many hours in noisy nightclubs, but I also liked to take lonely walks through cemeteries—sometimes on winter days when snow lay heavy on the graves. I told myself: "One day, I, too, will be dead, and snow will fall on my tomb, while the living will laugh, embrace and enjoy life. I shall be unable to participate in their joys; I shall not even know them. I'll simply not exist any more. After a short time, no one will remember me. So what use is anything?"

I remembered reading that Krupp, who'd become a millionaire by creating weapons of death, was himself terrified of death. No one was allowed to mention it in his presence. He divorced his wife because she told him about the death of a nephew. He had everything, but was haunted because he knew that his happiness couldn't last, that he would have to leave it behind and rot in a tomb.

Although I had read the Bible for its literary interest, my mind closed at the point where the adversaries challenge Christ: "Descend from the cross if you are the Son of God"; and, instead, He dies. It seemed to prove His foes right. Yet, I found my thoughts going spontaneously to Christ, and I said to myself, "I wish I could have met and talked with Him." Each day my meditation ended with this thought.

There was a woman patient in the sanitorium, too ill to leave her room, who somehow heard of me and sent me a book about the Brothers Ratisbonne, who founded an order to convert Jews. I was touched to think that others were praying for me, a Jew, while I did all I could to waste my life.

After some months in the sanitorium, my condition improved slightly and I went to convalesce in a mountain village where I became friendly with an old carpenter. One day he gave me a Bible. Only later did I discover that it was no ordinary Bible: he and his wife had spent hours every day praying over it for me. Lying on the sofa in my cottage, I read the New Testament, and in the days that passed Christ came to seem as real to me as the woman who brought my meals. But not every-

one who recognizes Christ is saved; Satan believes, and is not a Christian. I said to Jesus, "You'll never have me for a disciple. I want money, travel, pleasure. I have suffered enough. Yours is the difficult way of the Cross, and even if it is the way of truth as well, I won't follow it." His answer came to me like a plea: "Come my way. Do not fear the Cross. You will find it the greatest of joys."

I read on, and tears filled my eyes. I could not help comparing Christ's life with mine. His outlook was so pure, mine so tainted; His nature so selfless, mine so greedy; His heart so full of love, mine seething with hate. My old certainties began to crumble in the face of this wisdom and truthfulness. I was like the man in the ancient Chinese story, trudging exhausted under the sun, who came to a great oak and rested in its shade. "What a happy chance I found you," he said. But the oak replied, "It is no chance. I have been waiting for you for four hundred years." Christ had waited all my life for me. Now we met.

My conversion came six months after my marriage to Sabina, a pretty young girl who had never given a thought to spiritual matters. It was a terrible blow to her. She had lacked so much in her childhood and was beginning what she hoped would be a happier life, when the man she loved, her partner in pleasure, returned from the sanitorium a devout believer who talked of becoming a pastor. Later, she confessed to me that she had even considered suicide.

Although she began to come to church more often, Sabina still longed for the gay life, and when she wanted to go out somewhere, I went along. One evening we were invited to a party. The air was full of smoke, and couples were dancing, locked in each other's arms. There was a great deal to drink and the talk was full of double entendre. Suddenly Sabina grew disgusted with it all and asked to go home immediately.

I replied, "Why leave, when we've only just come?" So we stayed until midnight. Again she suggested going home, and again I refused. Only when I was convinced that she was thoroughly sickened by the whole affair, did I agree to leave.

We came out into the cold air. "Richard, I'm going straight to the pastor's house to make him baptize me. It will be like taking a bath after all this filth."

I laughed and said, "You've waited so long, Sabina, you can wait until morning now. Let the poor pastor sleep."

The next day our whole life changed. Before, we had sought pleasure exclusively. Had Sabina interfered with my enjoyment, I would have divorced her with barely a second thought. Now we had discovered the secret of living and, before long, we had our first child, a son, Mihai. He was a gift from God, for in the old days we would probably have prevented his arrival for fear it would complicate our carefree hedonism. Now we had a new aim in life, and Sabina became as active as I in winning souls for Christ; in fact, she won more.

In the business world I knew, honesty was the exception rather than the rule, and we were both relieved when the Reverend George Stevens, head of the Church of England Mission in Bucharest, asked me to take over as its secretary. I did my best to adapt my business instincts, but trouble arose when I persuaded an insurance agent to accept a bribe for dropping a claim against the Mission. To my surprise, Mr. Stevens did not seem to understand my arrangement. "But, who is right?" he asked. "The company or we?" I said that, in fact, the claim was justified. "Then we must pay," he said, closing what was to me an enlightening exchange.

Hitler invaded Poland and, in 1940, when relations between Rumania and Britain were severed, the English clergy had to leave. Sabina and I had given up most of our former friends, and many of our new ones were our converts: they had become members of the Mission congregation that was my new charge, since there was no one else to carry on.

I studied and taught myself to preach, and was ordained a Lutheran pastor, after carefully considering the claims of Rumania's rival denominations. The Orthodox church, to which four out of five people belonged, seemed to me too concerned with ritual. I felt the same about Catholicism: one Easter Sunday, after sitting through the Latin liturgy and a political address by the bishop, I left without even hearing in my own language that Christ was risen from the dead. The simpler Protestant services appealed to me, for they made the sermon —in which one could teach and set a feast for the mind—their central part. Then too, without his greatness, I felt some spirit-

ual kinship with Martin Luther. He was a quick-tempered quarrelsome man, but one who loved Jesus so deeply that he came to believe that man is saved not by his good deeds, which his flawed character does not allow him to perform, but by his faith. So I became a Lutheran. In Rumania this meant submission to state control, restrictions and, at times, persecution along with other religious minorities.

I had always been wary of clergymen, above all, those who might ask whether or not I was "saved." Now, although I never wore clerical dress, the impulse was all but irresistible to make the whole world my parish. I could not make enough converts. A list of my congregation was always in my pocket, and I pulled it out in buses and waiting rooms to ask myself what each one was doing at that particular moment. If one of them lapsed, I was sunk in depression for hours. A defection brought me physical pain, and I had to ask God to take it from me.

Under Stalin's conditions for economic help to Hitler during the war there was a new partitioning of Eastern Europe. One-third of our national territory was divided among Russia, Bulgaria and Hungary. Nazi influence supported the growth of an Iron Guard movement whose members tried to harness the Orthodox church to political terrorism. The night before assassinating Premier Armand Calinescu, their chief opponent, nine fanatics kept vigil, lying prostrate on a church floor, their bodies forming a cross. After that, the Iron Guard helped Hitler's protégé, General Ion Antonescu, to seize power. King Carol was forced to abdicate in favor of his young son Michael, in whose name Antonescu ruled as dictator.

Now the Iron Guard had a free hand to deal with those they regarded as their natural enemies: Jews, Communists, Protestants. Murder was commonplace. Our mission was accused of treachery, and I was threatened daily. One Sunday, from the pulpit, I watched a group of men in the green shirts of the Iron Guard slip silently into the back of the church. The congregation, facing the altar, was unaware of their presence, but I saw revolvers in their hands. I thought, if this was to be my last sermon, it should be a good one. I chose as my topic the hands of Jesus. With them He had wiped away tears, lifted children

up and fed the hungry. They had healed the sick, been nailed to the Cross, and had blessed the Disciples before He ascended to heaven. Then I raised my voice to the murderers at the door. "But *you*. What have *you* done with your hands?"

The congregation looked amazed. They were holding prayer books.

I thundered, "You are killing, beating and torturing innocent people. Do you call yourself Christians? Clean your hands, you sinners."

The Iron Guard men looked furious. Yet, they didn't want to break up the service. They stood with guns drawn while I said the benediction and the congregation filed out. When nearly all had safely gone, I came down from the pulpit and stepped behind a curtain. I heard running footsteps and shouts of "Where's Wurmbrand? After him," before I slipped through a small door, turning the key behind me: this secret exit had been built many years before. Along winding corridors I found my way to a side street, and so escaped.

As the war progressed, many members of the Christian minorities—Adventists, Baptists, Pentecostals—were massacred or driven into concentration camps with the Jews. My wife's entire family was carried off; she never saw them again. I was arrested by the Fascists on three occasions—tried, interrogated, beaten and imprisoned. So I was well prepared for what was to come under the Communists.

Lying in my empty cell in Calea Rahova, after my interrogator had left, I reviewed it all. Toward evening I found that, by standing on the bed beneath the window, I could see a corner of the yard. As I watched, a priest was let in through the gates. He moved swiftly across the asphalt and through a door —an informer, come to report on his congregation.

Knowing that I faced endless questioning, ill-treatment, possibly years of imprisonment and ultimate death, I wondered if my faith was strong enough to endure. I remembered then that in the Bible it is written 366 times—once for every day of the year—"Don't be afraid!": 366 times, not merely 365, to account for Leap Year. And this was February 29—a coincidence which told me I needn't fear.

The interrogators were in no hurry to see me, for Communist jails are like archives, to be drawn on whenever information is required. I was questioned innumerable times over the entire fourteen and a half years of my imprisonment. I knew that in the eyes of the Party my connections with the Western church missions and with the World Council of Churches were treasonable, but there was much else of importance that they did not know and must not learn from me.

As a soldier in peacetime prepares for the hardships of war, I had prepared myself for prison and torture. My text had been the lives of Christians who had faced similar ordeals and temptations to surrender, and I considered how I might adapt their experiences to my own. Many who had neglected to do so were finally crushed by suffering, or deluded into betraying others.

Priests were always told by their interrogators, "As a Christian you must promise to tell us the whole truth about everything." For my part, since I was sure of being found guilty whatever I said, I decided that under torture I might incriminate myself, but never reveal the identity of friends who had helped me to spread the Gospel. So I planned to leave my interrogators more confused at the end of their investigation than at the start; I would mislead them completely.

My first task was to get a message out somehow to warn my colleagues and let my wife know where I was. I was able to persuade a guard to act as intermediary, for at that time my family still had money. Over the next few weeks, he received about $1500.00 for carrying messages. Then everything we owned was seized.

The guard brought word that the Swedish Ambassador had protested my disappearance, saying that I had many supporters in Scandinavia and Britain. The Foreign Minister, Ana Pauker, replied that nothing had been heard of my whereabouts since I had secretly left the country some time before.

As a neutral envoy, the Ambassador could hardly pursue the matter further, least of all with Mrs. Pauker, a lady before whom strong men quailed. I had met her, and knew her father, a clergyman named Rabinovici, who told me sadly, "Ana has no feeling for anything Jewish in her heart." She had studied medicine, then turned to teaching at the English Church Mission

before embracing the Communist cause and marrying an engineer named Marcel Pauker who shared her views. Both were in and out of prison for conspiracy, but Ana proved the more fanatical partisan. She went to Moscow in the thirties, and Marcel followed, with less enthusiasm. During one of Stalin's wartime purges, he was executed—shot, it was rumored, by his wife—and few doubted the story. After spending most of the war as a Soviet citizen in Moscow, with officer's rank in the Red Army, Ana Pauker returned in 1947 in the role of Foreign Minister and became the dominating influence in Rumania. So great was her loyalty to Russia that one fine day, when someone asked why she was walking through Bucharest with her umbrella up, Ana is said to have retorted, "Haven't you heard the weather report? It's raining heavily in Moscow."

Under Ana Pauker's rule, a million Russian troops poured into Rumania. These were our new "allies."

After a group of political leaders, headed by young King Michael, had courageously deposed the dictator, General Antonescu, and ended his partnership with Germany, a meeting was called in Moscow to decide the shape of the postwar world. Churchill said to Stalin, "How would it do for you to have 90 percent predominance in Rumania, while we have 90 percent of the say in Greece?" And he wrote these words on a sheet of paper. Stalin paused. Then he made a large tick with a blue pencil on the paper and passed it back. And so Rumania's fate was sealed.

"The Russians are coming!" was no joke-phrase for the peoples of what became captive Europe. Four decades of Bolshevism, three of ruthless war, had given the Russians the masks of animals. They had only two aims in life: to drink and to ravage the "capitalist exploiters." Men were robbed in the street of such novelties as bicycles and wrist-watches. When order in the Red Army was forcibly restored, and shops began to raise their shutters, the visiting troops were astonished by the goods on display, and even more when they learned that most of the customers were farmers and factory workers.

Rumania's capitulation to Russia proclaimed on August 23, 1944, is still celebrated each year as the day when the country was freed. In fact, its terms were used to strip the country of its

entire navy, most of its merchant fleet, half its rolling stock and every automobile. Farm produce, horses, cattle, minerals and all our stocks of oil and gasoline were carried off to Russia. Rumania, once known as "the granary of Europe," swiftly became a starvation area.

On the day of my conversion twelve years before I had prayed, "God, I was an atheist. Now let me go to Russia to work as a missionary among atheists, and I shall not complain if I have to spend the rest of my life in prison." But God did not send me on the long journey to Russia. Instead, the Russians had come to me.

During the war, in spite of persecution, our Mission's following had greatly increased, and many of those who had harried Jews and Protestants were converts who now worshipped side by side with their former victims. After the war, my work for the Western church missions continued, and I also began to work for the World Council of Churches. I had an office, equipment, secretaries—a "front" for my new campaign.

Speaking Russian fluently, I found it easy to talk to Soviet soldiers in the streets, shops and trains, and, as I did not wear the collar, they took me for an ordinary citizen. Many, especially the younger men, were bewildered and homesick, glad to be invited to a friendly home or shown the sights of Bucharest. I had help from many young Christians who also knew Russian.

Using hidden presses, we published the Gospel in Russian. In three years more than 100,000 books were distributed in cafés, bars, parks, railway stations—wherever a Russian could be found—and many were passed from hand to hand until they disintegrated. Though a large number of our helpers were eventually arrested, none gave me away.

We were astonished not only by the number of conversions we made, but by their naturalness. The Russians were wholly ignorant of religion, but it was as if they had always sought the truth subconsciously, and recognized it with delight. Most were young peasants who had worked in the sun and rain, with seedtime and harvest, and they knew in their bones that someone orders nature. But since they had been brought up as atheists, they were convinced that they were, just as many people believe themselves Christians—and are not.

I met a young painter from outer Siberia on a train journey, and told him about Christ as we traveled.

"Now I understand," he said. "Before we met I only knew what they taught us in school—that religion's an imperialist tool. But I used to walk in an old cemetery near my home, and one day I came across a small, abandoned house among the graves." (I understood immediately that this must have been the cemetery's Orthodox chapel.)

"On the wall there was a painting of a man nailed to a cross. It was good work. At first I thought, 'He must have been a terrible criminal to deserve such punishment.' But if he were a criminal, why did his picture have the place of honor—as if he were Marx or Lenin? I decided they must have thought him a criminal at the time, then later discovered he was innocent and so put up his picture in remorse."

I told the painter he was halfway to the truth, and by the time we reached our destination, hours later, he knew all that I could tell him about Jesus. As we parted he said, "I intended to steal something tonight. Everyone does, after all. Now how can I? I believe in Christ."

We worked among Rumanian Communists, too. Every book had to pass through their censorship. So, we might present to the censor a book whose frontispiece bore a picture of Karl Marx and whose opening pages repeated his and Lenin's arguments against religion. The censor passed the book automatically, unaware that the rest of it was devoted to Christian thought. And he liked another of our books, *Religion—an Opiate for the People.* That had the ring of Marxist truth. Faced with vast piles of old and new books to examine, he went no farther than the reassuring title. Sometimes a censor would pass anything for a bottle of brandy.

Now that a Party card could mean the difference between eating and going hungry, the ranks of Rumanian Communists had escalated from a few thousands to millions. To deceive the West for a little while longer, Stalin set up a "united front" government of his own choice in Rumania, with the docile leader of the "Ploughman's Front," Premier Petru Groza, at its head. Apart from Ana Pauker, who is said to have "invented" Groza, power was wielded by the Russians through

three veteran Party comrades: Lucretiu Patrascanu, appointed Minister of Justice; Teohari Georgescu, who took over police and "security" as Minister of the Interior; and Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, a tough railway worker who was First Secretary of the Party.

In the role of observer, I attended a meeting of Orthodox priests which Gheorghiu-Dej addressed shortly after the Communist take-over. Stocky and jovial, he assured them all that he was prepared to "forgive and forget." In spite of their church's many links in the past with the Iron Guard and the other right-wing organizations, the state would go on paying clerical salaries as before. His concluding remarks concerning the similarity between Christian and Communist ideals won an enthusiastic cheer.

On informal occasions, Gheorghiu-Dej was frank about his atheism and his conviction that Communism would one day dominate the world, yet he could speak indulgently of his old mother, who filled their home with icons and brought up his daughters as Orthodox believers. In eleven years in prison under the old regime, Dej had had time to study the Bible and discuss religion with many imprisoned Christians, with whom he expressed sympathy. Escaping from jail just before the Russians arrived, he would have been caught and killed by the dictator Antonescu, if he had not been sheltered by a friendly priest. But if religion had touched Gheorghiu-Dej's life in his days of struggle, there was no room for it now that he was on top. The wife who had waited so long for his return was discarded, replaced by a blond actress. The house was full of servants and petitioners; Dej was rich and famous, and in no mood to listen to anyone.

When someone at the priests' meeting turned the conversation into spiritual channels, Dej replied with the standard Party arguments. He assured us that we would all have complete liberty of conscience in the new Rumania and, in return, my colleagues promised to make no trouble for the state. I listened and kept my reservations to myself. Many priests came forward at that meeting as champions of the Communist way of life, but sooner or later they violated some Party doctrine and wound up in prison.

The campaign to undermine religion developed rapidly. All church funds and estates were nationalized. A Communist Ministry of Cults controlled the priesthood completely, paying salaries and confirming appointments. The aging Patriarch Nicodim, a virtual recluse, was accepted as Orthodox figurehead, but the Party needed a more supple instrument. Dej decided that he knew the very man: the priest who had protected him from the Fascists the year before. So Father Justinian Marina, an obscure seminary teacher from Rimincul-Vilcea, was made a bishop, and soon all Rumania's 14 million Orthodox churchgoers knew that he was their Patriarch in everything but name.

The next task was to drive a wedge between the Roman and Greek Catholics, of whom there were two and a half million. The Greek Catholics, usually called Uniates, while keeping many traditions of their own (including the right of priests to marry) accepted Papal supremacy. Now they were taken over and forcibly "merged" with the obedient Orthodox Church. Most of the priests, and all the bishops, who objected to this shotgun wedding were arrested, their dioceses abolished and their property seized. The Roman Catholics, ordered to break with the Vatican, refused; they, too, paid dearly for their resistance. With priests filling the jails and lurid tales of their treatment spreading throughout the country, the minority religions waited resignedly to hear their fate.

They did not wait for long, and when the day came, it was a memorable one. In 1945 a Congress of Cults was convened in the Rumanian Parliament building, with four thousand representatives of the clergy present. Bishops, priests, pastors, rabbis and mullahs applauded loudly as it was announced that Comrade Stalin (whose enormous portrait loomed on the wall) was Patron of the Congress—they preferred to forget that he was at the same time President of the World Atheists' Organization. Frail old Patriarch Nicodim blessed the assembly and Prime Minister Groza opened it. Groza told us that he was a priest's son himself, and his lavish promises of support, echoed by the other distinguished speakers who followed him, were appreciatively cheered.

One of the most powerful Orthodox bishops then declared that in the past many political rivulets—green, blue, tri-colored

—had entered the great river of his Church, and he welcomed the prospect of a red one's joining it, too. One leader after another—Calvinist, Lutheran, the Chief Rabbi—rose in turn to speak. All expressed willingness to cooperate with the Communists until my wife, beside me, could bear no more. She said, "Go and wash this shame from the face of Christ!"

"If I do, you'll lose your husband," I replied.

"I don't need a coward," Sabina said.

I requested permission to speak and was immediately invited to the rostrum: the organizers looked forward to publishing a congratulatory speech by Pastor Wurmbrand, of the Swedish Church Mission and the World Council of Churches.

I began with a brief word on Communism. I said it was our duty as priests to glorify God and Christ, not transitory earthly powers, and to support His everlasting kingdom of love against the vanities of the day. As I went on, priests who had sat for hours listening to flattering lies about the Party seemed to awake as though from a bad dream. Someone began to clap. The tension snapped, and wave after wave of applause suddenly swept the hall as delegates stood up to cheer. The Minister of Cults, a former Orthodox priest named Burducea who had once been an active Fascist, shouted from the platform that my right to speak was withdrawn. I replied that I had the right from God. Ultimately, the microphone was disconnected, but by then the hall was in such uproar that no one could hear anything but cheering.

That closed the Congress for the day, and now I was in trouble. I learned that the Ministry of Cults intended to cancel my license to preach and I was advised to seek the help of the influential Partiarch-elect. After several attempts I managed to reach Justinian Marina on his return from a successful visit to Moscow. Black-bearded, smiling, full of his new dignity but no fool, this was the man who now had four-fifths of Rumania's churchgoing population under his care, and I suddenly realized that I might use my time with him better than to talk about personal problems. So I said instead that, since his promotion, he had been constantly in my prayers. To have jurisdiction over 14 million souls was truly a terrible responsibility. He must feel like St. Irenaeus, who wept when people made him bishop

against his will, saying, "Children, what have you done—how can I become the man this burden demands? The Bible saith that a bishop must be righteous."

While I spoke, he said little, but after I had gone he inquired about me among friends. For a time the talk of withdrawing my license stopped. Later on, when I was held by the police for a six-week inquiry, Justinian was among those who helped secure my release, and still later he invited me to Iasí, the seat of his bishopric, where we became friendly. His ignorance of the Bible was amazing, but he listened attentively when I reminded him of the parable of the prodigal son. Taking his hands in mine, I said that God welcomed back all who strayed, even bishops. Other Christians besides myself used all the influence they could bring to bear on Justinian. He had begun a life of prayer and love for God when, regardless of his feelings, the Party launched a full-scale campaign against religion, and I lost sight of him for several years.

The anti-God drive went hand in hand with the elimination of opposition parties, for after Stalin had gotten all he wanted from his wartime allies, the last pretenses of democracy were dropped. On October 30, 1947, Rumania's great National Peasant leader, Iuliu Maniu, was put on trial with eighteen others on false charges and, at the age of seventy-five, was sentenced to ten years' imprisonment—he would die in jail four years later. In the reign of terror that followed, it is estimated that some 60,000 "enemies of the state" were executed.

Ironically, the Minister of Justice who presided over this wholesale purge, forty-seven-year-old Lucretiu Patrascanu, had received considerable help from Maniu before the war in defending persecuted Communists. The two men had also worked together with King Michael to plan the armistice which Patrascanu then signed in Moscow in Rumania's name. Once Maniu was silenced, Patrascanu and other Party leaders forced our much-beloved young King to abdicate.

Then a Popular Republic was proclaimed; but who would lead it? Not the puppet Groza, certainly. Ana Pauker was detested, even within the Party; the others were at odds. Many of Patrascanu's admirers saw in him a nationalist Communist who would guide the country away from Stalinist extremes. He

was a "Western" type Communist from a landowning family, and everyone admired him for saying that he was a Rumanian before he was a Red. The leadership problem was the subject of hot debate in the Central Committee of the Party.

My life as a pastor, until this time, had been full of satisfaction. I had the trust and love of my parishioners and all that I needed for my family. But I was not at peace. Why was I allowed to live as usual while a cruel dictatorship was destroying everything dear to me and while others were suffering for their faith? On many nights, Sabina and I prayed together, asking God to let us bear a cross.

My arrest, in the widespread roundups that were going on at this time, could have been considered an answer to my prayer, but never could I have imagined that the first man to join me in my cell would be Comrade Patrascanu himself.

When the door of my room in Calea Rahova opened, a few days after my arrival, to admit the tall, hawk-eyed Minister of Justice, I supposed at first that he had come in person to question me. Why was I so honored? Then the door was locked behind him; stranger still, his shirt was open at the neck and he wore no tie. I looked down at his highly polished shoes—no laces! The second prisoner in my brand-new cell was the man who had brought Communism to power in our country.

Patrascanu sat down on the other plank bed and swung his feet up; a tough-minded intellectual, he was not going to allow the transformation from Minister to jailbird to affect his poise. Wrapped in our overcoats against the March chill, we began to talk. Although I knew Patrascanu's regime had shattered justice in Rumania, it was possible to like him as a man and believe in his sincerity. He dismissed his arrest with a shrug. It was far from his first spell in prison, for he had been arrested several times by the former rulers of Rumania. This time it seemed that his growing popularity had banded the other Party leaders against him. At a congress a few days earlier, he had been denounced as a bourgeois traitor by his colleague Teohari Georgescu, Minister of the Interior. A second charge, that Patrascanu had been "potentially helped by the imperialist Powers," was backed by Vasile Luca, the Minister of Finance, who had been in prison with him under the old re-

gime. And the accusations were driven home by Ana Pauker, another of his old friends.

They had been plotting against him for some time, Patrascanu said, but one incident in particular had told against him as a Communist. He had asked one of Georgescu's officials if there was any truth to the rumors that prisoners were being tortured. Why certainly, he was told; they were counterrevolutionaries who deserved no pity, especially if they held back information. Patrascanu was deeply disturbed. Was it for this, he demanded, that they had struggled all these years to bring the Party to power? His protest was reported to Georgescu, and the denunciation at the congress followed.

"As I left the hall," he said, "I saw a new driver waiting at the car. He said, 'Your chauffeur has been taken ill, Comrade Patrascanu.' I stepped in, two secret policemen got in after me —and here I am."

He was certain that he would soon be reinstated, and when supper came I began to think he might. Instead of the usual meager bowl of boiled barley, he was given chicken, cheese, fruit and a bottle of Hock. Patrascanu took a glass of wine and pushed the tray over to me, saying he had no appetite.

While I tried not to eat too ravenously, he told ironic anecdotes. One concerned the Swiss senator who wanted to be Navy Minister. "But we have no navy," said the Prime Minister. "What does that matter?" the senator asked. "If Rumania can have a Minister of Justice, why shouldn't Switzerland have a Minister of the Navy?" Patrascanu laughed heartily at his own joke, though it ridiculed the "justice" he had created, and of which he himself was now a victim.

The next morning Patrascanu was escorted from the cell, I supposed for interrogation. He returned bad-temperedly in the evening to say he had not been answering questions but giving a lecture at the university, where he taught law. The Party wanted his arrest kept secret for the time being, and he, with thirty years of Communist discipline behind him, had to accede to their wishes. To reveal, even to his wife, that he was "under examination," or to ask anyone's advice, would be a capital offense. This isolation preyed on his nerves, as his opponents intended. He could be himself only with me, because

he had reason to believe that I would never see the outside world again.

As Patrascanu revealed something to me about his early life, I was interested to learn that he had become a Communist not through any objective judgment, but in revolt against early hardship. His wealthy father had supported the Germans so enthusiastically in World War I that, after the Allied victory, the entire family had been ostracized. Young Patrascanu had had to go to Germany for a university education and, on his return, had joined the only political party that offered him a welcome. His first wife, a Communist, died in the Stalinist purges during the late '30s, and when he remarried it was to another Party member, who happened to be a schoolmate of Sabina's.

I tried to show Patrascanu the true source of his convictions. "You're like Marx and Lenin," I said, "whose ideas and actions were also the outcome of early suffering. Marx felt genius within him, but as a Jew in Germany, with anti-Semitism rampant, he could find no outlet for it except as a revolutionary. Lenin's brother was hanged for an attempt on the emperor's life—rage and frustration made him want to overturn the establishment. It's been much the same with you."

Patrascanu dismissed the idea. His nerves found an outlet in argument with me and in tirades against the wickedness of the church. The evil days of the Borgia Popes, the Spanish Inquisition, the savagery of the Crusades, Galileo's persecution, were all surveyed.

"But it's the crimes and errors of the Church that give us so much more to admire in it," I said.

Patrascanu was startled. "What do you mean?"

I said, "A hospital may stink of pus and blood; in that lies its beauty, for it receives the sick with their festering sores and horrible diseases. The Church is Christ's own hospital. Millions of patients are treated in it, with love. The Church accepts sinners; they continue to sin, and the Church is blamed for their transgressions. On the other hand, the Church seems to me like a mother who stands by her children even when they commit crimes. The politics and prejudices of its servants are distortions of what comes from God—that is, the

Bible and its teachings, worship and the sacraments. Whatever its faults, the Church contains much that is sublime."

Patrascanu smiled. "I could make much the same claim for Communism. Its practitioners are not perfect—there are scoundrels among them—but that doesn't mean there's anything wrong with our theories."

"Then judge by results," I said, "as Jesus advised. Sad deeds have stained the history of the Church, but it has lavished love and care on people all over the world. It's produced a multitude of saints, and it has Christ, the holiest of all, at its head. Who are your idols? Men like Marx, who was described as a drunkard by his biographer, Riazanov. Or Lenin, whose wife tells us he was a reckless gambler, and whose writings drip with venom. Communism has wiped out millions of innocent victims, bankrupted countries, filled the air with lies and fear. Where is its good side?"

Patrascanu defended "the logic of Party doctrine."

I said that doctrines as such meant nothing. "You can do unspeakable things under polite names. Hitler talked about a struggle for *Lebensraum* and wiped out entire populations. Stalin said, 'We must care for men like flowers,' and he killed his wife and yours."

Patrascanu looked uncomfortable; but he was frank. "Our long-range purpose is to communize the world. There are few who want to go all the way with us, but we can always find some who are willing for their own reasons to join us temporarily. First we had the Rumanian ruling classes and the king, who backed the Allies against the Nazis. When they had served our purpose, we destroyed them. We won over the Orthodox church with promises, then used the smaller sects to undermine it. We pitted the farmers against the landlords and later the poor peasants against the wealthy farmers—and now all of them will be collectivized together. These are Lenin's tactics, and they work."

I said, "Everyone knows that all your fellow travelers have been jailed, executed or somehow destroyed in the past. How can you hope to go on using people and then discarding them?"

Patrascanu laughed. "Because they're stupid. Here's an example. Ten years before World War II the great Bolshevist

thinker Bukharin opposed Trotsky's plans for making world revolution by force of arms. He argued that it was better to wait until the capitalist countries came to blows among themselves; Russia could then join the winning side and take the lion's share of conquered countries. A remarkable prophecy—but no one took it seriously. If the West had known that half of Europe and two-thirds of Asia would become Communist as a result, the last war would never have taken place. Fortunately, our enemies don't listen to our arguments or read our books, so we can speak openly."

I pointed out a flaw in his argument. "Don't you see that just as you used people and then cast them aside, so your comrades have done the same to you? Haven't you blinded yourself to the evil logic of Lenin's doctrine?"

For once, Pastrascanu's bitterness was unconcealed. He said: "When Danton was driven to the guillotine and saw Robespierre watching from a balcony, he called out, 'You will follow me.' And I assure you now that they will follow me—Ana Pauker, Georgescu and Luca, too."

So they did, after three years.

We spoke no more that evening, but at 10 P.M., after we had gone to bed, the door opened and my new name was called. Three men stood outside. One, whom I later knew as Appel, ordered me to get dressed. As I did so, Patrascanu whispered to me to put my overcoat on as well: it might dull the blows. A pair of black goggles was put over my eyes, and I was led along a corridor to a room where I was thrust into a chair. Then the blindfold was removed.

I sat before a table with a harsh, accusing light blinding me. At first I saw only a shadowy figure opposite, but as I grew used to the glare I recognized a man named Moravetz. A former police inspector who had been in trouble for betraying secrets to the Communists, he had been rewarded now with the job of interrogator.

"Ah," he said, "Vasile Georgescu. You'll find paper and pen on that desk. Take your chair over and write about your activities and your life."

I asked what particularly interested him.

Moravetz raised sarcastic eyebrows. "As a priest, you've

heard any number of confessions. We've brought you here to confess to us."

As he seemed in no hurry, I wrote an outline of my life up to the time of my conversion. Then, thinking the statement might come to the notice of Party leaders and have some effect, I explained at length how I—an atheist like themselves—had had my eyes opened to the truth. I wrote for an hour or more before Moravetz took the paper and said, "Enough for tonight." I was led back to the cell, where I found Patrascanu asleep.

Again several days passed without my being troubled. The Communists reverse normal police methods, which rely on the shock of arrest to make a prisoner talk. They prefer to let him "ripen." The interrogator never says what he wants; he merely circles around his prey, creating anxiety and guilt. While the man is racking his brains for the reason of his arrest, tension is built up by other tricks: a constantly postponed trial, the tape-recorded sound of a firing squad, screams from other prisoners. He begins to make false judgments. One slip leads to another, until exhaustion forces him to acknowledge his guilt. The interrogator becomes sympathetic. He offers hope and an end to suffering, if the prisoner will admit that he deserves punishment and tell all. So Appel returned in a few days, and the first of my innumerable interrogations began.

This time I was taken to a basement room a few steps down from the cell by Appel, who gave me a chair, offered me a caramel from his briefcase and settled down on a sofa. One of his colleagues took notes. Chewing steadily, Appel checked points in my statement and commented that a man's thinking was determined by his class. Not being of proletarian origin, I was bound to have reactionary views. Feeling certain that Appel was no proletarian either, I pointed out that none of the great Party thinkers were "workers" in the purest sense. Marx was a lawyer's son, Engels' father was a man of property, and Lenin came from the nobility. Class alone never dictated a man's convictions. Appel suddenly interrupted. "What were your connections with Mr. Teodorescu?"

"Teodorescu?" I said. "That's a fairly common name. Which one do you mean?"

But Appel didn't say. Instead, he turned to the Bible and to a discussion of the prophecies of Isaiah on the coming of the Messiah. From time to time, without warning, he mentioned the names of people who had helped in distributing my books to Soviet soldiers or in handling relief for the World Council of Churches. The shafts apparently came at random. Appel was always polite and never persistent. He appeared to be more interested in my reactions to sudden questions than in my answers, and, after another hour, I was taken back to the cell to think what it might mean.

Lying on his bed, smoking the cigarettes of a privileged prisoner, Patrascanu amused himself at my expense by talking about the Party's plans to eradicate Christianity in Rumania. Already, Ana Pauker, Georgescu and other Central Committee members had met Justinian in secret and decided he would ideally serve their purpose.

"Justinian," he said, "has as much to do with God as I have with the Emperor of Japan. As for old Patriarch Nicodim, he's in his dotage. What respect can you have for a man who was issuing encyclicals at the start of the war calling on everyone to fight the seven-headed Bolshevik dragon and then, when we broke with Hitler, urged his flock to march with the glorious Red Army against the Nazi demon? That's what Patriarch Nicodim did, and the whole country knows it. These are the princes of the church, and the rest aren't much better. They won't lead you far."

I replied that if he didn't leave prison as soon as he expected, he might come to meet more exemplary Christians.

"Patriarch Nicodim is a good man," I said, "but old and exhausted. Nor can I condemn the future Patriarch Justinian and those who've been tricked or forced into taking your road. It's too much like taking advantage of a girl and then calling her a harlot."

I thought this dig might carry my point with Patrascanu, who was apt to speak bluntly about sexual matters. I tried, too, to tell him what Christian love meant. He was too engrossed in his own troubles to listen much at first; but he was a bookish man, at a loss with nothing to read, and argued for the sake of distraction. When I questioned him about his atheism, he said,

"I went through the usual rebellion against religion when I was at school. I used to pray, but gave it up. Your Jesus asks too much. Especially when one is young."

I said, "I've never thought that Jesus asks anything from men. When my son Mihai was small, I gave him money to buy me a birthday present. So Jesus gives the virtues he seems to ask for and makes us better men. But perhaps you didn't have good religious teachers."

"Probably. They're not too common. Besides, there's a lot in Christianity I can't swallow—humility, and especially submission to tyranny. Take St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans. It says all authority is from God, so we must behave ourselves, pay our taxes promptly and keep the peace—this at a time when the ruler of the world was Nero!"

I said, "Read the Bible again and you'll find it full of revolutionary fire. It starts with the Jewish slaves revolting against Pharaoh. It goes on with Samuel, Jael, Jehu and many other rebels against tyranny. Before going further, ask yourself how the authority approved by God came to power. It's usually the result of an upheaval; so submission to authority means submission to those who have made a successful revolution. Washington made his name by overthrowing the English."

"As Lenin overthrew the Csars," Patrascanu put in.

"Only to introduce a worse terror. The man will come who will end the Communist tyranny, too, and bring free government. Then he will be the authority from God. Then we should submit. The real teaching in this part of the Scripture is not submission to tyrants, but avoidance of useless bloodshed in futile revolutions."

Patrascanu said, "What about 'Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's?' Here Jesus was surely urging the Jews to submit to the Roman tyrant?"

"The first Caesar was an usurper," I said, "even in Rome. He was a general who had made himself dictator. His successors had no more right in Palestine, which became a Roman colony by force, than the Russians have here. So it's clear that Jesus meant, 'Give Caesar what we owe him, a boot in the backside, and pitch him out—like that.'" And I shot my unlaced shoe

across the room. Patrascanu roared with laughter as he picked it up. "If every priest explained the Bible like you do, we'd soon reach a better understanding," he said.

I was not so sure.

One evening, he asked me to sum up the Christian belief in a nutshell. I recited the Nicene Creed and said, "In return, you should tell me what the Communist creed really is."

Patrascanu thought for a moment. "We Communists believe that we will rule the world," he said, and lay back on his grubby pallet.

The next morning he was taken from his cell. I never saw him again. We had become quite close in the week we had spent together. I felt that he was moved by much of what I said, but it did not suit his purpose to admit it, even to himself. It was years later when I heard what had become of him.

My new inquisitor, a little man named Vasilu who liked to talk out of the corner of his mouth, read from a typed list of questions. The first was also the hardest: "Write down the names of everyone you know, where you met them and what your relations with them were." There were many friends whom I wanted to shield, but if I left them out, and the police knew I had done so, they would be doubly suspect. As I hesitated, Vasilu snapped, "Don't pick and choose. I said 'everyone.'"

To make a start, I wrote the names of my known assistants and parishioners. The list covered a page or two. I added Communist members of Parliament and every fellow traveler and informer I could think of.

"Question Number Two," said Vasilu, "asks that you confess your crimes against the state."

"What am I accused of?" I asked.

Vasilu slapped the table. "You know what you've done. Get it off your chest. Start by telling us about your contacts with your Orthodox colleague, Father Grigoriu, and what you think of him. Just write, and keep writing."

Clergymen are always asked about one another—Protestants questioned about Orthodox priests, Catholics about Ad-

ventists, and so on, to stoke sectarian rivalries. Whatever you wrote might later be used to trap you. A prisoner would be told, "Sign it with a nickname; it's the way we do things here." When he had given several statements in different names, he would be asked to denounce a friend—with the warning that, should he refuse, everyone would be told he was an informer who had already given statements under false names. The threat was potent enough to create many real informers. During the long, solitary waits between interrogations, fresh questions were prepared and you tried to remember what you had said before, and what you had concealed. The inquisitors usually came in pairs, with their typed questions. If one went out, the other did not speak until he returned; there might be a microphone in the room. Some interrogators, in those early days, were decent enough men who had to live somehow. Once, when his companion was out of the room, one of them even showed me statements made against me. Several were given by men I trusted, but I could imagine the pressure that had been brought to bear on them.

This was only the first stage of a long process. The number of prisoners was overwhelming, and qualified interrogators were few; but more were being trained in Soviet methods every day. At least, I had time to prepare myself, and I was enormously relieved and encouraged when a barber, while shaving me, whispered that Sabina was well and preaching in my place. I had feared her arrest, leaving our son, Mihai, to starve or rely on the charity of neighbors. Now I was ready to reel off as many chapters from my spiritual autobiography as the interrogators liked. On other matters I revealed as little as possible. The simple fact that a friend had once visited the West might get his family arrested and earn him a savage beating.

So interrogation continued, month after month. You had to be convinced of your criminal past before Communist ideals could be implanted, and they took root only when you had succumbed to the belief that you were entirely, endlessly, in the Party's power and had surrendered every fragment of your life.

It was said now in Rumania that life consisted of the four "autos": the autocriticism that had to be recorded regularly in office and factory, the automobile that took you to the

Secret Police, the autobiography they made you write, and your autopsy.

Knowing that torture lay ahead, I resolved to kill myself rather than betray others. I felt no moral scruples: for a Christian to die means to go to Christ. I would explain, and He would surely understand. If St. Ursula had been canonized for killing herself rather than lose her virginity to the barbarians who sacked her monastery, then my duty to protect my friends was also more important than life.

But how was I to secure the means of suicide before my intention was suspected? Guards checked prisoners and their cells regularly for possible instruments of death: glass slivers, a piece of cord, a razorblade. One morning, during the doctor's rounds, I said I couldn't remember all the details the interrogators needed because I hadn't slept for weeks. He prescribed a nightly sleeping pill and a guard peered into my mouth each time to make sure I'd swallowed it. In fact, I held the pill under my tongue and took it out when he had left. But where to hide my prize? Not on my body, to which anything might happen. Not in my pallet, which had to be shaken and folded daily. There was the other pallet in which Patrascanu had lain. I tore open a few stiches and every day hid another pill among the straw.

By the end of the month I had accumulated thirty. They were a comfort against the fear of breaking under torture, but I had fits of black depression at the thought of them. It was summer. I heard familiar sounds from the world outside. A girl singing. A trolley car grinding around the corner. Mothers calling their sons, "Silviu! Emil! Matei!" Feathery seeds floated softly in to settle on my cement floor. I asked God what He was doing. Why was I being forced to put an end to a life which had been dedicated to His service? Looking up one evening through the narrow window, I saw the first star appear in the darkening sky, and thought that God had sent this light, which had begun its apparently useless journey billions of years ago, to console me.

The next morning the guard came in and, without a word, picked up the spare pallet with my hoarded pills in it and carried it off to some other prisoner. At first I was upset. Then I laughed, and felt calmer than I had for weeks. Since God did

not want my suicide, then He would have to give me strength to bear the suffering ahead.

The Secret Police had been patient, I was told, but now it was time for some results, and Colonel Dulgheru, their chief inquisitor, never failed to get them. He sat at his desk, still and menacing, with delicate hands spread out before him. "You've been playing with us," he said. In prewar days, Dulgheru had worked at the Soviet Embassy. Then, under the Fascists, he was interned along with Gheorghiu-Dej and other imprisoned Communists. They noted his strength, intelligence and ruthlessness. Now here he was, with delegated powers of life and death.

At once he began to question me about a Red Army man who had been caught smuggling Bibles into Russia. Until now the interrogators seemed to know nothing about my work among the Russians, but although the arrested soldier had not given me away, it was discovered that we had met. Now, more than ever, I had to weigh every word, for, in fact, I had baptized the man in Bucharest and enlisted him in our campaign.

Dulgheru's questions were persistent. He thought he had scented something important. In the weeks that followed I was worn down by a variety of means. The beds were removed from the cell and I had barely an hour's sleep a night, balanced on a chair. Twice every minute the spy hole in the door gave a metallic click, and the eye of a guard appeared. Often when I dozed he came in and kicked me awake. In the end I lost all sense of time. Once I awoke to see the cell door ajar. Soft music crept along the corridor: or was it an illusion? Then the sound grew distorted and became a woman's voice, sobbing. She began to scream. It was my wife!

"Please don't beat me. I can't bear it."

There was the sound of a whip on flesh. The screams rose to an appalling pitch. Every muscle in my body was taut with horror. Slowly the voice began to die away, moaning; but now it was the voice of a stranger. It faded into silence. I was left trembling, sweat-drenched, drained of feeling. Later I learned that the screams had come from a tape recorder, but every prisoner who heard it believed the victim to be his wife or sweetheart.

Dulgheru was a refined barbarian who modeled himself after the Soviet diplomats he had mixed with in his Embassy days. "I order torture with regret," he told me. Being all-powerful in the prisons, he could dispense with notes and witnesses and often came alone to my cell at night to continue interrogation. He asked about my contact with the Church of England Mission. One critical session dragged on for hours. He became steadily more enraged by my evasive answers. By 1 A.M. we were both exhausted.

"Do you know," he said with venom, "that I can order your execution now, tonight, as a counterrevolutionary?"

I said, "Colonel, here you have the opportunity for an experiment. You say you can have me shot. I know you can. So put your hand here on my heart. If it beats rapidly, showing that I am afraid, then know there is no God and no eternal life. But if it beats calmly, as if to say, 'I go to the One I love,' then you must think again. There *is* a God, and an eternal life."

Dulgheru struck me across the face, and immediately regretted his loss of self-control.

"You fool, Georgescu," he said. "Can't you see that you're completely at my mercy and that your Saviour, or whatever you call him, isn't going to open any prison doors? You'll never see Westminster Abbey."

I said, "His name is Jesus Christ, and if He wishes, He can release me, and I shall see Westminster Abbey too."

Dulgheru's patience finally snapped and he shouted, "All right. Tomorrow you'll meet Comrade Brinzaru."

I'd been expecting this. Major Brinzaru, the colonel's aide, presided over a room where clubs, truncheons and whips were kept. Other interrogators used his name as a threat. The contemporary Russian poet Andrei Voznesenski writes, "In these days of unheard-of suffering, one is lucky indeed to have no heart," and Brinzaru was fortunate in this way. Muscular and hairy as a gorilla, he introduced me to his range of weapons. "Is there any you fancy?" he asked. "We like to be democratic here."

He displayed his own favorite, a long, black rubber truncheon. "Read the label." It was inscribed MADE IN U.S.A.

"We do the beating," said Brinzaru, "but your American friends give us the tools." Then he sent me back to my cell to think about it.

The guard told me that before the war Brinzaru had worked for a prominent politician and been treated as one of the family. After the Communist take-over, which hoisted him up the ranks of the Secret Police, a young prisoner was brought to him for questioning. It was the politician's son, who had tried to start a patriotic movement. Brinzaru told him, "I used to hold you on my knees when you were a baby." Then he tortured the boy and executed him with his own hands.

Curiously, Brinzaru did not give me the threatened beating. On his nightly round of inspection, he flicked the spy hole cover back to watch me for a moment. "Still there, Georgescu? What's Jesus doing tonight?"

I said, "He's praying for you." He walked away without replying.

The next day he was back again. Under his supervision, I was made to stand facing a wall with my hands raised above my head so that my fingertips just touched it. "Just keep him there," Brinzaru told the guard before leaving.

So, at last, my tortures began, tortures common to all Secret Police prisons: a dreary round of indignities and pain. First I stood for hours, long after my arms had lost all feeling and my swollen legs had begun to tremble. Then I was allowed to collapse on the floor, given a crust and a sip of water, and made to stand again. One guard relieved another. Sometimes two or three would share the sport of forcing me to adopt ridiculous or obscene postures and this went on, with short breaks, for days and nights. Always there was the wall to look at, only the wall.

To make time pass, I thought of the many walls referred to in the Bible, recalling a verse from Isaiah which saddened me: God says Israel's wrongdoings put a wall between Him and the people. In the same way, the failures of Christianity had allowed a Communist triumph, and that was why I had a wall before me now. Then I remembered a phrase, "With my Lord, I jump over the wall." I, too, might vault this wall into the spiritual world of fellowship with God. I thought of the

Jewish spies who returned from Canaan to report that the cities were great and walled—but even as the walls of Jericho came down, so the wall before me must also fall at the will of God. When pain was overwhelming me, I silently recited a phrase from the Song of Songs: "My beloved is like a roe or a young hart; behold, he standeth behind our wall." I imagined that Jesus stood behind my wall, giving me strength. I remembered that as long as Moses held up his hands on the mountains, the chosen people went forward to victory; perhaps our sufferings were helping the people of God to win their battle, too.

From time to time, Major Brinzaru looked in to ask whether I was willing to cooperate. Once, when I had slumped to the floor, he said, "Get up. We've decided to let you see Westminster Abbey, after all. You start now."

"Walk," ordered the guard. I tried to pull my shoes on, but my feet were too swollen. "Come on. Hurry. Keep going around. I'll be watching from outside."

The cell was twelve paces around: four steps—one wall; two steps—the next; then two; then four. I shuffled around it in torn socks. The spy hole clicked. "Faster," shouted the guard. My head began to spin. "Faster—or do you want a beating?" I bumped painfully into a wall. My eyes stung with sweat. Round and round, round and round. Click! "Halt, turn about. Walk." Round and round in the opposite direction. "Faster." I stumbled, and picked myself up. "Keep moving." When I fell at last, the guard came in and cracked me across the elbow with a club as I struggled up. The pain was so agonizing that I fell again. "Get up. Get moving. This isn't a rest cure. This is the *manège.*"

Nearly everyone had to go through the *manège,* or training ring, as it was ironically called. Hours went by before you got a cup of water or anything to eat. The thirst drove out hunger. It was even fiercer in its way than the stabbing of hot knives that ran up your legs from feet that felt like pincushions. Worst of all was having to start walking again after being allowed a few minutes' rest, or a few hours at night in a stupor on the floor. Stiff joints, cracked muscles, lacerated feet would not support the body's leaden weight. So you clung to the walls,

while guards shouted orders. When you could no longer stay on your feet, you went around on all fours.

I do not know how many days and nights I spent in the *manège*. As I moved, I began to pray for the guards. I thought again of the Song of Songs that tells us of the holy dance of the Bride of Christ in honor of her bridegroom. I said to myself, "I will move with as much grace as if this were a dance of divine love for Jesus." For a while it seemed to me that I did. If a man wills to do everything that he has to do, then he does only the things that he wills—and the hardest trials, being voluntary, become easier. And, as I circled the cell, it seemed as if everything revolved around me. I could no longer distinguish one wall from another, or a wall from the door, just as in divine love one does not distinguish between good and evil men and can embrace everyone.

I had been virtually without sleep for a month when the guard fixed a pair of black goggles over my eyes and led me to a new interview office. It was a large, bare room. Behind a table sat three or four figures whom I saw only dimly because of the blinding light the reflectors threw in my face. I stood before them on bare and painful feet, handcuffed, wearing only a torn, filthy shirt. Familiar questions brought familiar replies. This time there was a woman among the inquisitors. At one point she threatened, "If you don't answer properly, we'll have you stretched on the rack." The machine used last in England for forced confessions three hundred years ago had been added to the Party's repertoire of persuasion. I said, "In St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians it is written that we must strive to reach the measure of Christ's stature. If you stretch me on the rack, you'll be helping me to fulfill my purpose." The woman pounded on the table, and a heated discussion went on behind the dazzle of the reflectors. Sometimes, a ready answer has the effect of deflecting a blow. I was not "racked"; instead, we went back to the Inquisition, for the Bastinado.

I was taken to a nearby cell. A hood was pulled over my head and I was forced to squat with my arms around my knees. A metal bar was thrust between elbows and knees and set between trestles, so that I swung head down, feet in the air. They

held my head while someone flogged the bare soles of my feet. Each blow sent an explosion of agony through my whole body. Some fell on my thighs and the base of my spine. Several times I fainted, only to be revived by buckets of icy water. After each drenching a voice would say that if I gave just one of the names they wanted, names of secret enemies of the state, the torture would stop. When at last they took me down from the spit, I had to be carried to my cell, my feet a mass of dark red pulp.

On every journey to this room I wore the black goggles intended to prevent me from learning the prison layout. Sometimes they were not removed until my return to my cell to increase the terror of the beating. When you see a blow coming, you tense yourself to receive it. But blinded, not knowing when or where it will fall, you shrink into yourself in fear. Usually four or five men used boots and clubs on me at once, while I rolled in torment on the floor. With the blindfold off, I saw Brinzaru hand over to a guard what he called "my latest acquisition from your American friends," a nylon whip. It came whistling through the air, lacerating the flesh. Three strokes and I lost consciousness. Once a knife was held to my throat. "Talk," said Brinzaru. "Talk, or you'll die." The two men holding me down tightened their grip. I saw the blade rise and fall several times and fainted. I awoke with my chest covered with blood.

In the weeks that followed, I ran the entire Secret Police gamut. I was given the water torture. Water was poured down a funnel into my throat, until the stomach was bursting; then it was kicked. I was left alone for hours with two half-breed dogs, part shepherd, part wolf, who leaped at my slightest movement. They were trained not to bite, but their yelping and snarling and the snap of fangs an inch from the throat kept you rigid with fear. Some bread would be placed beside you, but, hungry as you were, you dared not reach for it.

In the end, I signed any "confessions" they contrived about myself: that I was at once an adulterer and a homosexual; that I had sold the Church bells and pocketed the money—although our Church was a simple meetinghouse that had never had a bell; that under cover of my work for the World Council of Churches, I had been spying with intent to overthrow the re-

gime by treachery; that I and others had infiltrated the Party organization and revealed its secrets.

Brinzaru read through the sheaf of confessions and said, "All very well, Georgescu—but where are the names of those you passed the secrets on to?"

I had them ready, and he went off in high spirits with a score of names and addresses: it would surely earn him a bonus and promotion. A few days later he returned and had me savagely flogged. Headquarters had checked the names and found them to be those of men who had fled to the West long ago, were dead, or were foreigners who had left the country after short visits. But at least the respite had allowed me to recover a little strength.

Even worse than physical torture itself was the waiting. You lay there listening to the screams and weeping of others. You sweated in panic as the endless minutes ticked away. But God helped me never to say a word that harmed another. Under the knives and on one occasion when they branded me I lost consciousness easily. When that happened, I might be put in my cell to recover and be forgotten for a few days, because they wanted me alive and because they had so many others to deal with. Most of us survived because every prisoner was considered a source of further information, no matter how long he was kept. A doctor was always present at torture sessions to make sure that the victim was not about to escape into the next world while the Secret Police still had need of him. It was an image of hell, in which the torment is eternal and you cannot die.

It was hard, in pain, to remember the Bible. Still, I always tried to bear in mind that Jesus could have come to earth as a king, but chose instead to be condemned as a criminal and whipped. A Roman whipping was, by tradition, horrible, and with every blow I thought that He had also known such pain, and there was joy in sharing it with Him.

The mockery and humiliation were equally hard to endure. Jesus often said that he would be scourged, mocked and crucified; and I once used to think that mockery, compared with scourging and crucifixion, was nothing. That was before I knew that a man could be forced to open his mouth so that others

could spit or urinate in it, while his tormentors laughed and jeered.

It is difficult to believe, but just as the officers of the Spanish Inquisition thought it a sacred duty to burn heretics, so many Party men were convinced that what they did was justified. Colonel Dulgheru believed in his "mission." He used to say, "It is in the vital interests of society that men should be maltreated if they withhold information needed to protect it." Much later on, when he saw me reduced to a wreck, weeping from nervous exhaustion, he said with something approaching pity, "Why don't you give in? It's all so futile. You're only flesh and you'll break in the end." But I had proof to the contrary: had I been flesh alone, I could never have resisted. But the body is only a temporary residence for the soul. The Communists, relying on the supremacy of the instinct of self-preservation, thought a man would do anything to avoid extinction. They were mistaken. Christians who believed what they professed in church knew that to die was not the end of life but its fulfillment; not oblivion, but the promise of eternity.

Seven months had passed in Calea Rahova prison. It was October and winter was already on us. We suffered intensely from cold now, as well as from hunger and ill-treatment, and months of winter lay ahead. Gazing from my window at the sleet falling on the gray prison yard, I shivered, yet my spirits were not low. Whatever I could do for God by patient love in jail would be small, I thought, but the good in life always looks small in comparison with the bad.

One evening, a plate of savory goulash appeared, accompanied by four whole slices of bread. Before I could eat it, the guard returned and made me get my things together and follow him to a place where other prisoners were lined up. There, thinking longingly of my lost goulash—one more in a series of deceptions—I waited until we were taken by truck to the Ministry of the Interior, a splendid building much admired by tourists unaware that beneath it lies an enormous, labyrinthine prison, housing hundreds of helpless inmates.

My cell was deep underground. A single unshaded light bulb shone from the ceiling on bare walls, an iron bedstead with

three planks and a straw pallet. Stale air entered through a pipe high in the wall. I saw there was no bucket and realized that I would always have to wait for the guard to take me to the latrine. This was the worst indignity. Sometimes they made you wait for hours, laughing at your pleadings. Men, and women too, went without food and drink for fear of intensifying their agony. I myself have eaten from the dish in which I fulfilled my needs, without washing it, because I had no water.

The silence here was absolute—deliberately so. Our guards wore felt-soled shoes, and you could hear their hands on the door before the key found the lock. Sometimes the sound of a prisoner hammering steadily on his door or screaming echoed down the corridors. The size of the cell permitted me only three paces in each direction, so I lay down and stared at the bulb. It burned all night. Since I couldn't sleep, I prayed. The outside world had ceased to exist for me. All the noises I was used to, the wind and rain in the streets, steel boot studs on stone floors, the buzz of a fly, a human voice, were gone. My heart seemed to shrink, as if it, too, would stop in this lifeless silence.

For the next two years I was kept in solitary confinement in this cell. With nothing to read and no writing materials, I had only my thoughts for company, and I hadn't been a meditative man, but a soul that had rarely known quiet. I had God, yes; but had I really lived to serve God—or was it simply my profession? Forgetting that pastors are also men, people require them to be models of wisdom, purity, love and truthfulness. So, in smaller or greater measure, they begin to act the part. As time passes, they can hardly tell how much of their behavior is playacting.

I remembered the perceptive commentary that Savonarola had written on the fifty-first Psalm, in prison, with his bones so badly broken that he could sign the self-accusatory document only with his left hand. He said there were two kinds of Christians: those who sincerely believe in God and those who, just as sincerely, believe that they believe. You can tell them apart only in moments of crisis, and then by their actions.

Did I believe in God? Now the test had come. I was alone. There was no salary to earn, no opinions to consider. God offered me only suffering—would I continue to love Him?

I remembered one of my favorite books, *The Pateric*, concerning certain fourth-century saints who had formed desert monasteries during a period of persecution. It is four hundred pages long, but the first time I picked it up I didn't eat, drink or sleep until I had finished it. Christian books are like good wine—the older the better. There is a passage in *The Pateric* in which a brother asks his elder, "Father, what is silence?" The answer is, "My son, silence is to sit alone in your cell in wisdom and fear of God, shielding the heart from the burning arrows of thought. Silence like this brings to birth the good. O, silence without care, ladder to heaven! O, silence in which one cares only for first things and speaks only with Jesus Christ! He who keeps silent is the one who sings, 'My heart is ready to praise Thee, O Lord!' "

I wondered how you could praise God by a life of silence. At first, I prayed urgently to be released, asking, "You have said in Scripture that it is not good that a man should be alone; why do You keep me alone?" But as days passed into weeks, my only visitor was still the guard, who brought wedges of black bread and watery soup, and never spoke a word.

The Greeks had a saying, "The Gods walk in soft shoes": in other words, they believed that we cannot be aware of the approach of a divinity. Perhaps in this silence I was coming closer to God. Perhaps, too, it would make me a better pastor, for I had noticed that the best preachers were men who possessed a Christlike inner silence. When the mouth is too often open, even to testify to good, the soul loses its fire, just as a room loses warmth through an open door.

Slowly, I learned that on the tree of silence hangs the fruit of peace. Slowly, I began to realize my real personality and made sure that it belonged to Christ. I found that even here my thoughts and feelings turned to God and that I could pass night after night in prayer, spiritual exercise and praise. Now I knew that I was not playacting, believing that I believed.

I worked out a routine which I followed for the next two years. I stayed awake all night. When the 10 P.M. bell signaled time to sleep, I began my program. Sometimes I was sad, sometimes cheerful, but the nights were never long enough for all I had to do.

I began with a prayer in which tears, often of thankfulness, were rarely absent. Prayers, like radio signals, are heard more clearly by night: it is then that great spiritual battles are fought. Next, in a whisper no guard could hear, I preached a sermon as I would in church, beginning with "Beloved brethren" and ending with "Amen." At last I preached with complete honesty. What the bishop would think, the congregation say, or spies report no longer mattered. Yet I was not preaching to a void. Every sermon is heard by God, his angels and saints; and I felt that also among my "congregation" were those who had brought me to the faith, members of my flock, both dead and living, my family and friends. They were the "cloud of witnesses" of which the Bible speaks. I experienced the "communion of saints" of the Creed.

Every night I talked to my wife and son. I recalled everything fine and good in them. Sometimes my thoughts reached Sabina over the prison walls. She has a note in her Bible made at this time: "Today I saw Richard. I was lying in bed awake and he leaned over and spoke to me." I had concentrated all my power to transmit a message of love to her. We were richly rewarded for a few minutes' thought directed toward one another every day; while so many marriages were destroyed by prison, ours held firm and grew stronger.

Thinking about my family could also bring pain. Sabina would inevitably undergo intense pressure to divorce me. If she refused, and carried on her Church work as well, they would almost certainly arrest her. Then Mihai, who was only ten years old, would be left alone. I lay facedown on the pallet, hugging it as though it were my son. Once I leaped up and smashed my fists on the steel door, shouting, "Give me back my boy." The guards ran in to hold me down, while I was given an injection that rendered me unconscious for hours. When I awoke, I thought I might be going mad. I knew of many who had done so.

It gave me courage to think of Christ's mother, who stood at the foot of the Cross with no word of complaint. I wondered whether we were right to interpret her silence as unrelieved sorrow: surely she was proud, too, that He was giving His life for man? As it was Passover, she must have sung God's praises

that evening, according to Jewish ritual. I, too, must thank God for the suffering through which my little son might pass. One slender hope sustained me: even if Sabina should be arrested. we had friends who would surely care for Mihai.

One of my constant spiritual exercises was to imagine that I was surrendering all my life to Christ: past, present, future, my family, my church, my passions, my secret thoughts and every member of my body. I confessed my past sins to Christ without reserve and saw Him wipe them out with his hand. Often I wept.

During the first days, I spent much time in searching my soul. It was a mistake. Love, goodness and beauty are shy creatures who conceal themselves when they know they are observed. When he was only five, my son had given me a lesson on this subject. I had reproved him, "Jesus has a big exercise book and one of its pages bears your name. This morning he had to write that you disobeyed your mother. Yesterday you fought another boy and said it was his fault, so that went down, too." After thinking a minute Mihai asked, "Daddy, does Jesus write only the bad things we do, or the good things as well?"

My son was so often in my mind. I remembered with delight how he had taught me theology. When I read from the Epistle to the Corinthians. "Examine yourself to see whether you are holding to the faith," he asked, "How should I examine myself?" I replied, "Thump your chest and ask, 'Heart, do you love God?' " I gave my chest a blow as I spoke. "That's not the way," said Mihai. "Once the man at the station who hits train wheels with a hammer let me try, and he told me, 'You only give them a little tap in case they break, not a big thump.' So I don't have to give myself a thump either to see if I love Jesus."

Now I knew that the quiet "Yes" of my heart when I asked, "Do you love Jesus?" was answer enough.

Each night I passed an hour living in the minds of my chief adversaries, men like Colonel Dulgheru. Imagining myself in his place, I found a thousand excuses for him, excuses that enabled me to love him and my other torturers. Then I considered my own faults from his point of view and grew to a new and deeper self-awareness.

Allowing my imagination free rein, I put myself in the situation of a great statesman, a multimillionaire, the Emperor of China or the Pope, and considered how I would use their power. I dreamed of what life would be if I had wings or the cloak of invisibility, and decided that I had chanced on a definition of the human spirit as an invisible, winged force that can transform the world. These were diverting fantasies, but futile. A busy architect does not speculate about what he might do with nonexistent materials—weightless stone, elastic glass. Meditation, like architecture, should be constructive. But such digression did help me to see how opposed entities can unite in the life of the spirit, and now I understood how Christ can contain all things, be lion of Judah and lamb of God.

Nor did I lack amusement in my empty cell. I told myself familiar jokes and invented new ones. I played chess with myself, using pieces made from the coarse prison bread: Black versus Less-black, grayed with chalk from the wall. I could divide my mind so that Black should not know Less-black's next move, and vice versa, and since I did not lose a game in two years, I felt that I could claim to be a master.

I discovered that joy can be acquired like a habit, in the same way that a folded sheet of paper falls naturally into its original fold. "Be joyful," is a command of God. John Wesley used to say, "I was never sad even one quarter of an hour." I cannot say the same of myself, but I learned to rejoice in the worst of conditions.

The Communists believe that happiness comes from material satisfaction; but alone in my cell, cold, hungry and in rags, I danced for joy every night. The idea came to me with boyhood memories of watching whirling dervishes. I had been moved past understanding by their ecstasy, the grave beauty of these Moslem monks, their grace of movement as they revolved, calling out their name for God, "Allah!" Later I learned that many others—Jews, Pentecostals, early Christians, people in the Bible like David and Miriam, altar boys celebrating Easter in the Cathedral of Seville, even today—also danced for God. Words alone have never been adequate to express what man feels in the nearness of divinity. Sometimes I was so filled with joy that I felt I would burst if I did not give vent to it. I remem-

bered the words of Jesus, "Blessed are you when men come to hate you, when they exclude you from their company and reproach you and cast out your name as evil on account of the Son of Man. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy." I told myself, "I've carried out only half this command. I've rejoiced, but that is not enough."

When the guard next peered through the spy hole, he saw me springing about my cell. His orders must have been to distract anyone who showed signs of breakdown, for he padded off and returned with some food from the staff room: a hunk of bread, some cheese and sugar. As I took them, I remembered the conclusion to the verse in St. Luke: "Rejoice in that day and leap for joy—for behold your reward is great." It was a very large piece of bread: more than a week's ration.

From then on I rarely allowed a night to pass without dancing, although I was never paid for it again. Composing songs, I sang them softly to myself and danced to my own music. The guards became used to it. I did not break the silence, and they had seen stranger things in these subterranean cells. Friends to whom I spoke later of dancing in prison asked, "What for? What use was it?" It was not something useful. It was a manifestation of joy like the dance of David, a holy sacrifice offered before the altar of the Lord. I did not mind if my captors thought me mad, for I had discovered a beauty in Christ which I had not known before.

Sometimes I saw visions. Once as I danced I seemed to hear my name called—not "Richard," but another name that I cannot reveal. I knew that it was I who was called under my new name, and it flashed into my mind, I don't know why, "This must be the archangel Gabriel." Then the cell was ablaze with light. I heard no more, but understood that I was to work together with Jesus and the saints to build a bridge—a bridge of tears, prayers and self-sacrifice for sinners to cross over and join the blessed. I saw that our bridge had to be one that could be used by even the weakest in goodness. I saw that I must love men as they were, not as they should be. Another night I became aware of a great throng of angels moving slowly through the darkness toward my bed. As they approached they sang a song of spiritual love. I could not believe that the guards did

not hear this marvelous, passionate music which was so intensely real to me.

Prisoners who have spent long spells alone often have such visions and there are, of course, natural explanations for such phenomena which do not in any way invalidate them. The soul uses the body for its own purposes. These and other visions helped to sustain my life: that is enough to prove that they were not mere hallucinations.

One night a faint tapping began on the wall beside my bed. A new prisoner had arrived in the next cell and was signaling me. I answered, provoking a flurry of taps. Soon I realized that my neighbor was conveying a simple code: *A*—one tap; *B*—two taps; *C*—three taps.

"Who are you?" was his first message.

"A pastor," I replied.

From this halting start we developed our own system: one tap to indicate the first five letters of the alphabet, two taps for the second group of five, and so on. Thus *B* was a single tap, followed by a pause, then two more taps; *F* was two taps followed after a space by one. Even this code was not sophisticated enough for my new neighbor. He knew Morse and passed on the letters one by one until I had learned them all. Then he transmitted his name.

"Bless you," I replied laboriously. "Are you a Christian?"

A minute went by. "I cannot claim to be."

He was a radio engineer, it appeared, awaiting trial on a capital charge; fifty-two years old and in poor health. He had abandoned his faith some years before, having married an unbeliever, and was in deep depression. All that night, I spoke to him through the wall about Christ's mercy, growing progressively more fluent in the use of Morse.

In the hour before dawn, he tapped: "I should like to confess my sins."

It was a strange confession, broken by many silences. "I was seven . . . I kicked a boy . . . because he was a Jew. He cursed me . . . May your mother . . . not be able to see you . . . when she dies . . . Mother was dying . . . when they arrested me."

When he had unburdened himself, I told him about the

cleansing power of the blood of Jesus Christ, and he said he felt happier than he had for years. We became Morse friends as others become pen friends. I taught him Bible verses, but we also exchanged jokes and tapped out the movements of chess games. And every day I sent him messages about Christ, preaching in code. When the guard caught me at it, I was transferred to another cell, with another neighbor, and immediately began again. In time many of us learned the code. Prisoners were often shifted to new cells, and more than once I was betrayed by an informer, so I limited myself to tapping Bible verses and words about Christ: I was not prepared to suffer for the sake of political argument.

Solitary confinement caused many of us to probe deeply into the past. The deliberately forgotten betrayals underlying yesterday's successes returned to mind with inescapable persistence. It was as if mother, father, girls long ago abandoned, friends slandered or cheated came into your cell to confront you reproachfully. How many of the confessions I heard in Morse code began, "When I was a boy," "When I was at school. . . ." The memory of old transgressions stood like remorseless watchdogs before the sanctuary of God's peace. But when all other gates to heaven are shut for a man, the Cabala tells us that there remains the *bab hadimot,* the gate of tears, and it was through this gate that we prisoners had to pass.

One morning, when a neighbor tapped that it was Good Friday, I found a nail in the lavatory and wrote JESUS on my cell wall, hoping it might comfort those who came after me. The guard was angry. "You're for the carcer," he said.

I was taken down the corridor to a cupboard built into a wall, just high enough to stand in and twenty inches square, with a few small airholes and one through which food could be pushed. The guard shoved me in and closed the door. Sharp points stung my back. I jerked forward, to be pierced again in the chest by a second set of spikes. Panic surged through me, but I forced myself to stand absolutely still. Then, moving cautiously in the dark, I felt the sides of the cupboard—all were studded with steel projections. Only by standing rigidly upright could I avoid impalement. This was the carcer.

Soon my legs began to ache. By the end of an hour every

muscle seemed to hurt. My feet, still sore from the *manège,* were swelling. When I collapsed, lacerating myself on the spikes, they let me out for a brief rest, then put me back. I tried to concentrate on Christ's sufferings, but my own were too obsessive. Then I remembered that my son Mihai, when very young, had asked, "What shall I do, Daddy? I'm bored." I said, "Think about God, Mihai." He replied, "Why should I think about Him? I've only a small head: He has a great big head, so He ought to think about me." So now I told myself, "Don't try to think about God. Don't think at all." In that suffocating darkness I reminded myself that Indian yogis clear their minds of thought by repeating a secret formula, over and over again. Much the same method is used by monks on Mount Athos with their ceaseless "prayer of the heart," in which a word is said for every heartbeat: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy upon me." I knew already that Christ was merciful, but just as I used to tell my wife every day that I loved her, so I resolved to do the same with Jesus. I began to repeat, "Jesus, dear bridegroom of my soul, I love you." The quiet beating of a loving heart is a music that carries far, so I set this phrase to the same rhythm. At first I seemed to hear the devil sneering, "You love Him, and He lets you suffer. If He's all-powerful, why doesn't He take you out of the carcer?" I continued to repeat quietly, "Jesus, dear bridegroom of my soul, I love you." In a short time the significance of the words was blurred and then lost. I had ceased to think.

Later I was often to practice this detachment in bad moments. Jesus says in the Gospel according to St. Matthew, "For in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh." This has been my experience of Him. Don't think—and Christ will come, taking you by surprise. But the clarity of His light is hard to bear. Sometimes I reversed the process to flee from it to my own thoughts.

I spent two days in the carcer. Some of my friends were "incarcerated" for a week or more, but the doctor warned that my condition had become dangerous. Already I was inhabiting the borderland between the living and the dead. After my long confinement, and the lack of sun, food and air, my hair had

ceased to grow. The barber did not need to shave me for days. My fingernails were pallid and soft as a plant kept in darkness.

Hallucinations began to possess my mind. As I stared at my tin cup of water to convince myself that I was not in hell, where there is no water, I watched it turn into a helmet. I saw delicious dishes laid out on an enormous table, stretching out far beyond the cell. From a long way off my wife approached. She carried a plate piled high with smoking sausages, but I snarled at her, "Is that all? How small they are." Sometimes my cell expanded into a spacious library, with shelf after shelf of books in leather bindings reaching up into the darkness: famous novels, poetry, biography, religious and scientific works. They towered up above me. At other times, faces by the thousand turned eagerly toward me: I was surrounded by huge crowds, waiting for me to speak. Questions were shouted. Voices answered them. There were cheers and countercheers. A sea of faces stretched into infinity.

I was also troubled by angry dreams of violence against those who had imprisoned me, and tormented by wildly erotic fantasies. This sort of hell is not easily understood by those who have never lived there. I was thirty-nine when I entered prison, healthy and active, and now the return of tuberculosis brought with it heightened sexual desire. I daydreamed of performing the sex act with several women at once, and with girls of every race, and then of various perversions.

To shake off such hallucinations I treated them as hostile intruders, like the TB microbes in my body. So, far from blaming myself for their inroads, I claimed credit for resisting them. Once I could regard them not as sins but as enemies, I could plan their destruction. Evil thoughts can be subdued by reason, if their full consequences are calmly considered. I did not try to drive them out, knowing that they would slip in again by a side door; instead, I let them stay while I worked out the cost in real life should I surrender to them. To give way to such temptations would surely bring misery to all who knew me. My wife would have to divorce me. My son's future would be ruined. My parishioners would lose faith. And then, despised

by all, I should still have to answer to God for the harm I had caused. As doctors employ one virus to fight another, we can use the Devil's maxim, "divide and rule," to defeat him. So the devil of pride—the fear of losing face—can be victoriously turned against the devil of lust.

One morning, when our latrines were blocked, they took me to the toilet used by the guards. A mirror hung above the washbasin, and from it the eyes of a madman stared at me, bloodshot, and burning with fear and suspicion. After nearly two years, I did not know myself. My skin, yellow parchment, stretched over my cheekbones and was stained dark gray in the eye sockets. My hair was a dirty white. The red scar of a recent wound covered one side of a bony forehead. My mouth was a trembling line.

I gazed in horror at that terrible old man, and then laughter shook me in helpless gusts. So this was what was left of the handsome young preacher, loved and admired by all. If only my congregation could see me now. I understood, as though for the first time, that what is really fine in us is hidden, and reminded myself that my end would be uglier still—a grisly skeleton, an empty skull—and, remembering this, my faith and desire to keep to the spiritual life were strengthened.

Then I made a second discovery. In the toilet was a torn newspaper, the first I had seen since my arrest. It contained the news that Premier Groza had resolved to wipe out the rich, which struck me as enormously funny; a government bent on liquidating the wealthy, while the rest of the world was trying to end poverty. I looked for Patrascanu's name, in case he had been reinstated, but it was not among those of the Ministers present when Groza made his speech. On the way back to my cell under escort, I heard a woman weeping and crying out dementedly. Her shrieks seemed to come from a level of the prison below us; they rose to a paroxysm, then were suddenly silenced.

A few days later a new prisoner was put in the cell next to mine. I tapped out "Who are you?" and received a prompt reply. It was Ion Michalache, who had been a member of several prewar governments and a colleague of the great political

leader Iuliu Maniu. When the Party terror began, Michalache joined a group attempting to escape to the West. He was arrested at the airport and, in October, 1947, sentenced to life imprisonment. Michalache was over sixty and in a mood of black despair. All his life, he told me, he had struggled to help his countrymen, and this was his reward. I tried to make him give up willingly all that God had taken from him. "When you will all that happens, then what happens is only what you willed," I signaled. "Renunciation is the way to peace."

He tapped back, "There is no peace without liberty."

I replied, "In a country where tyranny reigns—prison is the place of honor."

There was a silence. Then, "Thank you. That is my only comfort." I reminded Michalache of the consolation in the prospect of eternal life, but he answered that God was lost for him.

I signaled, "God is never lost for any man . . . We are the lost ones . . . If we find ourselves . . . we find Godhead within us . . . Prison can help us in this search." He said that he would try again.

Before Michalache was moved on two days later, he told me that the woman whose cries we had heard was the wife of a former Prime Minister, Ion Gigurtu. The way her cries stopped revealed that they were giving her injections to silence her. When I next rapped on the wall there was no reply. Michalache was gone. I did not hear of him again for fifteen years.

Soon after this, my interrogation was resumed. It was usually conducted by Lieutenant Grecu, a resolute young man, intelligent and self-assured, who had been indoctrinated in the belief that he was making a better world. Once again he concentrated his questions on the famine relief I had undertaken for the Scandinavian church mission. Did I still deny, he asked, that the funds were used for spying?

I said, "I can understand your suspecting the British and Americans of spending money for espionage here, but what possible interest could Norway or Sweden have in such activities?"

"A good deal," he retorted, "since both are tools of the imperialists."

"But Norway is famous for its democratic spirit, and Sweden has had a Socialist government for forty years."

"Nonsense," he said. "They're as Fascist as the rest."

At our next meeting, Grecu said he had checked and found that I was right. It was a handsome admission, for a Party man, and I took advantage of my moral victory to sidetrack him at every turn. When he inquired, for instance, about the distribution of the Gospel in Russian, I suggested that a director of the Bible Society named Emile Klein might be behind it. When he asked why I had made repeated visits to the town of Iasí (one of the centers of this work) I said I had a standing invitation to call on the Patriarch.

The next morning I was summoned again. Grecu was at his desk, white with rage, a rubber truncheon in his hand. It seemed that he had been reprimanded for failing to cross-examine me.

"Your story was a pack of lies," he shouted. "They've determined that Emile Klein died before you were arrested; they've checked the dates of your trips to Iasí and Patriarch Justinian was hardly ever there at the time."

He pushed back his chair. "I've had enough. Here's some paper. We know you've communicated in code with other prisoners, including Michalache. Now we must know exactly what each of them said to you. We also want full details on all your other breaches of prison rules. This time, tell the truth. If you don't . . ."

He brought his truncheon crashing down on the desk. "You have half an hour," he said, and left the room.

I sat down to write. The first word had to be "Declaration." I had trouble starting. It had been two years since I had held a pen. I began the statement by admitting freely that I had broken the rules: I had tapped Bible verses and the Gospel message through the walls, hoarded pills to kill myself, and made a knife out of a piece of tin and chessmen from bread and chalk. As for the serious offense of communicating with other prisoners, I said I had done so, but did not know their names. I did not mention that, using Morse, I had received confessions

and even brought men to the Faith. I wrote, "I have never spoken against the Communists. I am a disciple of Christ, who has given us love for our enemies. I understand them and pray for their conversion so that they will become my brothers. I can give no statement about what others may have tapped to me, for a priest of God can never be a witness for the prosecution. My calling is to defend, not to accuse."

Grecu returned on time, swinging his truncheon. "I've been warming up on some of your fellow jailbirds," he said.

He picked up my "Declaration" and began to read. After a while, he put the truncheon aside. When he had come to the end he looked troubled and said, "Mr. Georgescu [he had never called me "Mr." before], why do you say you love me? I know this is one of your Christian commandments, but I don't believe anyone could keep it. *I* couldn't love someone who shut me up for years in solitary, who starved and tortured me."

I said, "It's not a matter of keeping a commandment. When I became a Christian it was as if I had been reborn, with a new character full of love. Just as only water can flow from a spring, so only love can come from a loving heart."

For two hours that day, we talked about Christianity and its relation to the Marxist doctrines on which he was raised. Grecu was surprised when I said that Marx's first work was a commentary on St. John's Gospel; nor did he know that Marx, in his foreword to *Capital,* wrote that Christianity—especially in its Protestant form—is "the ideal religion for the renewal of lives made wretched by sin." Since my life had been made wretched by sin, I said, I was simply following Marx's advice in becoming a Protestant Christian.

After this meeting, Grecu called me to his office almost daily for an hour or two. He had confirmed the quotations, and wondered why his teachers had never mentioned them. It was obvious that Marx was not as hostile to religion as they supposed. This became the pretext for long discussions about Christianity, in which I emphasized its democratic and revolutionary early spirit.

Repeatedly, Grecu said, "I was brought up an atheist, and I'll never be anything else." I told him, "Atheism is a holy word to Christians. When our forefathers were thrown to the wild

beasts for their faith, they were called atheists by Nero and Caligula. So if anyone calls himself an atheist, I must respect him."

Grecu smiled, so I continued, "Lieutenant, one of my ancestors was a rabbi in the seventeenth century. His biographers record how he met an atheist and said, 'I envy you, dear brother. Your spiritual life must be so much stronger than my own. When I see a man in trouble I often say, "God will help him," and pass on. You don't believe in God, so you have to take on his burdens and help everyone you meet.'

"You see, we Christians don't criticize the Party for atheism, but for producing the wrong type of atheist. There are two sorts: those who say, 'There is no God, so I can do all the evil I like,' and those who reason, 'Since there is no God, I must do all the good that God would do if He existed.' The greatest of all atheists in this second sense was Christ himself. When he saw men hungry, sick and in distress, he didn't pass by, saying, 'God will help them.' He acted as if the whole responsibility were his own. So people began to ask, 'Is this man God? He does God's work.' That's how they discovered that Jesus was God. Lieutenant, if you can become this sort of atheist, loving everyone and serving everyone, men will soon discover that you have become a son of God; and you yourself will discover the Godhead within you."

My arguments may shock those who take Christianity for granted. But St. Paul tells us that missionaries must be Jews among the Jews, Greeks among the Greeks. I had to be a Marxist with the Marxist Grecu, and speak his language. My words touched his heart; he began to study and love Jesus. Two weeks later, in his khaki uniform with the dreaded blue tabs of the Security Police at his collar, Grecu confessed to me in my patched prison rags. We became brothers.

From then on, while giving lip service to the Party, he bravely helped prisoners as best he could, through difficulties and dangers. Then one day he disappeared, and no one knew what became of him. I made cautious inquiries among the guards, who thought he had been arrested. To hide a true conversion is not easy.

I met other secret believers among the Secret Police, some of whom still go about their duties. Never say that a man cannot torture and pray at the same time. Jesus tells us of a tax-gatherer (whose work in Roman times went hand in hand with extortion and brutality) who prayed for mercy as a sinner and went home "justified." The Gospel does not say, however, that he immediately abandoned his unpleasant job. God looks into the heart and sees in a good prayer the promise of a new life in the future.

During my second year of confinment, one of these divided souls was put in my cell. All the time he stayed with me, his hands were chained behind his back, so that I had to feed and care for him.

Dionisiu was a young sculptor, full of new ideas in a world that asked only flattering busts of Stalin. On the verge of starvation, he had taken a post with the Secret Police. Part of his job had been the torture of prisoners, but at the same time he ran great risks to warn them of informers. Sensing that he was under suspicion, Dionisiu decided to flee the country; then, with freedom at hand, he was compelled by some inner urge to return and give himself up. These split personalities are found everywhere under Communism—Communism that corrodes the minds of honest men and ruins their capacity for decision. He had been pulled in two diametrically opposite directions all his life.

For ten nights, from dark till morning, I taught Dionisiu from the Bible. His sense of guilt was driven out, and Christ entered his heart. Before they transferred him from my cell he said, "If one of the fifteen priests in my little town had stopped to talk to me when I was younger, I should have found Jesus long ago."

Interrogation did not cease with Lieutenant Grecu's departure, but God granted me the gift of being able to forget the names of all those I could harm. Although in prison I composed more than 300 poems, totaling 100,000 words, and wrote them all down on my release, and although now, more than twenty years later, I can recall entire episodes from my prison years as

vividly as though they had happened yesterday, I could make my mind a blank during interrogation. So a new device was tried.

On the pretext that my tuberculosis had worsened—and, indeed, my coughing was almost continuous—the doctors prescribed a new drug, a yellow capsule that brought long sleep filled with delightful dreams. When I awoke I was given another. I remained unconscious for days, awakened only by guards bringing meals, which had become light and wholesome.

My recollection of the resumed questioning is hazy. I know that the drug did not make me betray my friends, because when I was put on trial later it was alone. No grand display trial of the men behind the World Council of Churches "spy net" ever took place. The drug was used on Cardinal Mindszenty and many others. It deteriorates the will until the victim goes into a delirium of self-accusation. Later, I was to hear men under its influence banging on cell doors and demanding to see the political officer so that they might lodge new charges against themselves. The treatment can also have long-term effects. Men who had taken it months before later confessed to me sins they had had no chance of committing. Perhaps the tuberculosis in my body counteracted the drug. At any rate, by God's grace, I was saved from treachery.

After the drugging I became still weaker and one day collapsed completely. But although I could rise from bed only with extreme effort, my mind retained its alertness. At times, I even feared its lucidity. It is no myth that St. Anthony, Martin Luther and many other more ordinary men have seen the Devil. I saw him once, as a child. He grinned at me. This is the first time I have spoken of it in half a century. Alone in the cell, now, I felt his presence again. It was dark and cold, and he was mocking me. The Bible speaks of places "where satyrs dance," and prison had become such a place. I heard his taunting voice day and night. "Where's Jesus? Your Saviour can't save you. You've been tricked, and you've tricked others. He isn't the Messiah—you followed the wrong man."

I cried aloud, "Then who is the true Messiah who will come?" The answer was clear, but too blasphemous to repeat.

I had written books and articles proving Christ was the Messiah, but now I could not marshal a single argument. The devils who had made Hans Hauge, the great Norwegian evangelist, waver in his faith while in jail, who had made even John the Baptist doubt in his dungeon, raged against me. I was weaponless. My joy and serenity were gone. Always before, I had felt Christ close to me, easing my bitterness, illuminating the darkness, but now I felt utterly forsaken.

During those hopeless days, I slowly composed a long poem, an act that may be difficult for those who have not known any similar physical and spiritual state to accept. It was my salvation. By word, rhythm and incantation, I was able to defeat Satan. Here is a prose translation which gives the exact meaning of the Rumanian:

> From childhood I frequented temples and churches. In them God was glorified. Different priests sang and censed with zeal. They claimed it right to love You. But as I grew, I saw such deep sorrow in the world of this God that I said to myself, "He has a heart of stone. Otherwise he would ease the difficulties of the way for us." Sick children struggle with fever in hospitals and parents pray for them. Heaven is deaf. The ones we love go to the valley of death, even when our prayers are long. Innocent men are burned alive in furnaces. And Heaven is silent. It lets things be. Can God wonder if, in undertones, even the believers begin to doubt? Hungry, tortured, persecuted in their own land, they have no answers to these questions. The Almighty is disgraced by the horrors that befall us.
>
> How can I love the creator of microbes and of tigers that tear men? How can I love Him who tortures all His servants because one ate from a tree? Worse than Job, I have neither wife, child nor comforters, and in this prison there is neither sun nor air and the regime is hard to endure.
>
> From my bed of planks they will make my coffin. Stretched upon it, I try to find why my thoughts run to You, why my writings all turn toward You? Why is this passionate love in my soul, why does my song go only to You? I know well I am rejected, soon I will putrify in a tomb.

The Bride of the "Song of Songs" did not love when she asked if You are "rightly loved." Love is its own justification. Love is not for the wise. Through a thousand ordeals she will not cease to love. Though fire burns and the waves would drown her, she will kiss the hand that hurts. If she finds no answer to her questions she is confident and waits. One day, the sun will shine in hidden places and all will be made plain.

Forgiveness of many sins only increased Magdalene's burning love. But she gave perfume and many tears before You said Your forgiving word. And if You had not said it, still she would sit and weep for the love she has toward You, even being in sin. She loved You before Your blood was shed. She loved You before You forgave. Neither do I ask if it is right to give You love. I do not love in hope of salvation. I would love You in everlasting misfortune. I would love You even in consuming fire. If You had refused to descend to men, You would have been my distant dream. If You had refused to sow Your word, I would love You without hearing it. If You had hesitated and fled from the Crucifixion, and I were not saved, still I would love You. And even if I found sin in You, I would cover it with my love.

Now I will dare to say mad words, so that all may know how much I love. Now I will touch untouched strings and magnify You with a new music. If the prophets had predicted another, I would leave them, not You. Let them produce a thousand proofs, I will keep my love for You. If I divined that You were a deceiver, I would pray for You weeping and, though I could not follow You in falsehood, it would not lessen my love. For Saul, Samuel passed a life in weeping and severe fast. So my love would resist even if I knew You lost. If You, not Satan, had risen wrongly in revolt against heaven and lost the loveliness of wings and fallen like an archangel from high, hopeless, I would hope that the Father would forgive You and that one day You would walk with Him again in the golden streets of Heaven.

If You were a myth, I would leave reality and live with You in a dream. If they proved You did not exist, You would receive life from my love. My love is mad, without motive, as Your love is, too. Lord Jesus, find some happiness here. For more I cannot give You.

When I had completed this poem, I no longer felt Satan's nearness. He had been defeated. In the silence I felt the kiss of Christ, and everyone is silent when he is kissed. Quiet and joy returned.

Chapter Two

AFTER almost three years of solitary confinement, I was near death. I spat blood so often that even Colonel Dulgheru became alarmed. "We're not murderers like the Nazis," he said, "we want you to live—and suffer." A specialist was called. Anxious to avoid infection, he made his diagnosis through the spy hole in the cell door and orders were given for my transfer to a prison hospital.

They carried me up from the underground cells and in the yard of the Ministry of the Interior I saw moonlight and stars again. Lying in an ambulance, I caught familiar glimpses of Bucharest. We were moving in the direction of my house, and for a moment I thought I was being taken home to die. Then, when we were almost there, the ambulance turned off and began to climb a hill on the outskirts of the city. I knew then that we were going to Vacaresti, one of the great monasteries of Bucharest which, during the last century, had been turned into a jail. The fine church and chapel had become storage sheds. Walls had been knocked down between monks' cells, making them into rooms large enough for many prisoners. Still, a few cells remained in which men could be isolated, and I was destined for one of them.

Before the guards lifted me out of the ambulance, they

wrapped a sheet around my head. Then I was half carried across the courtyard, up some stairs and along a balcony. When the sheet was unwound, I found myself alone in a narrow, bare cell. I heard an officer talking to a guard on the verandah outside.

"No one is allowed to see this man except the doctor, and even then you must be present," he said. My continued existence was to remain a secret.

The guard, a grizzled little man, was intrigued by these precautions. As soon as the officer had left, he asked what I had done. I said, "I am a pastor and a child of God."

He whispered, bending over me, "Praise be to the Lord. I'm one of Jesus' soldiers." He meant that he was a secret member of the Army of the Lord, a revivalist movement that had branched off from the Orthodox church. In spite of its persecution by Communists and clergy alike, the movement had spread rapidly through the villages, gathering hundreds of thousands of followers.

My new friend's name was Tachici, and I was happy to have him near. We exchanged Bible verses and he helped me as much as he dared—guards had previously been sentenced to twelve years for giving an apple or a cigarette to a prisoner. I was too weak to leave the bed, and often I lay in my own dirt. For a short spell in the morning, I could think clearly; then I tossed and turned again in delirium. I slept little. But at least there was a small window through which I could see the sky. And in the morning I was awakened by a strange sound—it was so long since I had heard birdsong.

I told Tachici, "When he walked in the woods, Martin Luther used to raise his hat to the birds and say, 'Good morning, theologians—you wake and sing, but I, old fool, know less than you and worry over everything, instead of simply trusting in the heavenly Father's care.' "

The window revealed a corner of grass and yard, usually empty. Sometimes white-coated doctors scurried across, afraid even to glance up at the windows. They had to practice medicine "in the spirit of the class war." I could hear men talking when they were let out for exercise. In the past I had sometimes longed for the sound of a human voice, but now it was an

irritation. Nothing but small talk. Their thoughts seemed trivial and false.

One morning, an old man spoke from the next cell. "I'm Leonte Filipescu. Who are you?"

I recognized the name of one of Rumania's first Socialists, a brilliant man whom the Party had used and then discarded. "Fight your illness," he called. "Don't give in. We'll all be free in two weeks' time."

"How do you know?" I asked.

"The Americans are driving the Communists back in Korea. They'll be here in two weeks."

I said, "But even if they meet no opposition, it will surely take them more than two weeks to reach Rumania?"

"Distance is nothing to them. They have supersonic jets."

I soon learned not to argue, for I discovered that prisoners lived on their illusions, the more elaborate, the more reassuring. Was the daily gruel a little thicker? It meant "An American ultimatum has frightened Russia and so our treatment is being improved." Had someone been knocked down by a guard? It meant that the Communists were making the most of their last days of power. Men came back in high spirits from the exercise yard, saying, "King Michael has broadcast that he will be back on his throne next month."

No one could bear to believe that he would really spend the next ten or twenty years in prison. Filipescu was still hopeful of early release when he was moved out, a month later, to another prison hospital, where we were to meet again. In his place came a leader of the Fascist Iron Guard, Radu Mironovici, who claimed to be a devout Christian, but was consumed with hatred for the Jews. One day I asked Tachici to help me up in bed and I called to Mironovici, "When you take Holy Communion in your Orthodox church, are the bread and wine transformed into the actual body and blood of Jesus Christ?" He answered that they were.

I continued, "You know that Jesus was a Jew. If the wine becomes His blood, then that blood is Jewish, isn't it?" Reluctantly, he admitted it. I went on: "Jesus says that whoever eats His body and drinks His blood will have eternal life. So, to have eternal life, you have to infuse in your Aryan blood-

stream a few drops of Jewish blood. Then how can you hate Jews?"

He had no answer. I begged him to see that it was absurd for a follower of Jesus, who was a Jew, to hate Jews—just as it was absurd for the Communists to be anti-Semitic, since they followed a Jew named Karl Marx. Mironovici was presently transferred to a distant cell, but he told Tachici, "A part of my life which was false has fallen away. I was a Christian who was too proud to follow Christ."

On a day when I was running a high temperature and feeling sick and faint, the guards came for me again. They muffled my eyes and led me along a corridor. When the blindfold came off, I was in a large, bare room with barred windows. Four men and a woman sat facing me behind a table. This, I was told, was my trial, and they would be my judges.

"A lawyer has been nominated to defend you," said the president of the court. "He has waived your right to call witnesses. You may sit down."

Guards held me upright on a chair, while I was given an injection to steady me. When the waves of nausea and dizziness passed, the prosecutor was on his feet. He was saying that I stood for the same criminal ideology in Rumania as Josip Broz Tito did in Yugoslavia. I thought I must be delirious. At the time of my arrest Marshal Tito was considered an exemplary Communist; I did not know that he had since been revealed as a deviationist and traitor. The prosecutor continued his interminable account of my guilt: spy work through the Scandinavian church missions and the World Council of Churches, spreading imperialist ideology under cover of religion, infiltrating the Party under the same pretense, with the real purpose of destroying it, and so on. As his voice droned on, I felt myself slipping from the chair and proceedings were delayed while I received another injection.

The defense lawyer did what he could. It was not much.

"Have you anything to say to these charges?" asked the president. His voice seemed far away and the room was growing dim. Only one thing penetrated my confusion.

"I love God," I said.

Then I heard my sentence: twenty years' hard labor. The

trial had taken ten minutes. As I left, I was again blindfolded.

Two days later, Tachici whispered to me, "You're leaving. God be with you." Another guard followed and, between them, they carried me to the main gate. I had a view of Bucharest spread below—the last time I was to see it for six years. Regulation chains, weighing fifty pounds, were hammered into place around my ankles. Then I was lifted into a truck in which there were already some forty men and a few women. All, even the sick, were chained. Near me, a girl began to weep. I tried to comfort her.

"You don't remember me?" she sobbed.

I looked more closely, but her face meant little. "It's my fever," I said.

"I was a member of your congregation." After my arrest poverty had turned her to theft, she told me, and now she had to serve three months. "I'm so ashamed." Her voice was full of tears. "I was in your church, and now you're a martyr and I'm a thief."

"I'm a sinner, too, saved by God's grace," I said. "Believe in Christ and your sins will be forgiven."

She kissed my hand, promising that on her release she would let my family know that she had seen me, but I knew she felt I had not long to live.

At a railway siding, we were loaded into a special wagon for transporting prisoners. The windows were tiny and opaque. As we rattled slowly across the plain and into the Carpathian foothills, we found that all of us had tuberculosis and decided that we must be bound for Tirgul-Ocna, where there was a sanitorium for TB prisoners. For some four hundred years convicts had worked at the local salt mines, and thirty years ago a famous doctor, Romanscanu, had built the sanitorium and given it to the state. Before the Communists took over, its reputation had been excellent.

After a 200-mile journey, which took a day and night, we came to the station of Tirgul-Ocna, a town of 30,000 inhabitants. With six other men unable to walk, I was piled into the back of a cart. The others had to haul us, while the guards looked on, until we reached the big building at the edge of the town. As I was carried in, I saw a familiar face. It was

Dr. Aldea, an ex-Fascist who had been converted and become a family friend. When I had been helped to a bed in the quarantine room, he hurried over to examine me.

"I'm a prisoner myself," he said, "but they let me work as a doctor. There are no nurses and only one physician, so we must look after each other as best we can." He took my temperature and made his check. I asked, "How am I?" and I saw his eyes were wet.

"I won't deceive you," he answered. "There's nothing we can do. You may have about two weeks to live. Try to eat what they give you, although it's not good. Otherwise . . ." He touched my shoulder and moved on.

During the next few days, two men who had been with me in the cart died. I heard another of them pleading hoarsely with Aldea, "I swear I'm better, Doctor. The fever's going down. Today I coughed blood only once. Don't let them put me in Room Four."

I asked the man who brought my watery gruel what happened in Room Four. He set the plate down carefully and replied, "That's where you go when they know there's no hope."

I tried to eat the gruel but couldn't manage it. Someone fed me with a spoon. The food wouldn't stay down. Dr. Aldea said, "I'm sorry, but they insist. You'll have to go to Room Four."

There I rejoined my companions from the cart.

Twelve beds, far too close together, and a few small bedside tables filled the room. It was on the ground floor. The big windows were thrown open and we could see prisoners working in the vegetable patch; and beyond that high walls and barbed wire.

I might already have been dead. Prisoners crossed themselves as they passed the foot of my bed. Most of the time, I lay in a coma. If I groaned, others turned me over or lifted water to my cracked lips. Dr. Aldea was helpless. "If only we could lay hands on some modern drugs," he said. A new American discovery called streptomycin was said to be doing wonders against tuberculosis, but when Aldea asked for it, he was told that the so-called cures were lying "imperialist propaganda."

During the next two weeks, all four men who had entered the

room with me died, one after another. As I clung to life, Dr. Aldea's look of pity began to change to bewilderment.

Sometimes in my delirium I was not sure myself whether I was alive or dead. At night I slept in brief snatches, jolted awake by sharp stabs of agony. Pus ran from a dozen sores in my body; my chest was swollen with it. I spat blood daily and the disease had also affected my spine. Fellow prisoners turned me on my side an average of forty times a night to ease the pain. With soul and body linked by the most tenuous ties, I moved to the borders of the physical world. Knowing that we all have a guardian angel, I asked mine angrily, "What kind of guardian are you, who cannot keep me from suffering, or if not that, even from un-Christian thoughts?" In a flash of white light lasting a thousandth of a second, I saw him: he seemed to have many arms like Krishna, and as the vision faded, I heard his voice: "I cannot do all I should for you. I, too, am a convert."

In the morning, I recalled that Orthodox mystics speak of "dark angels" who have been brought back to the service of God, and I myself have found that conversion, however deep, cannot altogether erase the past. In my state of mind, dogma meant nothing: I gave no thought to the place such a vision might have in Protestant theology. Being delirious and close to death, I found in this strange experience a comforting explanation of what I had already endured.

To the amazement of the doctors, I survived the first crisis and the worst of my fever passed, although I had no medicine. While my illness grew little better, my mind was clear for longer spells each day; I even began to take stock of my surroundings and companions. It was a quiet place with no alarm bells, no shouting guards—indeed, virtually no guards at all. Fearing infection, they kept away from the patients. Tirgul-Ocna was administered from a distance, and so, through indifference and neglect, became one of the freer prisons in Rumania. Nothing was provided for the prisoners, who had to wear the clothes in which they had been arrested. These were often years old, and now and then were patched with any cloth that could be found.

Food was brought by common criminals to the door of the

political section, and from there the politicals carried it to the various cells. Those who could walk went to the bucket for their rations; the others were given it in bed. For every meal there was watery cabbage or bean soup or a thin gruel made from maize or barley.

Prisoners who were well enough cultivated the plot encircling the building; the rest lay listlessly on their plank beds, passing the hours with gossip. In Room Four—the Death Room, as it was called, since no one had yet left it alive—the atmosphere was altogether different. As my eyes traveled from one gaunt, transparent face to another, I realized that we were certainly a strange collection.

Abbot Iscu of Tismana, on my right, was the saintly head of one of our historic monasteries. A youth of nineteen, Vasilescu, to my left, had been the Abbot's overseer when they were both in the slave camps of the Danube-Black Sea canal project that the Communists had launched the year after my arrest. Next came Filipescu, the old Socialist who had told me at Vacaresti that the Americans would be with us in two weeks' time. Then there was a police sergeant, Bucur, who swore that the doctors had put him in Room Four to satisfy their personal malice. His neighbor, Moise, whom he hated, possessed the zest for life and stamina characteristic of his Jewish race. General Tobescu, a former chief of police, had a corner bed. Then came two Communist guerrillas who had fled to Rumania after taking the losing side in the Greek civil war: like many of their comrades, they were immediately arrested for not having fought successfully. Then Valeriu Gafencu, of the Iron Guard, who had been sentenced at the age of eighteen—ten years before. Next to him, raw-boned Aristar, a farmer whose nightly prayer was, "God smite the Communists." Then Badaras, who had sheltered a nationalist from the Secret Police.

All these men died, and their places were taken by others, during the thirty months I spent in Room Four. But, remarkable as it may seem, not one of these hundreds of men died an atheist. Fascists, Communists, saints, murderers, thieves, priests, rich landowners and the poorest peasants were locked together in the same, small cell. There were often bitter quar-

rels, degrading incidents. Yet, no one died without making his peace with God and man.

The Abbot, who had been longest there, told me that time and again he had seen men enter as hardened unbelievers, only to witness their unbelief collapse in the face of death. He explained it with homely simplicity: "If a cat crosses a bridge, does it mean the bridge is sound? No. But if a train crosses safely, then it surely is. So if a man calls himself an atheist as he sits with his wife over tea and cakes, that is no proof. A true conviction must survive enormous pressure, and atheism does not."

As the long hours passed, old Filipescu recited passages from Shakespeare, whom he loved, or entertained us with chapters from his autobiography. His first of many arrests for political agitation was in 1907. When the Secret Police came for him in 1948, he quoted them *Troilus and Cressida*: "Time . . . a great-sized monster of ingratitudes," and said he had suffered for Socialism before they were born. They retorted that, if he had played his cards right, he would have joined the Communists in time to share the fruits of their victory.

"I told these young men, 'Socialism is a living body with two arms—social democracy and revolutionary Communism. Cut off one, and Socialism is crippled.' They laughed at me." Later, when he was given twenty years, a guard told him, "You'll die in prison, Filipescu." He replied, "I have not been sentenced to death. Why do you want to kill me?"

Filipescu started life as a shoemaker. Self-educated and sensitive to beauty, he had accepted Marxist teachings on religion: that the church was always on the side of oppression, that the clergy were paid by the rich to promise the poor a reward in heaven. But no one knows the depths of his own heart. In denying God, Filipescu was merely denying his primitive conception of the word, not the realities of love, righteousness and eternity. When I said as much, he replied, "I believe in and love Jesus Christ as the greatest of human beings, but I cannot think of Him as God."

He had only been in Room Four for a few days when I arrived, and soon after this conversation he collapsed. Two weeks

later, after a series of hemorrhages, the end came. His last words were "I love Jesus." There had been several deaths that week, and Filipescu was thrown naked into a common grave dug by other prisoners. When news of this reached Room Four, General Tobescu raised his voice from the corner: "That is the fate the Socialists in the West are preparing for themselves when they make allies of the Communists."

Abbot Iscu crossed himself. "At least we may be grateful that he came to God at the end," he observed gently.

Sergeant-Major Bucur disagreed. "Nothing of the sort. He told us he couldn't think of Christ as God."

I said, "Filipescu will have discovered the truth by now in the other world, for he loved Jesus, who will never reject anyone. The robber converted on Golgotha to whom Jesus promised paradise also called Him, simply, man. I believe in the Godhead of Jesus—and also in His love toward those who cannot discern it."

Bucur loved no one, but he worshipped his conception of the state, with himself as viceroy of the village where he had dispensed his own brand of justice. He was fond of telling everyone how, as police sergeant, he had beaten thieves and beggars, beaten his own men when they dared to answer back and—especially—beaten Jews. "Not a mark on any of them," he would say proudly. "You put sacks of loose sand across their backs first. It hurts just as badly, but they can't complain, because they've nothing to show."

Bucur could not understand why he had been deposed under the new regime. In the way of duty, he was ready to thrash anti-Communists with as much relish as anyone else. Although he was gravely ill, Bucur refused to admit it, even to himself. When Dr. Aldea was examining him one evening, he burst out, "Why are you keeping me here? There's nothing much wrong with me. I'm not like these others." Aldea looked at the thermometer and shook his head. "No," he said, "you're by far the worst. You should stop arguing and think about your soul." Bucur was furious. "Who do you think you are?" he shouted after the doctor's retreating back.

From the next bed, Moise said sharply, "Aldea is a good man." This brought a tirade from Bucur on the danger of

Jews to the state. At least the Iron Guard had known how to deal with them.

"Do you know," said Moise mildly, "that it was as a member of the Iron Guard that I was arrested?" A laugh went round the room.

"It's true," he protested. "After the Iron Guard were overthrown, it was a terrible crime to have a green shirt in your possession because it was regarded as their uniform. We Jews had lost so much during their reign that I thought, 'Here's a chance to get some of our own back. Buy up all the green shirts left unsold, dye them blue and sell them.' My house was crammed with all the green shirts in Bucharest when the police came for a search. They wouldn't listen to my explanation, so I was labeled an Iron Guard. Later the Communists discovered this in my file, and a Jew was sent to prison as a Fascist sympathizer!"

They made an odd pair: burly, bullying Bucur and quiet, little Moise with his acute ironic sense. Of the two, Bucur was the one who needed help. Although he boasted that he was a militant Christian, his whole life had been a quarrel with God. He had gone to church but no one there had ever guided him. He had never met a real priest. Those of his village had been not ministers of religion, but masters of ceremonial, and now he couldn't understand why he was suffering, why he was at death's door, what faith meant. Again and again, as he grew weaker, I told him, "You feel now that you have no reason to hope. But faith can be put into two simple words, 'though' and 'yet.' Job says, 'Though the Lord slay me; yet I will trust Him.' Many times these words come together in the Bible to prove that we can have faith, in the darkest hours." Bucur was pleased that I took an interest in him, but still showed no remorse for the cruelty and evil in his past, until the day on which he realized that Dr. Aldea had been right.

"I'm dying," he said in a frightened voice, "for my country." He lay still.

For hours he was unconscious. When he awoke he said, "I want to confess before you all. I have sinned so deeply, I cannot die thinking of it." His voice had gained a strange calm. He told us how he had killed scores of Jews—acting not under orders, but because he knew he would never be punished. He

had murdered several women, too; and on one occasion had shot a boy of twelve who made an easy target for his gun. His hatred was random, all-embracing.

"I thirsted for blood like a tiger," he said, adding despairingly, "Knowing my crimes now, Mr. Wurmbrand will hate me."

I replied, "Why should I hate you? You yourself hate this creature who killed innocent beings; you have reviled and rejected him. You are no longer that murderer. A man can be born again."

The next morning he still clung weakly to life.

"I didn't confess everything yesterday," he said. "I lacked the courage." His talk of savagery seemed endless. He had shot children in their mothers' arms, and when his ammunition was gone, he had clubbed them. At last the recital was over and he appeared resigned and more cheerful. Then he lapsed into unconsciousness. His breathing became hoarse and irregular. His breast rose and fell rapidly, as if he could not get enough air. We were all silent. His hands clenched and unclenched on the soiled blanket and then clasped themselves around the small cross at his neck. There was a tortured rattling from his throat and breathing stopped.

Moise wiped his eyes with his sleeve before calling out to a prisoner in the corridor. Soon two men came to take Bucur's body. The morning sun, pouring through open windows, fell on his face. But now the reddened eyes were closed and the cruel lines of his mouth relaxed; his features in death showed a great peace such as he had never known in life.

Room Four was the scene of great kindness and humanity. Prisoners from other wards often came to spend the night with us, helping the dying and offering comfort.

At Easter, a friend from his hometown brought a gift wrapped in a twist of paper for Gafencu, the former Iron Guard trooper. "It's been smuggled in," he said. "Open it."

Gafencu undid the paper to reveal two lumps of a glittering white substance—sugar. None of us had seen sugar for years. Our wasted bodies craved it. All eyes were on Gafencu, and the prize in his hand. Slowly he wrapped it up again.

"I won't eat it just yet," he said. "Someone might be worse off than I during the day. But thank you." He put the present carefully beside his bed, and there it stayed.

A few days later, my fever increased and I became very weak. The sugar was passed from bed to bed until it came to rest on mine.

"It's a gift," said Gafencu. I thanked him, but left the sugar untouched in case the next day someone should need it more. When my crisis passed, I gave it to Soteris, the elder of the two Greek Communists, whose condition was grave. For two years the sugar went from man to man in Room Four (and twice it returned to me). Each time the sufferer had the strength to resist it.

Soteris and his friend Glafkos were fond of boasting, at the start, of their exploits during the Greek civil war. They had raided the monasteries of Mount Athos, looting everything they could carry, smashing what they had to leave behind. Women are forbidden on Mt. Athos and many of the two thousand monks had not seen one for years. "We took a band of girl partisans along with us," Soteris said. "You should have seen those old fellows run."

Soteris was proud of his atheism, while he could joke and hope for life: but as death approached, he cried out for help from God. Only the priest's murmuring voice, promising heavenly forgiveness, could quiet him. Then he, too, found the great moral force to renounce the two pieces of sugar.

His body was prepared for burial by a prisoner from outside who often came to help us. He was known, respectfully, as the Professor and his name was Popp. Rarely did his stooped and scholarly figure appear unaccompanied by someone to whom he was teaching history, French or some other subject. I asked once how he managed without writing materials. He explained: "We rub the table with a piece of soap and scratch the words with a nail." When I admired his persistence, Popp's innocent blue eyes sparkled. "I used to think I taught for a living. In prison I've learned that I teach because I love my pupils."

"You have a vocation, as the priests say?"

"Well," he replied, "here we are shown what we're worth."

When I asked if he was a Christian, he looked upset. "Pastor, I've had too many disappointments. At my last prison, Ocnele-Mari, for example, the church was turned into a storeroom and they asked for someone to tear down the cross on the steeple. No one cared to do it. In the end it was a priest who volunteered. 'So much for Christians,' the men said."

I admitted that not every man in holy orders has a priestly heart, nor are all who called themselves Christians disciples of Christ in the true sense of the word. "A man who visits a barber to be shaved, or who orders a suit from a tailor, is not a disciple but a customer. So one who comes to the Saviour only to be saved is the Saviour's customer, not his disciple—that is, one who says to Christ, 'How I long to do work like yours. To go from place to place taking away fear; bringing instead joy, truth, comfort and life eternal.' "

Popp smiled. "But what of those who become disciples at the eleventh hour? I must say I've been puzzled to see so many convinced atheists turn into believers at the end."

I said I thought the explanation was that our minds do not always operate at the same level of activity. "A genius can talk nonsense at times or bicker with his wife, but he is not judged by that. We should respect our minds, like his, when they are working at their best—when they are straining to find a way out at the moment of supreme crisis. It is when the mind has to pass through the gap of death that it functions most keenly, and it is then that the façade of atheism nearly always collapses."

"And why do you suppose that a man like Sergeant Bucur longs to confess his crimes publicly?"

I said, "We once lived near a railway and never noticed the trains by day because the town was noisy. But at night we heard their whistles clearly. So the clamor of life can deafen us to the quiet voice of conscience. When death approaches in the silence of the prison, where there are no distractions, men hear the voice who never have before."

Abbot Iscu, who had been listening quietly, put in, "I call it listening to silence. In my last prison, at Aiud, there was a poor murderer in solitary confinement. He kept waking in the night

and shouting, 'Who's that in the next cell? Why doesn't he stop knocking on the wall?' "

"What's so odd about that?" asked Popp.

"Why, the next cell was empty."

Since I lacked the strength to wash myself, Professor Popp took on the task. I asked whether there were showers in his part of the prison.

"Certainly," he said. "In the People's Republic of Rumania we have the most modern equipment. Only it doesn't work. Our showers have been dry for years." He straightened his back and went on: "Have you heard of the Communist and the Capitalist who died and met in hell? They found two gates. One was labeled Capitalist Hell and the other Communist Hell. Although the men were class enemies, they put their heads together to decide which would be better. The Communist said, 'Comrade, let's go into the Communist department. There, when there's coal, there won't be matches. When there are matches there won't be coal. And even when they have both coal and matches, the furnace will break down.' "

The Professor continued to wash me while the others laughed. Then Aristar, the farmer, spoke up: "The first Communists were Adam and Eve."

"Why?" asked the obliging Popp.

"Because they had no clothes, no house, they had to share the same apple—and still thought they were in paradise."

The telling of jokes and stories was important to us all. Men lay all day with only their miseries to think of, and anyone who could help them to forget was performing an act of mercy. Often I talked for hours on end, although ill and dizzy with hunger: a story, as much as a piece of bread, could sustain a man. When Popp urged me to save my strength, I said I had enough for one more anecdote that morning.

"The Talmud tells us of a rabbi walking in the street when he heard the voice of the prophet Elijah saying, 'Although you fast and pray, never have you deserved the high place in heaven which awaits those two men on the other side of the road.' The rabbi ran after the strangers, and said, 'Do you give much to the poor?' They laughed. 'No, we are beggars our-

selves.' 'Then do you pray continuously?' 'No. We are ignorant men. We don't know how to pray.' 'Then tell me what you do.' 'We make jokes. We make people laugh when they are sad.' "

Popp looked surprised. "Are you telling us that those who make men laugh may have greater honor in heaven than those who fast?"

"That is the teaching of the Talmud, which is a book of Jewish wisdom. But we can also read in the Bible—the second psalm—that God himself laughs sometimes."

Helping me back into my clothes, Popp said, "He wouldn't find much to laugh at here—but where is God, Pastor, and why does He not help us?"

"Christ is with us in prison in many ways," I answered. "He can be seen in our Christian doctors, who are beaten and bullied but go on helping us. Some official doctors in Vacaresti have also smuggled in drugs and earned themselves ten years in jail.

"And, Christ is here in the priests and pastors who work to ease others' burdens, and in all Christians who give food, clothes and help to men worse off than themselves. He is with us, too, in those who teach about God, and also in the storytellers. And you have Him with you not only in the person of those who serve you, but also in the shape of those whom you can serve.

"Jesus tells us that, at the Last Judgment, God will separate the good from the bad, on His right hand and on His left. Jesus will say to those on the right, 'Come, enter and possess the kingdom that has been ready for you since the world was made. For I was hungry and you gave me meat; I was a stranger and you took me in; naked and you clothed me; sick and you visited me; I was in prison and you came to me.' The good will ask, 'Lord, when did we do all this?' And Christ will reply, 'Inasmuch as you have done it to the least of my brethren, you have done it for me.' "

Gafencu had spent his whole adult life in prison, but like other Iron Guard followers in whom Christian belief had prevailed, he could not do enough to make up for his mistakes. Every day, he set the example of putting aside part of his mea-

ger ration to help build up the weakest among us. His anti-Semitism had been completely abandoned, and when some of his old Fascist friends came to see him in Room Four he astonished them by saying, "I'd like to see the country ruled entirely by Jews."

His comrades were appalled.

"Yes," said Gafencu calmly. "Prime Minister, legislators, civil servants—everyone. I'd make only one condition. They must be men like the old Jewish rulers, like Joseph, Moses, Daniel, St. Peter, St. Paul and Jesus himself. Because if we have any more Jews over us like Ana Pauker, then Rumania is finished."

Gafencu had been jailed when he was nineteen. His youth had gone by without his ever knowing a girl. When others talked about sex, he asked, "What is it like?"

He told me one day, "My father was deported from Bessarabia by the Russians. We never had enough to eat. I was beaten in school, then jailed for running away and joining the Iron Guard. I'd never met a single good, truthful, loving person. I said to myself, 'It's just a legend about Christ. There isn't anyone in the world like that today and I don't believe there ever was.' But when I'd been in prison for a few months, I had to admit I'd been wrong. I met sick men who gave away their last crust. I shared a cell with a bishop who had such goodness that you felt the touch of his robe could heal."

Gafencu had been in Room Four for a year, and in all that time he had not been able to lie on his back. The pain was too intense. He had to be propped up continually. Every day his control over his body deteriorated a little further. Often he fulfilled his necessities where he lay, then had to wait, sometimes at night for hours, until someone came to clean him.

Stronger patients from outside had to take over the washing for those of us who could not help ourselves, scrubbing shirts, underwear, pillow cases, sometimes twenty sheets a day, although they had to break ice in the yard to reach the freezing water. My own things were always stiff with pus and blood, but when I tried to stop a friend from washing them, he was angry. He, too, was a former Iron Guard who now considered it a Christian duty to help others.

Gafencu never complained. He sat very still in bed, sometimes moving his head a little to nod agreement or convey a word of thanks. When it was known that he hadn't long to live, his old and new friends gathered around his bed with tears in their eyes. His last words were "The spirit of God wishes us jealously for Himself."

When he had gone, the others knelt and prayed. I said, "Jesus tells us that if a seed does not fall into the earth and die, it cannot bring forth fruit, and that as a seed is reborn as a beautiful flower, so man dies and his mortal body is renewed in a spiritual body. And his heart, which has come to be filled with the ideals of Christianity, will surely bear fruit."

After a priest had said a prayer, Gafencu was wrapped in his sheet and carried to the mortuary. During the night he was buried in a common grave by criminal convicts, who always performed this task. His legacy was two pieces of sugar.

During the early 1950s a steady flow of new arrivals at Tirgul-Ocna kept us informed of events outside, and sometimes it seemed that we in prison were hardly worse off than the "happy workers and peasants of free Rumania." Wages had never been so low. An eight-hour day had been proclaimed, but you might work twelve before completing your "norm," and then "voluntary" work and Marxist lectures left no time for family life; in any case, every apartment had two or more families in it.

Strikes were illegal. One of our newcomers, a gnarled old trade unionist named Boris Matei, told me: "It's forty years since I was jailed for fighting for the eight-hour day and, now that there's a Communist government, I'm working fourteen hours in prison." His crime had been to write an anonymous letter to Comrade Gheorghiu-Dej protesting on behalf of his workmates against the severity of their conditions and contending that in any capitalist state they would be entitled to withdraw their labor. The Secret Police swarmed into his rolling-stock depot and took handwriting samples from the 10,000 workers. After weeks of investigation, Boris was accused of trying to stir up a strike and given fifteen years for attempted sabotage.

Still he remained unshaken in his Marxist beliefs. Boris had

no sympathy for the dissenting groups who'd been herded with him into prison: Freemasons, Rotarians, Theosophists, Spiritualists. Nor could he feel for the poets and novelists who'd been locked up for their independent outlook: they had been summoned in turn to Party headquarters to be given their orders and should have known better than to chase the will-o'-the-wisp of objective truth.

Boris argued that Lenin had emphasized in his books the importance of finding and clinging to one point of view in life.

"The Party line?" I said. "But this doctrine reverses all philosophical concepts. If I look at the cell from my bed, I see only the window. If I look from where you're sitting, I see the door. If I look at the floor, the room has no ceiling. Every viewpoint is in reality a blind spot because it incapacitates you totally from seeing other points of view. It is only when we abandon all 'points of view' and accept our intuition of the whole that we find truth. St. Paul says 'Love believes everything'—not just the creed of this group or that."

But talk of religion made Boris angry. He flew to the defense of his Marxist materialism. "There is no God, no soul. Only matter exists. I defy you to prove otherwise." I said he must take his arguments from a Communist textbook in which I had seen the following definition of a kiss: "A kiss is the approach of two pairs of lips, with reciprocal transmission of microbes and carbon dioxide."

He smiled at this, but I persisted: "It's no laughing matter. Time and again, Communism violates the human spirit in trying to fit it into a Marxist straitjacket. No wonder the love, the longing, the magic and falsity, if you like, of the kiss has no place in your philosophy. This impoverishment of spiritual values affects the material side of life—the side you consider all-important. It takes the heart out of the workers, so that the poor quality of goods from Communist countries has become a byword."

Boris said, "I know the saying that the Sabbath is made for man, not man for the Sabbath, but in our view we all exist to benefit the state. The loss of individual liberty and private property are steps on the way to perfection."

I thought that even a dog will fight with anyone who tries

to take its bone, but if a fifteen-year sentence had not cured Boris of his illusions, arguing was unlikely to do so. And then an unhappy thought struck me; he might be one of the periodical crop of new informers.

Informing had spread like a disease. You might be denounced for speaking of God or praying aloud; even for such suspicious activity as learning or teaching a foreign language. Often the man who pointed the finger might be a close friend—even, under cruel pressure, son, father, wife, husband. Indeed, the informer was probably a worse menace for "free" men than for those already behind bars, and in Room Four we undoubtedly exercised more free speech than was heard anywhere else in Rumania. It didn't matter, since none of us was going to live.

On the anniversary of the "ten days that shook the world"—the Russian revolution of November, 1917—Professor Popp took advantage of Boris' absence from the cell to commemorate it with an anecdote.

On the first anniversary of the triumph of Bolshevism, he said, the new rulers held a hunting party in the forest outside Moscow. Later, they rested by the fire and Lenin asked, "Tell me, Comrades, what you consider the greatest pleasure in life?"

"War," said Trotsky.

"Women," said Zinoviev.

"Oratory—the power to hold a vast crowd under your spell," said Kamenev.

Stalin, as always, was taciturn, but Lenin insisted: "Tell us your choice."

At last, Stalin said: "None of you know what real pleasure is. It is to hate someone, and to pretend for years that you are his best friend, until one day he rests his head trustingly on your breast. And then to plunge the knife into his back. There is no greater pleasure in the world than this."

There was a long silence. We knew something of Stalin's ruthlessness even then; the rest, to be made known after his death at the hands of his colleagues, proved the truth of this chilling story.

Chapter Three

FOR some time there had been anxious talk of the new system of "reeducating" prisoners practiced at Suceava and Piteshi jails. It was carried out not with books, but beatings. The tutors were usually turncoat Iron Guards, who had been organized as the "Prisoners of Communist Convictions." We heard the names of Turcanu and Formagiu as the organizers of these groups. They seemed to be behaving like savages.

We feared that the process would be introduced at Tirgul-Ocna, but Boris scoffed. He couldn't believe that his former associates of the left would allow atrocities: "They know that 'terror can never uproot ideas.' That was what Karl Kautsky, the Social Democrat thinker, wrote at the start of the Russian revolution."

I said, "Yes. And I remember what Trotsky, who was War Minister, replied: 'Mr. Kautsky, you do not know what terror we will apply.' It's ironic that Trotsky's own ideas have been as effectively uprooted by terrorism in Russia as capitalism has."

The Abbot sighed. "I fear that terror and torture, applied ruthlessly and long, may crush any man's resistance, without a miracle of God."

"I don't believe in miracles," said Boris. "I'll get along without them, thanks. Nothing has altered my convictions yet."

The prison's atmosphere grew worse after a brief visit by the "reeducation" leader Formagiu with instructions to inaugurate the system. Up until this point, although prisoners had been tormented for most of the day, they knew that sooner or later the guards would go to eat or sleep. Now the "Prisoners of Communist Convictions" moved in with us. They had the power to beat and bully at will, and rubber clubs to do it with. They'd been handpicked by the authorities from among the worst and most violent prisoners, and there was no escape from them: to every fifty prisoners there was a group of ten or twenty PCC men, and their number grew. Those who declared themselves ready to become Communists had to demonstrate the sincerity of their conversion by "converting" others, in the same way.

Brute violence was punctuated by sessions of more refined cruelty, under medical supervision to ensure that prisoners did not die. Doctors were often PCCs themselves. I knew a Dr. Turcu who, after "examining" a cellmate, would call a halt, give the man an injection to increase his resistance and tell the reeducators when to start again. It was Turcu who decided when the man had reached his limit and might be thrown back into his cell until the next day.

A wave of madness swept the prison. Tuberculosis patients were stripped, laid on the stone floors and drenched with buckets of freezing water. Pigs' swill was thrown on the ground before men who had been starved for days; with hands tied behind their backs they were forced to lick it up. No humiliation, however vile, was spared. In many prisons men were made to swallow excrement and drink urine. Convicts were also made to perform sexual perversions in public. I had not thought such mockeries of body and soul were possible.

Those who clung to their faith were the worst treated. Christians were tied for four days to crosses. Every day the crosses were placed on the floor, and the other prisoners were ordered to defecate on the faces and bodies of the crucified. After this, the crosses were stood upright again.

A Catholic priest brought into Room Four told us that in Piteshi jail, on a Sunday, he had been pushed into the latrine's cesspool and ordered to say Mass over excrement.

"Did you obey?" I asked.

He buried his face in his hands and wept. "I've suffered more than Christ," he said.

These things were done with the encouragement of the prison administration, on orders from Bucharest. Turcanu, Formagiu and the other specialists were taken from jail to jail, recruiting PCCs and seeing that the campaign did not flag. Party leaders, even men from the Central Committee, like Constantin Doncea and the Under-Secretary of the Interior Ministry, Marin Jianu, came to watch the sport. Boris, who had once worked with Jianu, broke through the guards to protest, but if Jianu recognized his former colleague he wouldn't admit it. "We don't interfere when one swine beats another," he said. In effect, the Party dissociated itself from the torturers, but encouraged them to torture. "Take him away," said Jianu. Boris was beaten until he screamed for mercy. The old union fighter broke down completely. Exposed to constant humiliation and torment, his spirit faltered. He crawled to kiss the hands of his tormentors. "Thank you, Comrades," he said. "You've brought me to the light." Then he began to rave feverishly about the joys of Communism, and how criminal he had been to persist in error. After such a collapse, his self-respect demanded a complete shift of loyalty; otherwise he would have appeared ridiculous in his own eyes, and that he couldn't bear. Boris joined the PCC group. One of the first to feel his truncheon was Dr. Aldea.

The reeducation system, imported from Russia, brought incredible results. Victims revealed secrets they had kept back under months of grueling interrogation. They denounced friends, wives, parents so more thousands of arrests were made.

During this time, a group of sick men from the lead mines were brought to a special cell at Tirgul-Ocna. They were joined by other prisoners who, finding that some of the newcomers were priests, confessed to them and so gained their confidence. The men from the mines spoke freely of their secret religious and political activities. Then they were moved to a larger cell, for reeducation—only to discover that they had been talking to informers.

One of them was carried bruised and bloody into Room

Four. He told us that the reeducator in charge was a well-built young man with a set smile, who made jokes all the time. "Does that hurt?" he would ask. "*So* sorry. Let's try something new. Did you enjoy that?"

"If I ever get my hands on that man," said the victim, "I'll skin him alive."

"That's right," cackled the old farmer, Badaras. "Put salt and pepper on, that's the spirit." Badaras had a daily prayer: "In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, God destroy the Communists, make them suffer, hurt them, the pigs."

"Why say such things?" I asked him. "That's not what is expected of a Christian."

He shook his fists to heaven in invocation. "I say them because God will not let anyone into paradise who does not curse those bastards."

Many like Badaras lived only for the day on which they could torture their torturers, believing in hell so that the Communists might fry there.

"We mustn't give way to hatred," I said. "Men like Boris have broken only under terrible pressure."

But Boris was now a sore subject in Room Four. His attempt to prove his Communist conversion by attacking Dr. Aldea, who made very plain his contempt for Turcu and the other PCC doctors, had made Boris one of the most hated men in the prison. Aldea suffered terribly from boils on his back and shoulders, the result of our inadequate diet, and Boris had beaten him on the back. Prisoners would have given their lives for Aldea, who was giving his for them. After the beating, the doctor was found on a bed in Room Four. Then someone came to say that a seriously ill prisoner was asking for him.

"The doctor is too sick to move," said the Abbot.

Aldea asked, "Who is it?"

"Boris."

Aldea climbed painfully out of bed; no one spoke as he walked from the room.

Abbot Iscu spoke sometimes of his experiences in the slave camps at the Danube-Black Sea canal, where thousands

were dying of ill-treatment and hunger. The canal had been begun largely on Russian instigation—since it would help them to drain Rumania of her produce even more efficiently than they were already doing—and also as a prestige project for our government. It was an immense scheme, and it had become such a symbol of Communist achievement that when a group of engineers warned that the river was unlikely to supply sufficient water for both the canal and its irrigation network, they were shot as "economic saboteurs." Rumania's resources were thrown prodigally into the plan, and over 200,000 political and criminal convicts labored to build it between 1949 and 1953.

The Abbot was sent to Poarta-Alba, one of the penal colonies along the route. Living in ramshackle barracks, behind barbed wire, each one of the 12,000 prisoners had to move eight cubic meters of earth a day by hand. Under the blows of guards, they pushed wheelbarrows up steep inclines. Temperatures plummeted to 75 degrees centigrade in winter, and water, brought to the colonies in barrels, froze solid. Disease was rife. Many prisoners, hoping to be shot, broke through into the forbidden area around the camp.

The most brutal criminals were put in charge of "brigades" of a hundred or so prisoners each and were paid in terms of results, in food or cigarettes. Christians were herded into a so-called "Priests' Brigade" where, if a man so much as made the sign of the cross, a reflex action among the Orthodox, he was beaten. There was no day of rest, no Christmas, no Easter.

Yet at Poarta-Alba, Abbot Iscu said, he had witnessed great nobility. A young Catholic, Father Cristea, incurred the hatred of an Orthodox priest turned informer, who asked him, "Why do you close your eyes so often? Is it in prayer? I challenge you to tell the truth: do you still believe in God?"

To answer "yes" would mean a flogging, at the very least.

Father Cristea considered. "I know, Andrescu, that you tempt, as the Pharisees tempted Jesus, to accuse me. But Jesus told them the truth and I will tell it to you. Yes, I believe in God."

"Well, do you believe in the Pope, too?" Andrescu went on.

Cristea replied, "I believe in the Pope, too."

Andrescu hurried to the political officer, who came over and

called the young man out before the others. Cristea was thin, exhausted, shivering in his rags. The officer was well fed, wrapped in an overcoat and wearing a Russian fur hat. "I hear that you believe in God," he said.

Father Cristea opened his mouth to answer, and in that moment one could understand why it is written in the Gospel of St. Matthew, before the Sermon on the Mount, that Jesus "opened his mouth and spoke"—surely a strange thing, for no one speaks with a closed mouth. Now Cristea had only parted his lips to speak, but everyone knew that great wisdom would come from his mouth at this moment of decision. The Christians there were overcome with awe.

Cristea said, "When I was ordained, I knew that thousands of priests, throughout history, had paid for their faith with their lives. And as often as I went to the altar I promised God, 'Now I serve thee in beautiful robes, but even if they should put me in prison, I will serve Thee still.' And so, Lieutenant, prison is no argument against religion. I believe in God."

The silence that followed was broken only by the sound of the wind. The lieutenant seemed at a loss for words. At last he said, "And do you believe in the Pope?"

The answer came. "Since St. Peter there has always been a Pope. And until Jesus returns there will always be one. The Pope has made no peace with Communism; nor will his successors. Yes, I believe in the Pope."

The Abbot ended his story: "I found it hard to forgive my Orthodox brother who had turned informer, and I am no follower of Rome, but at that moment I felt like crying, *'Viva il Papa!'* "

"What happened to Father Cristea?" asked someone.

"He was locked for a week in the carcer, where you stand and never sleep; then beaten. When he still refused to deny his faith, he was taken away. We never saw him again."

Reeducation was claiming new victims daily, and the conviction grew that unless something was done soon we should all be "converted" or killed. A rumor reached Room Four that some sort of protest was brewing among the Communist prisoners, who were the boldest among us: the guards were more

careful with them, for those who were in jail today had been in power yesterday and might again be tomorrow.

Christians debated what we should do: if there was a riot, should we join in? Or was it a time to "turn the other cheek?" Several prisoners cautioned against a fight.

I argued, "Jesus is usually portrayed as 'meek and mild,' but he was a fighter, too. He drove the merchants from the temple with a whip and gave as guide to his first followers the Old Testament with all its fire and fierceness."

We decided to work with the rebels. Little could be done in secret because of the many informers among us and the suspicions between anti-Semite and Jew, peasant and landowner, Orthodox and Catholic, but it was agreed that some simultaneous action would be taken at the first opportunity.

In the tiny town of Tirgul-Ocna, the sole diversion was a weekly football match held in a stadium that lay only a stone's throw from the prison. On May 1, which coincided with a savage new outburst of reeducation, we learned that a Labor Day game would be played in the stadium, at 5 P.M., and the whole town would be there. It was our chance for a demonstration. Word went around that the signal would be the noise of a window being smashed.

Soon after the game began there was a faint tinkle of breaking glass somewhere, and the entire prison exploded into bedlam. Windows shattered on all sides. Plates and mugs were hurled onto the courtyard below. Chairs were smashed. Amid the uproar, some of us started a steady chant: "Help us! Help us!" From higher windows overlooking the stadium men cried, "We are tortured here! Your fathers and brothers and sons are being murdered!"

The game came to a halt. The crowd was on its feet and soon hundreds had gathered in the road below the walls. Inside, one of the prisoners had cut his wrists, and the guards were trying to reestablish order with clubs. The crowd in the street were quickly driven away by troops wielding rifle butts. There remained the task of putting the prison to rights and counting the casualties. Among them was Boris, who had been knocked down and severely injured while trying to rescue another prisoner from under the feet of the guards. Again, Dr. Aldea had

to tend him. We sent friendly messages, but there was no reply.

"He may not survive," said Aldea. "This has come too soon after his last hemorrhage."

News of the revolt spread rapidly throughout the country. There were no outright reprisals; only a stiffening of the prison regime. Those suspected of being ringleaders were transferred to other prisons and so deprived of the little medical attention they had received at Tirgu-Ocna. Many, I heard later, died soon afterwards.

In the crowded confines of Room Four Abbot Iscu was coughing for longer spells each day. His body, wasted by years of starvation and exposure at the canal, was racked by terrible bouts. We lay and watched him dying. Sometimes he failed to recognize friends who came to help him. When he was conscious he spent hours in whispered prayer, and he always had words of comfort for others.

New survivors from the canal project had come to Tirgul-Ocna, and their stories of its horrors reminded me of the slavery of Israel in Egypt, with the added bitterness that the oppressed were compelled to praise their oppressors. A famous composer among the prisoners had been forced to write hymns exalting Stalin, and, to their accompaniment, the brigades marched to work.

Once, when a prisoner collapsed and a doctor pronounced him dead, Colonel Albon, the hated Poarta-Alba Commandant shouted, "Rubbish!" He gave the corpse a kick. "Put him to work."

My bed was between the Abbot's and twenty-one-year-old Vasilescu, who was a canal victim of a different kind. Vasilescu was a common law criminal who had been put in charge of the "priests' brigade." He had worked them until they dropped. But for some reason, Colonel Albon took a dislike to him and Vasilescu was treated so brutally in turn that he was also near death. His tuberculosis was well advanced.

Vasilescu was not an inherently evil young man. He had a rough-hewn, square face with dark curly hair that grew low on his forehead, making him look a little like a bewildered young bull. Tough, ignorant, he was too fond of what he con-

sidered the good things in life to settle down to a steady job; and he had had a hard life. He told us, "Once you get in those camps you'll do anything to get out. The Commandant promised if I did what he told me, they'd let me go free." He wanted clothes, a girl to take to a dance. And the Party offered him the choice of joining the tortured or the torturers. "They took a crowd of us to a special camp where they train secret police," he said. "And one of the things we had to do was shoot cats and dogs and then finish off the survivors with steel spikes. I said, 'I can't do that.' And the instructor said, 'Then we'll do it to you.' "

Vasilescu was sorry for himself now. Repeatedly, he told me of the terrible things he had done at the canal. He had not spared the Abbot. The boy was obviously dying, and I tried to give him a little comfort; but he couldn't rest. One night he woke up gasping for breath. "Pastor, I'm going," he said. "Please pray for me." He dozed and woke again, and cried, "I believe in God." Then he began to weep.

At dawn Abbot Iscu called two prisoners to his bed and ordered, "Lift me out."

"You're too ill to move," they said. The whole room was upset. "What is it?" said voices. "Let us do it for you."

"You cannot do this," he said. "Lift me out."

They picked him up. "To Vasilescu's bed," he said.

The Abbot sat beside the young man who had tortured him and gently put a hand on his arm. "Be calm," he said soothingly. "You are young. You hardly knew what you were doing." With a rag, he wiped the sweat from the boy's forehead. "I forgive you with all my heart, and so would other Christians, too. And if we forgive, surely Christ, who is better than we, forgives. There is a place in heaven for you, too." He heard Vasilescu's confession and gave him Holy Communion. The others carried him back to his bed.

During the night both Abbot Iscu and Vasilescu died. I believe they went hand in hand to heaven.

The next day, Dr. Aldea told me I should have a pneumothorax, a simple procedure that involved running a hollow needle into the chest to allow air to enter and cushion the lung. It was relatively painless and afterwards I fell asleep. When I

awoke, I was delighted to find Professor Popp sitting by my bed. He had been away for months in Jilava prison, and he too had suffered much under the reeducation system. We talked for hours.

The Professor told me that there had been many suicides at Jilava. It was the same in other prisons. At Gherla and Piteshi men threw themselves down the stairwells from the upper floors until the spaces between the landings had to be covered with wire to stop them. Some cut their wrists with glass, some hung themselves, some died after drinking cleaning fluid. One poor old Orthodox father had repeatedly thrown himself from a top bunk to the floor, until he succeeded in fatally fracturing his skull. "He'd been tortured," the Professor said. "He was afraid that, if the reeducators started on him again, he'd break down and betray his faith."

Some of the suicides were famous men, like George Bratianu, a great prewar figure in Rumanian politics, who quietly starved himself to death, unnoticed among prisoners who neither knew nor cared. A leader of the Liberal Party, Rosculet, had killed himself at Sighet jail: he was one of those who had thought that "local" Communists were not like the Russian variety. But after making him a puppet Minister of Cults, the Party imprisoned him as a counterrevolutionary.

"Reeducation" brutalities had caused unrest in many prisons, and the atmosphere of revolt was still simmering at Tirgul-Ocna when two separate incidents occurred which were to change the situation. During an inspection in our wing of the prison, a despised Secret Police colonel, Sepeanu, was making the rounds when he spotted a new fence around a vegetable plot.

"Why did you build this?" he asked the Commandant, with a laugh. "The wood might have been better used to beat the counterrevolutionaries."

Men working nearby overheard them, and the story swiftly circulated through the jail, provoking a furious response. A former major shouted, "Something's got to be done, and I'm going to do it!" At the time, we thought it was merely an angry boast. But when Sepeanu had gone, the major requested a

special interrogator from Bucharest to hear something of importance that he had so far failed to confess.

On his arrival, the major told him, "As you know, I'm a war criminal serving twenty years for executing Russian prisoners. But, as brigade major, I didn't shoot these men myself. Do you wish to know the murderer's identity? He was a lieutenant named Sepeanu. Today he is a Secret Police colonel." Colonel Sepeanu was subsequently tried for war crimes and sentenced to twenty years. During the trial, he revealed much of what was going on in the prisons.

The second incident also involved a Secret Police chief, and a high-ranking one at that. Colonel Virgil Weiss had been a friend of Ana Pauker and other members of the government. Then he fell out of favor and was sent to prison. At Piteshi jail he fell into the hands of Turcanu, the ruthless leader of the PCC groups. A man who helped Turcanu torture Weiss told me later what happened.

"Colonel Weiss had fainted three times in an hour while Turcanu was working him over. We brought him around with buckets of water. He looked at Turcanu and said, 'All right, no more. I'll tell everything I kept back. And let's see if *your* bosses can take it.' Turcanu hoped he'd stumbled on some secret that would bring him the release he'd so often been promised. He told Weiss, 'If you lie to me now, I'll kill you.' Weiss said, 'I have disclosures to make, but not to you. They concern traitors in high places.' He was taken to Bucharest in such bad shape that he spent weeks in the hospital close to death. He saw members of the Party Central Committee there who were rivals of the Pauker-Luca-Georgescu clique. He told them that these three all-powerful ministers had asked him to help them obtain false passports in case they wanted to get out of Rumania in a hurry. They had also transferred large sums of money to Swiss banks. This information was immediately reported to the Party's Secretary-General, Gheorghiu-Dej, who was scheming against the Pauker group."

Colonel Weiss had plenty to say about reeducation, and showed its appalling scars on his own body. He had a good hearing. With yet another reversal in Party fortunes ahead, the idea

that they might one day face the same treatment haunted the current Party leaders. Some had been unaware of the excesses, and others pretended to be; and so inquiries were begun. The leading reeducators were brought to Secret Police headquarters for torture. Several of them, including Turcanu, were sentenced to death. The treadmill of terror continued in its inevitable cycle.

The reeducation scandal was used as a weapon against the Ministry of the Interior, headed by Teohari Georgescu, and later became an important factor in the political purge of 1952. At last the triumvirate that had ruled Rumania since the Communist take-over was overthrown. The other Ministers involved in Colonel Weiss' charges, Vasile Luca and Ana Pauker, were made scapegoats for the galloping inflation and the economic chaos into which the country was plunging.

In prison we saw the personal toll taken by collectivization. Many of those who came to help us in Room Four were farmers who had rebelled against the confiscation of their land. The prisons of Rumania were full of them. Thousands more had been stood up before firing squads. They told harrowing stories. Their property had been seized, and under the 1949 "land reform" law they received no compensation. Evicted from their homes, turned overnight into vagabonds who had nothing to lose, they fought back. Officials who fell into their hands were likely to be shot, beaten or burned alive with gasoline. But it was all for nothing. The farmers lacked organization, their rebellions occurred at different times and in different regions, and the government could easily stamp them out. Now I understood why Martin Luther had opposed the futile peasant revolts of his time.

A leathery old sheep farmer named Ghica told me, "The Secret Police showed me two rusty rifles. 'We dug them up in your barn,' they said. 'If you join the collective you might avoid a trial.' Well, I agreed. But when they came to take my animals, I lost my head and tried to stop them. They beat me up, and here I am serving fifteen years. I've lost everything. Land, sheep, wife, children." All farmers lamented their losses in that order.

Another told how he'd been deprived of his flock. He begged at least to keep the bells that had hung around their necks. The officials laughed but let him have his way. He took the bells up to his loft, tied them to a rope and sat there all night, ringing the bells from time to time. When morning came, he ran through the village to the Party headquarters and stabbed the Secretary to death.

That year, fewer countryfolk came into prison. Gheorghiu-Dej, while retaining the Party leadership, made himself Prime Minister in 1952, and courted popularity by slowing down collectivization. Luca, Pauker and Georgescu were all dismissed from their posts. With their downfall, followed by a Party purge which gave Dej full control, we hoped for more humane prison conditions. But nothing had yet altered in Moscow, and it was there that policy was made.

Winter came on, with heavy snowstorms. Thick icicles hung from the roof and hoarfrost patterned the windowpanes. Outside, the cold made you gasp. By December the snow was six feet deep. Old-timers declared it the coldest winter for a hundred years. There was no heating, but until now we had had two or three blankets each, instead of the regulation one, for every time a man died in Room Four we took his bedclothing. Then there was an inspection—and we were left with a single threadbare blanket apiece. We slept in our clothes all winter. Often we went without bread. The soup, made of carrots too rotten to be sold, became thinner still.

On Christmas Eve, prison talk became more serious. There were few quarrels, no swearing, little laughter. Every man thought of those he loved, and there was a sense of communion with the rest of mankind, who were usually so remote from our lives.

I spoke of Christ, but what an effort it was. My feet and hands were cold as steel, my teeth chattered, and an icy lump of hunger in my stomach seemed to spread through my body until only the heart lived. When I could continue no longer, Aristar, the young farmer, took up where I'd left off. He had never been to school. Yet he talked so naturally, describing the scene of the Nativity as if it had happened in his own barn that week, that there were tears in the eyes of his listeners.

Somewhere in the prison a man began to sing. At first his voice was quiet, and hardly penetrated my thoughts of my wife and son. But gradually it swelled wonderfully in the crisp, clear air until it rang through the corridors, and everyone stopped what he was doing to listen.

We were very quiet when he finished his song. The guards, huddled in their quarters around a coke stove, did not stir all evening. We began to tell stories, and when I was asked for one, I thought of the song, and told them this old Jewish legend:

"King Saul of Israel brought David, the shepherd honored for killing Goliath, to his court. David loved music and was delighted to see a harp of great beauty standing in the palace. Saul said, 'I paid much for that instrument, but I was deceived. All my musicians have tried. In vain. It produces only ugly sounds.'

"David took it up to try, and drew from it music so exquisite that every man was moved. The harp seemed to laugh and sing and weep. King Saul asked, 'How is it that all the musicians I called brought discord from this harp, and only you could bring out music?'

"David, the future king, replied, 'Before me, each man tried to play his song on these strings. But I sang to the harp its own song. I recalled how it had been a young tree, with birds that chirped in its branches and limbs green with leaves that blossomed in the sun. I reminded it of the day when men came to cut it down; and you heard it weep under my fingers. I explained then that this is not the end. Its death as a tree meant the start of a new life in which it would glorify God, as a harp; and you heard how it rejoiced under my hands.'

" 'So when the Messiah comes, many will try to sing on His harp their own songs, and their tunes will be harsh. We must sing on His harp His own song, the song of His life, passions, joys, sufferings, death and resurrection. Only then will the music be true.' "

It was a song like this we heard that Christmas in the jail of Tirgul-Ocna.

Aristar died in February. We had to dig through deep snow and break ground like iron to bury him in the prison yard,

alongside Abbot Iscu, Gafencu, Bucur and a score of his friends of Room Four. His bed was taken over by Avram Radonovici, who had been a music critic in Bucharest.

Avram knew long passages from the scores of Bach, Beethoven and Mozart and could hum them for hours; he was as good as a symphony concert. But he had brought a more precious gift with him. Because of the tuberculosis, which had affected his spine, he was encased in a plaster cast, and as we watched he pushed a hand into the breast of his gray shell and brought out a small, tattered book. None of us had seen a book of any kind for years. Avram lay there quietly turning the pages until he became conscious of several eager pairs of eyes fixed on him.

"Your book," I said, "what is it? Where did you get it?"

"It's the Gospel according to St. John," said Avram. "I managed to hide it in my cast when the police came for me." He smiled. "You're looking at me like beggars watching a man enjoy a lovely meal," he said. "Would you like to borrow it?"

I took the little book in my hands as if it were a live bird. No lifesaving drug could have been more precious to me. I, who had known much of the Bible by heart and had taught it in the seminary, was forgetting more of it every day. Often I had tried to remind myself of the great advantage in this lack of a Bible; while reading what God told His prophets and saints, we may forget to listen for what He has to say to us. Avram's Gospel went from hand to hand. It was difficult to give it up. I think prison was harder for educated men: factory workers and farmers found a more varied society than they had known before, but the reading man was like a fish thrown on the sand.

Many learned the whole Gospel by heart and we discussed it daily; but we had to be careful which prisoners were let in on the secret. Avram's tattered Gospel helped to bring many to Christ, among them Professor Popp, who, simply by being near many living Christians, had come steadily closer to faith. The words of St. John were completing the work, but a last barrier remained to be overcome.

"I've tried to pray again," said the Professor. "But between reciting the Orthodox formulas I learned as a boy and demanding favors of the Almighty to which I have no claim, there is nothing much to say."

I told him of a pastor who was called to an old man's deathbed. He went to sit in an armchair close to the bed, but was surprised when the old man said, "Please don't sit there." So the pastor pulled up a stool, heard his confession and gave him Holy Communion. Then the old man revived a little and said, "Let me tell you the story of that armchair. Fifty years ago, when I was a boy, the old pastor here asked if I said my prayers. I replied, 'No. I have no one to pray to. If I shout at the top of my voice the man on the floor above doesn't hear, so how will God in heaven?' The old pastor replied mildly, 'Do not try to pray then. Just sit quietly in the morning with another chair before you. Imagine that sitting in it is Jesus Christ, as He sat in so many homes in Palestine. What would you tell Him?' I said 'If I were honest, I'd say I didn't believe in Him.' 'Well,' said the pastor, 'that at least shows what's really in your mind. You could go further and challenge Him: if He exists, then let Him give proof of it. Or if you don't like the way God runs the world, why not tell Him so? You wouldn't be the first to complain. King David and Job told God they thought He was unjust. Perhaps you want something? Then tell Him exactly what it is. If you receive it, give Him thanks. All these exchanges are in the realm of prayer. Don't recite holy phrases by rote. Say what's really in your heart.' "

The dying man went on, "I didn't believe in Christ, but I did in the old pastor. To please him, I sat before that armchair and pretended Christ was in it. For a few days it was a game. Then I understood that He was with me. I spoke to a real Jesus about real things. I sought guidance and received it. Prayer became dialogue. Young man, fifty years have passed and every day I speak with Jesus in that chair."

The young pastor was there when the old man died, stretching out a hand with his last gesture, toward his friend in the armchair.

The Professor asked, "Is that how you pray?"

I said, "I like to think that Jesus stands near me, and that I can talk to Him as I do to you. People who met Him in Nazareth and Bethlehem didn't recite prayers to Him. They said what was in their hearts."

Popp said, "Why do you suppose that many who did talk to

Him in Palestine two thousand years ago didn't become His followers?"

I said: "For centuries the Jews prayed for the coming of the Messiah, and none more loudly than the Sanhedrin, the supreme council. But when He came, they mocked and spat on Him and sent him to His death, for the last thing they wanted was someone who would upset their comfortable routine. That's true of many nations today."

Professor Popp became a Christian. He told me, "When I first saw you I had a premonition that you had something to give me." Such intuitions are not uncommon in jail. When the outside world is cut off from view, a new avenue opens to the unseen. We became very close. Sitting with me in silence sometimes, he would voice the very thought that was stirring in my mind. So it should be, but rarely is, between friends, and between man and wife.

The icicles melted and the snow lay in patches against the wall. Buds appeared on the bare trees and we heard the birds sing. Through our chilblained hands, our feet wrapped in rags, our faces stiff with cold, we felt life start again.

News galvanized the prison. A prisoner had been taken to the hospital in town, where he'd seen a woman weeping as she scrubbed the floor. "What's wrong?" he asked. "Our father Stalin is dead," she sobbed. It was in the newspapers. We shed no tears. Everyone speculated excitedly on what it would mean.

Popp said, "If Stalin is dead, so is Stalinism; a dictatorship doesn't survive its dictator."

A reminder that Communism had survived Lenin fell on deaf ears. A few days later we heard train whistles blowing and bells tolling to mark Stalin's funeral in Moscow. The prison echoed with laughter and curses. The guards looked surly and the officers nervous. No one knew what might happen next.

After weeks of uncertainty, a high official arrived from the Legal Department, and we understood that he had been sent to study prison conditions. Silence greeted him as he went from cell to cell asking for complaints. Many suspected a trick. When he reached Room Four I said, "I have something to say, but I won't begin unless you promise to hear me out."

"That's what I've come for," said the official politely.

I said, "Prosecutor, you had a renowned predecessor in history named Pontius Pilate. He was asked to handle the trial of a man he knew to be innocent. 'Never mind,' said Pilate to himself. 'Am I to risk my career for a Jew and a carpenter?'

"Although two thousand years have passed, this betrayal of justice has not been forgotten. In any church you enter throughout the world you hear it said, in the Creed, that Jesus was crucified under Pontius Pilate."

The others in Room Four were looking very anxious for me.

I said, "Look into your heart and you'll see that we are the victims of injustice. Even if we're guilty in the Party's eyes, we were to purge our crimes in prison. But this is a prolonged death sentence. Before you make your report, consider our food, the lack of heating and simple medicine, the dirt and disease. Ask about some of the barbarities we've suffered. Then write the truth. Don't wash your hands of helpless men as Pilate did."

The prosecutor looked at me somberly, turned on his heel and left without a word. The news that he had heard me out spread through the prison and encouraged others to speak. Before he left, we learned that there had been angry words in the Commandant's office. Later that day, the guards became very polite, almost apologetic. A week afterwards the Commandant was dismissed.

With the improvements in prison routine, I began to get out of bed and walk a few paces each day. Dr. Aldea brought the official doctor to see me. Aldea said, "We can't figure you out. Your lungs are tattered, the spinal vertebrae are affected; I couldn't put you in plaster and there's been virtually no surgical intervention. You're no better, but you're getting no worse, and so we're going to move you out of Room Four."

My friends there were delighted. They took courage from the fact that, after two and a half years, I was the first man to leave the cell alive. "How's it done, Pastor?" asked one, jokingly. "Why doesn't that old body of yours obey doctor's orders and die?"

I said, "I expect you could find a medical reason if you tried. But, in the war, I learned a lesson about looking too far for explanations. I met some Party men who had been in Russia.

When I asked why the Soviet Union had eased its campaign against religion at the time, one man said, 'You tell us.' I replied that I thought it was a concession to Britain and America, who were helping to keep Russia in the war. The official smiled. 'That's the explanation that I would give, as a Communist. If I were a Christian, I'd say it was God's answer to prayer.' I was silent, because he was right. In the Bible it is said that an ass once reprimanded a prophet. So I say to you now, that if I have recovered, it is a miracle of God and an answer to prayer."

I knew that many people prayed for me, both prisoners I had met and members of my congregation, as well. But not for many years did I learn how many thousands around the world had joined in their prayer.

Chapter Four

THE "death room" had been like an altar before which men were transformed and transfigured for their faiths. I was glad to be still alive, but entering the normal prison atmosphere of quarrels, vanity and shabby pretensions was an anticlimax.

The grim persistence with which a section of the former upper classes clung to formal titles was at once sad and comic. "Excellencies" wished each other good day; barons and counts inquired after one another's health. Talk of past affluence and the return of the "good old days" filled up the hours. A neighbor of mine, who would not give a civil reply to anyone who failed to address him as "Brigadier," tried to borrow some string from me to hold up his trousers as we got in line for the use of the stinking barrel. Failing to do so, he went off "to find something to smoke."

The only source of cigarettes was the guards, who were forbidden to give them to the prisoners but smoked all night and threw the butts away. The informers always seemed to be first out when the cells opened in the morning, so they had a monopoly on butts collected in the yard. Sometimes one reached the other prisoners, who would stand in a jealous circle smoking it in turn on the end of a pin. On this particular morning

"Brigadier" Donca sidled up to a young guard luxuriously puffing on a cigarette while he lounged beside the door.

"What will you take for that cigarette?"

The guard grinned. "What have you got to offer, Brigadier?"

Donca had nothing. He tried to bluff. "I have friends in high places. You shall be rewarded for every attention I am shown."

"Influential friends, eh? So you are really a Communist after all, Brigadier?"

"I am a loyal Rumanian, Sergeant."

"Now, if you were a loyal Rumanian *Communist,* Brigadier, I might give you this cigarette."

Donca hesitated, glancing furtively around. The guard started to move away.

"No, wait. I am a loyal Rumanian Communist, of course."

The guard beckoned his comrades over to share the entertainment.

"So you can dance to a Russian tune, Brigadier? Give us a dance. Dance like a Russian bear." Tantalizingly, he held out the cigarette.

His arms spread, a slight foam flecking his lips, Donca began to hop ludicrously from one foot to another. The guards found him vastly entertaining. The prisoners averted their eyes as Donca rooted among their legs for the discarded cigarette.

When Donca was transferred, his bunk was taken by another former member of the Staff, General Stavrat. Epaulets no more make the officer than the habit makes the monk, and Stavrat was everything that Donca was not. Though short in stature, he dwarfed his fellow prisoners by sheer personal magnetism. Crusty, quick to despise weakness, yet full of kindness and good sense, he liked to address the cell at large as "Men!"

Juliu Stavrat was a General without boots. He had given his away. We shared my pair, wearing them on alternate days for exercise in the yard. Soon after his arrival, food parcels were finally permitted, and the first one was delivered to the General. Before an excited audience, he tore away the wrapping. A gasp went up. Ham, smoked sausage, fruitcake, chocolate—what sacrifices his wife must have made to buy such things. Stavrat, who had lived on pigs' swill for eight years, wrapped

up the parcel again and came over to my bed. "Pastor," he said, "be good enough to divide this among the men."

Stavrat was a Christian before he was a soldier. When we heard that Russia had exploded her first atomic bomb, he said, "Then we must no longer hope for full-scale American military intervention: it's better for us to die in jail than for millions to die in an atomic war."

"You think it would wipe out humanity?" I asked him.

"The future of humanity and its past as well," he said. "There will be no one left to study our struggle and progress through the ages." Stavrat had a deep feeling for history and could talk eloquently of Rumania's past.

"But if nuclear war solves nothing," he added, "and civilization and Communism cannot live together, then I don't know what the answer is."

"It's Christianity," I answered, "in a vital form. It can change the lives of all men. Remember the many barbarian rulers like Clovis of France, Stephen of Hungary, Rurik of Russia, who were converted and then Christianized their countries. It can be done again. Then we'll see the Iron Curtain melt."

"Shall we begin with Gheorghiu-Dej?" smiled Stavrat. "A tall order."

His rivals all eclipsed, Gheorghiu-Dej was now our dictator. He admitted freely that the previous regime had made grave errors, and counted the Danube-Black Sea canal among the gravest. After three years in which many millions of dollars had been wasted and thousands of lives lost, only five of its projected forty miles had been completed. The project's leading engineers and camp administrators were accused of sabotage. Three were sentenced to death, two summarily executed. Thirty others received prison terms ranging from fifteen years to life. A fresh survey now revealed that the Danube could not supply enough water for the project—exactly what the engineers consulted at the start had been shot for saying. The canal was abandoned. All that remained of Rumania's major investment of time and money in the first decade of Communist rule were the labor camps, and they were quickly mobilized to accommodate the overflow from the prisons.

While we were discussing this fiasco, Professor Popp drew me aside. He said, "I've been keeping something from you since my return to Tirgul-Ocna. Dr. Aldea thought it might be too much of a shock for you in your condition. Your wife is in prison, and—she has been at the canal."

Popp had pieced the facts together from various prisoners who had worked there. Sabina had been arrested two years after me. No specific charge had been brought against her. She'd led the women in the church as a deaconess and at that time had refused to preach along Party lines. At Poarta-Alba, on the canal, Sabina was assigned to the detail of women—schoolgirl patriots and prostitutes, society women and women suffering for their faith—who were made to shovel earth into wheelbarrows and cart it great distances. Those who failed to fulfill their quota got no food. At Camp Kilometer 4, the Commandant was later sentenced to hard labor for raping thirty girl prisoners: the charge was "damaging the prestige of the regime."

Poarta-Alba was run by the notorious Colonel Albon. To survive, Sabina ate grass like an animal. Rats, snakes, dogs, everything was eaten. Some of those who'd eaten dog said it was palatable. But when I asked them if they would eat it again, they were horrified. Sabina was tiny and fragile, so a favorite joke among the guards was to toss her into the freezing Danube and fish her out again. Her reprieve from death came with the collapse of the project. Along with other prisoners, she was sent to do hard labor on a state farm where pigs were bred. The Professor said that a prisoner from Vacaresti had spoken with Sabina in the hospital there.

"She has been very ill," said Popp, "but she will live. She knows you are safe. The women around her spoke of a pastor who was considered to be dying, a pastor who preached from behind the walls. They told your wife that in 1950 they had stopped hearing your voice and were convinced you had died. But she insisted that you were alive despite all the evidence against it."

This news almost shattered my self-control. For a moment I would have done anything to reach Sabina. I tried to pray, but

a black gloom descended upon my mind. For days I spoke to no one. Then one day in the prison yard I saw a very dignified old priest by the guardroom, with his white beard blowing in the cold wind. He had just arrived and they had left him there. Several officers were loitering around making fun of him.

"What's this old pope doing here?" asked one of them.

"He's come to confess the prisoners," mocked another.

That is what Father Suroianu soon did. He possessed such an aura of holiness that you felt a great impulse to reveal yourself completely to him. I, too, confessed my sense of despair and told him of sins I had never before acknowledged. The roots of evil are seldom laid bare in the confessional. But the more I accused myself, the more Father Suroianu regarded me not with contempt but with love. On my part, it was surely a private confession. I do not believe in confession as sacrament.

Suroianu had more reason to mourn than any of us. Tragedy had struck his entire family. One of his daughters, a cripple, had been deprived of her husband: he was in Tirgul-Ocna with us. Another daughter and her husband had been sentenced to twenty years. One of his sons had died in prison. The second, on whom Suroianu had set great hopes as a priest, had turned against him. Because of their parents' "anti-Party activities," his grandchildren had been dismissed from school or had lost their jobs. Yet Father Suroianu, a simple, self-educated man, spent his day encouraging and cheering others. He never greeted people with "Good morning," but always with the Biblical "Rejoice!" He told me, "The day you can't smile, don't open your shop. It takes seventeen muscles of the face to smile, but forty-three to frown."

"You've had so much misfortune—how can you possibly rejoice?"

"Why, it's a grave sin not to do so," he told me. "There's always good reason to rejoice. There is a God in heaven and in the heart. I had a piece of bread this morning. It was delicious. Look, now the sun is shining. And so many here love me. Every day you do not rejoice is a day lost, my son. You will never have that day again."

I, too, could rejoice, for at last I could fulfill the hope I'd cherished since being ordained—to be a prison pastor. In every-

day life one rings the bells and waits for people to come to church; but here my parishioners were "in church" with me, not only on Sunday but all day and every day.

One evening young Lazar Stancu, a fluent linguist whose only crime had been to work for a foreign news agency, interrupted me: "No more about Christianity, please. After all, there are other interesting religions."

"Well," I said, "I know something about Confucius and Buddhism." And I told one of the lesser-known New Testament parables. When Stancu praised its beautiful and original thought, I was delighted, explaining that it was really Christian teaching. "Why do you run after other religions?" I asked. "Is it as they say in the old Rumanian proverb, Your neighbor's hen is always a turkey? Or simply the restless intellectual's search for novelty?"

"Bernard Shaw once suggested that people are so inoculated in childhood with small doses of Christianity that they seldom catch the real thing," Stancu replied.

Sometimes as I spoke, men tried to shout me down. One evening, a young prisoner, a new arrival in the cell, jumped up and cried, "Stop it! Stop it!" The others looked at him in surprise, and he flung himself down on his bunk. I went over to him. He had a fine, sensitive face, but his jaw and neck were covered by makeshift bandages. Hopelessly, he turned his face to the wall. Feeling that I would only upset him further, I did not persist in trying to talk to him.

Dr. Aldea told me his name was Josif. "A nice boy," he said, "but he'll be badly scarred for life by a facial ulcer. He's another bone tuberculosis case." Aldea told me Josif's story. Four years before, when he was only fourteen, Josif was arrested while trying to reach his sister's home in Germany. The Secret Police put him under the guard of trained dogs, who leaped at him if he moved, snapping at his throat. Shock and fear took possession of him; he still talked obsessively of the harrowing hours he'd spent on the frontier at the mercy of the dogs. Next, suspected of being a pawn in some political game, Josif was taken to Bucharest and tortured for information he didn't possess. Then he was sent with a forced labor gang to the canal, where he starved and contracted TB.

I watched Josif as he settled down among us. He had a native honesty and openness that hardship had not corrupted. At times, forgetting his troubles, he threw back his shock of dark hair and roared with laughter at some ancient prison joke. But often his hand went to his damaged face. It was painful: but worse was the thought that his good looks were gone for life.

Sure that I could help him, I bided my time.

For a few months after Stalin's death, the monthly parcels from home continued to arrive. We looked forward to them eagerly. On the postcards they gave us I wrote asking, in addition to food, for cigarettes and "Doctor Filon's old clothes."

Though I dislike smoking, I always asked for my full quota to give away, since men were so desperate for cigarettes. The result was unhappy: those for whom I had none were resentful, and those to whom I gave suspected me of giving more to others.

The request for Dr. Filon's clothes puzzled my family. The doctor was about half my size. I hoped they'd realize that what I really wanted from him was streptomycin. Aldea told me that Socialist medicine now conceded that the drug, discovered in America ten years before, had some value. If I received it, he could treat me; but we were not allowed to ask for it in our parcels.

Even simple aspirin would have been welcome at that moment. I was suffering from one of the frequent bouts of toothache that plagued us all. Teeth decayed quickly for lack of proper food or were broken in beatings. Sometimes I had carried fifty-pound chains around my ankles and could not even walk a few steps to ease the pain. But never was it worse than during this spell at Tirgul-Ocna. An upper tooth had me in agony all day; then at sunset the pain settled in my lower jaw. We had no dentist and no hope of relief. Pascal is said to have combatted toothache with mathematical problems, so I tried to compose sermons; but pain must be more amenable to calculation than composition, for they were desperate sermons, begging for ease of our earthly pain. Then I tried writing poems, but they were equally morbid and self-pitying.

I tried to forget the pain in talking to Josif. One evening when he had finished the last crumb of his supper, I sat down

next to him and asked why he'd been so angry when he heard me speak of God.

He said fiercely, "I hate God. And if you don't leave me alone, I'll call the guards." Then his eyes began to well with tears. But the boy's basic good nature always prevailed, and a day or two later he was telling me of his hopes of rejoining his sister in Germany and going on together to live with relations in America.

"You must start to learn English, then," I said.

"I'd love to, but who would teach me, here?"

I said I could give him lessons if he wished. Overjoyed, he proved a bright and earnest pupil, although we had no books, paper or pencil. I told him of books in English I had read and had him memorize passages that I knew by heart from the King James version of the Bible.

Josif was not the only prisoner who threatened to report me, but the real danger in our midst was the hidden informer. Often such men used patriotism to serve their purpose, especially with the young.

The partisans who held out for years in the mountains of Rumania inspired many young people to form their own anti-Communist groups, so that boys and girls of seventeen and eighteen were arrested and herded into jail: there was even a fourteen-year-old with us at Tirgul-Ocna. They loved to hear the stories that a former intelligence colonel named Armeanu used to tell of our King Stephen the Great and other patriot-heroes who had struggled against foreign domination.

General Stavrat, who had known Armeanu before, told me not to trust him and suggested we keep an eye on him. Later that day, I walked slowly by while Armeanu was talking to a young partisan named Tiberiu. "They got me all right," Tiberiu said, "but others are carrying on the fight . . ." When I walked by again, I heard him saying that his girl friend was among the partisans. Armeanu, seeing me near, clapped him on the shoulder and went off. Then I asked Josif to listen; Armeanu would take even less notice of him. A few evenings later, he overheard snatches of conversation.

"Tell me about your girl, Tiberiu. I'll bet she's good-looking. What's her name? . . . Maria—and where does she come

from? . . . Yes, I know the place. In fact, I was friendly with a family named Celinescu who had a daughter of the same name . . . Ah, your Maria is a Miss Cuza. And her father? An army captain, eh? Not in the twenty-second regiment by any chance? Oh, the fifteenth. Yes, yes."

After this report, I agreed that Armeanu was very probably an agent and that Maria would be arrested in a few days. General Stavrat wanted to confront him at once, but I told him we had no tangible evidence against him. When I next found Armeanu alone, I struck up a conversation. He asked why I was in prison and I saw a desperate chance.

"For spying," I said, adding that I knew I could speak freely to a nationalist like him. "My arrest doesn't matter. I'm only a minor cog in the organization." I dropped further hints and allowed him to wheedle names and addresses of my "contacts." He failed to mask his look of cunning triumph: he thought he had the information that would secure his release.

As soon as the cells opened the next day, Stavrat saw Armeanu whispering to the guard. Immediately afterwards Armeanu was summoned for a "medical inspection"—a frequent pretext for consulting informers. Then I was sent for by the political officer. In his imagination an extra star already glittered on his shoulder, for, without any attempt to shield Armeanu, he at once demanded the full story of the great international spy network I had mentioned.

"Lieutenant," I replied, "if you pass on the information I gave Armeanu yesterday, it will start a furor in Bucharest. That's why I advise against it. You'll only harm yourself."

"What do you mean?" he asked.

I said, "I invented the whole thing. I wanted to confirm my suspicions about Armeanu."

For a long minute, the officer stared at me incredulously. Then, to my relief, he began to laugh. I went back and told Stavrat, who confronted Armeanu with quiet rage: "Brave men have died under your command, and now you turn traitor."

Armeanu tried to bluster, but he was an outcast from that day on. Years later I heard that he had died in prison. All his betrayals brought him only shame.

My next month's parcel included 100 grams of streptomycin.

The hint had been taken. Thinking of the men I had left behind in Room Four, I asked General Stavrat to offer it to the most serious case there.

"That's Sultaniuc," he said with distaste. "A thoroughgoing Iron Guard Fascist. Though he won't admit it, he's at death's door. Much better take the stuff yourself . . . Very well, if you insist."

Stavrat was soon back. "Sultaniuc wanted to know where the drug came from, and when I told him it was yours, he said he wouldn't take anything from an opponent of the Iron Guard. There's nothing to be done with a fanatic like that."

Still, I thought, there might be a way around his prejudice. When Stavrat left, I asked Josif, whom no one would suspect of duplicity, to act as a go-between. "Tell Sultaniuc the General was mistaken. Say it's a gift from Graniceru. He's an Iron Guard man too, and I hear he recently received some drugs."

Josif was unsuccessful. "Sultaniuc doesn't believe that Graniceru would give him a crumb. He won't look at the powder unless you swear on your oath that it doesn't come from you."

"Why not?" I said. "I've given him the drug and I can give him an oath to go with it."

Dr. Aldea, who was busy elsewhere when the streptomycin arrived, was speechless when he heard what had become of it. Even Stavrat was puzzled at my giving "a false oath." He said, "I thought you clergy always insisted on the whole truth and nothing but the truth."

I answered, "It was the whole truth. The streptomycin is not mine, but God's. I offered it to Him from the first moment I received it."

Stavrat soon had an example of what misunderstood "whole truth" can cost when two new prisoners, one of whom had testified against the other, were put into our cell. The first was a Catholic bishop who had wanted Rome to know how bitterly his church was being persecuted. The second was a lawyer who had delivered the bishop's letter of complaint to the Papal Nuncio, when there was still one in Bucharest, for transmission to the Vatican. As the lawyer left the Nuncio's palace he had been arrested and, having denied delivering a letter, had been con-

fronted by the bishop. The bishop had said, "I cannot lie. Yes, I did give him a letter."

Both men were tortured and ended up in Tirgul-Ocna. Endlessly they argued over which one was in the right. The bishop expected my support, but I couldn't offer it. I said, "If a man refuses to tell a lie, well and good, but then he should keep dangerous information in his own hands. If he decides to risk someone else's safety, then he must defend him at all costs."

The bishop protested, "The whole affair has brought me much sorrow, but how could I tell a lie?"

I replied that if we do good to our enemies, surely we should help our friends. "If my hostess has spent all day preparing a disastrous dinner, I still feel obliged to compliment her: that's not a lie, it's simple courtesy. When men here ask, 'When will the Americans come?' I tell them, 'It can't be too long now.' It's not the truth, I'm afraid, but it's not a lie either. It's a word of hope."

The bishop was unconvinced. I continued, "If you submit to the purists, all art becomes a lie. Faust didn't really sign a contract with the Devil, you know; it's just that liar Goethe at work. Hamlet never existed—that's a Shakespearean lie. The simplest joke (I hope you laugh at jokes) is a fabrication."

"That may be true," the bishop replied. "But this is a personal issue. When *you* are interrogated, Reverend Wurmbrand, don't you feel you must tell the truth?"

I laughed. "Of course not. I have no qualms about saying the first thing that comes into my head, so long as it misleads those who are trying to trap my friends. Do you really expect me to give these people information that they can use to attack the church? I'm a minister of God."

When we were alone later, Josif asked me, "What do you call a lie, then?"

"I'd define it as an untruth told with intent to harm someone. You don't think the oath you carried to Sultaniuc about the streptomycin was a lie, do you?"

"Oh, no," said Josif, with his sweet smile. "That was an act of love."

Josif was changing. His bitterness had been eased, and one day after our English lesson I asked him, "Why do you say that you hate God?"

"Why?" he echoed. "You tell me first why God created the TB bacillus." He felt that would put an end to the conversation.

"All right, I can explain," I said. "If you'll listen quietly."

"I'll listen all night if you can do that," he replied.

I warned him that I would take him at his word. It was a problem, I said, that went to the root of all human suffering, and of evil, too. Josif was not the only one to ask why such things could happen under the eye of a merciful God; probably all of us in prison were troubled by the same question, and there was not a single answer to it, but several.

"First of all, we tend to confuse the unpleasant with the bad. Why is the wolf bad? Because it eats sheep and this upsets me. But, the wolf has no duty toward the sheep, whereas we rear it, feed and water it, and when it puts its full trust in us, then we cut its throat. Yet no one blames us."

Josif sat watching me in absorbed silence.

"It's the same with bacilli. One bacillus lives to make bread ferment; another lives to damage a child's lung. Neither germ knows what it does, but I approve one and condemn the other. So things are neither good nor evil in themselves; we label them according to whether or not they are convenient to us. We are merely inhabitants of the universe, but we want the universe to conform to our wishes."

The cell was dark, and unexpectedly quiet, so I went on. "In the second place," I said, "what we call 'bad' is often simply unfinished good."

"That will take some proving," Josif put in, "in my case."

I said, "You had a namesake four thousand years ago, who was sold into slavery by his brothers and suffered many other injustices in Egypt. Then he rose to become Prime Minister and was able to save the land, and his own ungrateful brothers, from starving in a famine. So until, like Joseph, you reach the end of the story, you can never know if what has happened so far will prove good or bad. When a painter starts a portrait, all you see is a blur of color. It takes time for the sitter to emerge. Everyone admires the Mona Lisa, but it took Leonardo

forty years to finish. The ascent of a mountain is hard going before you can enjoy the view from the summit."

"But the men who lie here in prison," Josif said, "may never reach the view."

"On the other hand, a spell in jail may help them to the summit. Would Comrade Gheorghiu-Dej have come to power in Rumania if he hadn't been in prison like us?"

"And those who don't live to see freedom again?"

"Lazarus died in poverty and sickness," I said, "but Jesus tells us in a parable that the angels took him into eternal blessedness. After death, compensation comes to all of us. Only when we see the end of everything can we hope to understand."

Josif promised to think about what I'd told him, and I left him in his bunk, staring off into space.

One rapid cure for toothache is good news, and the letter that came for me shortly later raised my spirits enormously, for it said Sabina was free. She was still confined to Bucharest, but my son would shortly be permitted to visit me. The letter ended abruptly: it was all the information the censors had allowed.

I had last seen Mihai at the age of nine, and now he was fifteen. I couldn't imagine my son as a young man. We had always been so close. Immediately, I began to worry day and night about the meeting. When at last they led me into a large hall, I had to sit in a box with a barred window so small that the visitor opposite would see only a fraction of my face. The guard called, "Mihai Wurmbrand," and he came and sat down before me. He was so pale, so thin and hollow-cheeked, with the beginnings of a moustache.

In case he was cut off he said rapidly, "Mother says even if you die in prison you must not be sad because we'll all meet in paradise."

Consoling first words! I didn't know whether to laugh or cry. I pulled myself together. "How is she? Have you food at home?"

"She's well again," Mihai replied. "And we have food. Our Father is very rich."

The guards assigned to listen to us grinned. They thought my wife had remarried. Mihai couched his answer to every

question in a Biblical verse, so that in the few minutes we were allowed I could get little family news. But before our time ran out, he did tell me he had left a parcel with the guards at the gate.

The next day, I received the parcel, in excess of my monthly allowance, because Mihai had addressed it to "Richard Wurmbrand." The others had been addressed to my prison self, Vasile Georgescu. Shortly afterwards, restrictions were fully restored: no visits, no parcels, no letters.

Before the easier times ended, a guard dragged a basket into the cell, containing sheets and towels—more than enough of these unimaginable luxuries for all.

"There's been a miscount," said Emil, a tailor. "Let's cut up the extra ones for clothes. I can easily run up some good, warm shirts out of this stuff."

Ion Madgearu, a lawyer, said uneasily, "It would be stealing state property."

"Who's to know? There's no inventory."

"I'm a political prisoner, not a criminal."

"You're a fathead."

Sides were taken and the argument raged. Josif appealed to me.

I said, "I see no problem here. All this 'state property' belongs to us. We've been reduced to rags, and we're entitled to take back what we can. We owe it to our families to do all we can to survive the winter. It's just the same as when the guard comes in half asleep in the morning to ask 'How many are you in this cell today?' and we try to exaggerate our number to get a little extra bread."

Madgearu said, "I prefer to abide by the law."

"But every law is unfair to someone," I replied. "The law tells a millionaire, who lacks nothing, not to steal, and it says the same to you and me, who have nothing."

Madgearu eventually joined us, but later he told me he had a special reason for wishing to make no compromise of this kind.

"I used to be a state prosecutor and in my time I've sent hundreds to jail. I thought, 'Well, it makes no difference what I say; the Party will send them to prison in any case.' When

later I became the scapegoat for some mistake and received a fifteen-year sentence myself, I was stunned. They sent me to the lead mines at Valea Nistrului. There, a Christian prisoner befriended me, shared his food, and protected me from the guards. I felt we'd met before, so I asked why he was in jail. 'Oh,' he said, 'I helped a fellow in trouble, like you. He came to my farm asking food and shelter. Then he was arrested as a partisan and I got twenty years.' I said, 'Disgraceful,' and he gave me a curious look. Suddenly it came back to me. I had been the prosecutor in his case. The man had never reproached me, and his example of returning good for evil convinced me to become a Christian."

Josif sang as he tried on the shirt Emil had made for him out of the surplus toweling. It fit like a tunic, with a hole for his head, but he was delighted to have something fresh near his skin, even if it was state property. "Everyone steals these days," he said cheerfully.

Stavrat said, "The younger generation takes dishonesty for granted. In ten years we've turned into a nation of thieves, liars and petty informers. Farmers steal from land they once owned; farm workers steal from the collective; even the barber steals a razor from his own shop, which the cooperative has seized. Then they have to cover their thefts. Did you send in exact tax returns, Pastor?"

I admitted that I saw no reason to give the parishioners' money to the Party and didn't consider that wrong.

"Stealing will be part of the school curriculum next," said Stavrat.

Josif put in, "I didn't listen to anything at school once the teachers said that Bessarabia, which everyone knows was stolen from us, had always been part of Russia."

"Good lad," said the General.

"I hope you'll reject their teaching against religion, too, Josif," I added, and told him about a professor I knew who had to lecture regularly on atheism. After crossing himself alone in his room, asking God's forgiveness, he would go out and tell his students that God did not exist.

"Well, of course," said Josif. "They would be spying on

him." He couldn't imagine a world in which you didn't have to look over your shoulder before opening your mouth. The talk turned to informers and I said that I had no scruples about suppressing them because of the damage and suspicion they caused.

Shortly after our discussion a former Iron Guard man, Captain Stelea, moved to our cell from one further down the corridor. There he had regretfully left an old wartime comrade.

"What was his name?" General Stavrat asked.

"Ion Coliu," Stelea replied. "He was put in with me the night after my arrival at Tirgul-Ocna and we had a wonderful talk about old times."

Stavrat asked whether Stelea had told Coliu any secrets he'd held back under interrogation and torture.

"Yes, everything," said Stelea. "He's been my closest friend for years. I'd stake my life on him."

When Stavrat told Stelea that Ion Coliu was the most despised stool pigeon in Tirgul-Ocna, he could not believe it. I was asked to confirm the fact. For hours Stelea sat on his bunk like a shell-shocked soldier. Then he leaped up and began to rage against us hysterically until the guards carried him off. In every prison a room is set aside for those who break down. There they are abandoned to rave, relieve themselves on the floor and fight among themselves, sometimes fatally. Food is simply thrust through a hatch. No guard risks his life among them.

Although Josif's sentence had only weeks to run, he showed little excitement. But at least he was planning for the future. "No more wild dashes for the frontier. My sister in Germany will work for a permit for me to leave Rumania and another for us to go to America. I'll perfect my English and learn a trade."

Still, he had not entirely mastered his bitterness at having to confront the outside world with a disfigured face. One evening, he repeated some verses of the New Testament in a way that revealed he was moved by them. I told him how Helen Keller, although blind, deaf and dumb, had become one of the most admired women in America. He was fascinated as I described how she taught herself to become a fine pianist, aided only by a

piece of sounding wood held in her teeth, its other end fixed in the piano; and how her work had brought Braille to thousands of blind people.

"She wrote, in one of her famous books, that although she had never seen the starry heaven, she had heaven in her heart and could spread the beauty of God's creation before a world that has senses but often fails to use them."

I told him that Helen Keller came from a wealthy family. If she had been "lucky" like other girls in possessing all her senses, she might have frittered her life away. Instead, she used what the world calls "evil" as a stimulus to reach new heights of achievement.

"It's an example of what you said—only when we see the end of things can we hope to understand them," Josif said thoughtfully. "All the same, Helen Keller must be one in a thousand."

"No, there are many like her. The Russian author Ostrovsky was blind, paralyzed, and so poor that he had to write his novel on wrapping paper. Today it's world famous. Great men have often been sick men; Schiller, Chopin and Keats were tubercular like us. Baudelaire, Heine and our own poet Eminescu had syphilis. Scientists tell us that the microbes of such diseases excite our nervous cells and thus heighten our awareness, although they may ultimately bring madness or death. TB may make a bad man worse, but good ones see their lives running out and want to do all the good they can in the time left to them."

Josif had often helped out in Room Four. I said, "Haven't you seen the special serenity, gentleness and lucidity that comes to some of those suffering with tuberculosis?"

His eyes lit up. "That's true; but how strange it is."

I said, "For thousands of years men regarded fungus as harmful. Then, twenty-five years ago, Sir Alexander Fleming found the good in it, and penicillin, which heals so many diseases, was discovered. It may be that we have yet to learn how to put the TB microbe to work for us. When once this incurable disease has finally been conquered, our children might even be inoculated with small doses of the germ to enhance their intelligence.

"God made heaven and earth, and your life, and so much beauty, Josif. There is sense in your suffering, as there was in

Jesus', for it was His death on the Cross that saved mankind."

Josif was shivering in his new shirt, which was already growing threadbare. I took the woolen jacket my relatives had sent, tore out the lining, saying I would keep that for myself, and persuaded him to take the jacket only after he had clasped his arms over his narrow chest in a vain attempt at convincing me of how warm he was. Josif's conversion began on that day. During our lessons I talked to him often about Jesus. Yet he still wouldn't commit himself. Some final catalyst was needed to lift him across the gap from disbelief to faith.

The turning point came one day during the daily distribution of the bread rations, which were laid in rows on a table. Each portion was supposed to weigh three and a half ounces, but some were a shade larger, some smaller. Often disagreements broke out over whose turn it was for first choice, followed by argument over who had to be last. Men asked one another's advice: which was the biggest portion left? Then, having acted on it, they suspected they were being misled, and friendships soured over a mouthful of coarse black bread. On this particular day a surly prisoner named Trailescu attempted to cheat me. Josif and others watched to see what I would do. I told Trailescu, "Take mine, too. I know how hungry you are." He shrugged and crammed the bread into his mouth.

That evening we sat translating New Testament verses into English and Josif said, "We have read nearly everything Jesus said now, but still I wonder what He was like to know as a man."

I said, "Let me tell you. When I was in Room Four there was a pastor who would give away everything he had—his last bit of bread, his medicine, the coat from his back. I have given these things also sometimes, when I wanted them for myself. But at other times when men were hungry and sick and in need I could be very quiet; I didn't care enough. The pastor I speak of was really Christlike. You felt that just the touch of his hand could heal and calm. One day he was talking to a small group of prisoners and one of them asked him just the question you've asked me: 'What is Jesus like?' And the pastor replied, in a moment of great courage, simply and humbly, 'Jesus is like me.' And the man, who had often received kindness from the pastor, answered, smiling, 'If Christ was like you, then I love Him.'

The times when one may say such a thing, Josif, are very rare. But to me that is what it means to be a Christian. To believe in Him is not such a great thing. To become like Him is truly great."

Tears came to Josif's eyes. "Pastor, if Jesus is like you, then I love Him, too," he said. There was such innocence and peace in his gaze at that moment, that I knew I'd succeeded, even if Josif was wrong in thinking so highly of me.

Then the moment passed, and we continued our lesson. I had been telling him how Jesus answered the Jews who asked for a sign so that they might believe Him. "Our ancestors," they said, "saw bread fall from heaven. Moses did that for them." And Jesus replied, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me shall never be hungry or thirsty. Your forefathers ate and are dead. I speak of bread that comes from heaven, which a man may eat and never die."

The next day Josif worked in Room Four, as he often did now. When we met in the evening he said, "I want to be a Christian more than anything." I baptized him with a little water from a tin mug, saying, "In the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Ghost." Before he was released, the bitterness had completely left his heart.

On the day of his departure, he embraced me with tears in his eyes. He said, "You've helped me as though you were my own father. Now I can stand by myself, with God."

Years afterwards, we met again and he was still a Christian. The hated scar was still there, but now he was glad to bear it.

It had not taken long for our prison administrators to get over their anxiety at Stalin's death. There had been serious trouble in the slave camps of Siberia, and they were determined to show no weakness. Old restrictions were revived; new ones created. The windows were closed and painted over, despite the doctors' protests, and we could open them only an inch at night when the guards weren't looking. In summer the heat and stench were stifling.

Outside, too, the church's sufferings increased. We heard, from newly arrested Orthodox priests, that Patriarch Justinian had become a mere tool of the Party. One of his most callous

acts was his treatment of Mother Veronica, a nun revered throughout Rumania. Years before, as an unlettered peasant girl, Veronica claimed to have had a vision of the Virgin Mary, who appeared to her in a field, asking that a convent be built on the spot. After several such appearances had been recorded, contributions poured in, and two hundred young girls took the veil. In the years that followed, the Holy Virgin's shrine became a place of pilgrimage resembling Lourdes, and after the Communist take-over the legend that the Virgin would redeem Rumania acquired a new meaning. One day Justinian arrived in a limousine and began his ministrations by excommunicating the priest of the convent church. Then, as head of the church, he advised the nuns that they were wasting their time preparing for an afterlife; much better to go out and take their pleasures in the world. Why should they forgo their sexual rights for an illusion of future bliss? The nuns ignored him and refused to leave their refuge. So Justinian's visit was followed shortly by a Security Police raid. The sisters who would not break their vows were shamefully abused, and finally the convent was forcibly shut down.

All Rumania was shocked: even the Party was temporarily apprehensive. Mother Veronica was subjected to intense pressure in a secret prison and made to confess that her vision had been a delusion. After her release, she married and had children. That was the end of Rumania's Lourdes.

Another blow for the faithful was the fate of Petrache Lupu, known as "the shepherd saint" from Oltenia. While tending his flock many years before, he had seen the figure of an old man who had introduced himself as God, declaring that more churches must be built and more money given for the poor. Although Lupu was a hereditary syphilitic who could barely speak intelligibly, his story was believed. Thousands came to see him. When war broke out, he was flown to the front to inspire the troops, and the soldiers competed to kiss his hand. He went from one sector to another, telling the men that God wanted them to kill more Russians. On his arrest by the Communists, Petrache Lupu asked his fellow prisoners when the Americans would rescue them. "Why wait for the Yanks?" they

said. "Your 'Old Man' will surely free you soon enough?" Lupu cackled, "He'd like to, but he hasn't got a gun."

Many of the blows the Party struck at religion simply lopped off superstitious branches, leaving true faith sounder than before. But human nature is such that if religious superstition is too drastically curtailed, it may be replaced by atheist superstition. Instead of excessive veneration for holy images we then saw the idolatry of Stalin, the mass murderer.

One day Professor Popp announced that a new batch of prisoners had come in and one of them who'd been beaten badly was asking for me. I went with him along the passage. It was Boris. The old trade unionist had been in several prisons since reeducation ended. He lay unconscious on the stone floor where the guards had dropped him. The others from the cell were out on exercise and no one had given him any help until Popp had come past. As we eased him on to a plank bed, Boris came around with a moan. Congealed blood glued his grubby shirt to his back. Slowly and painfully we soaked it off, revealing a back criss-crossed with ugly welts. A frailer man would never have survived. It was Boris' reward for cooperating with the reeducators, and the reward of all his companions who'd thought to win favor with the Party by wielding a club. The prisoners began to file in from exercise, and looked at him with hatred and contempt.

"I asked for it," said the old fellow, as Popp and I had cleaned his wounds.

"And you got it," said someone cruelly.

Boris clutched my arm. "I met someone you know. Patrascanu gave me a message for you."

Boris told me that Lucretiu Patrascanu, the former Communist Minister of Justice who had shared my first cell in Calea Rahova after our arrest in 1948, had been executed. During the year of uncertainty following Stalin's death, the Party bosses were as fearful as our guards that they might fall victim to a counterrevolution. They saw the imprisoned Patrascanu as a man with a popular following who might lead a victorious liberalizing movement and take revenge on them. After six

years in jail, he was given a hasty trial and the death sentence.

Boris had been with him briefly. He said that Patrascanu, who'd done so much to bring Communism to power, was tortured before he died. When he had complained of the cold in his cell, they gave him heavy clothes and put him in chains. "Still cold?" they asked, and heated the cell until, gasping and soaked in sweat, Patrascanu begged them to turn off the steam heat. They did so, only after stripping him to his shirt, and then let the cell temperature drop abruptly to freezing. So Patrascanu was alternately roasted and frozen, and since he still refused to die, he was finally taken out and shot.

Boris said, "He told me, 'If you meet Wurmbrand again, tell him he was right about the flaw in my argument.' "

Dr. Aldea came to examine Boris. It didn't take long. "We'll have to take you to Room Four," he said.

I spent all the time I could with Boris in the "death room," and after a few days he seemed to be on the mend. Although his pride wouldn't let him admit it, he was happy to be back in an atmosphere of human kindness. He nodded his head toward his neighbor, a Jehovah's Witness, a sect outlawed by the Communists. "Old Losonczi's praying for me. He says enough prayers for both of us." Raising his voice, he said, "You there, Losonczi, you tell God everything about us, don't you?"

"I do," said the old fellow, "and ask good for us all."

"You haven't had an answer yet, I notice," Boris said sardonically. "Maybe he's pulling your leg, trying you out, like Job."

I was washing him, and he grasped my wrist. "It's something for the clergy to explain, isn't it? Year after year, I've seen men praying for liberty, for news of their families, for one single meal they might enjoy. What do they get? Nothing."

Losonczi tried to speak, but Boris continued. "I was in Jilava, the worst prison in Rumania. My friends were praying, 'God, if you love us, give us something to eat without worms in it.' "

"And did the food get better?" Losonczi asked.

"No, it got worse. Why didn't God help?"

I said, "You raise a great problem. But tell me, when the doctor treats you, doesn't he often have to cause you pain?"

"Think for a moment of animals that die in scientific experiments. If a laboratory dog knew that its suffering might

save the lives of millions of higher beings, mightn't it accept pain willingly, or even death? In the same way our suffering may serve future generations. Jesus bore his pain, understanding that it would save mankind."

Losonczi intervened. "Every day, all over the world, people call upon 'Our Father' and ask that His Kingdom come, and it doesn't. But I think I know why. It's because those who pray don't really want it to. They say, 'Thy Kingdom come,' but it's not a prayer from the heart. What they really want is the Iron Guard back, or the Americans to come, or the King to return, or the triumph of anyone else who'll help them."

I saw that Boris was listening seriously.

"But you can bet that the last thing in their minds is the Kingdom of Heaven, though they could bring it into being if they thought and worked for it. In my village we once had a prayer service for the poor. Everyone attended except for one rich farmer. While we were thinking how much better we were than he, his son arrived with four sacks of wheat. He deposited them at the church door, saying, 'My father has sent his prayer.' That man *did* something to create the Kingdom of God."

I said, "You're answered, Boris. The Bible promised that the Jews would come from the ends of the earth and be given their kingdom in Palestine; but the prophecy mightn't have come true for another thousand years if men like Herzl and Weizmann had not worked and struggled to fulfill it."

Others nearby, gaunt, earnest men in this room of death, questioned me about the meaning of prayer and how it could help them. I spoke my thoughts aloud: "Many look on God as if He were a rich man to whom they appeal for favors. Many cling to superstition. But Christians in prison know that we must try to achieve a purer form of religion, even though it is not for everyone. Our prayers take the form of meditation, acceptance, love. Millions call on the Father daily. But since we on earth are the children of God, and children share their father's responsibilities, then these prayers are directed to us, too. Isn't the Father to whom all pray in my heart? So, when I say 'Hallowed be Thy name,' I must hallow God's name. 'Thy kingdom come,' so I must fight to end the rule of intolerance

and evil over a large part of the world. 'Thy will be done,' and the will of good men, not bad. 'Forgive us our sins,' so I must also forgive. 'Lead us not into temptation,' so I must try to keep others from being tempted. 'Deliver us from evil,' so I must do all I can to free man from sin."

After this, Losonczi and I became friends. He was an interesting man, a farmer, whose simple good sense shone through the unorthodox views he held as a Jehovah's Witness. I found that the sect had chosen him, rather than the reverse. Disillusioned with the Orthodox church, and seeking religion because of a personal crisis in his life, he had embraced the first faith he encountered. There were many of these "refugees" from the traditional religions. Had Losonczi been drawn into a sect that the regime recognized—such as the Baptists or Adventists—he would not have been serving a twenty-year sentence as one of the outlawed Witnesses, and he might still have found peace for his spiritual torment.

One day, as I was talking to him, he asked me, "Do you know why I'm really here?" It was not, he said, only because the Party resented the Witnesses' refusal to conform. "Years ago I committed a grave sexual sin. I repented and asked God to let me suffer and atone for it. I am still atoning."

Losonczi was in no state to consider another doctrine now. He was dying. But I tried to comfort him: "Even the saints had difficulty in subduing their carnal nature," I said. "Jesus knew this. He has atoned for our sins, and there's no need for you to go on atoning by yourself."

"But I still can't forget," he replied sadly.

A few days later I came into the room and found Losonczi's bed empty. He had died during the night. I was sad that so fine a man had left the world still troubled by a youthful error: sad, but not surprised. Prison was a place where sex was seldom out of men's minds. With no outlets, repression led quickly to erotic dreaming. Prisoners sat gazing into space. What they experienced, day and night, were sexual fantasies —fantasies that settled on the mind persistent as flies: men and women, naked, in the act of sex and in its every perversion. My cellmates tried to find some relief in talking about their obsession, and I was often baited with embarrassing questions.

Those most preoccupied with sex were the married men. At least half of them in our wing had already lost their wives, either because they had gone off to live with other men or because they had asked for a divorce. To divorce a sentenced "counterrevolutionary" was a simple formality, and the pressure on women to do so was intense. Most, though by no means all, broke the tie out of necessity.

Frimu was awaiting the result of his appeal. When he was summoned to the Commandant's office he was overjoyed—"What did I tell you—my release has come through." When he returned a few minutes later, speechless with rage, someone incautiously asked what was wrong.

"Wrong?" he exploded. "The woman's divorced me. I've just been told. And married a director of the state theatre. God help them when I get out of here."

Frimu, a fleshy, middle-aged man known to the cell as "The Great Lover," had often boasted of his pretty young wife; now he could think of no fate too appalling for her. Other abandoned husbands were glad to work off their feelings by cursing feminine frailty and talking of revenge.

When I tried to intervene, Emil, the accountant, interrupted me to tell us what had happened when he returned home after a previous sentence. "Halfway down the street my dog scented me. She tore her chain from the fence and rushed to greet me. I bent down, and she jumped up to lick my face, whimpering with delight. Then, I went into my house and found my wife in bed with another man. Which of them was the animal?"

I tried again. "But if our wives were out of the way for years," I said, "how many of us would stay faithful if we were free?"

Frimu shouted, "Don't you start lecturing . . ."

I felt he must be quieted. "I'm sorry for your bad news," I said, "yet what could you expect? You're always talking about the girls you've seduced and the wives of friends you've had, and the conquests you're going to make when you get out again. How can women be pure with men like you setting examples?"

Novak, a dignified cathedral dean, surprised us with a glimpse of his personal life. "The husband is not always to blame," he said. "I always tried to make my wife happy. I

thought I had. When I went home after my first term in prison my front door was opened by a stranger. My wife came out and said, 'I'm married to him now—so please go.' I tried to speak to her, but she said, 'I can have nothing to do with you. I've had enough trouble without having counterrevolutionaries in the house.' I spent my first night of freedom in the waiting room of the railway station."

"More fool you," retorted Frimu. Before Novak could reply, Petre asked, "How about the second night?"

The dean flushed and turned away.

The Communists did all they could to corrode morality, yet even without their influence, it did not seem—to judge from the talk around us—that Christian teaching in sexual matters was still effective. We decided to find out. Dean Novak, Professor Popp, Stavrat, Stancu from the news agency and I spent some weeks in making and comparing notes. We let others ask their provocative sex questions and, in return, we asked one of our own: have you always obeyed the basic rules of the Christian church in keeping chastity in thought, word and deed until marriage and full fidelity within it?

Of three hundred prisoners, all nominal Christians, only two men answered yes. One was saintly old Father Suroianu, and the other a boy of fifteen.

General Stavrat commented, "It looks as though the church will have to think again. No army can go into battle with orders that everyone acknowledges but no one obeys. And, in religion, to preach what no one is going to practice devalues all you people say."

The Dean replied, "It may be a thankless task, but we can't go against the Bible."

I said, "Surely, we cannot compromise with sin, but we must have more understanding for the sinner. In those days women were veiled and modestly dressed. You had to be a virtuoso of vice to discover a beautiful girl and lead her astray. Nowadays their clothes are designed to lead men on, and opportunities lie everywhere. The ancient lawgivers would be astonished if they knew that the rules they laid down for the Chosen People long before Christ was born are applied—so far as we can apply them

—to every race in a world which has changed beyond recognition. Think of how Jesus treated the woman in adultery. When those who wanted to stone her had all crept away, He asked, 'Has no one condemned you?' She said, 'No one, Lord.' Jesus replied, 'Neither do I condemn you; go, and sin no more.' Sin must be condemned and the sinner understood and loved."

Dean Novak was worried. "But if we priests do not give the sternest warnings, what will happen? Young people have complete license today: they must be warned of possible danger."

"Yes," I said, "but we must also teach that sex within the limits of morality is a gift that God has given mankind, a beautiful one. We must tell the whole truth to free it from any taint of obscenity. There is divinity here, too. The world's oldest religious book, the *Manava-Dharma Sastra,* puts it well: 'Woman is an altar to which man brings a pleasing sacrifice to God, his seed.' "

Stancu, the Catholic journalist, yawned behind his hand. "This is all rather exalted," he complained. "Most of us regard a woman in a more humdrum light. She's something to be used; an object of pleasure, or an attractive ornament. Or a servant, to clean and cook. Or even an idol in whose service a man can lose himself. Hardly anyone sees her as an equal, even in sexual pleasure."

"The main thing is to choose a partner who can make you happy," said the Dean.

"Or vice versa," I suggested. "One of the happiest men I knew chose the plainest girl in the village because he thought she would find no one else to marry."

"What a romantic," scoffed Stancu. "Marriage is only a contract. When my parents found a nice girl with an adequate dowry, the deal was done. We've been quite content, going our own ways."

"So you're not really married at all," I said.

"The knot was tied in church."

"I mean that I consider a marriage for material interest invalid in God's sight, even if it's blessed by the Pope himself."

Stancu laughed. "Then the world is full of invalid marriages. Boys sell themselves to rich girls, just as poor girls are

sold to wealthy men. Isn't it more unreasonable to be valued for good looks, which don't last, than for a solid bank balance, which does?"

I answered by telling Stancu about a young woman whose parents had made her marry a wealthy man. After years of unhappiness she fell in love with her tailor and went to live with him. Many churchgoers would have ostracized her. I, of course, firmly believed that to live with a man out of wedlock is sin, but I tried to understand her position. I knew she loved the tailor deeply and I thought it would have been a worse sin to remain with a man to whom she'd been bound against her will. I asked my congregation not to judge her hastily. The rules of the Church consider such a marriage invalid.

"The young woman came in tears to thank me. I said, 'My dear, the register of church members is not the same as the register God keeps in heaven. God understands the feelings that led you into the arms of another man.' She flung her arms round my neck and kissed me, and at that moment my wife came in."

The others roared with laughter. Stancu asked, "And how did you explain the situation to her?"

"I didn't, since there was nothing to explain," I said.

Prisons are supposed to encourage homosexuality, but we saw no evidence of this, perhaps because of the illness, the exhaustion, the overcrowding we had to live with. Professor Popp spoke strongly against one or two suspected instances.

I said that homosexuality is undoubtedly a sin. We should condemn the sin, but try to understand these often unhappy men and forgive their failings, as we did other human faults, and try to cure them. Many great men had been homosexual —Alexander, Hadrian, Plato, Leonardo; and many had shown a deep Christian feeling in their work, from Socrates—who was called "a Christian before Christ"—to Michelangelo and, in our own time, Oscar Wilde and André Dunant, who founded the International Red Cross.

"Yes, I know their honors list," said Popp, "but so many of them, in the theater and so on turn a private matter into a

public one. Since society condemns this tendency, they should at least practice a little discretion."

A rabbi intervened in the discussion, recalling a word of advice from that book of great practical wisdom, the Talmud. "It says that if a rabbi cannot conquer a bad impulse, he should at least avoid scandal, put on a veil and go to another town; and then return to preach the law."

Most prisoners, who are always short of food, put sexual need on an equal footing. At the Last Judgment men will be reproached for failing to feed the hungry; and they will be reproached, too, some of them said, if they have not satisfied this thirst after love, whenever they could have done, ennobling their partners and making them happier.

There is sexual injustice, of course, just as there is social and economic injustice. It is one of the great causes of human suffering. But then every law, even divine law, has unavoidably an element of injustice in it in giving the same tasks to unequal men living in unequal conditions. The law lays down the same rules for rich and poor, for under-sexed and over-sexed, for the ignorant and the intellectual.

Marriage must be a question of honor. It is a duty you take upon yourself—to be faithful. Love is a sentiment, and all sentiments change: nobody loves or is angry forever in an equal measure. It is a law of nature that passion lowers in intensity as one grows older, so it cannot be a guarantee of a happy marriage, either. There must be something more: the decision to be loyal, the decision to make the other happy.

Since it is obviously impossible to satisfy everyone's sexual need, we discussed chastity as an alternative. The Catholics spoke up in favour of celibacy for the priesthood.

I said, "If celibacy is imposed, and marriage forbidden by vow, then failure to abstain may damage a priest's faith."

"It can become a great creative force," the professor said. "It's doubtful whether Spinoza, Kant, Descartes, Newton, or Beethoven ever 'knew' a woman in the Biblical sense."

I thought the chief aid to be given was to teach men to sublimate this natural drive into works useful to society and God. Chastity, in my view, was for the few. Yet we must understand more and more that our bodies are not ours to misuse for

selfish pleasure, but temples of God, to be consecrated in His service.

For weeks, Popp and I had taken turns looking after Boris, who lay in Room Four, coughing weakly. Dr. Aldea said, "If he eats, he may last ten days. My visits are not really helping him. He's so remorseful over that beating he gave me long ago that it harms him to see me."

I asked if he could be moved into my cell, where I'd be better able to look after him. Aldea said it could be arranged. So Boris was carried to the bed next to mine, and I nursed him through the last week of his life. The old steelworker decayed before our eyes. His wiry hair was reduced to a few strands, his cheeks were sunken, his few remaining teeth were rotted stumps. His skin turned gray and he sweated feverishly. I sponged him down, day after day.

"It'll be over soon," he wheezed. "A priest once told me, 'You'll rot in hell.' So be it."

"What made him speak like that?" I asked.

"I was cursing God for my sufferings. He said I'd be punished for eternity."

A Protestant pastor, Valentin, said, "Men curse the Communist Party, but eventually it may release them. If hell were endless, then God would be worse than our Secret Police."

Astonished, Boris opened his eyes. "Do you mean you don't believe in Everlasting Fire?"

"The Biblical doctrine of the endlessness of hell is true subjectively, no doubt, but what *is* hell? Dostoevski calls it a state of conscience, and he was an Orthodox believer. In *The Brothers Karamazov* he wrote of hell, 'I believe it is the suffering of being unable to love.' "

"I don't think I'd mind that sort of hell," said Boris.

"Perhaps you've never known what it may be to live where there is no love. When the bad have only the bad for company, imagine what it will be like. It's said that when Hitler went to hell he looked around until he found Mussolini. 'What's it like down here?' he asked. Mussolini replied, 'Not so bad, but there's a lot of forced labor.' Then he began to sob. 'Come,

Duce,' said Hitler. 'Let's know the worst.' 'Well, then, it's this —Stalin's in charge of the work party!' "

Boris smiled. "I'd certainly hate to find my old boss Ana Pauker down below." He lay thinking. "That Catholic priest who told me I'd burn for blasphemy was a good man," he said. "He never harmed anyone, but he still thought that, simply for revenge, God would torture me eternally. The God he believed in was worse than he."

Pastor Valentin said, "I don't doubt that those in hell feel it as an infinite punishment: just as prison seems endless to us. But we see men coming to love God and to realize that they have done wrong. So I believe in hell there will also be changes. In the parable of Lazarus, Dives shows signs of a change of heart there. He had been an egoist; now he is concerned about his brothers. In hell there may still be some evolution toward goodness, which opens a door to hope."

Boris called weakly to prisoners sitting on bunks nearby, "Good news, my boys. Pastor Valentin says we're not going to fry forever after all."

There was laughter. Frimu, Stavrat and others came to join us. General Stavrat, however, was not amused. "I was taught at school and in church that God will punish eternally those who die unrepentant and without faith," he said. "It's the received dogma."

I concluded the discussion with these words: "Received in your mind, but not, perhaps in your heart, General. We see men around us cursing God and denying His existence because they suffer so unjustly. They will surely be judged according to their deeds and words and thoughts. And then? Suppose you see a stranger in danger of being killed—you'd be the first to run and help him. And if Christians really believed their neighbors would be tortured for all eternity in hell, they would try continually to persuade them to repent and believe. How sad that this does not happen!"

Boris' old prejudices fell away one by one, but instead of becoming cheerful he grew depressed. "I feel I've wasted my life," he said. "I thought myself clever. I've deceived a great many people in the last fifty years. If your God exists, He won't

want me in heaven. So down I go to join that old sow Pauker —I'm really scared now."

Often when he couldn't sleep he asked me to talk to him.

"Who's going to pray for me when I'm gone?" he asked. He thought Lutherans forbade prayer for the dead. I said that Luther simply did not want people to suppose that, however much they sinned, they might pay a priest to pray them out of purgatory.

"We pray for our fellow prisoners, who are dying every day. It wouldn't be an act of love to stop praying when the soul leaves the body simply because Catholics and Protestants quarreled about public prayer four hundred years ago."

"And does it help them?"

"Yes," Pastor Valentin intervened. "Before God all are living —and so they are for me. And if they are living, prayer might help them. In any case it is worthwhile trying. God is free not to accept the prayers if He thinks that prayers for the dead are not right."

"If I were you, I wouldn't waste your prayers on me." He laughed a little at this, and brought on a fit of coughing.

Valentin said, "I'm sure you've done much good. There are certainly many worse men. But I pray for the worst of all— Stalin, Hitler, Himmler, Beria."

"What do you pray?" His voice was growing weaker.

"I say, 'God, forgive the great sinners and criminals and, among the worst of men, me also.' "

Valentin and I sat with Boris for a long time that night. It was so quiet that we could hear Frimu's boastful voice in the next cell. They were laughing over his sexual exploits.

For some hours, Boris said nothing. I thought he was asleep. Suddenly he murmured, "What can it be like?"

"What?" I asked him.

"The judgment of God. Is He sitting on a tall throne, saying as the souls come before Him: 'Hell, heaven, hell, heaven'? I can't visualize it, myself."

I told him how I imagined it: "God sits on a throne with a great curtain behind Him and, one by one, we come before Him. Then God makes a sign with His right hand, and from behind the curtain come beings each more beautiful than the

other: so splendid that we cannot bear to look at them. Each of these beings stands behind one of those to be judged. We who are accused ask, 'Who is this beautiful being with me?' God answers, 'That is you, as you would have been if you had obeyed me.' And then comes remorse."

"Remorse," Boris whispered.

During the night he had a hemorrhage; then he fell into a coma. He lay quietly, staring blindly at the ceiling. His pulse was weak but still present under my fingers. Suddenly he pulled his hand away and half sat up. He gave a cry that seemed to tear soul from body—"Lord God, forgive me!"

Some of the prisoners around us awoke and muttered angrily before going back to sleep.

When dawn came, I began to wash the body and prepare it for burial, and while I was doing this, someone informed the Orthodox bishop in a cell down the corridor that a man had died. He came along and began the ritual. I went on with my work. Now and then the bishop interrupted himself to hiss at me, "Stand up. Show some respect." But I did not look up. When the ritual was finished, the bishop rebuked me again.

I said, "Where were you when this man was dying all last week? Did you hold a cup to his mouth when he wanted water? Why do you come only at the end—and then to perform a ceremony which meant nothing to him?"

We were both angry, and said things that should not have been said, but his ritual had seemed such a hollow thing beside that simple cry from the depths of the heart, "Lord God, forgive me!"

Spring, 1955, brought sure signs of a political thaw. A number of prison commandants were arrested for "economic sabotage" and also to Tirgul-Ocna came many who had been their victims. Beds had to be found for the new arrivals, and I was among a group who were ordered in early June to get ready for transfer to another jail.

Dr. Aldea said, "You're not fit to move, but there's nothing we can do. Take care of yourself. And if you lay hands on any more streptomycin—don't give it away."

I said an emotional good-bye to my friends.

"We'll meet again: I know it," said Professor Popp.

I heard my name called and joined a line of men out in the yard. We were a bizarre group, with our shaven heads and suits of many patches, each clutching a bundle of rags which was all he possessed. Some could hardly walk; nevertheless, those with long sentences were ordered to step forward and then lie on the ground while our ankles were chained. The political officer stood over the blacksmith as he moved from man to man. When my turn came, the officer smiled unpleasantly.

"Ah, Wurmbrand. Surely you have something to say about being put in irons?"

Lying on my side, I looked up and replied, "Yes, Lieutenant. I can answer you in song."

He folded his hands behind his back and said, "Oh, please. I'm sure we'd all like to hear you."

I sang the opening words of the Party anthem, "Broken chains are left behind us . . ." The blacksmith's hammer finished the task in a few more blows, and in the uneasy silence I added, "You sing that broken chains are left behind—but this regime has seen more people in chains than any other."

The Lieutenant still had not managed a reply when a shout from the guardroom announced the arrival of transport. We were taken to the station and herded into wagons. There we lay for hours before the train began to creak and rattle across the countryside. Through holes in the tiny, painted-over windows, we glimpsed forestland and mountains. It was a warm and beautiful summer's day.

Chapter Five

THE journey across the plains westward from Bucharest was about two hundred miles long, but there were so many stops and starts along the way that it took almost two days and two nights. Word of our destination circulated even before the thick, hundred-year-old walls of notorious Craiova prison came into sight.

Our chains were struck off in the stone-flagged courtyard, and we were goaded with blows along dark passages rank with dirt. My companions were thrust, in small groups, into cells along a gallery. Loud protests came from inside: "There's no room here. We're suffocating already." The guards squeezed the new arrivals in forcibly. It was like rush hour on the subway, with the conductors wielding clubs.

A push in the spine sent me stumbling forward and the door clanged shut behind me. A nauseating stench filled the cell. At first I could see nothing. I felt about, and my hand drew back from an almost naked, sweating body. Slowly, as I grew used to the dim light from the single bulb, I saw tiers of bunks rising toward the ceiling, jammed with men who lay gasping for breath. More prisoners, also half-naked, sat on the floor, or leaned against the walls. No one could move without waking a neighbor, whose curses disturbed everyone else.

My stay in the cell over the next two months was to be broken only by journeys to the stinking cesspool outside, carrying lavatory pails.

I told the prisoners I was a pastor, and said a brief prayer. A few swore at me, but many listened quietly. Then someone called my name from an upper bunk hidden in the darkness.

"I recognize your voice," he said. "I heard your speech at that Congress of Cults many years ago."

When I asked his name, he replied, "We'll speak tomorrow."

The long night ended at 5 A.M., when reveille was sounded by a guard who beat on a dangling piece of railway track with an iron bar. The man from the upper bunk, a little fellow with a twist of cloth around his head, came down to shake my hand.

"It's as well I knew your voice in the dark," he said, gazing at me with bloodshot eyes. "I wouldn't have recognized you. The Party has had its revenge for your protest, I see. How thin you are."

He was a khodja named Nassim, who had represented the small Moslem community at the 1945 Congress of Cults. At Craiova we were to get to know one another well. Our friendship began while I was trying to eat my first meal. The vile smell of the greasy soup preceded its arrival in the cell. Shreds of rotten cabbage and unwashed offal floated in a scum. But to eat was a duty, and I emptied my can.

"How can you?" asked the khodja, whose stomach had revolted.

"That's a Christian secret," I said. "I think of St. Paul's words, 'Rejoice with those that rejoice.' Then I remember friends in America who are now eating broiled chicken, and I thank God with them as I take the first mouthful of soup. Next, I rejoice with friends in England who may be eating roast beef. And I get down another mouthful. So, by way of many friendly countries, I rejoice with those that rejoice—and stay alive."

Nassim and I had to share a bunk through the hot, stuffy nights. I was lucky not to be on the floor. "You lie very still," said the khodja as others coughed and fidgeted around us. "What are you thinking? Does St. Paul help you now, too?"

I replied, "Yes, for now I rejoice with those in the West by thinking of their comfortable homes, and the books they have, the holidays they can plan, the music they hear, the love they have for their wives and children. And I remember the second part of the verse from the Epistle to the Romans, 'And weep with those that weep.' I am sure that in the West many thousands remember us and try to help us with their prayers."

All men in prison feel a need to assert themselves. They like to argue. They flare up at a word. And when they find someone who fails to return insult for insult, they torment him all the more. In the appalling conditions of Craiova the difficulties I faced were almost insuperable. When I preached I had to compete with groans and pretended snores. The prisoners were desperately bored. They had no inner resources and longed for their familiar distractions. I found that sermons quickly turned into discussions, and then into quarrels. But anyone who could tell a story, particularly a mystery story, was sure of an audience. So I told them thrillers of my own invention, in which the Christian message played a central but inconspicuous part.

My most popular hero was a bandit called Pippa, whose name everyone in Rumania knew. I described how my mother, as a girl, had once seen him in court and had never forgotten his savage, hunted face. Pippa's parents were wealthy. They died while he was still a boy, leaving him in the care of a guardian, who cheated him of his property. Pippa took work at an inn, where the owner promised to save his money, and pay him a lump sum when he returned from military service. The boy agreed, and dreamed of using his savings to go into business. When he returned from the army, the innkeeper denied their agreement, and in blind fury the youth stabbed him to death.

Pippa became an outlaw, and from his mountain hideout made a series of raids—all on inns. Over the years he killed thirty-six innkeepers. (Amazed whistles from my listeners at this point.) He did not lack company. With two other outlaws, all in their best stolen clothes, he went down to a village and persuaded three girls to dine with them. They drugged the wine and carried the girls off to their cave.

So much was fact; but at this point in my version the girls, awakening, kept their captors at arm's length by telling them stories, in the manner of Scheherazade. These romances ended with the prettiest girl relating the story of the Gospel and winning the outlaws over to Christ.

Equally well received was an epic account of Dillinger, whose progress from hungry down-and-out to America's most notorious gangster was a pattern familiar to many of my listeners. A ruined childhood and social injustice are the usual preludes to a criminal career, and Dillinger had begun his by robbing a movie theater's cashier of a few dollars.

When we understood how Pippa and Dillinger had become what they were, we could pity them, I said; and from pity came love, and love among mankind was Christianity's highest aim. We condemn men, but how rarely we offer the love that might save them from crime.

I could have spoken for twenty-four hours a day without exhausting the demand for stories. Soon I found myself drawing on classics with a Christian point of view: Dostoevski's *Crime and Punishment,* Tolstoi's *Resurrection,* told in episodes.

"Pastor," said a forester named Radian, "I've heard many crime stories, but none like yours, which always end with the criminal, the victim and the policeman all going to church together."

The men laughed, but they went on listening. Often they told their own stories, at once farcical and tragic. Radian, tall and lean as the trees he used to tend, had led an uneventful life, until the day when he'd strolled through a forest with two friends and looked back to see it in flames.

"When we reached the next village we were arrested and charged with setting the fire," he said. "We were beaten until we confessed that we'd done it to sabotage the local 'collective.' But at our trial the real culprit came forward, and we were acquitted.

"Don't think we were released," he added in his deep, untroubled voice. "They took us back to the police station and said, 'Now confess what else you've done.' Under torture, we

confessed to a sabotage plot that was a complete invention. I would have said anything to stop the pain." They had been sentenced to fifteen years each.

There were many stories like this at Craiova. Before long, we knew one another inside out. It was a nervous, highly charged atmosphere. No one could bear contradiction, and all sense of proportion vanished. When I retold Knut Hamsun's novel *Hunger,* the men were obviously moved, and as the group broke up for supper a prisoner named Herghelegiu told me how touched he'd been. I suggested that he offer a little of his bread to the khodja, who feared that the other food might contain pork fat, forbidden by the Koran. But if Herghelegiu was moved to the heart, he was not moved to the stomach. My proposal was ignored.

The intellectuals were prisoners of words. If someone talked of a modern Russian writer, he would be dismissed as a "state-subsidized hack." Catholics flatly rejected the wisdom of Jewish philosophers. The Jews knew little of the thought of the Christian church.

Once I described a religious book I had been thinking out during the long nights. Judgment was passed instantly. "Riddled with Lutheranism," cried one Orthodox listener. "It's easy to see you're a Protestant," said another. Some days later, during a conversation with the same pair, I quoted extensively from *The Problem of Truth,* by the "great Rumanian writer" Naie Ionescu. The reception was rapturous. I decided that if ever I wanted a fair hearing for my views, they had better be published anonymously, since I'd invented Ionescu and his book and the words were my own.

Alexandru, a student, raised patronizing smiles when he recited some of his poetry. I quietly suggested that he read another poem and announce it as a Shakespearean sonnet. "Superb," the critics chorused. Revealing Alexandru's secret, I told them one should not be intimidated by fame, but judge impartially. Shakespeare and Byron—to take the English poets only—often exalted unworthy men and ideas.

When a scholar of English literature championed Shakespeare's nobility and lofty thought, I answered that, when

Shakespeare was writing, the problems of the Reformation and Puritanism were drawing even street sweepers into excited argument; yet a historian who had only Shakespeare's plays to read would not even be aware that Christianity had reached England.

"In all his plays there's not a single Christian character," I said, "except, possibly, for poor Cordelia. Claudius kills his rival. The Queen marries her husband's murderer. Hamlet dreams of revenge, will not act and cannot forgive. Polonius is an intriguer. Ophelia's only escape is into insanity. Othello is a professional killer. Desdemona merely plays cow to his bull. Iago is a monster of cynicism and deceit . . . No, Shakespeare was a magnificent poet and a born psychologist, but he had no idea of Christian character."

The scholar said, "Perhaps there's really no such thing."

I told him that I could tell he'd spent only a few weeks in prison; when he'd been there longer, he would know better. He would see some of the goodness that I'd experienced: the sinners who confessed with their last breath, the saints who forgave their murderers as we hope to be forgiven at the last. And I quoted him some lines revealing how great a Christian poet had been lost in Shakespeare:

> They say the tongues of dying men enforce attention like deep harmony,
> Their words are scarce, they're seldom spent in vain
> For they breathe truth that breathe their words in pain.

How well he could have applied this passage to the last words of Jesus on the Cross.

The little khodja had much to teach about submission to the will of God. He often reminded us that every chapter of the Koran begins with the invocation "In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate," and he tried to make obedience a part of his everyday life. Five times a day, Nassim knelt on the hard floor and directed his prayer toward Mecca. When men made fun of him, I told them to think twice.

"When an Englishman asks for bread, a German for *Brot,* an Italian for *pane,* they are all asking for the same thing. Gheorghe here is a Catholic, so he makes the sign of the Cross one way. Carol, an Orthodox believer, makes it another. Ion, a Baptist, clasps his hands. So why shouldn't Nassim address his prayers to the East? We all approach God differently, but He sees past our gestures of love and honor into our hearts. That's where we should look, too."

Nassim and I had many talks, sitting side by side on a low bunk amid the squalor and confusion of the cell. He spoke of his faith, which Moslems believe was revealed to the Prophet by the angel Gabriel, with a fervor that momentarily transformed that dismal place. To my surprise, he talked of Jesus with great love.

"Jesus is for me a most holy and wise prophet, who speaks the language of God himself. But he cannot in our view be the son of God. I hope I haven't offended you."

"By no means," I replied. "In fact, I agree with you."

"How can you, a Christian Pastor, say that?"

"I can say it because a son results from a man and a woman making love. No Christian believes that Jesus is the son of God in that sense. We call him 'Son of God' in another, unique, sense, as an emanation from the Creator. He is the Son because He bears the very stamp of God, as a man does of his father. He is the Son in the way He brims over with love and truth. In those ways we have no doubt of it."

"In that way, I, too, can accept," said Nassim, smiling gravely. And I told him that Jesus turns no one away who loves Him, even if a man does not know the true title of the One he loves.

The prisoners who filled our cell came and went. "The only thing that never changes," said Nassim, who stayed on for a while, "is the air." Each time some men left, a few more took their places, so I had to begin my "parish work" all over again.

Among the newcomers was the irrepressible General Calescu, a former head of Military Justice who loved to fight his battles over again. Most had taken place, he admitted, in the "boudoir," and his best days had been during the war: "So

many pretty spies—I always tried to let them off if they were kind to me."

When Calescu was not talking of women, it was food. One evening, he announced, "Today's my birthday: I invite you all to dinner." And since he had spent many happy anniversaries in Paris as a young man—"We shall dine at Maxim's. Please be my guests." For an hour or two, regardless of expense, he regaled us with the best the house could offer. *"Maître d'hôtel,"* he called. "What do you recommend? A *bouillabaisse* of every fish, swimming in rich saffron sauce? Perhaps excessive for a start? Let's say *foie gras,* with truffles, from Perigord, with hot toast, fresh Normandy butter. All quite simple. Then *canard à l'orange*—you like duck, don't you, Pastor, or a *coq au vin;* and, for the khodja, *shaslik* on a flaming sword!"

Each dish was accompanied by a mouthwatering commentary and an elegiac list of wines. In hushed tones, the General ordered the choicest Burgundy and Hock, with a magnum of champagne "to top it off." A golden Château Yqem was ordered with an array of liqueurs and old brandy. Cigars were chosen from a well-filled trolley: Henry Clay, Romeo y Julietta. There was no stopping this panorama of pleasures; on and on he went. Then the door opened, and in came the usual barrel of rotting tripe and cabbage.

In this talk of food, as in erotic daydreams, imagination ran riot. Simpler souls than Calescu invented fantasies of chicken stuffed with bananas, potatoes piled with strawberry jam and many other equally exotic dishes. In fact, the food at Craiova was the worst I encountered anywhere, with one unforgettable exception.

It was a complete, incredible surprise. The guards brought in a large, steaming canister of onion soup, then another of real beef stew with fresh carrots; there were snowy mashed potatoes, and two white bread rolls each; and finally, an apple for every man. We almost expected one of Calescu's fragrant cigars to crown the meal.

What could it mean? The prisoners' persistent tendency to see high significance in the most trivial change in routine made us all hope for new wonders. During the afternoon General Calescu excitedly called us to the window: "Women, dammit,

and they're leaving." We crowded round the small, barred opening to see five or six well-dressed ladies being shepherded out the gate by the Commandant in his best uniform. Later a grinning guard told us they were a delegation of "democratic women" from the West, leaving after an hour with comments on the excellence of the prison food.

Dinner that evening was the usual greasy slop, and the food seemed to deteriorate even further in the week that followed. The anticlimax left us all depressed. I never learned what organizations the visitors represented, but we heard later that their "eyewitness reports" on Rumania's model prison were circulated in Britain, America and France.

Guided tours like this were part of a Soviet "peace offensive." Every time the Russian leadership changed hands there was a short thaw, before the freeze set in again with a vengeance, and this time, after a secret struggle among Stalin's successors, Marshal Bulganin emerged as Chairman of the Council of Ministers.

Calescu said that the former War Minister's rise to power meant "the Americans will finally have to fight for it." His opinion was supported by a rash of prison rumors. President Eisenhower's "very words" on the subject were freely quoted: "I have only to do up the last button on my uniform and the captives of Eastern Europe will be free." Calescu's dream was that once the Red armies were routed, everything in Rumania would be restored to its proper place.

Calescu was a fervent monarchist. So were the farmers; and for a simple reason: "When the King was here, I had my field and cattle. Now that he's gone, I've lost everything." On Rumania's former national day, many in the cell joined in a service which included prayers for King Michael, the Queen and the Queen-Mother. Even the informers thought it safer to look the other way. Our one republican, the schoolmaster Constantinescu, was always arguing, but Radian, the forester, had the last word. "You don't care for pomp and glory? Well, these things come naturally to a king. Since he doesn't need to strive for them, he leaves us in peace. It's different with politicians who must make their reputations with wars and revolution,

always at our expense. Give me the King, prosperity and peace."

The spring brought news, this time official, that put an end to General Calescu's nightly war games. The Russians had promised to withdraw their troops from Austria, and the first "summit meeting" between East and West for a full ten years of cold warfare was scheduled to take place in Geneva.

Soon, "peaceful coexistence" was all the rage. Constantinescu, the Leftist schoolmaster, was full of it. "Why shouldn't the West live harmoniously with the Communist East?" he demanded.

I said, "I'm no politician, but I know that the church, at least, can never make peace with atheism."

"You hate atheists, then?" said Constantinescu.

"Far from it," I replied. "Naturally I hate atheism as a creed, but I love atheists, just as I hate blindness, but love the blind. Since atheism is a form of spiritual blindness, it must be fought."

Constantinescu's long face registered mock horror. "You talk of fighting, Pastor? I thought Christians turned the other cheek. Didn't St. Francis save a wolf from those who wanted to kill him, and say, 'Don't kill Brother Wolf, he is one of God's creatures.'"

"I admire St. Francis deeply," I replied, "but if I don't shoot Brother Wolf he will eat Sister Sheep. My duty to kill the wolf, if I can't control him, is inspired by love. Jesus told us to love our enemies, but He himself used force when there was no alternative. God takes thousands of lives daily: it is in His nature to give death, as well as life."

A newcomer to Craiova told us he'd heard BBC broadcasts take the line that the Western powers should no longer try to interfere in the internal affairs of the Communist bloc.

I objected, "But if I start to knock a hole in a boat we're sharing, and say, 'Don't interfere—this is my side of the boat,' will you agree? Or won't you say, instead, 'You're making the hole in your side, but it will end by drowning me.'" The Communists, I went on, had seized whole countries and tried to poison the youth with hatred. Their plan to overturn the

established order all over the world was not an internal affair.

"It's international banditry," said Calescu.

Constantinescu rallied. "The West can't always be right, General," he said, "and Stalin wasn't entirely evil. He could say, 'Man is our most precious capital.' "

"So that's why we're kept locked up," snorted Calescu. But Constantinescu insisted that there had been undeniable industrial, and even cultural, progress under Communism. "You can't deny that," he said.

I replied, "A visitor to Egypt in ancient times would have been amazed by Pharaoh's monuments, but God did not admire them. They were the work of slaves, whom God sent Moses to free. In Russia and the satellites today, slave labor is building the houses, factories and schools you talk about. And what is being taught in the schools? Hatred of everything Western."

"The Communists say they plan for the future," said Constantinescu. "A generation or two may be sacrificed, but the basis is being laid for the future good of mankind."

I said, "To make future generations happy, men must be good themselves. But Communist leaders are constantly denouncing one another as the worst of criminals. The most powerful men in the Soviet Union have been murdered by their opponents. What Communist can be happy, knowing he may fall in the next Party purge?"

"There is good in them," Constantinescu objected. "No man is entirely bad, and Communists are men, who keep something of God's image."

I agreed. "There was good even in Hitler. At first he improved the lot of most Germans and made his country the strongest in Europe. He gained the world for Germany, and lost her her soul. Communist successes have also been won at the expense of the soul, by crushing man's most vital element, his personality."

"The world wants peace," said Constantinescu. "What's your alternative? Atomic war?"

"Nuclear war's no alternative; nobody wants that. The world has a grave problem with drug addiction, but we don't think of

annihilating the addicts. All the same, we can't settle down to 'peaceful coexistence' with the dope traffic; a solution must be found. How can we live peacefully with people who cannot stay at peace among themselves, because all that their leaders want is power? All the Communists intend to do is to lull our suspicions while they plan their next grab."

I could make no impression on Constantinescu's resolve to take Soviet gestures at face value, so I made a Russian gesture of my own. Leaning down from my bunk, I snatched his pillow—the small, lumpy bundle of personal things he used as a headrest. His skull hit the wall. He was furious.

"But why can't you coexist peacefully with me?" I asked. "I'm ready to be friends, now I've stolen all you have."

But I had to restore his property before the talk turned to other things.

Constantinescu was a victim of that wishful thinking about Communism which is our greatest danger. Men trained in the school of Lenin and Stalin see goodwill as weakness to be exploited, and for their own good, we must work for their defeat. Love is not a universal panacea. Communist rulers are criminals on an international scale, and only when the criminal is defeated does he repent; only then can he be brought to Christ. I was convinced that the fate of the West was either to destroy Communism or be destroyed by it.

A lull in the cold war did follow; and in the desire to show Communism in a better light before the Summit meeting, some of the worst excesses in the prisons system were curbed. At Salcia, where punishments had included hanging prisoners by the heels and immersing women in icy water for hours, the entire staff was arrested. Official evidence said fifty-eight people had died in the competitions between "brigade leaders" to see who could kill the largest number of prisoners; in fact, Salcia survivors transferred to Craiova said there had been at least eight hundred deaths.

With a show of judicial indignation, the Salcia staff were given long sentences, and the purge had an ameliorating effect in other jails. Beatings stopped. Guards became carefully polite. When the Jilava Commandant, Colonel Gheorghiu,

asked for complaints and had a plate of barley thrown at him, the offender suffered nothing worse than a day in solitary confinement.

The reforms were short-lived, however. Soon, beatings and insults were again the rule; and a year or so later, when the trials had been forgotten abroad, the mass murderers of Salcia were reinstated in their posts, with promotions. Only the common law criminals, who'd served as their tools in torturing others, remained in prison.

During this shake-up in the jails, I was moved several times. A series of nightmare journeys merge into one. I need only close my eyes to see a frieze of stubble-chinned, shaven-headed convicts, jogging gently with the movement of the train. Always we wore fifty-pound chains that chafed us through our clothes, making sores that took months to heal in our undernourished state.

On one journey we came to a halt during the night, and the silence was broken by a wail of anguish: "I've been robbed."

I sat up to find little Dan, a petty crook from Bucharest, moving from one prone figure to the next, shaking everyone awake. Dan was cursed and cuffed, but he went on howling, "I had five hundred lei hidden away and it's gone. It's all I had in the world."

In the hope of calming him, I said, "My friend, I hope you don't suspect a pastor of stealing, but if you do, you may search me to the skin."

The others also allowed Dan to search them for the sake of peace, but nothing was found. The train moved off at last and, one by one, we fell into restless sleep. I was awakened at dawn by a new and worse uproar. All the other eighteen prisoners had been robbed, as well.

"I knew we had a thief among us," Dan cried.

Days later, at once notorious Poarta-Alba, our next stop, I told the story to a man serving a year for theft. Bursting with laughter, he said, "I've known Dan for years. He simply wanted to find out where each of you kept anything worth stealing."

There were many "Dans" at Poarta-Alba, where "politicals" and common criminals were confined together. Once I dozed off while a group were playing with homemade dice and woke

abruptly to discover a prisoner unlacing one of my shoes. The other was already off.

"What are you doing with my shoes?" I demanded.

"I've just won them at dice," he grinned, and was offended when I wouldn't surrender them.

The world of thieves is a world apart. I found that they loved to reminisce about their exploits, the riskier the better. They thrived on excitement and danger as other men love drink, gambling or women. I never ceased to wonder at the dedication they brought to their profession.

One evening, when most of the prisoners were outside, the door crashed open and the guards flung in a pickpocket, known to everyone as "Fingers." He rolled on the floor, gasping and groaning. Soaking a rag in water, I began to sponge the blood from his swollen mouth. It seemed he'd been pilfering from the kitchen.

"You're not a bad sort, Pastor," Fingers said. "When I get out and make my next good haul, I won't forget your share."

I said I hoped he'd find a means of living that didn't have such uncomfortable consequences. He laughed. "They're wasting their time beating me," he said. "I love my work. I'll never give it up."

I put my arm around his shoulder and told him, "Thank you. You've taught me a great lesson."

"What do you mean?" Fingers asked.

"If beatings don't persuade you to give up your profession, why should I listen to those who want to change mine? I must put at least as much thought into winning a soul as you do into pulling off your next heist. The more I listen to the stories you and your friends tell, the more I learn."

He grinned painfully, "You're joking, Pastor."

"Not so," I said. "For example, you work at night, and if you fail the first night, you try again the next. So I, as a pastor, should spend my night in prayer, and if I don't get what I want, I should not give up. You steal from others, but there's honesty among thieves: we Christians should be as united among ourselves. You thieves don't let punishment deter you; nor should we shrink from suffering. Just as you hazard everything, so, too, should we, knowing there's a paradise to win."

Chapter Five

The prison at Poarta-Alba consisted of the remains of the labor camp beside the canal project on which my wife had once worked. I knew now from Mihai that she was living somehow in Bucharest, and not an hour passed without my thinking of her as I gazed through the dirty windows at the desolate horizon. We lived in a series of long, bare huts, each holding fifty men. Around us were the derelict barracks and vegetable patches Sabina must have known. Even this melancholy comfort was taken from me after a few weeks, when I was told to get ready for another move.

Fingers came up to say good-bye. With him was a colleague named Calapod, a notorious bandit who'd terrorized the countryside. He slapped me on the back, shouting, "So this is the Holy Reverend who likes thieves and robbers."

"Mr. Calapod," I said, "Jesus did not mind comparing himself with a thief. He promised, 'I will come as a thief in the night.' Just as those you've robbed never knew you were coming, so one night Jesus will come for your soul, and you will not be ready."

Weeks in the dank chill of Craiova and Poarta-Alba brought back my tuberculosis in full force. I arrived at my next prison at Gherla, in the Transylvanian mountains, in such a debilitated state that I was immediately put into one of a group of cells known as "the hospital." Our doctor, a young woman named Marina, told me that Gherla was her first post. Other patients said that on her first day she'd turned pale as she went from cell to cell. Nothing in her training had prepared her for the dirt, the hunger, the lack of simple medicines and equipment, the heedless cruelty. They thought she was going to faint, but she carried on grimly until she had examined the last prisoner.

Marina was a tall, fragile girl with fair hair framing an exhausted face; but she had enormous courage. After an examination she told me, "You need good food and plenty of fresh air."

I couldn't help laughing, "But don't you know where we are, Dr. Marina?"

Tears rose in her eyes. "What else can I say? That's what I learned at medical school."

Some days later, high-ranking officers arrived at Gherla on a visit. Dr. Marina tackled them in the gallery outside our cells. In a voice sharp with strain, she told them, "Comrades, these men haven't been sentenced to death. The state pays me to keep them alive, just as it pays you to keep them safe. I only ask for conditions that will allow me to do my job."

A man's voice said roughly, "So you side with convicted outlaws."

"They may be outlaws to you, Comrade Inspector," she replied, "but to me they are patients."

Conditions got no better, but instead we had news that was worth all the drugs in the pharmacopoeia to me. As part of the window dressing before the Summit conference at Geneva, visits by relatives were to be allowed.

Excitement mounted, and nerves became jumpy. At one moment a man would be bursting with joy; at another near tears, especially after arranging his thinning hair in a piece of cracked mirror that went from hand to hand. Some had had no news of their families for ten or twelve years, and I hadn't seen Sabina for eight.

The day finally came, and when my name was called I was marched into an echoing hall and made to stand behind a table. Some twenty yards away, I saw my wife, behind another table. The Commandant, flanked by officers and guards, stood near the wall between us, as if ready to umpire a tennis tournament.

I gazed at Sabina, and it seemed to me that in the years of her suffering she had achieved a peace and beauty such as I had never seen before. She stood there with folded hands, smiling, and my sadness was almost beyond words.

Gripping the table, I called, "Are you well at home?"

Even to me, my voice sounded strange in the enormous room. She replied, "Yes, we are all well, thank God."

The Commandant broke in, "You are not allowed to talk about God here."

"My mother is still alive?" I asked.

"Praise God, she is alive."

"I have told you that you are not allowed to mention God."

Then Sabina asked, "How is your health?"

"I am in the prison hospital—"

The Commandant: "You are not allowed to say where you are in prison."

I tried again: "About my trial, is there hope of an appeal?"

The Commandant: "You are not allowed to discuss your trial."

So it went, until, exhausted, I said, "Go home, Sabina, dear. They won't let us speak."

My wife had brought a basket of food and clothes, but she was not allowed to give me so much as an apple. As they took me away I looked over my shoulder and saw her being escorted by armed guards through the door at the farther end of the hall. The Commandant lit a fresh cigarette and stroked his chin, his thoughts elsewhere.

That evening, Dr. Marina stopped at the foot of my bed with a look of concern. "Oh dear," she said. "And I thought your wife's visit would do you so much good."

Over the weeks Dr. Marina and I had become friends. She told me that she had been taught nothing about religion, but supposed herself to be an atheist. "Isn't everyone, these days?"

One day, alone with Marina and another Christian prisoner in the little cubicle serving her as a surgery, I mentioned that it was the day of Pentecost.

"What's that?" she asked, bending over the instruments in her sterilizer. A guard on orderly duties was going through the files, so I waited until he left with the card he wanted. Then I replied, "It's the day on which God gave us the Ten Commandments, thousands of years ago."

I heard the guard's returning footsteps and added loudly, "And it hurts here, Doctor, when I cough."

The guard returned the card to the files and moved away again, so I continued, "Pentecost is also the day on which the Holy Spirit came to the Apostles."

Again the guard's footsteps, so I continued hastily, "And at night the pain in my back is terrible."

Dr. Marina bit her lips to keep herself from laughing. I went on with my interrupted sermon, while she tapped my

chest, and told me to cough and peered down my throat, until at last she burst into laughter. "Do stop," she gasped, holding a handkerchief to her mouth as the guard's impassive face again appeared in the doorway. "Tell me later."

In the weeks that followed, I told her the story of the Gospel and when I, and others at Gherla, had brought Dr. Marina to Christ, she took even greater risks to help us. Years later, in another prison, I heard that she had died of rheumatic fever which had affected her heart. Probably she had been overworking, as she always did.

My health deteriorated, and I was moved back to Vacaresti. This was the prison-hospital where I'd spent a month after my long spell of solitary confinement in the cells under the Ministry of Interior. The place was more overcrowded than ever. Tubercular patients and victims of other diseases had to share rooms and exchange infections.

Two Secret Police officers who remembered my last stay asked what I thought of Communism now. "How am I to say?" I replied. "I know it only from the inside of its prisons."

They grinned, and one said, "Now you can learn about it from a VIP. Vasile Luca, the old Minister of Finance, is in your cell."

Luca's dismissal for currency scandals in March, 1953, had helped to bring down the Ana Pauker clique. With Teohari Georgescu, Minister of the Interior, he had been expelled from the Party, and now all three were in various prisons with the victims of their five-year reign. In his days of power, Luca was much flattered, but little loved. Now, guards and prisoners alike took the opportunity to show their contempt. Luca sat alone, in corners of our cell, biting his knuckles and muttering to himself—old, ill, and unrecognizable as the man whose photographs had appeared so regularly in the newspapers.

A Christian, whatever his troubles, knew that for his faith he was treading the road that Christ had trod, but Luca, who had worked all his life for Communism, had neither hope nor belief left. He could find no relief from his sufferings. If the nationalists seized power, or the Americans came, Luca and his

comrades would be the first to hang. In the meantime, they were punished by their former Party friends.

Luca was close to the breaking point when we met. After his political disgrace, he told me, he had been forced to confess to the most absurd charges under torture. A military court condemned him to death. Then the sentence was commuted to life imprisonment.

"They knew I wouldn't last long," he said, coughing.

He was given to outbursts of rage against his Party enemies. One day, when he couldn't eat the swill pushed into our cell, I offered him my bread. He took it hungrily.

"Why did you do that?" he growled.

"I've learned the value of fasting in prison. It shows that the spirit is master of the body and saves me from the quarrels and hard feelings over food that are so common. And, well, if a Christian doesn't fast in jail, what means has he of helping others?"

Luca choked down the bread and said the only help anyone had given him since his arrest had come from Christians. But he couldn't restrain his bitterness: "I know far more clergymen, however, who are first-rate scoundrels. As one of the Party's Central Committee, I kept a firm hand on sects and religions. My department had a file on every priest in the country —including you. I began to wonder if there was a priest in Rumania who wouldn't soon be knocking at my back door after dark. What a band of brothers."

Luca's spite against the world would not allow him to admit goodness in anyone. He recited the familiar atheist arguments, about the Church's persecution of science. I reminded him of the many brilliant scientists who have been Christians—from Newton and Kepler to Pavlov and the discoverer of anesthetics, Sir James Simpson.

Luca was contemptuous: "They simply conformed to the conventions of the day."

I said, "Do you know the declaration of Louis Pasteur, who discovered microbes and vaccination? *'Je crois comme une charbonnière le plus que je progresse en science.'* He believed like a coalminer, like a woman coalminer of the last century.

This brilliant scientist retained the faith of the simplest workman."

Luca said indignantly, "What of all the scientists the church has persecuted? Men like Galileo, who went to prison. Giordano Bruno, whom they burned . . ." He stopped.

I said, "So you can find only two cases in two thousand years. That's a triumph for the Church by any human standards. Compare the Party record in the last ten years, here in Rumania alone. Many thousands of innocent people shot, tortured and imprisoned; you yourself sentenced on the strength of perjured evidence and false confessions obtained by threats and bribes. How many miscarriages of justice do you think there have been in all the countries under Communist rule? How many scientists did you put in jail?"

But Luca had closed his mind against religion. One evening I spoke of the Last Supper, and Jesus' words to Judas, "What you have to do, do quickly." A little later, Luca said to me, "Nothing will make me believe in God, but if I did, my only prayer would be that one, 'What you have to do, do quickly.'"

His condition worsened. He spat blood, and in his fever a cold sweat broke out on his forehead. At about this time, I was moved to another prison and, before I left, he promised to give some thought to his soul. I have no way of knowing what happened, but when a man starts to argue with himself, the chances of finding the truth are small. Conversions are usually instantaneous. The message pierces the heart, and from its depths something new and healing emerges at once.

I met many men like Luca at this period, and often discussed with friends what tack should be taken with Communist leaders and their collaborators when Communism fell. Christians opposed the vast majority who called for revenge, but were divided among those who thought that forgiveness should be complete, and those who said that Jesus—in telling Peter to forgive men who had wronged him "Not seven times, but seventy times seven"—had fixed a limit which the Communists had long ago overstepped.

My view is that, having judged each man individually, with understanding of the evil forces that shaped him, we have only the right, without being vindictive, to put the wrongdoer into a position where he can do no further harm. Communists al-

ready spend much time and effort in punishing each other. Rumor has it that Stalin poisoned Lenin. He had Trotsky murdered with an ice pick. Khrushchev so hated his "comrade" that he destroyed his reputation and despoiled his tomb. Luca, Teohari Georgescu, Ana Pauker and so many more were victims of their own cruel system.

My next journey was by road, in a truck labeled STATE FOOD TRUST: security vans often bore such signs to conceal the number of prisoners constantly on the move, and perhaps, also, for fear of rescue attempts. Two men were with me. One turned out to be a former Iron Guard leader with a twenty-year sentence to serve. The other, a minor thief, who'd done six months, was due to be released shortly.

"I won't see these again," said the Iron Guard cheerfully, shaking his chains. Then, turning his back on me, he told the thief that it had been agreed to free all "politicos" before the Summit meeting, and he would be among the first. The thief explained in turn that all he wanted was a decent job, but no one would give him one.

The Iron Guard sympathized. Then, seizing his neighbor by the sleeve, he said, "I've an idea. Why can't we help each other? Now that the Russians have given way, the Americans will be here within the month. I have influential friends among them. Supposing we exchanged identities—at the next stop, you answer to my name and I to yours. As soon as they let me go in your place, I'll start preparing the way for the American take-over. You, bearing my name, will be released as a political prisoner on the day they arrive. Leave the rest to me—your future will be secure."

The thief was delighted. Before I could intervene, the van pulled up in the prison yard. The two men answered to one another's names and were marched to different compounds. Ten days later, the Iron Guard was released. The thief watched weeks and months go by without news of the Americans. Faced by the prospect of fulfilling the other man's sentence, he told the Commandant the truth. The Iron Guard was hunted down and the thief expected to be freed at last. Instead, he was tried for helping a Fascist criminal to escape

and was given a twenty-year sentence of his own. So the two men had to go on living together, like so many others who had betrayed one another.

The new prison was called Jilava, which means "wet place" in Rumanian. It was justly named. To enter it, the truck drove down a steep ramp, and we plunged below the earth into darkness. The deepest levels of Jilava were more than thirty feet below ground. It had been designed as a fortress, with trenches surrounding it, and strangers could pass it by unaware of its existence. Sheep grazed about it, and we felt buried alive, under thousands of tons of earth. Jilava was intended for five hundred troops, but now it held two thousand prisoners in a series of dimly lit cells and tunnels which occasionally widened out into small courtyards where men exercised. At some points, streams ran down the walls, walls that were stained with great patches of green damp.

The man in the bunk next to me, a former police chief from Odessa, Colonel Popescu, said conditions had been far worse when he arrived. A hundred men had been crushed together in our small cell with the windows boarded up, and some had suffocated. Popescu told me he had hidden in a cave from the vengeful Russians for twelve years after the war. "I slept on straw and ate what friends brought me and pushed in through a small hole. But in the end, the Secret Police caught up with me. Crouching in that cramped space for so long, my legs had become paralyzed. It was months before I could walk upright again."

It was plain from Popescu's ribald conversation that religion had been outside his thoughts for many years. I asked how he had passed the time in his lonely cave.

"I composed a novel," he said. "If I wrote it down, it would run to five thousand pages. But no one would dare publish it."

I saw why when Popescu recited a few passages. Never have I heard such a torrent of obscenity. Fortunately, our meal was announced by a shout from the corridor, and the author abandoned fantasy for food. I took my rotting carrot soup over to a neighbor's bunk and we sat talking for a while. He was a young radioman who had transmitted information to the West

for a patriotic group, and he mentioned that he had been brought to Christ through his knowledge of Morse.

"It happened five or six years ago. I was interrogated in the cells of the Ministry of Interior and, while I was there, an unknown pastor next door tapped Bible verses to me through the wall."

When he told me the position of his cell, I said, "I was that pastor."

With his help I gradually built up a nucleus of Christians who tried to spread their influence throughout the prison. But there was one man whom everyone left alone. No one wanted anything to do with Gheorghe Bajenaru.

The son of an Orthodox bishop, Bajenaru had long been known as "the wickedest priest in Rumania." He began his career by forging his father's signature to honors and degrees and went on to embezzle the funds from a school where his wife was headmistress. When she committed suicide to conceal his guilt, Bajenaru showed no remorse. He even informed on his own father for money. Then he went West, posing as a refugee. There he was soon made a bishop, with control over all Rumanian Orthodox exiles. From them and from the World Council of Churches, he obtained funds. Meanwhile the Communists waited, and watched.

Bajenaru had been a worldly, arrogant man, built like a bull; but now he was thin and shrunken. He told me what had happened. He had gone to Austria for the wedding of a wealthy Rumanian, and stayed on for a few days. Leaving a restaurant in the French sector one night, he heard steps behind him. Four burly men jumped him. He felt a needle pierce his leg.

"I woke up in the Soviet sector. There was a mirror on the wall, but I didn't recognize the man who looked back at me. My black beard was gone. They had cropped my hair and dyed it red. My skin had been bleached to go with it. I was flown to Moscow. Interrogators in Lubianka prison thought I might be a key figure in the Anglo-American spy world. They wanted to know what the World Council of Churches was planning to do behind the Iron Curtain and information on the intrigues of Rumanian exiles in the West. I could tell them nothing. I had merely been enjoying myself. The Russians

wouldn't believe me. 'Very well, Your Grace,' they said, 'we shall have to stimulate your memory in the surgery.' "

Bajenaru held up his hands to show that his fingernails were broken.

"They broke them one by one," he said. "The doctor was in white. So were the two nurses. There was every scientific aid you can think of, except anesthetics."

Bajenaru was tortured for weeks. He was close to insanity when the Russians, deciding that he had no information for them after all, passed him on to the Secret Police in Bucharest. There he was tortured again.

At Jilava his interrogation was still going on, and when he returned to our cell from questioning, prisoners accused him of informing. In fact, he wished only to atone for what he had done. Suffering had purified him. But the others refused to believe it, although Bajenaru showed his change of heart in many ways. Once, when he held a public liturgy, praying aloud for the King and the royal family, someone told the guards. He was sent to the "Black Room" with myself and some other clergy who were also among the informer's victims.

We were driven down a steep flight of steps to a windowless, underground chamber in the depths of the fort, probably an old ammunition store: no shell could penetrate here. Water, dripping from the roof, kept the floor of the Black Room awash, and even in summer it was bitterly cold. "We must keep moving," said a voice in the pitch darkness. So we began to walk in a circle, slipping on the slimy floor, and we kept on until, many hours later, exhausted and bruised from falls, we were released.

Others told us we'd been lucky. Men were often stripped to the skin before being locked in the Black Room, and the story of how one group of eighteen had survived there for two days had become a legend. The victims were all middle-aged or elderly members of the National Peasant Party. To avoid freezing to death, they formed a human snake in the darkness. Each man clung to the one in front for warmth as they plodded around in an endless circle, splashed from head to foot in filth. Often a man collapsed, but the rest always dragged him up from the water and forced him on.

Bajenaru continued to pray for the King. When at last he was called for trial, he returned to say calmly that he had been given the death sentence. Bajenaru had finally achieved humility, and I have noticed that humble men, who have sinned gravely, can often resist persecution better than Christians of high spirituality. St. John Chrysostom, who lived in the days of the Roman chariot races, once said, "If a car drawn by the horses of Righteousness and Pride were matched with another drawn by Sin and Humility, I believe the second chariot would reach heaven first."

When Colonel Popescu suggested to Bajenaru that he appeal for mercy, he replied, "I do not recognize these judges. I obey God and the King." Shortly after he had been moved to the condemned cell, Popescu admitted, "Perhaps we were wrong in trying to be his judges, too."

We heard nothing of him for four months; then he returned to our cell, his sentence commuted to life imprisonment. Although his whole character had changed, the majority of prisoners still refused to accept him. It was unjust. When Bajenaru was offered release if he would agree to work for the Secret Police, he replied, "I'll leave prison when the last priest goes free."

His reprieve was regarded as suspicious because it was more common for a sentence to be increased than reduced. At any time, under Communism, the state can obtain a more severe penalty for a sentenced man. In fact, one prisoner who had served twelve years of a life sentence had just been told, with no explanation, that his sentence had been reviewed. The next day he was shot.

Bajenaru was transferred to another cell, where he was kicked and beaten by the prisoners. Twice he attempted suicide. Then he was transferred to another jail, where he died.

The first execution I witnessed at Jilava was of two brothers, named Arnautoiu who had lived in the forest for years as partisans, until a woman who visited their hideout was trailed by soldiers and they were caught.

Executions were conducted with grim ceremonial. At dawn,

guards lined the corridors, and from the cells hundreds of prisoners watched through cracks and spy holes as the Commandant led a small procession out into the yard. Two senior officers came first. Then the brothers carrying their chains, each flanked by guards. A doctor followed. More guards came behind, with machine guns. The clang of hammer blows echoed in the cold, morning air, as the men's chains were struck off. With sacks pulled over their heads, they were pushed into the car that drove them a short distance to a field. There they were shot in the back of the head at point-blank range. We heard the two reports.

The executioner was a man of gypsy blood named Nita, who received a bonus of 500 lei on each occasion. He was the best-mannered guard we had: prisoners called him the Black Angel of Jilava.

"I always give them a last cigarette in the cell before their time comes," he told us. "I try to keep their courage up, and it's not so hard as you might think, because every one of them believes he'll be saved up until the very last moment."

Curiously enough, this actually did happen in the case of a youth of nineteen. The boy, aided by some friends, made a series of attacks on militiamen in revenge. On being captured, one of the raiders talked, so nine were sentenced to die.

The first two were marched out into the yard, then a second pair. The others heard their chains being removed. Then the shots. They heard the guards coming to get the next pair. One of them told me later, "I felt perfectly calm. I saw the Holy Virgin and she spoke to me so gently. I was confident that I should be reprieved." The door of the cell opened. It was the Commandant. Word had come from Bucharest that the sentences on the remaining men had been commuted. Many times in jail I saw at work this mysterious power which sustains men in their last moments.

The Black Angel's politeness was his personal apology for a hideous job. The other guards, and the "trusted" prisoners in Jilava, felt no such compulsion. Punishments were particularly savage in this transit jail where men frequently confronted their old enemies. Many were former policemen who, de-

spite their anti-Communist sympathies, had been kept on by the Party for two years to train its Secret Police candidates. Then, their usefulness at an end, those who opposed the regime were arrested by their fellow instructors. There were bitter recriminations when police officers saw the comrades with whom they'd worked for half a lifetime delivering them to "justice." After sentence, scores of these police shared the same cell at Jilava, for in the end no officer of the old regime escaped the purge. But one day they found a new focus for the hatred that consumed them.

He was thrown into our cell from another—bruised, dishevelled, dirty, his jaw hanging loose, as he gazed at us in terror. A roar went up: "Albon!"

It was Colonel Albon, once the Commandant of Poarta-Alba, who had hounded thousands to their deaths. Now Albon had been made a scapegoat for the canal's failure. We remembered how Albon had greeted his new arrivals "Professors, doctors, lawyers, priests and all the rest of you—my clever friends. Here we have no use for brains; only for hands, your gentlemanly hands. For your labor, you are paid with the air you breathe. Don't think you'll be released from this camp, except by death —or when they stop work on the canal and lock me up."

Now the once all-powerful Albon stared at us like a hypnotized rabbit. A prisoner seized him by the collar and yanked him to his feet. Another swung him around. A third kicked him in the groin. Albon went down under a torrent of blows, screaming hysterically. I tried to save him, but the men turned on me: "So, you side with this murderer?"

Albon struggled up, streaked with blood and dust, amid jeers and mocking laughter. Holding his hands before his face to shield it, he fell again on his way to the door, cutting himself severely on the sharp corner of a bunk. The shirt was roughly ripped from his back. At last, he collapsed and lay still on the floor. Albon was tormented in cell after cell, until finally he was transferred to Ocnele-Mari, the prison reserved by the authorities for disgraced officers and officials.

Days later, I recognized another familiar face: Colonel Dulgheru, once chief inquisitor for the Secret Police, who had

questioned me for a week what seemed an eternity ago in Calea Rahova's solitary confinement cells. I warned him of Albon's fate, and he tried to keep out of trouble, but it was inevitable that someone else would soon spot him.

He told me he had been accused of being a police spy in pre-Communist days—the usual charge when the Party wanted to incriminate one of its own men—and described his arrest. He'd gone to the cells with his retinue of three subalterns to interrogate a prisoner. They opened a cell door politely and ushered the Colonel in, then slammed it behind him. Dulgheru found himself locked in an empty cell. He banged on the door, demanding to be let out. His men laughed and he heard one of them say, "This time, you're the one to stay there."

When Dulgheru's identity was discovered at Jilava, he was savagely attacked by the prisoners and had to be removed to Ocnele-Mari. The Party prison soon became as overcrowded as the rest.

Shortly after his departure, I was taken to Bucharest for interrogation. At Secret Police headquarters the questions of a uniformed colonel seemed designed to sound out my attitude to the regime rather than to get information. He gave me no clue to his real purpose in seeing me.

The jail was crowded and "secret" prisoners shared cells. I was put in with a thickset, sullen man, who turned out to be Vasile Turcanu, the chief "reeducator," who had been sentenced to death by the regime—the regime that had once licensed him to kill and torture. The Party had kept him alive for three years, intending, in the usual way, to announce his execution when the need for a political distraction arose.

Turcanu's path in prison had crossed that of his former boss, the terrible Ana Pauker. She had been tortured, he said, and put in a cell first with Fascist women whom she had arrested while in power, and then with women who were totally insane.*

Turcanu also described the arrest of Teohari Georgescu, Minister of the Interior, in 1953 at the time of the Pau-

* Ana Pauker was later released and died in 1960. Her memorial is a small plaque among hundreds in the Bucharest Crematorium: "Ana Pauker—active social worker."

ker purge. He was sitting in his office before a row of telephones when three of his own security officers burst in with revolvers. They made Georgescu face his own portrait, hanging on the wall in its gold frame, while he dropped his trousers for a search.

Easily the most interesting revelation at Secret Police headquarters, however, was that Stalin had been denounced as a murderer and tyrant by his successor Khrushchev. The first reports of Khrushchev's execution of Beria and his six top strongmen on Christmas Eve, 1953—along with thousands of lesser Soviet secret agents—were only just coming out, and the process of discrediting Stalin had begun in earnest in Rumania. Gheorghiu-Dej, the new Rumanian dictator, was introducing a more popular policy. Dej liked to live well himself, and his temperament, at least, had proved a great improvement on that of the Pauker circle.

The news I took back to Jilava threw the cell into an uproar. Everyone was delighted that Stalin had been toppled from his pedestal. They hoped it would hasten their own release.

But Popescu said, "I know the Party. They'll denounce the robber—but they won't repay the robbed."

"Anyway, Stalin's through," another prisoner said.

"May he burn in hell!" shouted a second.

Amid laughter, cheering and jeers, two prisoners waltzed around together, screaming obscene remarks about "Uncle Joe." Only the guards were silent. Stalin's denunciation left their future unsettled.

Popescu called to me, "You're not looking so happy, Pastor."

I said, "I can't take pleasure in explosions of hatred toward anyone. We don't know Stalin's fate. He may have been saved at the final hour, like the thief on the Cross."

It was an unpopular remark. How could anyone possibly think that, after all the crimes Stalin had committed?

"Perhaps he's like the rich man who did only one good thing in his life, and yet ended in heaven," I said.

I told them how a man who had lived by exploiting the poor developed a great hatred for the village pastor, simply because

of his goodness. When they met in the street, the man always spat in the minister's face, and the minister let him, thinking, this is a pleasure for this poor creature. Once a year, however, the rich man, who was called Bodnaras, went to church. It was always on Good Friday, and as he heard the story of the Crucifixion, two tears would roll down his fat cheeks. He wiped them away surreptitiously and left before the collection was taken.

One Good Friday, a large congregation waited for the service to begin. The minister failed to appear, and so did Bodnaras. An hour passed. At last someone looked behind the altar. There was the minister, stretched out on the floor, breathing calmly, his eyes closed and with such a look of bliss on his face that the people realized he had been transfigured by a holy ecstasy.

That morning Bodnaras had died and gone to judgment. When the devils placed all his bad deeds upon the scales, his guardian angel had nothing to put in the other side except the two tears he had shed every year. Yet those tears weighed exactly as much as all the evil deeds together.

What could be done? Bodnaras began to sweat and tremble. But just at that moment God looked away and the rich man snatched a few bad deeds off the scale. The balance swung up on the side of Good.

But God sees everything. He said sadly to the rich man, "Never in all creation has anyone tried to cheat me on the Day of Judgment." And looking around the assembled host, he asked, "Who will defend this man?"

The angels were silent. "Come," said God, "this is not the Popular Republic of Rumania. We can't condemn a man without a defense."

Even the rich man's guardian angel shrank from the task. "But," he added, "there is a minister in his town of so saintly a character that he might be willing to speak for him."

So the pastor was summoned to heaven, while his body remained below. When he saw the man he had so often humiliated, Bodnaras thought his last chance had gone, but the minister accepted the case at once.

"Heavenly Father," he began, "which of us is better, You or I? If I'm better than You, come down from Your throne and let

me take Your place, for every day I allowed Bodnaras the joy of spitting on me, and was free of bitterness. Certainly if I can forgive him, so can You.

"My second plea is that Jesus died on the Cross for the sins of man, and although in our unhappy country we may now be punished many times for the same crime, it is not right that Bodnaras should suffer again for his sins, when they have been punished already in Jesus' body.

"And third, God, a practical question. What do You lose if he goes to heaven? If paradise is too small. You can enlarge it. If You don't wish to introduce evil among the good, then make another heaven for lost souls—give them a little happiness, too."

His argument was so pleasing to God that he called at once to Bodnaras, "Go now to heaven." The rich man hurried off. Then God turned to the pastor, deeply moved, and said, "Stay here a while, and talk with me."

"Thank You," said the minister, "but I haven't conducted morning service yet, and everyone is waiting to get home. I must go back and do my duty, and tell men to beware of sin. But I shall teach them also that you fulfill *Your* duty, forgiving us all, for Your love is given even to the worst of sinners. If You began to judge man according to his deserts, none of us would escape."

The cell heard this story in silence.

"And would you," Popescu asked, "defend Stalin before God?"

"Who knows if Stalin hasn't wept over his sins," I said. "Psychologists say that the worse a man's crimes, the less he is responsible for them. A maniac like Hitler, who annihilates millions of harmless people, a mass murderer like Stalin, who kills thousands of his own comrades—such men are not normal, and we cannot judge them by the standards we apply to ourselves."

Colonel Popescu said, "I've heard many Christian teachings from you in this cell, but this is the best—and the most difficult to put into effect."

In the spring of 1956 some swallows nested high up in the roof of the cell, near the window. One day a chirp announced that the eggs had hatched. A prisoner stood on another's shoul-

ders and peered in. "Four of them," he called. The parent birds never seemed to rest. It made a change from speculations on our release to count the number of times they darted in and out of the nest to feed the chicks—250 trips a day. An old countryman said, "They'll fly in twenty-one days." The others laughed. "You'll see," he said. On the seventeenth day nothing had happened. On the twenty-first, with cheeps and flutterings, the young birds departed. We were delighted. "God has arranged their schedule," I said. "He can do as much for us."

The weeks passed, and it began to appear that the denunciation of Stalin did herald another "thaw" in the frozen misery of the lands occupied by Communism. I knew that it couldn't last, yet on the other hand, many prisoners were being released under the terms of an amnesty. Would I be among them? To my surprise, the thought only saddened me: if they let me go now, what use would I be? My son had grown up and could hardly remember his father. Sabina was used to her independence. The church had other pastors, who made less trouble.

Early one morning, my gloomy thoughts were interrupted: "Interrogation, at once. Move."

Back to the bullying, the terror, the questions for which I had to find false answers. I started to gather my things, while the guard bellowed, "Come on, come on. The car's waiting." I hurried with him through the corridors and across the yard. One after another the steel gates were unlocked as we climbed the steps. Then I was outside.

There was no car in sight, only a clerk who handed me a slip of paper. I took it. It was a court order declaring that under the amnesty of June 12, 1956, I was free.

I stared at it stupidly and said, "But I've only done eight and a half years and my sentence is for twenty."

"You're to leave at once. This comes from the highest court."

"I've got nearly twelve years yet to serve."

"Don't argue. Get out."

"But look at me." My ragged shirt was gray with dirt. My trousers a map of colored patches tacked together. My boots might have been stolen from Charlie Chaplin. "I'll be arrested by the first policeman in sight."

"We've no clothes here for you. Get going."

The clerk turned back into the prison. The gate clanged and its bolt was driven home. Outside the prison walls there was not a soul to be seen; I was alone at last, in an empty, summery world. The warm June day was so quiet that I could hear insects buzzing about on their business. A long, white road stretched away under trees of an amazing deep green. In the shade of a grove of chestnuts, cows were grazing. How still it was.

I called out, so that the guards could hear behind their walls, "God, help me not to rejoice more because I'm free than because You were with me in prison!"

It is three miles from Jilava to Bucharest. I shouldered my bundle and set out across the fields. It was only a collection of smelly rags, but they had been so precious to me in jail that I never considered abandoning them. Soon I left the crown of the road to walk in the deep grass and touch the rough bark of the trees along the way. Sometimes I stopped to gaze at a flower or a budding leaf.

Two figures came toward me—an old country couple. They stopped me and said curiously, "You come from *there?*" The man brought out a leu, a coin worth about a penny, and gave it to me. I looked at it in my hand, and felt laughter rising. No one had ever given me a leu before.

"Give me your address, so that I may repay you," I said.

"No, no. Keep it," he urged me, using "thou," as people do to children and beggars.

I went on with my bundle. Another woman stopped me. "You come from *there?*" She hoped for news of the priest of Jilava village, arrested months before. I had not met him, but explained that I was a pastor myself. We sat on a wall by the roadside and talked. I was so happy to find someone who wanted to talk about Christ. When I went on my way, she, too, produced a leu: "For the trolley fare."

"But I have a leu already."

"Take it for Our Lord's sake, then."

I walked on until I reached a trolley stop on the outskirts of the city. People crowded around me, knowing at once where I had come from. They asked after brothers, fathers, cousins—all had someone in prison. When I boarded the trolley, they re-

fused to let me pay. Several stood to offer me a seat. Released prisoners in Rumania, far from being outcasts, are highly respected men. I sat with my bundle on my knees, but just as the car started I heard shouts from outside: "Stop! Stop!" It was my heart that nearly stopped. We jerked to a halt as a militiaman's motorcycle swerved in front. There had been a mistake —he was coming to take me back. But the driver turned and shouted, "He says there's someone standing on the steps."

I sat next to a woman with a large basket of fresh strawberries. I looked at them unbelievingly.

"Haven't you had any this year?" she said.

"Not for eight years," I replied.

She said, "Go on, take some," and filled my hands with the soft, ripe fruit. I gulped them in hungry mouthfuls, like a child.

At last I reached my own front door and hesitated a moment. They were not expecting me, and I was a fearful sight in my filth and rags. Then I opened the door. In the hall were several young people, among them a gawky young man who stared at me for a moment, then cried, "Father."

It was Mihai, my son. I had left him at nine: now he was eighteen.

Then Sabina ran in from the kitchen. Her fine-boned face was thinner, but her hair was still black; I thought, "She is more beautiful than ever." My eyes blurred. When she put her arms around me, I made a great effort and said, "I must tell you something. Don't think I've simply come from misery to happiness. I've come from the joy of being with Christ in prison to the joy of being with Him in my family. I'm not coming from strangers to my own, but from my own in prison to my own at home." Later, I sang softly a little song I had made for her years before in prison to sing if we ever met again.

Shortly afterwards Mihai came to say the place was full of visitors who would not go without seeing me. Members of our church had been telephoning all over Bucharest; the doorbell rang continuously. Old friends brought new ones. People had to leave so that others could find standing room. Every time I was introduced to a woman, I had to bow politely in my absurd trousers, held up by string. By the time all were gone it

was nearly midnight and Sabina urged me to eat something, but I felt no hunger. I said, "Today we have had happiness enough. Let's make tomorrow a day of fasting in thankfulness, with Holy Communion before supper."

I turned to Mihai. Three of our visitors—one a philosophy professor from the university whom I had not met before—had told me that evening that my son had brought them to faith in Christ. And I had feared that, left without father or mother, he would be lost! I could find no words for my happiness.

Mihai said, "Father, you've gone through so much. I want to know what you've learned from all your sufferings."

I put my arm around him and said, "Mihai, I've nearly forgotten my Bible in all this time. But four things were always in my mind. First, that there is a God. Second, Christ is our Saviour. Third, there is eternal life. And finally, love is the best of ways."

My son said, "That was all I wanted." Later he told me of his decision to become a pastor, too.

In my clean, soft bed that night, I lay sleepless. I sat up and opened the Bible. I wanted the Book of Daniel, which had been a favorite, but I could no longer find my way to it. My eye was held instead by a line in the Epistles of St. John, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth." I had this joy, too. I went into my son's room, to reassure myself that he was really there. In prison I had dreamed so often of this, only to wake up in my empty cell.

It was two weeks before I could sleep regularly. By then I was being treated in the best-placed bed of the sunniest ward of the best possible hospital. As an ex-prisoner, everyone wanted to help me—in the streets, the shops, everywhere—and the stream of visitors began again.

Chapter Six

NOW that I was free, I longed for quiet and rest. But Communism was working everywhere to complete the destruction of the Church. The peace I desired would have been an escape from reality and a danger to my soul.

I returned to poverty, but I was luckier than many. Because she refused to divorce me after her release my wife could not get work and lived in drastically reduced circumstances, darning women's stockings and living on the kindness of friends. She said that it would have been impossible for them, had it not been for Mihai. When he was thirteen, Mihai had been allowed to visit his mother during her three years of forced labor on the canal. Deprived of both parents, living on charity, he felt bitter.

"I borrowed the money to go to the camp," he told me. "We met in a place where there were two sets of iron bars dividing us. Mother was in prison uniform, dirty and thin. She was half crying, but she had to shout to make me hear. She said, 'Mihai, believe in Jesus and be faithful.' I answered, 'Mother, if you can still believe in a place like this, then so must I.' "

On her return to Bucharest, Sabina found that Mihai had become a piano tuner after being apprenticed to an expert at the Opera House: his ear was so true that he was able to work

at this craft by himself from the age of eleven. Soon he was earning enough to help his mother and send himself to school. Life was hard, but at least they had food.

Mihai's troubles with the Party began early when he won the right granted to model pupils to wear a red tie—only to refuse to do so because it was "the symbol of the oppressors." Publicly expelled, he was quietly readmitted when the fuss died down, because his teachers gave only lip service to the regime. Again, at fourteen, he was expelled for saying that he had read the Bible for himself and that the attacks on religion in the schoolbooks were based on falsehoods. Now he was attempting to continue his studies in evening classes.

Mihai was a Christian, with no love of Communism. But a songbird with a nest near a family of crows will eventually sing out of tune, and Mihai had heard little else. On the day after my return I had to tell him that he was mistaken in believing that the workers in capitalist countries were dying of hunger. He and his friends took it for granted, and one girl told me that she had wept in school for the millions of starving children of America.

Even the finest young people seemed confused and disoriented. Not only were they deprived of the chance of reading great Christian authors, but in Rumania now you could not buy the works of philosophers like Plato, Kant, Schopenhauer and Einstein. Mihai's friends said their parents told them one thing, their professors another, and often they sought my advice. One young theology student from the university of Cluj asked for help with his thesis, a history of liturgical song in the Lutheran church.

I advised him to begin by changing his subject. We should not be filling young men's heads with historical trivialities, when tomorrow they may face death for their faith.

"What should I be studying, then?" he asked.

"How to be ready for sacrifice and martyrdom," I replied.

I told him some of the things I'd witnessed in prison, and soon he was bringing his friends to listen. All had the same difficulty as they tried to come to terms with their lives. I questioned them about their studies.

One of them said, "Our professor of theology says that God

gave three revelations: the first to Moses; the second to Christ; and the third to Karl Marx."

"What does your pastor think of that?"

"The more he talks, the less he seems to say."

The upshot of our talks was that I agreed to go to Cluj and preach in the cathedral there. The students wanted to read my books, but all my writings had been banned. Before I went, I had a call to pay, in fulfillment of a promise made in prison to members of the Army of the Lord, a sect resembling the Salvation Army that was being harassed unrelentingly by the Secret Police. It was years since I had met Patriarch Justinian Marina and I thought that he might help. The harm he had done to the church was great; it was still in his power to do some good.

I found him walking in the grounds behind his palace. Probably he chose to see me in the garden because it was free from microphones and far from his eavesdropping clerks. I said, "You are Patriarch and men come to you for positions and pensions, and everywhere you must preach and sing—so I thought that I should come and sing to you. It's a song of the Army of the Lord; one I learned in prison." I sang it, and asked him to do something for these good and simple people: "They must not sit in prison forever, merely because they belong to a particular sect." He agreed to try, and we had a long talk.

Attempting to call him back to God, I said, "Even in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus called Judas 'friend,' opening the way to salvation." I wanted to plant a seed from which a change of heart might grow. He listened quietly, even with humility, but said he could do little because the Metropolitan of Iasí, Justin Moisescu, had been made his subordinate; if he went too far, or resigned, Moisescu would replace him as Patriarch and behave much worse. Justinian had kept a kind of respect for me. But although his divided heart did not love what his hand did, his waverings always ended in submission to the Party's demands.

Later I heard he had raised the matter of the "Army" in the Holy Synod, where he was opposed by the Metropolitan, who had become accepted as Orthodox representative for the World Council of Churches. Next, he was reproved by the

Ministry of Cults for receiving me; his secretary, of course, had reported my visit, just as the Patriarch always relayed the activities of his secretary. Justinian had agreed to meet representatives from the "Army," but when they arrived, he rudely dismissed them. "So Wurmbrand told you to come, did he? It's time he was back in jail again."

The news that I had promised to deliver a series of talks at Rumania's ancient university town was at once reported to the authorities, with the warning that my real intention was to attack Marxism and stir up trouble among the students under the guise of lecturing on Christian philosophy. The zealous informer in this case was a Baptist minister, who told me to my face what he had done.

It came as no surprise. I had met many of his colleagues since my release—priests, pastors, even bishops, who served as informers for the Ministry of Cults. Usually, the reports concerned their own congregations, and usually the clergy were ashamed and sorrowful over what they had to do. They said it was not so much for their own safety that they undertook the task, but to save their churches from being closed down. Every town had its Secret Police representatives from the Ministry of Cults who questioned ministers regularly on the conduct of their congregations; quite apart from politics they wanted to know which parishioners were frequent communicants, which of them tried to obtain converts, what sins people confessed. Those who refused to answer such questions were dismissed, and in the absence of a suitable informer to take over, the doors of their churches were closed. By now Rumania had four categories of ministers: those in prison, those who informed under pressure and tried to keep things back; those who shrugged and did as they were told; and those who had acquired a taste for informing. (The official pastor who was not a collaborator was a rare exception and, in time, lost his license to preach.) Traitors, like streetwalkers, thrive by being brazen, and my Baptist colleague was one of these.

His warning was followed up immediately by an official spy named Rugojanu. The Ministry of Cults had its categories, too. Some of its employees were slack, others used their power to

extract "protection money" from the clergy, but Rugojanu was a fanatic who went from church to church, tirelessly sniffing out "counterrevolutionaries." He resolved to attend my lectures himself.

On my way to Cluj I decided that if I did not want my preaching license abruptly canceled, careful strategy was in order. I decided to start with a series of apparently benevolent comparisons between the doctrines of Christianity and Communism, delivered with great respect for the sensibilities of the regime. While the students would not fail to see what I was really getting at, informers in the congregation would, I hoped, be unable to make a clear case against me until it was too late to interfere.

At Cluj, on the first evening, there was a group of fifty students. As Darwin and his evolutionary theories were always prominent on the reading lists for theology classes, I tried first to deal with them. I said that the new Rumania, advanced and Socialist, rejected all debased capitalist ideas; wasn't it odd that an exception was made in the case of the English bourgeois Sir Charles Darwin? Was it that his theories were thought to contradict Christian belief? Darwin himself went to some trouble to deny any such inference; indeed, as a believer himself, he had willed his fortune to Christian missions.

Rugojanu, hunched forward in a pew, was staring at me intently, so I looked directly at him as I continued, "A doctor's son wants to be a doctor, a composer's son a musician, a painter's son an artist, and so on. If you believe you were created by God, then you will try to become Godlike; if you prefer to believe that you spring from a tribe of apes, you are in danger of turning into a beast."

I started my lectures on a Monday. On Tuesday the audience had doubled. By the end of the week more than a thousand faces looked up at me—the entire university, it seemed, was packing the cathedral. I knew that many of them, eager as they were to hear the truth, must fear the consequences of embracing it, so I told them of the advice given me by a pastor who died for his faith at the hands of Fascists. He said, "You give your body as a sacrifice to God when you give it to all who wish to beat and mock you. Jesus, knowing His crucifixion was

near, said, 'My time is at hand.' His time was the time of suffering, the charge He had received from His Father, and it was His joy to suffer for the salvation of mankind. We, too, should regard suffering as a charge given us by God. St. Paul wrote, in the Epistle to the Romans (12:1): 'My brothers, I implore you by God's mercy to offer your very selves to Him: a living sacrifice, dedicated and fit for His acceptance.' "

As I looked over the heads of my silent young congregation it seemed, for a moment, as though I were back in my church in Bucharest during the war, on the day when the Iron Guard bullies had filed in with their guns. Menace was all around us, not only in the place where Rugojanu was carefully taking note of everything I said.

I continued: "Don't let suffering take you by surprise. Meditate on it often. Make the virtues of Christ and His saints your own. The pastor I spoke of, my teacher who died for his faith, gave me a recipe for a tea against suffering, and I will pass it on to you."

I told them the story of a doctor of early Christian times who was unjustly imprisoned by the emperor. After some years his family were allowed to visit him, and at first they were appalled. His clothes were rags, his food a slice of bread and a cup of water every day. Then his wife looked at him more closely. "How is it you look so well?" she asked. "You have the air of one who has just come from a wedding." The doctor smilingly replied that he had found a remedy for all troubles, "a tea good against all suffering and sorrow. It contains seven herbs, and I shall number them for you.

"The first is contentedness: be satisfied with what you have. I may shiver in my rags as I gnaw on a crust, but how much worse off I should be if the emperor had thrown me naked into a dungeon with nothing at all to eat.

"The second herb is common sense. Whether I rejoice or worry, I shall still be in prison, so why distress myself?

"The third is remembrance of past sins: count them, and on the assumption that every sin deserves a day in prison, reckon how many lives you would spend behind bars—you have been let off lightly.

"The fourth is the thought of the sorrows Christ bore gladly for us. If the only man who ever could choose his fate on earth chose pain, what great value he must have seen in it. So we observe that, borne with serenity and joy, suffering redeems.

"The fifth herb is the knowledge that suffering has been given to us by God as from a father, not to harm us, but to cleanse and sanctify us. The suffering through which we pass is intended to purify us, prepare us for heaven.

"The sixth is the knowledge that no suffering can harm a Christian life. If the pleasures of the flesh are all, then pain and prison bring an end to a man's aim in living; but if the core of life is truth, no prison cell can change it. Prison cannot stop me from loving; iron bars cannot exclude faith. If these ideals make up my life, I can be serene anywhere.

"The last herb in the recipe is hope. The wheel of life may put the emperor's physician in prison, but it goes on turning. It may eventually bring me back to the palace, and even return me to the throne."

I paused for a moment. The crowded church was still. "I have drunk barrels of this tea since then," I said, "and I can recommend it to you all. It has proved good."

As I finished speaking, Rugojanu stood up and pushed his way out of the cathedral without a backward glance. I came down from the pulpit and the audience crowded around me. Outside, students applauded, cheered and tried to take my hands. I telephoned Sabina, who approved of what I'd done, though she knew reprisals were bound to follow.

The next day I was summoned by my bishop, who told me that Rugojanu was making trouble. While he was telling me about protests from the Ministry of Cults, Rugojanu himself strode into the room. "Ah, you," he cried. "What excuses are you trying to make? A torrent of sedition—I took down every word."

I asked him what in particular had displeased him. Everything had—but particularly my cure for suffering.

"But what was wrong with my poor tea?" I asked. "Which herb didn't you like?"

"You told them the wheel always turns. But in this counter-

revolutionary outburst you are mistaken. The wheel will not turn, my friend. Communism is here forever." Hatred distorted his face.

"I didn't mention Communism," I replied. "I simply said that the wheel of life keeps turning. For instance, I was in prison, now I am free. I have been ill, now I am better. I lost my parish, now I may work . . ."

"Don't hand me that. You meant that Communism would fall, and they all knew it. Don't imagine you've heard the end of this."

Rugojanu summoned church leaders to a meeting at the bishop's palace in Cluj, where I was denounced for trying to poison the youth with veiled attacks on the government. "You may be sure he'll never preach again," shouted Rugojanu, working himself up into an ugly rage. At the end he cried, "Wurmbrand is finished," gathered up coat and hat and stalked out of the building. A hundred yards from the door a car, swerving to avoid a dog, mounted the pavement and crushed him against the wall. He died instantly. The story of Rugojanu's last words and their sequel spread throughout the country. Often during these years God showed His hand.

The revocation of my license as a pastor did not stop me from preaching, but now I had to work as secretly as I did among Soviet soldiers after the war. A new danger appeared in the form of visits from old prison friends asking advice and help. Some tried to provoke me into speaking against Communism—they had turned informer. These unhappy men had expected too much from their release; on finding their domestic world in chaos they had turned to the pursuit of sexual pleasure in a vain attempt at recapturing their lost youth. This usually cost more than they could afford; and the shortcut to a new start with the regime and quick profits lay in providing the Party with information. Their freedom ultimately proved more tragic than their confinement.

Our best safeguard against informers lay in the warnings we received from friends in the Secret Police. Many of our followers held Party jobs. One young couple who spent their days in the propaganda department passed their evenings praying with us, and, more than once, we met in the home of a lead-

ing Secret Police officer, away on vacation, whose maid was one of us. Or, we gathered in basements, attics, flats, country houses. Our services were as simple and beautiful as those of the first Christians 1,900 years ago. We sang aloud. Should the neighbors ask questions, it was a birthday celebration. Christian families with three or four members had thirty-five birthdays a year. Sometimes we met in the open country. The sky was our cathedral; the birds supplied our music, the flowers our incense, the stars our candles, the angels were the acolytes who lit them, and the shabby suit of a martyr just freed from prison meant far more to us than the most precious priestly robes.

I knew, of course, that sooner or later I would be rearrested. After the revolution in Hungary, the situation grew more difficult with every month. Khrushchev announced a new seven-year plan, "to eradicate the vestiges of superstition." Churches were closed or converted for use as Communist clubs, museums, grain stores. Those whom the Party newspapers reviled as "swindlers in black cassocks" were rounded up by the thousand.

I prayed, "God, if You know men in prison whom I can help, whose souls I can save, send me back and I'll bear it willingly." Sabina sometimes hesitated, then said, "Amen." At this time there was an inner joy about her that came from knowing we would soon serve Christ more fully.

It was 1 A.M. on January 15, 1959, when they finally came for me. Our home was turned inside out in a search that lasted until 5 A.M. My son found a lost belt of his behind a dislodged cupboard. "And yet people say the Secret Police are useless," he remarked. "I've been looking everywhere for that." The next day he was barred from night school for insolence.

When they had taken me away, Sabina picked up my Bible. On a scrap of paper, she found a sentence I'd noted down from the Epistle to the Hebrews (11:35): "Through faith . . . women received back their dead raised to life." I had written below it, "I have such a woman for my wife."

It was still dark and the streets were covered with icy slush when we reached police headquarters in Bucharest. I went through the familiar reception processes before guards led me to a cell. Here I found a man of about thirty named Draghici, one of the hated reeducation leaders at Piteshi. Each time the

cell door opened he wheeled around. When he had started like this several times, he said, "I'm sorry to be so jumpy. I never know if they're coming to take me out for a bath or to be shot. I've been under sentence of death for four years."

Draghici told me his life story. As a boy he had admired the local priest, who said one day, "Your father's a watchmaker—ask him to repair the church clock, for a low price." Draghici persuaded his father to do the work for nothing. The priest then asked for a receipt for 500 leu in order to pocket the money, which he then charged the church. Draghici added sardonically, "I might have grown up as a Christian and given the church a vast sum of money over the years, if it hadn't been for that."

His father, a drunkard, disappeared with the family savings, and at fourteen the boy enlisted in the Iron Guard for the sake of the green shirt, the marching songs, the admiration of the girls. A few months later, the Guard was overthrown. Draghici went to prison and when the Communists took power was automatically sentenced to eleven years as an active Fascist. After serving seven years he was told at Piteshi, "Beat the other prisoners, and you'll be freed."

He told me, "I was then twenty-one. I didn't want to stay in jail so I did as I was told. I believed them, and now I have to die for it."

It looked to me as though he were dying already, of tuberculosis. "It's no more than I deserve," he said.

That night I lay awake, listening to Draghici coughing and spitting blood, and I thought: if God called me now and asked, "After fifty-six years on earth, what do you think of man?" I should have to reply, "He is not guilty. Satan and his fallen angels are at work to make us miserable as they are themselves; but man is not to blame."

For ten days and nights I talked to Draghici about Christ. "You didn't become a criminal of your own free will," I said, "but your sense of guilt demands atonement. Jesus has taken on Himself the punishment you feel you deserve."

On the tenth evening, Draghici broke down in tears and confessed to me. We prayed together, and his remorse and fear

were lifted. So my request to be allowed to help other prisoners was answered in my first days back in prison.

I was taken next for interrogation at Bucharest's Uranus jail. A Secret Police major tried to make me name all the "counter-revolutionaries" I knew. I told him I'd be glad to. Several thousands of them had been killed in the Soviet Union during the thirties by Yagoda, then Minister of Interior, but in the end it was revealed that the real counterrevolutionary was Yagoda himself. Then, under his successor Beria, the Soviet Secret Police drove hundreds of thousands to their deaths, until Beria, too, was shot. I added that the supreme enemy of the revolution, the killer of millions, was Josef Stalin, who had since been turned out of his tomb in Red Square. So it would be best, I suggested, to look elsewhere than in my poor church for counterrevolutionaries.

The officer ordered me beaten and kept in solitary confinement, where I remained until my trial. It was a ten-minute rehearing, in secret session, of my trial of ten years before. But this time my wife and son were present to hear me denounced.

I waited in a cell for transport to the next prison. While I spoke to the others about Christ, an officer came in to announce the new court decision. I thanked him, and went on with what I was saying. The sentence had been increased from twenty years to twenty-five.

Chapter Seven

WITH other newly sentenced clergy I was crowded into a police van. After a short journey we bumped down a steep ramp and came to a halt. My heart sank as the van descended, for I realized that we were back in the damp, underground prison of Jilava, where I had been only thirty months before. There were loud shouts of "Get them out." The van doors burst open.

A reception party of baton-swinging guards drove us along the passage with blows. They had been drinking, and at the sight of priests there was a whoop of joy. Gray, grubby prison uniforms were flung at us. Those who were slow in changing had the clothes torn from their backs. Beards were hacked off with scissors amid roars of laughter. Heads were roughly shaved. Bleeding and half-naked, we were driven into a large cell.

We sat on the stone floor, huddling together for warmth in the February cold. Almost immediately another guard lurched in, bawling, "All priests outside." We filed out, and into a new gauntlet of baton blows. I ran with the rest, protecting my head with my arms as best I could. Then we were all driven back again. Those who fell were mercilessly kicked with heavy

boots. Half an hour later all the priests were called out again. When no one moved, the guards rushed in, lashing out indiscriminately until they tired of the sport.

One man near me had lost some teeth and his lip was badly split. As I cleaned the blood from his face, he said, "I'm Archimandrite Cristescu." We had met years before at Iasí, when I had been waiting to see the Patriarch. Miron Cristescu was working in Justinian Marina's office, so I had told him of our troubles. He had placed his hands on my shoulders and said, "Brother, Christ will come again: we hope for it"—something a man of God should say often, yet seldom does. I never forgot him. But shaven, his sensitive face streaked by blood and dirt, he was unrecognizable.

The hours passed as we sat and shivered. Miron Cristescu talked of how he and others around the Patriarch had tried to save the Church from becoming the instrument of the state. They had thought they could work on the Patriarch's better nature. But Gheorghiu-Dej had chosen well. Justinian was sent on a triumphal visit to Moscow. Afterwards he readily collaborated in dealing blow after blow at the Roman and Greek Catholics and at all within his fold who refused to toe the line.

"I should never have compromised," said Archimandrite Miron. "I should have resisted from the start. Here I am now, like the rest."

I tried to comfort him, but he raised his fine eyes to my face and answered, "Brother Wurmbrand, I know only one sadness, the sadness of not being a saint."

Spoken from the pulpit, this would have been merely a beautiful phrase; in that horrible cell, after a ferocious beating, I thought the words showed greatness.

Miron was with me when a few days later I joined a convoy headed into the mountains, and after many hours, the Transylvanian town of Gherla and its largest building, the prison, came into view. Here my wife had visited me during my two-month stay in 1956. It held other memories, too. From the upper windows of the jail, built during the reign of the Empress Maria Teresa, you could see the old gallows, now out of use, since the Communist mode of execution is a shot in the back of the head. Beyond the high walls we saw life going on in the

town. Prisoners gazed out at the passing scene and daydreamed. But at noon no one could bear to watch. It was then that the children came from school, shouting and laughing as they chased each other home.

Some 10,000 prisoners were packed into primitive accommodation intended for 2,000, and the regime was as harsh as it was in the worst days of the re-education campaign. The previous summer there had been serious rioting at Gherla. Prisoners had barricaded themselves into a wing in protest at the nailing up of the shutters that deprived them of light and air. Guards had smashed down the doors and a running fight had begun. Then the militia were called in and opened fire. Many prisoners were killed or wounded. A reign of terror followed; food was cut to starvation level, and hundreds of so-called ringleaders were dispersed to other jails.

We priests and pastors soon took their places, along with an army of other political prisoners caught in the new wave of arrests—landowners, army officers, doctors, shopkeepers, artisans who wouldn't join the cooperatives, farmers who opposed the final land seizures which the Party was then preparing. On top of two disastrous five-year plans, Premier Gheorghiu-Dej announced a sixteen-year plan, which would last until 1975 —"If," said Miron, "there's anyone left at liberty by then to carry it out."

The cells were long, dark, echoing barrack rooms, each containing fifty to sixty bunks and from eighty to a hundred men. Like many others, I had to share a bed, and sleep was difficult. Apart from the night-long procession to the overflowing lavatory buckets there were a dozen champion snorers to keep us awake. Each performed his own tune; if one paused, another joined the resonant chorus. Nor could we rest by day. The guards made surprise visits, ordering us to lie facedown in rows on the floor so that they could trample on each man in turn as his number was called. The iron bars across the windows were constantly being banged to ensure that they had not been filed. Whips and studded boots enforced discipline.

Each morning I helped Miron carry lavatory buckets to the drain to empty them, and when he slipped and nearly upset one, a guard sent him sprawling. "You'll end up in Rozsa San-

dor," he shouted. Later, Miron asked me what this meant. I said, "The graveyard. It's a common threat here."

Rozsa Sandor was the prison cemetery, whose headstones, deep in weeds, could be seen from the windows. It was named after a thief who, during the last century, had been sentenced to twenty years. He was then only nineteen. Looking down from behind the bars, he saw in a garden a woman with a baby in her arms. Day after day he watched them. The priest called to baptize the child; she went to school, appeared in her First Communion dress, and grew into a beautiful young woman under his fascinated gaze. The girl became Rozsa Sandor's entire life; he resolved to marry her when he was free. At last the day came for Rozsa's release. He hurried across the road only to discover a party in progress—a wedding feast. She had even thought to receive him in this way. He ran up to her and said, "I can't tell you how happy I am that you'll be my wife today." Astonished, the girl began to laugh. "What can this silly old man mean?" she asked. Then, taking the hand of a young man beside her, she said, "This is my bridegroom." Horrified, Rozsa Sandor stared at the couple. Then in a fit of rage and madness he snatched up a knife from the table and stabbed them both to death. He was hanged for the murders and buried in the prison graveyard.

"You'll end in Rozsa Sandor." The shout was a daily warning that we were growing older. Prisoners never realize how time is passing. To themselves they are always the age they were when they were sentenced. They dream of the young wives and sweethearts left behind, never the careworn women to whom they will return. Even the clock over the main gate at Gherla had stopped and never moved in the six years I was to spend there.

The Commandant was a fat, red-faced little Nero who never stopped eating. Prisoners brought before Major Dorabantu were startled when, in the middle of a tirade, he burrowed urgently in a drawer searching for something and emerged clasping a garlic-sausage roll or a banana. My first meeting with him was typical. I stood to attention listening to a meaningless hymn of hate. It seemed there were only two things Dorabantu really liked: food and the sound of his own voice.

"So, Wurmbrand," he cried. "A monk, eh."

I said that I was a pastor.

"Pastors, priests, monks—all the same. Grinding the faces of the poor to feather your own nests. I know." He waved his arms clownishly as he told a rambling story of his boyhood. He had kept his father's sheep near one of the richest monasteries in Rumania; when they strayed on to church lands the monks had thrashed him brutally.

"Ever seen a priest firing a double-barreled shotgun at a hungry child, Wurmbrand? A pretty holy picture."

Dorabantu also complained that he had been exploited as a factory worker in later life. So now he was making efficient use of his opportunity to pay back clergy and capitalists alike. The slightest breach of rules brought twenty-five strokes, with a doctor standing by—for men had died under the lash. Nearly everyone was given "twenty-five" for one reason or another, and the brutalizing effect of these floggings was noticeable on guards and prisoners alike. There were some ruthless characters in my cell: war criminals serving life sentences for massacring Jews or Russians, murderers and thieves who were nominally political prisoners, since robbing the state was called "economic sabotage." They were bitter, angry men, and all my attempts to offer religious consolation were shouted down. In particular, those who had killed Jews were very bitter toward me because I am a Jew by birth. I never hid this fact, and often, when I was questioned about it, I expressed the natural love I had for my nation, while I exercised every man's right to choose his faith. Whenever I began speaking quietly with a single man in a corner the others formed a menacing circle around us.

"We told you to be quiet," snarled the leader. I stood up and someone pushed me. Another put a leg out and I landed on my back. I felt a violent kick in the ribs. But as the pack fell on me, there was a shout of warning. A guard had seen the struggle and was calling for help. The crowd scattered. When the cell door opened, everyone was in his bunk.

Prowling the corridors, the Commandant had heard the story. Being the tallest man in the room, I'd been recognized

by the guard, but he could not identify my attackers in the semidarkness.

"Who did it, Wurmbrand?"

Nursing a cut lip, I said I couldn't tell him.

"Why not?"

"Because as a Christian I love and forgive my enemies, so I can't denounce them."

"You're an idiot," snapped Dorabantu.

"There you're right, of course. Anyone who isn't a Christian from the bottom of his heart is an idiot."

"What?" thundered the Commandant. "Are you calling me an idiot?"

"I didn't say that. I meant that I myself am not as good a Christian as I should be."

Dorabantu smote his forehead with the palm of his hand. "Take him away. Thirty strokes." And he waddled off, growling, "Crazy monks."

The flogging made my back feel as though it had been grilled in a furnace, and the shock to the nervous system left me shaking for days. When I returned to the cell the guards were still questioning prisoners. Since no information was forthcoming no one else was punished. After that, there were fewer interruptions when I tried to preach.

Prison quarrels usually flared up and died in a minute, but one argument followed me from cell to cell. Should the windows be open, so that we lay freezing in our bunks, or closed, so that one awoke with a headache? No parliament ever debated a topic so exhaustively. Those whose bunks were located at a distance from the two narrow slits in the outer wall said, "Fresh air harms nobody." The opposition party near the windows replied, "Millions die from pneumonia every day."

It reminded me of Lenin's axiom, "If powerful material interests dictate that two multiplied by two should be something other than four, then they will be." We often saw this proved in prison. The guards grew bored as we exercised. "The hour's up—everyone inside," they shouted. We complained, "We haven't had fifteen minutes yet." Both sides believed they were right; self-interest even dictated our sense of time.

Habitual criminals quickly settled in, almost as much at home here as outside. They had their routine, their order of precedence. They were wonderfully ingenious at smuggling scraps of food, had friendly nicknames for the guards and tried to cadge cigarettes from them. They monopolized most of the easy jobs earmarked for "trustees," leaving the dirty work to politicals and Christians. Their only quarrels were over creature comforts.

There was no lack of laughter in the cell. "Gladness," in the Acts of the Apostles, is called a witness for the existence of God; and without such a belief the presence of joy in prison is inexplicable. Some made a point of laughing at their own sufferings. Major Braileanu was one: a short, spry ex-officer with a boyish shock of hair, he brought an exciting new rumor to the cell. Another Summit conference was to take place that spring of 1959, between the Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko and Western delegates. It was said that it would convene on May 10. Under Braileanu's encouragement, prisoners adopted a new greeting; they held up all ten fingers to indicate the hoped-for day of their release.

On the day of the conference the guards did, in fact, open the cell door and ask for four men, Major Braileanu among them. We watched them enviously. But soon we heard the groans of men in agony coming from the small recess at the end of the passage where floggings were administered. There was no escaping the sound. Three men were beaten; but when the turn of the fourth came he did not utter a sound; all we heard were the twenty-five blows descending on his back. Braileanu followed the others back to the cell, pale and unable to speak. He pulled himself up. "Gentlemen," he said, "I give you our new salute!" He held up two fingers of his right hand, five of his left, to signal the ominous twenty-five.

Stories and riddles were told by the hour. Everyone had to contribute. Gaston Demeter, a pale, thirty-five-year-old Unitarian minister, told what he swore was a true story about the Commandant. Strolling down a line of convicts on parade, he asked each in turn the same question. "What is your crime?"

"I've done nothing, sir, and I've got ten years."

Dorabantu moved on. "And what is your crime?"

"Nothing, sir, and I've got twenty years."

"Lying swine," said Dorabantu indignantly. "Nobody in the People's Republic ever gets more than fifteen years for nothing."

But it was the petty thieves, living by their wits, who made the best storytellers. One named Florescu recounted a job he'd pulled in Bucharest, at a jeweler's located on a street lined with Jewish shops: Mr. Hercovici, courtliest of shopkeepers, welcomed an elegant couple to his premises. "Good morning," said the man, who was, of course, Florescu. "This is my fiancée, the sweetest girl in town." And one of the richest, too, according to their chatter. "We've come to choose the ring—emeralds, I think. Oh no, those are too small." From rings they proceeded to a jewel-faced watch for the bride's mother, an alligator dressing-case for her father, and then the girl interrupted—"Oh dear, we mustn't forget the bishop. He's my uncle, so he won't accept a fee for the marriage and you know what they say: a service not paid for is not acceptable to heaven." "But what does one give to a bishop?" At this moment their eyes turned to a showcase which held a complete set of gilded episcopal robes. "Just the thing," cried Florescu. "But, darling," said the girl, "we don't know if they'll fit him." Florescu looked the jeweler up and down. "Mr. Hercovici's just the bishop's build." And before the shopkeeper knew what was happening, the couple had draped him in a golden cassock, tied the belt around his waist and jammed a glittering miter on his head. "A perfect fit," said Florescu. "Just hold this scepter that goes with it."

With that, the couple swept the jewelry into the alligator case and ran from the shop. Hercovici was paralyzed with shock; then he followed, screaming, "Thieves! Stop them. Help." All the Jewish merchants ran to their doors and saw Hercovici galloping down an empty street in the full regalia of an Orthodox metropolitan. "Hercovici's gone mad," they shouted. Three of them brought him down and held him as he struggled and protested. "What are you doing? The thieves are escaping." So they did, up a side street, not to be seen again.

When the story was over and the laughter subsided, Gaston Demeter said, "But they caught you in the end, didn't they?"

Florescu looked annoyed; then he said, "Well, suppose you tell us why you're here, Mr. Demeter?"

"Why not?" said Gaston. "It's a funny story too, in its way. I was given seven years for retelling the story of the Holy Family's flight into Egypt. A spy in my congregation at Christmas denounced me for a seditious sermon. At my trial the prosecutor said I'd made a thinly veiled attack on the People's Republic. Herod, he told the court, massacred the children in the hope of killing the child Jesus, and I had compared Herod's court with the Communist Party. He also claimed that in mentioning Egypt I'd hinted that President Nasser would join the imperialist camp."

Everyone said it sounded like absolute nonsense, and Gaston agreed. "The real reason for getting rid of me I only learned later from an interrogator. 'What have I done wrong?' I asked. 'I help the workers, I've started a school and a cooperative, the church is always full.' The officer laughed. 'The kind of priest we want is in the next parish—a lecherous old drunkard whose church is always empty.' "

Later, Gaston Demeter told me more about his disillusionment. "I was strongly left-wing because of my poverty-stricken youth. More than once I was beaten for stealing. Once I raided a hencoop and the police had me paraded through our village with a notice reading 'Thief' around my neck. Later on, as a Unitarian minister I tried to work with the Communists, but I couldn't blind myself to their behavior. When one of our foreign members arrived with credentials from the World Alliance of Unitarian Churches I told him my complaints." The visitor's departure was followed by a wave of arrests among Unitarians: he was a fellow traveler who had reported the substance of all their confidential talks to the Secret Police.

Gaston's house was searched on his arrest. "A Secret Policeman found a copy of Adler's *Individual Psychology* on the bookshelf," he said. "And carried it off with a warning that my 'individualism' would count heavily against me. That was the end of my love affair with Communism."

Some months later, while I was scrubbing the floor of our huge cell, the guards brought in a new prisoner and ordered

him to help me. I was shocked to see my old friend, Professor Popp. His bright blue eyes were dull behind the glasses; he looked ill and old. We had not met since the early days of the 1956 amnesty, and I had lost sight of him altogether. No reply had come to my letters. Now, as we moved round the room with our bucket, Popp explained why.

"Prison was a challenge to me—it might have been better if I'd never been released. I was like a seabird that rose highest on my wings in the face of the wind; when it dropped, I fell. The struggle for life in our jail at Tirgul-Ocna was so real; everything mattered so intensely. But life outside seemed a fraud . . . I don't know what possessed me." Like many other prisoners he had plunged into a round of pleasure as soon as something resembling health returned. It was strange how men who had bravely endured terrible suffering experienced a moral collapse on their release.

Popp said: "I left my wife. Starving for a good time, I couldn't seem to stop myself. I wanted food, wine, women. I had such fear that life had passed me by, and I tried to win back a little time to prove that it wasn't over, that I could still take physical pleasure as I had in my youth. Then, inevitably, I ran short of money and was forced to lie and cheat."

When he came to an awkward pause I said I hoped he hadn't forgotten Christianity.

Popp laughed shortly as he wrung a dirty cloth into the bucket. "If only I'd come to you—but I was on the other side of the country and I wanted to clear my conscience. I went to the nearest pastor and told him everything, saying it was the aftermath of prison life and blaming Communism for destroying me as it's destroying the country. He asked for my address in order to keep in touch. Then he denounced me."

We had scrubbed our way to the end of the room and stood waiting for the approval of the room leader, a prisoner appointed by the guards to keep us up to scratch. As he walked over, I knew exactly what was coming. A kick overturned the bucket of dirty water on the floor. "Now you can start again," he said. When we had spent another hour scrubbing, he repeated the performance. Finally, he passed our work and the guard came to inspect it himself. Pointing to some dirt he'd

carried in on his own boots, he shouted, "Some job," and slapped the room leader's face. No sooner had the guard left the room than the "trustee" turned on us with blows and kicks.

Popp took the incident badly. I warned him this was routine practice in his new home. "As you know, there's no oppressor worse than the oppressed," I said. "It's all part of the system." To distract him from his own troubles I told him about Gaston's and introduced the two men over the midday meal. It was an unfortunate move. A look of shock passed over Gaston's face and Popp turned abruptly away. "We've met before," he said curtly. Gaston moved off without waiting his turn for some watery soup.

Popp and I spent the rest of the daylight hours cleaning the courtyard. This could be done to the Commandant's satisfaction only by scraping each separate brick with a triangle of glass: an illegal arrangement winked at by the guards. Popp told me he had been given another twelve-year sentence, a sentence he would never survive, since his tuberculosis had progressed rapidly. I tried to encourage him by talking of the life to come and he listened quietly; but something seemed to have burned out in him. The next day he replied to a guard's insults with a stream of pent-up abuse of the Party and all its works. A savage beating left him unconscious, and he was carried to the prison hospital. We heard he was dying and that, ironically, his "civil burial" had already taken place outside.

This barbaric practice had been introduced not long before. On the announcement of Popp's sentence, his family, friends and colleagues from the university were summoned together and his memory was publicly buried. The "mourners" were told: "This counterrevolutionary is dead forever, and for everyone. No one may visit him or his family, or help them in any way. No one may enter his home, or greet his children in the street until his crimes are purged." Popp's eldest daughter had led the denunciations; had she refused, she would have forfeited her job and been unable to keep her children. Popp's students and fellow teachers followed her example, heaping further slanders on his name.

The Professor's fate threw our corner of the cell into silent gloom. Archimandrite Miron offered prayers for the dead, and

Gaston sat on the edge of a bunk with his hands over his ears as if to keep the world out and his thoughts to himself. Sitting near him because I thought he should not be left to brood, I spoke to the others of eternal life and the thought seemed to ease them all. But Gaston wouldn't accept it. Getting up angrily, he said, "As a progressive and a Unitarian I cannot believe in survival after death."

I replied, "But I'm not talking to progressive Unitarians; I'm talking now to you. Must it always be, 'We Catholics,' 'We Jews,' 'We Rumanians?' Let's have the courage to be ourselves!"

Several more prisoners came over to join us, so I continued, "Personality is God's greatest gift to man, for only personality survives as the body annually changes its cells. The atoms of oxygen and hydrogen in my body are the same as anyone else's; indeed, the same as they are in tap water. My body's heat is the same as yours and differs only in degree from the heat of the stove: it can be measured by the same instruments. All my bodily forms of energy, chemical or electrical, are readily identified as the same as any other man's. Only my thoughts, my feelings, my will can be said to be my own. Spiritual energy is like a coin that bears the head of a king. How can you believe it will share the body's fate?"

Florescu, who had drawn up a stool, said provocatively, "The pastor's pulling our leg. I believe in what I can see, taste and feel. We're all matter like this piece of wood I'm sitting on and when you're dead it's all over."

Without warning, I kicked the stool from under him. It shot across the floor and left Florescu sprawling. He scrambled up furiously. "What's the idea?"

I replied mildly, "I haven't heard the stool complaining—and you said you were both the same matter and nothing more."

This time even Gaston smiled, and I went on, "I'm sorry, Florescu; I simply wished to demonstrate that since matter reacts neither with love nor hate, it is, after all, utterly different from us."

Florescu never sulked for long. Soon he was saying he might believe in another life, if the dead ever came back to talk to us.

"I'm sure that men have been in touch with the dead," I replied. "Great scientists from Newton to Oliver Lodge have be-

lieved in spiritualism. The Bible describes the evocation of the dead King Saul. Scriptures forbid it but say it is possible."

The row over Florescu's stool had brought others to listen, and I found myself launched on a sermon about life after death. It was no academic topic for us, but one of immediate, burning interest. We watched men die around us every day.

"If God had created us for this life alone," I said, "He would logically have given us first age with its wisdom, then youth with its vigor. To gather knowledge and understanding simply to take to the grave makes no sense at all. Have you heard Luther's comparison of our life on earth to the life of an unborn child? He says that if the embryo could reason in the womb, it would wonder why it grew hands and feet, and it would surely come to the conclusion that there must be another world to come—a world in which it would walk and run and play and work. In the same way as the embryo is preparing for a future state, so, too, are we."

I forgot the guards and raised my voice to reach the prisoners lying in their bunks. Eyes watched me in the dim light as I continued, "Suppose I told you that there was room in a pint bottle for ten pints of milk. You'd all laugh at me. How does it happen, then, that in a brain hardly bigger than my fist I have room for the daily things of life, the infinite and the eternal? How can I contain in my mind thoughts of an event like the Flood, which happened thousands of years ago, of my wife and son in the house where I left them, of God and of the Devil? The illimitable cannot be contained except by something which is itself without limits: in other words, the spirit. When your unfettered spirit can travel anywhere in time or space, do you believe it shares the mortal fate of this husk, the body?"

While I spoke of these things, there was a silence such as there never is in church. No one yawned or fidgeted. The prisoners in soiled clothes, their cheeks hollow, their eyes big with hunger, received the thought of survival after death as thirsty soil receives rain.

The next day before reveille I awoke to see the outline of a frail figure at the window. It was Gaston Demeter. Throwing a blanket over my shoulders, I joined him as he stared down through the bars. The light was ashen. Mist hung in the yard,

but we could make out a row of black objects by the main gate; coffins, containing the bodies of prisoners who had died during the last twenty-four hours. It was a daily scene at Gherla, and I asked myself why Gaston had chosen this day to rise and watch: then it came to me that one of the dead would be my old friend, Popp.

I tried to get Gaston back to his bed, but he wouldn't move. Under our eyes, a guard crossed the yard and raised the lids of the coffins, exposing the darker shadows within. Another man followed with a long, steel stake in his hand. He lifted it and went down the row, plunging the shaft into each corpse in turn.

The guards were making sure that no life remained. Gaston, beside me, winced each time the steel did its work. He was trembling, so I put the blanket around him, and he continued to watch while the coffins were closed and loaded on the truck that would take them to Rozsa Sandor.

"God rest their souls," I said. Gaston did not reply, and for days he remained silent. He rebuffed all attempts to break into his misery. In the evenings he would listen to others exchanging stories; once, stammering with the effort, he contributed one himself.

"It did not seem funny at the time. I entered a restaurant before my arrest, thinking it might raise my spirits to have a pleasant meal. So I hung my overcoat near a corner table by the stove and ordered my favorite dish with a bottle of good wine. Another customer nearby rose with a worried air to speak, but I waved him away, 'Not now, please. We all have our troubles but I should like to dine in peace.' After an excellent meal I felt sorry I had been so uncivil and invited my neighbor to tell me the trouble now. 'Too late,' he said. 'The stove's burned a hole in your overcoat.' "

The men laughed—Gaston's gloomy narrative style amused them more than the tale itself. As I climbed into my own bunk, next to him, I saw that his eyes were shut. At one period Gaston had spent hours telling us how he honored Christ as the greatest teacher, but not as God, and what the Unitarians accepted as true in the Bible and what not. Their reappraisal did not leave a man much to hold on to. They were not over-con-

cerned with eternal life, he said. But now he began to talk again about Professor Popp. What proof was there that anything remained after the ghastly scene we had watched together that dawn? A man, he said, needed four things to survive: food, warmth, sleep, a woman. "And the last can be dispensed with," he added. "My wife's gone to live with another man. Our two children are in a state home."

"You yourself don't believe this," I replied. "We live here at Gherla on the absolute minimum of them all. Yet every day you hear men laughing and singing. What makes them do it? Their bodies have nothing to sing about; something else sings in them. The Greeks called it *psyche,* the Egyptians *kaa,* the Hebrews *neshama.* We call it the soul, and if you don't believe we have souls, why do you worry so much about your children's upbringing? It will all be over for them in a few decades; indeed, what do any of us want with religion, morals, or decency?"

Gaston sighed. "I can't change now. My life has been smoldering away, like my coat in that restaurant, and people have tried to warn me, but now it's too late. I concealed a piece of glass after the last floor-scraping, intending to slash my wrists, but I lack even the courage for that."

I said, "Suicide proves nothing except that the soul is strong enough—and independent enough, too—to kill the body for its own reasons. Even if you were free and had all you wanted, you might seek the same way out. I understand how you must feel about your wife and children and your loss of freedom; but I sense something else eating into your peace of mind, something that gives you no rest."

Gaston was silent, so I continued: "I knew one prisoner who intentionally starved himself to death in order to give bread to his son who was in prison with him. That's how strong the soul can be in its mastery over the body. You, too, possess inner resources. You have your own form of Christianity to help you. Speak to Jesus: He will give you comfort and strength to carry on."

Gaston said in the darkness, "You make it sound as though He were here with us, alive."

"Certainly He's alive," I said. "Haven't you heard about the

Resurrection? Then tomorrow we'll start the others talking about it and I'll prove it to you."

"How you persist," he said. "Worse than a Communist."

"Better than a Communist," I replied, and was rewarded with the first smile I had seen on his face since the Professor's death.

When the prisoners were talking the next evening, I reminded them that Easter was approaching—my second in Gherla. "If we had any hard-boiled eggs we'd dye them red and crack them together, following the Orthodox custom," I said. I held out my hand as if offering an Easter egg and said, "Christ is risen."

At once old Vasilescu, one of the farmers, cracked my fist with his own and called back, "He is risen indeed." A chorus of voices echoed the traditional response.

Gaston, beside me, murmured, "Some find faith easy."

"Let's look into it, then," I said. Turning to the rest of the group, I said, "We know that Christ died on the Cross, but what proof have you that He rose again?"

There was a pained silence. Vasilescu tugged at his heavy moustache. "I'm a simple farmer and don't read books, but I believe it because I see how nature is resurrected every year. When the snow's on the ground, it's hard to think that the fields will flourish in the spring. But the trees bud and the air grows warm, as it did last year, and the year before, and the year before that. If the world can come alive again, so can our Saviour."

"A sound answer," said the Archimandrite.

Gaston insisted skeptically. "Nowadays, in a world where every assertion is challenged, we need something more specific."

"I agree," I said. "We need the strongest proofs, and they exist. Mommsen, the great German historian of the Roman Empire, calls the Resurrection the best-proved fact in all his annals."

I asked Major Braileanu, "When you served on courts-martial, did you take into account a witness' character as well a his words?"

"Of course," he replied. "Often it was decisive in a case of conflicting evidence."

"So you would make some allowance for the character of the classical historians: courtiers, as a rule, the flatterers of kings, who praised for profit or to please their patrons. How much more then should we believe the Apostles, who spent their time doing good: Peter, Paul, Matthew, Andrew—men who died martyrs' deaths to spread the truth."

Gaston persisted, "It's miracles, like the feeding of the five thousand with five fishes. These are the things that tax my belief."

"What do you call a miracle?" I asked. "Mission workers from Africa say they are at first received as miracle-workers; the primitive tribesman is astounded to see a match struck. Pearl Buck, the writer, told women in a remote part of China that in her own country carriages moved without horses. 'What a liar,' they whispered. So a miracle is simply something a superior creature can do, and Jesus was a being of exceptional powers."

Gaston shook his head. "An unlettered tribesman may accept an idea that a rationalist can't swallow."

I said, "It's far more rational to believe that Christ rose from the dead than to suppose that the church, which has survived the external assaults and inner corruptions of two thousand years, is built on a deliberate lie. Only consider that Jesus, in His lifetime, organized no church, wrote no books, made no plans for the future. He had only a handful of poor disciples; one of these betrayed Him for money, while the rest fled or denied Him when the test came. He died on the Cross, crying 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' And His tomb was sealed with a huge stone."

"Not a hopeful start," Gaston admitted.

"Then how do you explain that it led to a world religion?"

"The disciples came together again," said Gaston doubtfully.

"But what gave them the power to preach and to die for their faith?"

"They overcame their fear in time, I suppose."

"Yes, and they tell us how they mastered it: on the third day Christ appeared in person and gave them courage. Peter, who'd been frightened by a housemaid, stood in Jerusalem and de-

clared that he and his brethren had seen and spoken with Christ; that He had risen indeed. Peter said they might kill him before he denied it again. So they did."

Was it "rational" to believe, I asked, that Peter and the disciples went to be crucified for a lie? Peter gave his first sermon about the Resurrection five hundred yards from the empty tomb. He knew that the facts could not be contradicted; certainly no one among Christ's enemies attempted to do so. "Why was Saul of Tarsus so easily converted by the vision of Christ reproaching him on the road to Damascus? Saul, who'd been the scourge of Christianity?"

"It may have been an auditory and visual hallucination," said Braileanu.

"No. Paul knew all about such phenomena. An apparition is no argument to a man like him. He yielded so quickly and lived up to his new beliefs so completely because, as a member of the Sanhedrin, he knew the great secret—that the tomb was empty."

Archimandrite Miron was sewing a patch on his shirt as we talked. He raised his intense, luminous eyes to Gaston and said, "Years ago, I had a postcard from a brother in New York, who'd been to the top of the Empire State Building. He didn't investigate the foundations first. The fact that it has stood there for forty years was sufficient proof that the base is sound. The same with the church, which has rested for two thousand years on the truth."

Our discussions had an effect on Gaston Demeter. Gradually, his pain was eased and his faith deepened. As the weeks passed, his death-wish faded, but I felt that he still carried the burden of some unconfessed sin. Then the summer brought a fresh influx of prisoners. We were moved into different cells, and for a year I lost sight of him.

Months went by, and I preached and worked in a dozen cells of Gherla. I was often punished, and it was because of a beating that I met Gaston again. I was playing chess with a friend, using pieces made of bread, when Commandant Dorabantu burst in: he still prowled the corridors, making trouble

wherever he could. "I'll have no gambling in my prison!" he shouted.

I suggested that chess was a game of skill, not of chance.

Dorabantu was furious. "Ridiculous. It's merely a question of chance to have the skill."

Pleased with his answer, he strutted away. When he had disappeared, the prisoners began to mimic him. The door crashed open again. Major Dorabantu had been eavesdropping behind it.

"Wurmbrand—out you come." Five others were ordered out along with me. "You'll laugh on the other sides of your faces this time."

We received twenty-five strokes each, and afterward I was transferred to an isolation cell where men who collapsed were taken to recover. There, alone on a bunk, lying facedown, I found Gaston Demeter. He had been terribly beaten. A mass of bloody wounds covered his back. I tried to ease the pain with applications of a shirt soaked in water, and when the worst had passed, I examined the raw flesh for splinters of rope. His body shook feverishly. At first he couldn't speak. But slowly, in broken phrases, he explained that he'd been punished for preaching. A prisoner he trusted had informed on him.

"I deserve it," he said. "I want to tell you something . . ."

I said, "You mustn't talk."

"I must. Now or never. It's about Professor Popp. The pastor who betrayed him . . ." He stopped, his lips trembling.

"You needn't tell me," I began.

"Yes, it was me. I couldn't stand up to the pressure. It was a crime, but I've paid for it. When he died . . ." He began to sob.

We prayed together. Gaston said the Professor had never forgiven him; how could he forgive himself?

I said that Popp would have understood if he had known everything. "Christ has atoned for this sin, too."

Gaston shook his head sadly, so I continued: "Let me tell you about a man who was far worse than you. It will help us to pass the night. He was, in effect, the murderer of my wife's family. She forgave him, and he became one of our closest friends.

I can say today that there are only two men my wife kisses—her husband, and the man who murdered her family."

When Rumania entered the war on Germany's side, a pogrom began in which many thousands of Jews were deported or killed. In Iasí alone, 11,000 Jews died in a single day. My wife, of Jewish origin, is a Protestant deaconess and during the war we lived in Bucharest, from which the Jews were not deported. We learned that her parents, her brother, three sisters and other relatives had all been taken to the border province of Transmistria, which had been captured from the Russians. Those Jews who were not massacred by the journey's end were simply left to starve, and Sabina's family was wiped out.

I had to break the news to her. After a while she brushed away the tears and said, "I won't weep anymore. You are entitled to a happy wife, Mihai to a happy mother, our church to a servant with courage." If she shed tears in private I do not know, but from that day I never saw Sabina weep again.

Some time later, our landlord, a good Christian, told me sadly of a man who was staying in the house while on leave from the front. "I knew him before the war," he said, "but something has turned him into a beast. He talks of nothing except how he volunteered to exterminate Jews in Transmistria and even boasts of killing babies in their parents' arms. What can we do?" I was deeply distressed and decided to pass the night in prayer. To avoid disturbing Sabina, who was unwell and would have wished to join in my vigil in spite of that, I went upstairs after supper to the landlord's apartment to pray with him. Lounging in an armchair was a giant of a man whom the landlord introduced as Borila, the killer of Jews from Transmistria. When he rose he was even taller than I, and there seemed to be about him an aura of horror that was like the smell of blood. Soon he was telling us of his adventures in the war and of the Jews he had slaughtered.

"It is a frightening story," I said, "but I do not fear for the Jews—God will compensate them for what they have suffered. I ask myself with anguish what will happen to the murderers when they stand before God's judgment."

An ugly scene was prevented by the landlord who said that we were both guests in his house, and turned the talk into neu-

tral channels. Oddly, the murderer proved to be a pleasant talker, and eventually it came out that he had a great love of music.

He mentioned that while serving in the Ukraine he had been captivated by the local folk songs. "I wish I could hear them again," he said.

I knew some of these old songs. I thought to myself, looking at Borila, "the fish has entered my net!"

"If you'd like to hear some of them," I told him, "come to my flat—I'm no pianist, but I can play a few Ukrainian melodies."

The landlord, his wife and daughter accompanied us. My wife was in bed. She was used to my playing softly at night and did not wake up. I played the folk songs, alive with feeling, and I could see that Borila was deeply moved. I remembered how, when King Saul was afflicted by an evil spirit, the boy David had played the harp before him.

I stopped and turned to Borila. "I've something very important to say to you," I told him.

"Please speak," he said.

"If you look through that curtain you can see someone is asleep in the next room. It's my wife, Sabina. Her parents, her sisters and her twelve-year-old brother have been killed with the rest of the family. You told me that you had killed hundreds of Jews near Golta, and that is where they were taken." Looking into his eyes, I added, "You yourself don't know who you have shot, so we can assume that you are the murderer of her family."

He jumped up, his eyes blazing, looking as if he were about to strangle me.

I held up my hand and said, "Now—let's try an experiment. I shall wake my wife and tell her who you are, and what you have done. I can tell you what will happen. My wife will not speak one word of reproach! Instead, she'll embrace you and offer you supper, the best things she has in the house.

"Now, if Sabina, who is a sinner like us all, can forgive and love like this, imagine how Jesus, who is perfect Love, can forgive and love you. Only return to Him—and everything you have done will be forgiven."

Borila was not heartless: within, he was consumed by guilt and misery at what he had done, and he had shaken his brutal talk at us as a crab its claws. One tap at his weak spot, and his defenses were down. The music had already moved his heart, and now came—instead of the attack he expected—words of forgiveness. His reaction was amazing. He jumped up and tore at his collar with both hands, as though suffocating. "Oh God, what shall I do, what shall I do?" he cried. He put his head in his hands and sobbed noisily as he rocked himself back and forth. "I'm a murderer, I'm soaked in blood, what shall I do?" Tears ran down his cheeks.

I cried, "In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, I command the devil of hatred to go out of your soul!"

Borila fell on his knees trembling, and we began to pray aloud. He knew no prayers; he simply asked again and again for forgiveness and said that he hoped and knew it would be granted. We were on our knees together for some time; then we stood up and embraced each other, and I said, "I promised to make an experiment. I shall keep my word."

I went into the other room and found my wife still sleeping calmly. She was very weak and exhausted at that time. I woke her gently and said, "There is a man here whom you must meet. We believe he has murdered your family, but he has repented, and now he is our brother."

She came out in her dressing-gown and put out her arms to embrace him; then both began to weep and to kiss each other again and again. I have never seen bride and bridegroom kiss with such love and passion and purity as this murderer and the survivor among his victims. Then, as I had predicted, Sabina went to the kitchen to bring him food.

While she was away the thought came to me that Borila's crime had been so terrible that some further lesson was needed. I went to the next room and returned with my son, Mihai, who was then two, asleep in my arms. It was only a few hours since Borila had boasted to us how he had killed Jewish children in their parents' arms, and now he was horrified; the sight was an unbearable reproach. He expected me to accuse him. But I said, "Do you see how quietly he sleeps in his father's arms? You are also like a newborn child. The heavenly Father

cares for you. The blood of Jesus Christ shed for you has cleansed your past."

Borila's happiness was moving: he stayed with us that night, and when he awoke in the morning, he said, "It's a long time since I slept like that."

St. Augustine says, *"Anima humana naturaliter Christiana est"*—the human soul is naturally Christian. Crime is against a man's own nature, the result of social pressure or environment, and what a relief it is to cast it off as he had done.

That morning Borila wanted to meet our Jewish friends and I took him to the homes of many converted Jews. Everywhere he told his story, and he was received as the returning prodigal son. Then, with a New Testament which I gave him, he went to join his regiment in another town.

Borila later came to say that his unit had been ordered to the front. "What shall I do?" he asked. "I'll have to start killing again."

I said, "No, you've killed more than a soldier needs to already. I don't mean that a Christian shouldn't defend his country if it is attacked. But you, personally, shouldn't kill anymore —better allow others to kill you. The Bible doesn't forbid that."

As I told this story, Gaston grew quieter. At the end, he smiled and reached out for my hand. In the morning we were moved back into another cell together, and among the occupants I found Grigore, another war criminal responsible for massacring Jews who had now repented.

I told Gaston Demeter, "Grigore can tell you the epilogue to Borila's story."

Grigore explained that he had served with Borila in Transmistria and taken part in the atrocities. "When we went to Russia later, he was a changed man," he said. "We couldn't understand it. He refused to bear weapons; instead of taking lives, he saved them. He volunteered to rescue the wounded under fire, and in the end he saved his own officer."

Gaston, too, was saved. From that day on, he knew what Christianity means.

The months turned into years: two had gone by; the faces came and went and all else remained the same. Prison made

saints of some men, brutes of others, and it was not always easy to predict who would be saint, and who end as brute; but one thing was sure—that the majority of prisoners would go on living as though in a vacuum. Hour after weary hour they lay idle on their bunks; talk became their entire life. I wondered what would happen if science should ever make work unnecessary. There is a limit to innovation in fantasizing about sex, food and power, and so many have nothing else in mind.

As my third year in Gherla progressed, conditions improved a little. Thanks to official indifference, we gained a bit more freedom of speech and a few mouthfuls more of food. And though we suspected that conditions outside must be changing again, we did not know how, nor that the greatest trial lay ahead.

Chapter Eight

ON a morning of March, 1962, the guards burst into the cells shouting, "All priests outside." The others gathered their few belongings and filed dutifully into the corridors. I did not move.

We had a new commandant, a martinet named Alexandrescu, and the regime was growing harsher: this move, whatever its purpose, meant more trouble, and I wanted to work and preach without fresh hindrance. It turned out that the entire jail was being divided according to classes: "intellectuals" in one cell, peasants in another, military men in a third, and so on. Overcrowding and the ignorance of the guards led to considerable confusion. A member of a sect called Students of the Bible was placed in a cell of writers and professors; he was an ignorant laborer, but to the officials, all "students" were intellectuals.

When the clergy had departed, a guard asked me my profession. "A pastor," I replied in a soft, country accent. So I was placed in a cell with shepherds and farm hands. "Pastor" is the familiar word for a shepherd in Rumanian.

I escaped segregation for a few weeks, until an informer betrayed me, and I was taken, after a beating, to the cell assigned

to priests. It was to be my home for the rest of my stay in Gherla—cavernous, with walls of dirty, gray cement. Dim light filtered through the two narrow dirty windows. Bunks were closely packed in tiers four high. The only other furniture consisted of a few low benches, and a table. The prisoners, mostly clergymen but also a group of other Christian believers, numbered about a hundred. There was always a waiting line to use the lavatory bucket.

As I entered, a deep voice cried, "Welcome, welcome." It was old Bishop Mirza, a member of the Orthodox faith and a man of great goodness. His rusty black pullover was full of holes. He had sad, gentle eyes and an aureole of white hair. Heads were raised, and I greeted men I knew—including Archimandrite Miron, who had a bunk above the Bishop and Gaston.

That evening, in the hour which the priests' room had set aside for prayer, Catholics collected in one corner, the Orthodox occupied another, the Unitarians a third. The Jehovah's Witnesses had a nest on the upper bunks; the Calvinists had settled down below. Twice a day, our various services were held: but among all these ardent worshippers I could scarcely find two men of different sects to say an "Our Father" together.

Far from fostering understanding, our common plight made for conflict. Catholics could not forgive the Orthodox hierarchy for collaborating with Communism. Disputes arose over every possible point of doctrine. And while discussion was normally conducted with genteel malice, learned in seminaries on wet Sunday afternoons, tempers sometimes flared.

When mass was celebrated a few feet from his bunk day after day, the evangelical pastor Haupt murmured some words of Martin Luther.

"What's that?" one of the Catholics demanded.

Haupt raised his voice obligingly, repeating the words of Luther: "All the brothels which God condemns, all murders, thefts, adulteries do not make so much harm as the abomination of the Papal mass."

After the service had broken up in outraged protest, one of the Catholics, Father Fazekas, said: "*Dear* brother, have you

not heard the saying, 'Mankind has suffered three great catastrophes—the fall of Lucifer, and of Adam, and the revolt of Martin Luther?' "

Father Andricu, an Orthodox priest, joined in the counterattack: "Luther and Lucifer," he put in, "are one and the same." So Catholic and Orthodox followers became temporary allies. But nightfall found them squabbling over Papal supremacy.

Fazekas was of Hungarian origin, and this was held against him even by his fellow Catholics. When he prayed aloud to the Virgin Mary as "patron of Hungary," general displeasure was shown.

"Isn't the Blessed Virgin Rumania's patron, too?" asked a patriotic Orthodox priest.

"Certainly not, she is Hungary's patron."

Gaston ironically wondered if the Virgin were not patron of Palestine, since it seemed treacherous to leave the country of her birth to become patron of another.

"Perhaps you haven't heard that the Jews murdered her son?" said Fazekas, his voice rising half an octave.

Bishop Mirza, smiling gently, tried to calm everyone down. "The Virgin is not bound to any one country," he said. "She leads the church, she is Queen of Heaven, she moves the planets and heads the choirs of angels."

"It seems that God must be unemployed, then," I snapped.

Other Protestants supported me. "Why should I venerate Jesus' mother like this?" said one. "She cannot save."

Fazekas replied, "Poor man. Do you venerate only those who will save you? The mother of the Lord sings in the Magnificat, 'All generations will call me blessed.' They do so because she was Jesus' mother, not because she distributes favors."

It was a good answer, yet, much as I honor the Virgin Mary, I believe her role has been exaggerated by her following, and that this distortion began in ancient times. When Christians first imagined paradise they had visions of an Oriental court: a place of luxury, music and sweet perfumes. A man requiring a favor from the sultan found a friend who said a word to a vizier, who might pass it on to the sultan's favorite wife, and she to her husband. It created the idea of a spiritual hierarchy, in which

simple men put their requests to priests, priests to the saints, the saints to the Virgin. The bedrock of my faith is that a man may speak directly to God, but there are times when argument only encourages anger. I told the story of two martyrs of different confessions who were sent together to the stake. They were asked if they had a last wish before the fire was lit. Both said, "Yes. Tie us back to back so that I don't have to see that damned heretic as I die."

Sometimes I too could not hide my feelings. For hours I listened to Father Ranghet, a Dominican in the bunk below, telling his beads.

At last I said, "Why do you have to appeal a thousand times a day to the Virgin? Is she deaf, or indifferent? When I ask someone here for a favor he grants it if he can; but I don't go on asking, if he doesn't."

Ranghet was cross. "Since you Lutherans have no belief in the infallibility of the Holy Father, you have still less cause to believe in your own," he said. "What's wrong in your impaired sight is right in mine." And he went back to repeating "Hail, Mary . . ." even louder than before.

"You speak often of the 'Holy Father'—do you mean God?" I asked.

"I mean His Holiness the Pope," he answered.

"To me it seems blasphemy to use divine titles for a human being," I replied. "You call him Christ's Vicar on earth, which means his substitute, but I cannot accept such a substitute, any more than I could allow my wife to have a substitute for me."

"You go too far," he cried.

And I had thought it was he who went too far. Only that day Father Ranghet had said that all the sacrifices, of life, of liberty, offered by all men, were as nothing compared with the offering he made at the altar when he sacrificed the Son of God. I could not accept that a priest made God from a piece of bread, or that there was any need for such a thing. I could not believe that my eternal destiny depended on absolution from a man who might not be too sure of heaven himself.

I looked for topics on which we could agree. When Pastor Weingartner, a modernist Protestant, took issue with Catholics on the Virgin Birth, I felt bound to take their side.

Weingartner said he could not accept such a scientific improbability.

I replied, "It's too late to make a historical inquiry into the Virgin Birth, but it's also too early to dismiss it as scientifically impossible. An American biologist named Loeb has already produced a birth without male seed in the infra-organisms. What a biologist can do for a small being surely God could do for man?"

"But the history of religion is crowded with virgin births," said Weingartner. "It can only be a myth."

I answered by telling the story of a famous rabbi who lived in the Ukraine in Czarist times, and was once called upon to give evidence in defense of a follower. Rabbi Hofez Haim's obvious spirituality impressed the court, but the old man refused to take the oath; he was unwilling, he said, to involve God's name in his evidence. The prosecution protested, "We must have a guarantee that he is telling the truth."

The defense lawyer rose. "Your Honor," he said, "may I mention something that will prove the character of my witness and show that we can accept his evidence, even if, for religious reasons, he cannot be put on oath? Rabbi Hofez Haim often goes from shop to shop collecting money for the poor. One day a thief knocked him down and snatched the purse containing the collection. The rabbi was upset, not so much at the loss of the money, which he instantly decided to replace from his own small savings at home, but at the harm done to the thief's soul. He ran after him calling, 'You have no guilt before God, it is my money and I give it to you freely. The money for the poor is safe at my house. Spend what you have taken with a clear conscience.' "

The judge gazed sternly at the lawyer. "Do you believe this story?" he asked.

"No, I don't."

"Then why tell us stories you don't believe?"

"Your Honor, has such a story ever been told of you, or me or my friend the prosecutor? They say instead (of course it's quite untrue) that we are too fond of women, or drink, or gambling. What a saint this man must be to have such legends woven around his name."

Weingartner said, "Very amusing; but I don't know if the story about the Rabbi was true, and I cannot believe the story of the Virgin Birth is, either."

"Christians believe the word of God," I said. "But even if it were a myth, as you call it, don't scoff. Myths have a profound place in human thought. They are often the measure of a man's greatness."

"You mean that people must have thought Jesus very great to believe that He was not born like other men?" he said.

"When my own son was very young, he asked me how Jesus was born," I said. "So I told him again the story of the manger. 'No,' he objected. 'That's not what I want to know. Sometimes people say, "What's born of a cat eats mice" and if Jesus had been born like us, He would have been bad like us.' "

Bishop Mirza had been listening to us. "A child spoke like that," he said.

"You have a point," admitted Pastor Weingartner. "We must try harder to understand each other's views."

I said, "I confess that I would have accepted Christianity in another form than Lutheranism, if it had been so presented to me at the time of my conversion. What matters is respect for the Scriptures as the only rule, and salvation by faith in Jesus. The names and rituals don't count."

The next morning a very pleasing thing happened. Bishop Mirza said, "I thought in the night of the Lord's Prayer, which tells us to say, 'Our Father which art in heaven . . . forgive our trespasses.' Jesus did not tell us to confess to a priest, or receive absolution from him; he told us to pray for it to the Father. Of course, the question is not a simple one, but if I were a Protestant, I should use this argument. So I thought that in friendship I would make you a present of it in exchange for your defense of the Virgin Mary."

The Bishop set us all an example. If we failed to live in peace together we fell into the trap the Communists had laid: by locking us up together, they deprived the other prisoners of spiritual guidance, while we weakened our own cause with quarrels. But what else, I wondered, did they have in mind? Electricians had been working in the prison for some time,

and loudspeakers had been installed in many cells, one to each wall. So we were to have broadcasts.

Gaston said, "It won't be light music."

When the entire prison had been divided into classes, a lecture series began. It seemed ridiculous. A brash, young political officer would explain that an eclipse of the sun was about to occur, assuring us that there was no cause for alarm since Socialist science had freed us from superstition. He proceeded to explain the workings of a solar eclipse to a yawning audience of dons and doctors. The event was to take place on February 15, and since it was the duty of the People's Republic to broaden our views, we would be allowed to watch it from the courtyard.

Weingartner's hand went up. "Please, if it rains, can we have the eclipse in the hall instead?"

No, said the lecturer seriously, and began his explanation again from the start.

The indoctrination lectures lasted for hours. The same points were driven home relentlessly. At the end of the day, exhausted and ill-tempered, we were left to our own disputes.

These were often begun by Father Andricu, to whom Luther and Lucifer were one. His extremism had swung him between a crusade against the Russians during the war to championship of Communist ideas after they had triumphed. He had traveled the country preaching in favor of the Party, until his former comrades decided that "the Red Priest" had outlived his usefulness, arrested him, and had him sentenced to ten years for his wartime activities. Now he was an all-too-vociferous champion of the Orthodox faith.

Once I asked: "When you were baptized, Father Andricu, was it in the Orthodox church?"

"Of course. By a bishop," he answered.

"And you studied religious doctrine in an Orthodox school?"

"The finest in Rumania."

"Then you won't be upset if I give you the one logical reason why you're an Orthodox believer? It is that fifty years ago a Rumanian Orthodox man copulated with a Rumanian Orthodox woman."

Andricu was furious. To soothe his feelings I said that this was true for most of us. We are molded in our earliest youth and taught only the arguments that support our parents' religion. Yet we are convinced that we have thought it all out for ourselves.

Andricu protested. "I may be a simple priest, but I have studied other faiths besides my own."

I said that we had all done that, but from a viewpoint that is ours by accident of birth. Turning to a group of Protestants nearby, I asked at random, "How many of you know the ninety-five theses that Luther nailed on the church door at Wittenberg?"

They all did. Pastor Haupt quoted Luther's words, "Here I stand; I can do no other."

I asked if the Protestants could also remember the reasons for Luther's excommunication contained in the Papal Bull. "Leo X was no madman," I said. "We ought to know his reasons." But not one of them had read that great historical letter.

Father Andricu was by now arguing with a rabbi who had asked, "Are you by any chance acquainted with our Talmud?"

Andricu retorted: "Have *you* looked into our New Testament?"

The answer in each case was obvious.

To avert another clash, I asked the company, "Do you know Tolstoi's story of the time he explained his faith point by point to a rabbi: meekness, humility, patience. 'We don't need the New Testament for these virtues; we try to practice them, too,' said the rabbi. At last, Tolstoi said, 'Jesus has taught us one thing which the Jewish religion does not. He tells us to love our enemies.' 'This we do not practice,' said the rabbi. 'But, neither do you Christians.' "

As the prison lectures continued I saw that, although they were ridiculous in themselves, the intention behind them was clever. Soon the speakers put politics aside and made a direct appeal to the pleasure-seeking, irresponsible part of every man —the part Freudians call the id. They reminded prisoners of all they were missing in the world. They talked of food, drink and sex, clearly finding these subjects easier to handle than Marxist dialectic, although that was not forgotten.

One early talk introduced us again to Darwin and the apes. A young political officer mispronounced his way through a Party brief on the theory of evolution and, with mangled quotations from Marx, Lenin and Darwin, progressed by way of the alleged conflict between Christianity and science to its sad consequences in America, where millions were starving.

At first, we were encouraged to argue, and when a lecturer said that only a handful of chemicals remained of the body after death, I asked why, if that were so, Communists were ready to give their lives for their beliefs. "For a Christian to sacrifice himself, is, you might say, ultimately a good bargain. To give up the transitory things of life to win eternity is like a man laying down ten dollars to win a million. But why should a Communist give his life—unless he, too, has something to gain for himself?"

The political officer could find no reply. So I suggested that the answer had been given by St. Augustine when he said the soul is naturally Christian. "Atheism is a mask for your feelings. In the depths of your heart—which is never reached unless a man practices meditation or prayer—you, too, believe there is a reward for living up to ideals. Deep in your heart you also believe in God."

"Let us see what Comrade Lenin has to say about that," said the lecturer, and from a well thumbed booklet, which had often inspired him before, he read, "even flirting with the idea of God is unutterable vileness, contagion of the most abominable kind. Filthy deeds, acts of violence and physical contagions are far less dangerous."

He grinned. "Any questions?"

"Have you a child?" I asked.

"I have a daughter in the Young Pioneers."

"And would you prefer that she be stricken by a horrible disease rather than come to believe in her Creator? That is what Lenin says; that cancer is better than religion."

The political officer called me up and slapped my face. That was his only answer.

Under this onslaught of indoctrination, a blow seemed a modest price to pay for defending one's beliefs. But an unknown menace hung in the air. We had the sense of being con-

stantly spied on. What lay ahead? What were the loudspeakers for?

Until recently, we had been starved, beaten, abused, but no one had cared what we thought. The old Commandant, Dorabantu—removed, we learned through the guards, for falsifying accounts—used to say, "We don't care what future Cabinets you bandits may be planning in your cells, so long as we have the government in Bucharest."

The lectures showed how this attitude had changed, following the new policy of Gheorghiu-Dej, Rumania's dictator, who was trying to ease the Kremlin's grip and do business with the West. For this, Dej had to present a more "democratic" facade. The army of political prisoners held in Rumania was an embarrassment to him, yet we could not simply be set free to spread "counterrevolutionary" beliefs. Our ways of thought were to be altered by mass brainwashing.

To prisoners in Gherla in 1962, this was one theory among many, and few believed it. There was uncertainty about what actually happened in brainwashing. Feelings were summed up by Radu Ghinda, a well known author and Christian writer, who had recently joined us: "If they haven't changed me with all I've suffered in the last fifteen years, how will they do so now?"

We were talking this over when the cell door opened to admit more new arrivals. Among them was a large, bald man who took a few halting steps from side to side, as if to escape the staring prisoners.

"Daianu," gasped Radu Ghinda.

Nichifor Daianu had been a great figure in Rumania. Poet-Professor of Mystical Theology at a university, leader of the anti-Semitic National Christian Defense League, Minister of Propaganda in the wartime government, he had been at the height of his power under the Fascists and now he was serving twenty-five years. He had come to Gherla from Aiud jail.

At first I hardly recognized Daianu. His great belly had vanished. The skin beneath his chin hung in wattles like a turkey's. The *bon viveur* and lady-killer had become a trembling, spidery old man.

His fellow prisoners told us what had happened at Aiud.

Daianu, who had always been a heavy eater, had tried to get a second helping of barley gruel from the cooks. The prison governor had him turned away. On the following day the governor was there again. "Stop," he said. "That man is too fat. Let him wait until tomorrow." The next day, as Daianu's turn came, the governor said, "Tell me, Daianu, is there a God?" The cook held the ladle suspended. Daianu mumbled something. "Speak up, let us all hear." Daianu said, "There is no God." "Louder," said the governor. "There's no God," shouted Daianu. The governor motioned for him to be served. Daianu gulped the gruel. This spectacle so amused the governor that he had it repeated every day for the next week. The story was told all over Rumania, and later abroad as well.

But Daianu's gift for writing religious poetry remained. Friends from his Fascist days encouraged him to recite some of the verses he had composed in Aiud. They were songs of grief and repentance more beautiful than any he had yet written. He had retained, too, his anti-Semitism, like his friend Radu Ghinda. Their disciples among ex-Iron Guard prisoners smuggled scraps of food and even cigarettes for them in the priests' room. Anti-Semitism dies hard, and Daianu and Ghinda were martyrs to the cause.

When theories about brainwashing were being discussed one evening, Ghinda scoffed, "Pavlov played tricks with the behavior patterns of dogs, and the Communists in Korea adapted some of his ideas to make American prisoners change sides, but these methods won't work on people of education and intelligence. We're not GI's."

"Nor dogs," said Daianu.

No one disagreed.

Pastor Weingartner told us of a simple personality test he had learned while studying psychology: you drew a line down the center of a card, then asked people to make of it the first thing that came into their heads. We used a soaped board and a nail.

One man drew a sword, another a helmet, others a flower, a crucifix, a book, a geometric figure. I said, "I need another board; this is too small for what I have to draw."

Not one in ten of us revealed in our drawings the touch of mysticism which is at the heart of a priestly nature.

Weingartner laughed. "No wonder they wouldn't let me try it at the seminary. Perhaps we should all learn to make shoes, for it's the shoemaker among us who seems to have the most spiritual character."

He referred to Gelu, an old sectarian believer who had a great knowledge of the Bible. This seemed to irritate Daianu.

"My dear man," he said, "if you tell us about shoes and how to mend them, well and good. But you are among men here who possess theological degrees from the great universities of Europe and need no Bible classes."

"You're right, Professor," replied Gelu. "It's I who need instruction. Could you tell me what the Old Testament book of Habbakuk is about?"

"A very minor prophet," said Daianu. "Don't worry your head about him."

"Well then, the Book of Obadiah?"

Obadiah was another prophet whom shoemakers did not need to know.

"Perhaps you can tell me about Haggai?"

Daianu could not. There was not a theologian in the room who could muster three sentences on the subject. Gelu astonished us by quoting whole chapters of these prophets by heart. The clergy had studied books about the Bible rather than the Holy Scriptures themselves. They were grounded in dogma and dialectic, but they knew next to nothing of the Communist ideology that was working to destroy them.

During 1963 we had news of Pope John's appeal for a reconciliation between the "separated brethren" and soon we were quarreling over how unity might be achieved.

"We fight over the kingdom of heaven, which none of us have," I said. "If we possessed it, we should not quarrel. Those who truly love Christ must love one another. Like so many blindmen whom Jesus has healed, we discuss how our sight was restored. One says, 'It was done by the power of faith.' Another, 'He touched my eyes.' A third, 'He rubbed clay mixed with spittle on my eyelids.' If Jesus came among us, he would say,

'I have made you whole in different ways. Now you should not quarrel, but rejoice.' "

Goethe says that "color is the pain of light": passing through a prism, light is torn to pieces. I saw our division as a pain borne by Christ. Men divide in their search for truth.

The loudspeakers on the wall crackled into life. Then, in the sugary tones of a radio announcer plugging a famous product, came the words: *Communism is good. Communism is good. Communism is good.* A pause. More crackling. The voice returned with increased volume, resonance and authority:

Communism is good.
Communism is good.
Communism is good.
Communism is good.

All night and well into the next day it continued—a total of sixteen hours. Soon we were only intermittently conscious of the tape-recorded words, but still they penetrated our minds, and when at last the voice stopped, switched off at a control center somewhere in the prison, the words rang in my head: *Communism is good. Communism is good. Communism is good.*

Weingartner said this was the first stage in a long process. "Our rulers have learned it from the Russians and the Russians from Peking. Next it will be public confession. Under Mao Tse-tung, the Chinese must attend lectures in their factories, offices and streets. Then they are made to denounce themselves, to say how they plotted against the proletariat, five, ten or twenty years ago. If you don't confess, you're imprisoned as a stubborn counterrevolutionary; if you do, you go to jail for your admission. So people try to confess and yet not to confess, to admit to treacherous thoughts, while denying they have acted on them. One man denounces another. All trust between friends and in families is destroyed. The same procedure has begun with us."

Father Fazekas said, "Satan always apes God. It is a mockery of Christian confession."

"How long will it last?" asked Gaston.

"Until you believe that 'Communism is good,' perhaps for years," said Weingartner.

Our next lecturer was plump and jolly. Briskly, he told us of the wonderful, new Rumania that was developing under Gheorghiu-Dej's sixteen-year plan, and of the paradise that those whom the Party considered worthy were already enjoying. He described the privileges granted to loyal workers, the good food, the flowing wine, the glorious holidays at Black Sea resorts with girls in bikinis everywhere.

"But I forget!" He laughed. "Most of you men have never seen a bikini. Maybe you don't even know what it is, poor fellows. Let me explain. The best things in life are not confined to the decadent West."

His eyes gleamed and his voice became thick as he began a graphic description of breast and belly and thigh. Then he spoke sensually of the pleasures of wine and travel. I have never seen such hungry lust as I saw then on the faces of my fellow prisoners in the big hall. They were ugly and frightening in their suggestion of animals in heat. Their human decency was stripped away by the lecturer's unbridled talk, and only sensual greed remained.

"There's the door. *You* can open it, if you choose. Pleasure is waiting just outside. Throw off the reactionary garbage of ideas which have made criminals of you. Come to our side. Learn to be free."

Little was said when we returned to the cell after these talks. No one thought now of the wives and hard work that awaited them outside. The raw desire that is part of our will to live had rekindled the hope of tasting again the joys we had missed for so many years.

Protestant and Orthodox priests who had been married suffered surely more intensely from this appeal to the sex instinct than the Catholic priests who had led a life of celibacy from their very youth.

We had been kept for months past on low rations and weighed regularly to ensure that we remained forty pounds under normal. Now the food improved, but it had a peculiar flavor. I suspected the presence of aphrodisiacs, and doctors

later agreed with me that sexually stimulating drugs had been added to our meals. Many of the staff left and were replaced by women. The doctors and the clerks who came to read out announcements or court verdicts were nearly always girls, girls wearing tight, provocative dresses, plus heavy perfume and makeup. They seemed to linger deliberately in the cells.

"You've only one life," the lecturer said each day. "It passes quickly. How much time have you left? Throw in your lot with us. We want to help you to make the most of it."

This appeal to the ego, the self-enhancing, self-protective side of man's nature, came when primitive emotions had been aroused. Finally, as the civilized veneer cracked, came the assault on the superego, our conscience, social values and ethical standards. The lecturers called our patriotism false, our ideals a fraud, and in their stead they tried to implant Communist ideology.

"Struggle meetings" was the name given these mass suggestion sessions, and the struggle was never-ending. "What are your wives doing now?" asked the jolly lecturer. "What you'd like to be doing yourselves, of course." We were exhausted and on the verge of mass hysteria. The tape recorders ground out their message—*Communism is good*—during every hour when the lectures were not in progress. Prisoners quarreled furiously among themselves over trivialities. It was part of the plan. They hoped we would destroy each other slowly, like spiders trapped beneath a glass bell.

Daianu was the first to break. At the end of a lecture, he jumped to his feet and began to reel off his crimes against the state. "I see it now, I see it all. I've thrown my life away for a false cause." He blamed his wealthy landowning parents for putting him on the wrong track. No one had asked him to attack religion, but he repudiated his faith, the saints and sacraments. He ranted against "superstition" and blasphemed against God. When, at last, he ran out of words, Radu Ghinda stood up and continued in the same vein. "I've been a fool," he shouted. "I have been misled by capitalist and Christian lies. Never again will I set foot in a church except to spit in it."

With greater enthusiasm than the lecturers themselves, Daianu and Ghinda called on the prisoners to abandon their

old beliefs. Both were gifted speakers, and when the others heard their eloquent praises of the joy and liberty Communism brings, they were deeply shaken. Anyone who knew nothing about these two would have been convinced that they spoke from genuine and lifelong faith.

When Ghinda sat down, a gaunt, trembling old man shouted, "You all know me—General Silvestru of the Royal Army. I disown my rank and loyalty. I am ashamed at the role I played in making criminal war on our ally, Russia. I served the exploiting classes. I disgraced my country."

One after another, men stood and parroted their confessions. This was the first fruit of months of planned starvation, degradation, ill-treatment and exposure to mass suggestion. The first to give way were those, like Daianu and Ghinda, whose lives were already eaten by private guilt. They were divided against themselves. As a doctor of theology, Daianu had preached asceticism but practiced gluttony and pursued sexual pleasure. He had told his students to give up the world for God, while he himself became a propagandist for Hitler. He said, "Love Jesus," and he hated the Jews. He thought he was a believer, but what a man believes is revealed in his daily life: his poems, fine as they were, expressed aspirations, not fulfillment. Ghinda, too, though not internally divided, was torn in half ideologically by Fascism and anti-Semitism on the one hand, and his faith on the other. And both men were growing old: they had served a dozen years in prison, and faced many more.

The majority in the priests' room did not yield so quickly, and for them further suffering waited. Our denominational quarrels, at least, came to an end. We learned an unforgettable lesson that day. All our denominations could be reduced to two: the first, based upon hatred, makes ritual and dogma a pretext for attacking others; the second, founded upon love, teaches men of all kinds to realize their oneness and brotherhood before God. At times in the past it had seemed that a mission to priests would be more valuable than any other. More often now it was as if the cell was afire with the spirit of self-sacrifice and renewed faith. In such moments the angels seemed all around us.

For the Communion service, bread was needed. Many sacrificed their ration. The Orthodox ritual required that the bread

be consecrated over an altar containing the relic of a martyr. There was no relic.

"But we have living martyrs with us," said Father Andricu. They consecrated the bread and a little wine in a chipped cup, smuggled from the hospital, over the body of Bishop Mirza as he lay ill in bed. The whole cell stood or knelt in silence.

Soon the prisoners who had been "converted" to Communism were asked to deliver lectures to the others, which they did with passion. Their release, they believed, depended on their efforts. We gathered from various cells to listen, and so word quickly spread of a terrible sequel to the defection of Daianu and Ghinda. Two members of the Iron Guard, their nerves already shattered, lost all hope when they heard of the treachery of the men they'd looked to for leadership. They stole a chisel from the carpenters' shop, opened their veins in protest and bled to death.

I found Daianu and Ghinda sitting in a corner of the cell. "What do you think of yourselves now that your betrayal has cost the lives of two men who believed in you?" I asked.

Ghinda said, "They died so that the people may live."

"A week ago you were counted among the enemies of the people yourselves," I said.

Daianu burst out: "I mean to get out of here, no matter who suffers."

Feeling against them became so strong that they were moved to another cell. When they had gone, Miron said, "Strange that men who wrote with what seemed deep Christian faith should turn traitor so easily."

Perhaps the answer was that in their work Daianu and Ghinda had always praised Christ for the gifts at His disposal: peace, love, salvation. A real disciple does not seek gifts, but Christ himself, and so is ready for the ultimate self-sacrifice. They were not followers of Jesus, but customers; when the Communists opened a shop next door with gaudier goods at lower prices they naturally took their business there.

I had become very ill again. During 1963 I was moved to the prison hospital. After a week, every man, however sick, was ordered up. Some could hardly walk, but we helped one another out into a big yard where it seemed that the whole

prison had been assembled. We stood while an hour-long play, mocking Christianity with crude and childish blasphemy, was enacted by prisoners who had succumbed to brainwashing. When the officers around the Commandant clapped or laughed, the audience echoed them.

When it was over at last, Alexandrescu asked for "criticisms." Approval was insufficient; reasons for it must be given. Daianu led the way, saying how brilliantly the play had illustrated the impostures of Christianity. Ghinda followed him. One after another, men went up to mouth Party slogans against religion, some in low, strained voices, others shouting profanities. As they rejoined the ranks, some embraced me tearfully and said, "We *must* say these things until it is over." Father Andricu, beside me, quoted a proverb: "Be friends with the devil until we're across the bridge."

The Commandant called me up. As I went, I remembered what my wife had said to me so many years before, at the Congress of Cults: "Go and wash this shame from the face of Christ."

I was well known at Gherla; I had been in so many cells.

Hundreds of eyes were on me, and they all seemed to ask one question: Will he praise Communism, too?

Major Alexandrescu called, "Go on. Speak, man." He wanted opposition. When the stubborn ones broke—and they considered it only a matter of time—it demonstrated the Party's power.

I began cautiously, "It is Sunday morning, and our wives and mothers and children are praying for us, in church or at home. We should have liked to pray for them, too. Instead we have watched this play." As I spoke of their families, tears came to the prisoners' eyes. I went on: "Many here have spoken very strongly against Jesus, but what do you hold against Him? You speak of the proletariat, but wasn't Jesus a carpenter? You say that he who doesn't work shall not eat, but the same thing was said long ago, in St. Paul's Epistle to the Thessalonians. You speak against the wealthy, but Jesus Himself drove the moneylenders from the temple with whips. You want Communism, but don't forget that the first Christians lived in a community

of goods, sharing all they had. You would raise up the poor, but the Magnificat, the Virgin Mary's song at Jesus' birth, says that God will exalt the poor above the rich. All that is good in Communism comes from the Christians.

"Now, Marx has said that all proletarians must unite," I continued. "But some are Communists and some are Socialists and others Christians, and if we mock one another we cannot unite. I would never ridicule an atheist. Even from the Marxist point of view this is a poor tactic, for if you mock the proletariat, you divide it."

I quoted what Marx says in his introduction to *Capital,* that Christianity is the ideal religion for remaking a life destroyed by sin. I gave them many quotations from their own authors, and Major Alexandrescu shifted uneasily in his chair but did not interrupt.

The prisoners, too, were quiet and, seeing so many tears, I forgot where I was and began to preach openly about Christ, and what He had done for us, and what He meant to us. I said that just as no one had heard of a school without examinations, or a factory where work was not inspected to see that it was good, so all of us would be judged, by ourselves, by our fellows, by God. I looked at the Commandant and said, "You will be judged, too, Major Alexandrescu."

He let it pass again, and I told how Jesus teaches love and gives eternal life. As I finished, cheers and applause rang out.

When I returned to my place, Miron said, "You've undone all their work." But I knew I hadn't. Gaston whispered, "Did you hear the cheers?" But they were cheering what they had found in their hearts, not me.

Until now the number of priests who had fallen victim to brainwashing were a minority, but they were a noisy one. Those who opposed it openly were also few. But their sympathizers were many, even if they lacked the wit or the courage to fight back. As a result of this incident I lost my sanctuary in the prison hospital. Major Alexandrescu called me to his office the next day. For three hours he lectured on the futility of religion, then returned me to the priests' room.

The political officer, Lieutenant Konya, an olive-skinned,

sharp-nosed young man with menacing eyes, announced that Daianu and Radu Ghinda, in their private cells, had volunteered to write about the wonders of the People's Republic, which neither of them had set eyes on for twenty years. They were given pen and paper and all the Party propaganda they might need. The two men made full use of this chance to demonstrate the strength of their new convictions, and some weeks later they were freed. They were the first to be released, though we could not know that they would also be the last. Their freedom struck a powerful blow to our resistance.

A few weeks later, Konya brought a newspaper into the priests' room and gave it to Father Andricu, "Read this aloud, so that everyone can hear."

Andricu read the headline: A COUNTRY THAT LAUGHS AND HEARTS THAT SING. It was an article by Radu Ghinda, accompanied by a smiling photograph taken before his arrest.

Lieutenant Konya said, "He's got a well-paid job now. We want you to know that every one of you has an equal chance of freedom and work, just as soon as you give up your nonsensical, old-fashioned beliefs and join the people of the new Rumania."

Hearts that sing. Everyone remembered Ghinda as a bag of bones; we knew his family was in distress and his child denied education. Daianu also lent his name to glorifications of freedom in Socialist Rumania. But the new work of Daianu and Ghinda was good only for the West. There they could trade on the ignorance of those who had never been inside the country. The articles they wrote appeared in special newspapers and magazines sent to thousands of Rumanians abroad, but never in the Rumanian press itself.

Everyone was excited at the two men's release. Many who had suffered cruelty and humiliation for years, without giving way, now began to waver. But those who did yield, instead of being freed, had to prove their conversion by volunteering to work for fourteen or sixteen hours a day. On returning to their cells, they were required either to attend more lectures, or to give them. They had to keep a "temperature chart of political health," which meant that every prisoner had to write about his neighbor's attitude to Communism, estimating it as lukewarm, cold, or even hostile.

The authorities cannot have received many good reports about me. Konya came to bring me two unhappy items of news: first, that my wife was in prison again, and had been for some time; second, that I was to be flogged at ten o'clock that evening, for my repeated defiance and insolence, culminating in my outburst at the "play."

The news about Sabina was a terrible shock, and my pain at the thought of her suffering mingled with fear of the beating to come. We all dreaded this period of waiting. Time dragged interminably and then passed all too quickly whenever I heard footsteps coming down the passage. The tramping boots passed by. Someone was taken from the next cell and I heard blows falling and screams from the room at the end of the corridor. Nobody came for me that night.

The next morning I was again warned. For six days the suspense was maintained. Then I was led up the passage. The blows burned like fire. When it was over, Lieutenant Konya, who supervised, shouted, "Give him some more." Then I was slow in getting to my feet. "Ten more," said Konya. I was half carried back to the cell, where the loudspeakers were blaring:

Christianity is stupid.
Christianity is stupid.
Christianity is stupid.
Why not give it up?
Why not give it up?
Why not give it up?
Christianity is stupid.
Christianity is stupid.
Christianity is stupid.
Why not give it up?

This was their latest message, broadcast especially to the priests' room. Prisoners were moving like automatons, obeying orders with a mechanical lifelessness. Sometimes, beatings were administered by guards in the cell, for "minor irregularities."

"Drop your trousers for a beating."

We dropped them.

"Lie on your bellies."

We lay bellydown on the cold, damp floor.

"Turn over on your back, hold your feet up."

We rolled over.

We prayed often. Sometimes a priest would say, "I call on 'Our Father,' but what kind of Father, what God, abandons me to my enemies like this?" And we urged him, "Don't give way. Go on saying 'Our Father.' Be obstinate. By persisting in prayer you will renew your faith." The priest could listen to us, because we suffered equally.

When the guards became bored, they collared a couple of prisoners. "Slap your friend in the face!" If the man failed to do so, they said, "You've lost your chance," and ordered the second man to strike the first. He struck out blindly. "Now smash him back." They struck at each other's faces until blood flowed. The guards roared with laughter.

One evening Lieutenant Konya entered the priests' room and told me to get my things together. As he led me out between guards he said over his shoulder that I had not responded to treatment and so a spell in the Special Block might do me good. The prison was rife with rumors about this section, and those who returned from a stay there were few. You died, or you succumbed to brainwashing so intense that you were transferred to another part of the building to join the indoctrination staff and learn to brainwash others.

We crossed the yard, turned a corner or two and stopped while one of a row of doors was opened and then double-locked behind me.

I was alone in a cell walled in white tiles. The ceiling reflected fierce white light from concealed lamps. It was midsummer, but the steam heating, which worked nowhere else in Gherla, was on full. Sweat poured down my body. Konya had left me in handcuffs, so that I could lie only on my back or side. After a few hours, I was blinded with sweat and the intense light and half-maddened. The spy hole clicked open. A snicker from the guard outside: "Something gone wrong with the heating?" A dull ache gnawed at my stomach. There had been an unusual flavor in the food lately, but I was so hardened to *not*

thinking of what I was eating that I had ignored it. Now I wondered if it was drugged again. The loudspeakers had a new message:

Nobody believes in Christ now.
Nobody believes in Christ now.
Nobody believes in Christ now.
No one goes to church.
No one goes to church.
Give it up.
Give it up.
Nobody believes in Christ now . . .

I fell into a black pit, haunted by gruesome dreams. In the morning Konya was back, letting in a flood of cool, life-giving air. My handcuffs were unlocked. I stretched agonizingly stiff arms and obeyed his order to follow him along the corridor.

A new cell and fresh clothes awaited me. This time there was a full-size bed with linen sheets, a table with a checked tablecloth, a reading lamp, flowers in vases, pictures on pastel walls. It was too much for me: I sat down and began to weep. When Konya left, I recovered and reached for a newspaper lying on the table, the first I had seen in all my years of imprisonment. I scanned it quickly to check a rumor current in Gherla that the U.S. Sixth Fleet had entered the Black Sea to demand free elections in the Iron Curtain countries. There was no such news: instead, what I found was an item about a Communist dictator who had taken power in Cuba and was defying America on her own doorstep.

My first visitor was Commandant Alexandrescu himself. He said my new surroundings were a sample of the good life open to me. He began to attack religion. Christ, he said, was a fantasy invented by the Apostles to delude slaves with hopes of freedom in paradise.

My eye fell on the newspaper. I said, "Look at this, Commandant. It's printed on the Party presses. It gives a date in July, 1963. That means, 1,963 years since the birth of someone who—according to you—never existed. You don't believe in Christ, yet you accept Him as the founder of our civilization."

Alexandrescu shrugged. "It means nothing; it's customary to count that way."

"But if Christ never lived, how did the custom arise?" I asked.

"Some liars started it."

I said: "Suppose you tell me that the Russians have landed on Mars, I needn't believe you. But if I tune the radio to New York and hear the Americans congratulate them, then I know it must be true. In the same way, we must accept Christ's existence as a historical fact when it's recognized in the Talmud by His worst enemies, the Pharisees, who also give the names of His mother and some of His Apostles. And, again, we must be impressed when the Pharisees attribute miracles to Christ, while protesting that they were worked by black magic. Many heathen writers also acknowledged Him. Only Communists deny this plain historical fact, simply because it doesn't suit your own theories."

Alexandrescu did not pursue the argument. Instead, he sent me a book. It was wonderful to have a book in my hands after all these years, even if it was only the *Guide of the Atheist.* This manual, unknown in the West, is required reading for all who seek careers behind the Iron Curtain.

My copy was well-bound, plentifully illustrated and carefully argued. From the origins of religion it progressed through Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism and Islam. Then came Christianity, with a chapter for each denomination. Catholicism came out badly, Lutheranism much better (Luther had, after all, defied the Pope), but all were shown to be impostures. Science had proved this, so the church had always persecuted science. A full chapter portrayed the church as a tool of capitalism through the centuries; Christ's exhortation to love your enemies meant no more than to bow to the exploiter. A special section was devoted to the corruption of the Russian priesthood (the book had evidently been translated from Russian). One faked picture after another was used to show, misleadingly, that Christian rites were based on heathen superstition. A final chapter analyzed "Forms of Atheist Propaganda" and concluded with a list of Soviet decrees aimed against religion. Over this I fell asleep.

Chapter Eight

During the next few weeks, I alternated between promises and threats, between my flowery private room and the blinding cell where the loudspeakers blared, between good (but drugged) meals and starvation, between argument and punishment. While undergoing the heat treatment I was joined one morning by Father Andricu, the former "Red Priest" who had repented. He sat panting until he could bear no more. Then he jumped up and hammered wildly on the door, begging for air. The guards only laughed, but someone must have reported that we had reached the breaking point, for presently the Commandant appeared.

"Too hot?" asked Alexandrescu. "It can be made hotter still; that depends on you. You've both given me a lot of trouble and, if you've experienced a change of heart, I want proof of it. How would you behave if we set you free? I want you to compose an example of the sort of sermons you would preach. Here's paper; begin at once."

He banged the cell door behind him, and we sat down to write. When I had finished, I gave Andricu my sermon and asked to read his. When I had looked through it, he could not meet my eyes.

"There's no harm, really," he said, defensively. "You can hear sermons like that every Sunday. Progressive, naturally, in a scientific, Marxist way."

I said, "Don't try to deceive yourself again. You know this nonsense is a recantation of all you really believe. Even if he loses his faith, a priest should be silent. I don't speak now of judgment before God. What would your parishioners, your friends, your family think if they heard you preach these blasphemies? Don't let the Communists cheat you again. They buy you with promises they never keep."

For hours I pleaded with Andricu. I told him that in his heart he knew still that Christianity was the truth and that God was watching over us. At last he said, "Give me back the sermon." He tore it to pieces.

A new series of "struggle meetings" attended by hundreds of prisoners began in the main hall, and we were sent back from the Special Block to attend them. Most of the lectures were now being delivered by brainwashed prisoners who, not long ago,

had been our friends and cellmates. After a spell of instruction by Party experts they came back to rant and shout at us in praise of the Communism which had condemned them to years of suffering. All our values and conceptions were assailed by those who yesterday had been their champions. Attacks on religion were often based on the teaching of modern theologians who deny the Scriptures: propagandists of the theories that culminated in the Western "God is dead" school of thought. "Study your own thinkers," we were told. "They have proved there is no objective truth in Christianity." However they began, the brainwashed lecturers always wound up with an appeal first to the id—and their talk of sex was far cruder than that of the official speakers—then to the ego, with visions of freedom, money and a job with status.

It went on for ten to twelve hours a day: lectures, discussions, the tape-recorded slogans dinning into our drugged minds. You were never away from it, never off guard. In every cell two or three men reported daily on the "political health" of each inmate; if you played up to them they could keep you safe, but if they took a dislike to you they could get you sent to the Special Block. Informing touched everyone like a fever. On August 23, the anniversary of the armistice with Russia, most of us seemed ready to believe anything we were told.

Major Alexandrescu addressed a special meeting in the main hall. "I have good news," he began, and I saw peasants who had seen their farms seized and ruined beam when he announced that they were flourishing in the collectives. Former merchants and bankers looked happy when told that trade was booming, too. Alexandrescu raked our scarecrow ranks with scornful eyes.

"Some of you," he went on, "are seeing sense at last. Others still have some way to go, however, and I will address myself to them. You fools, you have rotted in prison for ten or fifteen years, waiting for the Americans to come and free you. I have news for you. The Americans are coming, but not to release you. They are coming to do business with us."

Alexandrescu outlined the Party's new steps, under Premier Gheorghiu-Dej, to win commercial favor in the West, raise

loans, build factories, operate a nuclear plant, all with Western aid.

"You fools." He spat out the words again. "You live in illusions, we in reality. We know the Americans. If you beg, they give you nothing. If you insult them, you get everything. We have been more clever than you."

Someone laughed, high-pitched and out of key. Another joined in. Soon the entire hall was rocking with hysterical laughter, encouraged by the sight of the austere Alexandrescu holding his sides in merriment. It continued until, with a raised hand, the Commandant silenced it. Then, still in a good humor, he told us that although we could not take part in the "Freedom Day" celebrations, he had arranged that we should at least watch them. Television had been installed for the occasion.

The TV show began with speeches by Gheorghiu-Dej, followed by many others, on the toppling of the Fascist regime in Rumania. None of the speakers, of course, mentioned the roles played on August 23, 1944, by young King Michael, or by the National Peasant statesman Iuliu Maniu and the Communist Minister of Justice Patrascanu, both long since dead in jail.

During Communism's early days, Rumanians had tried to avoid taking part in the anniversary demonstrations, but now the parade began and I was astonished at its size. We watched endless columns file past the reviewing stand: factory workers in jerseys and cloth caps; schoolchildren in dark dresses and white collars. They passed Party headquarters, where huge portraits of Marx, Lenin and Dej flapped among the red flags in the breeze. We heard the steady tramp of boots, the brassy music, the crowds' cheers, the shouts, "August 23 brought us freedom."

"It was never like this in the past," I said to Father Andricu beside me.

"You know the old story," he hissed back. "The first time a girl is violated she struggles; the second time she protests; the third time she enjoys it."

The prisoners had enjoyed it; but that was not enough to

satisfy the Commandant. When the performance ended, another began. "We will now discuss the celebrations," Alexandrescu said, "and say in turn what August 23 means to us."

One by one, the prisoners testified. Ex-soldiers, former policemen, landowners, peasants, an industrialist or two. Each concluded his contribution by crying, "August 23 brought us freedom." My turn arrived. Alexandrescu looked at me with a gleam in his eye.

I started in the mood of the moment. "If there is anyone here to whom August 23 has brought liberty, it is me," I said. "The Fascists hated Jews, and if Hitler had won the war, I should probably be a piece of soap by now. But I'm still alive, and the Bible has a saying: 'A living dog is better than a dead lion.' " Approving murmurs from the crowd.

"But I was freed before August 23," I went on. "Let me tell you how. In ancient times the Tyrant of Syracuse read the book of Epictetus, the philosopher-slave, and admired it so greatly that he offered to set him free. 'Free yourself,' replied Epictetus. His visitor protested, 'But I'm the king.' The philosopher answered, 'A tyrant ruled by his lusts is in bondage; a slave who rules his passions is free. King, free yourself.' " The hall was quiet.

"Although I am in prison," I said, "I am free. I have been freed by Jesus from guilt, from darkness in my mind. I can thank the events of August 23 for freeing me from Fascism. But for the other freedom, the freedom from all that is transitory —from death, itself—I thank Jesus."

The Commandant was on his feet. "Tell that nonsense to Gagarin," cried Alexandrescu. "He's been up there in space, but he saw no sign of God." He roared with laughter at his own joke. The brainwashed prisoners joined in.

I replied, "If an ant walked around the sole of my shoe, it could say it saw no sign of Wurmbrand."

Another spell in the Special Block was my punishment. And I was there when Alexandrescu called specially to inform me that the President of the United States had been assassinated. "What do you think about that?" he asked.

I said, "I can't believe it." He showed me a newspaper dated November 22, 1963, which reported President Kennedy's assassination in a brief paragraph.

"Well, what have you to say?"

I replied that if Mr. Kennedy was a Christian, he would be happy now in heaven. Alexandrescu walked out, slamming the door. It was part of the Communist technique to spring surprise questions of this sort on the prisoners, to determine how quickly their minds were working.

Some time later I was in a cell with Father Andricu when the guards entered. We were blindfolded, handcuffed and led out: for all we knew, it might be to our execution. The guard said, "Turn right here," and, "Now turn left."

We came to a distant part of the prison and when the blindfolds were removed we found ourselves in a suite of clean, warm offices which I had never seen before. This must have been the central administrative offices from which the lectures and tape recordings were controlled. Andricu was taken away and I remained standing outside a door, alone with a guard who in the past had listened in receptive silence when I spoke of Christ.

"My poor friend," he whispered, "you're having a hard time. But if you are in the right, go on—in God's name." His face became impassive again as he moved some paces away, but his words warmed my heart.

The door opened and I was led into a comfortably furnished office. Several men faced me at a long table. In the center sat a man in general's uniform. It was Negrea, Deputy Minister of the Interior, whose keen intelligence matched the fierce energy burning in his strong, gypsy face. The political officer and some officials from Bucharest sat beside him.

Negrea came politely to the point. "I've studied your case, Mr. Wurmbrand. I don't like your views, but I respect a man who sticks to his guns. We Communists are obstinate men, too. I've often been in prison myself and plenty was done to make me change my mind, but I resisted."

He tapped a pencil on the desk. "It's time we met halfway.

If you're prepared to forget what you've suffered, we'd be ready to forget what you've done against us. I believe that we could turn the page and become friends instead of enemies. So far from acting against your own convictions, you could act upon them and still enter a period of fruitful cooperation."

He flicked the pages of a file before him. "I've even read your sermons. The explanations of the Bible are beautifully put. But you must realize we live in a scientific age."

What now? I asked myself, as Negrea swung into the Party's standard science lecture. Had an important Minister come two hundred miles for this? Like the Danube, which twists and turns through the plains but reaches the sea at last, his discourse came to an end: "We need men like you. We don't want people to join us out of opportunism, but because they see the fallacies in their past thinking. If you are prepared to help us in the struggle against superstition, you can start a new life at once. You will have a post with a high salary and your family around you again in comfort and safety. What do you say?"

I replied that as for starting a new life, I found great joy in the life I was already leading; and as for helping the Party, I had thought of a way of doing so if I were released.

The political officer sat up sharply. Negrea said, "You mean you'll work for us? In what way?"

"I suggest that you send me from town to town along with the best Marxist professor you have. I shall expose first my ignorance and the stupidities of this retrograde Christian religion; then the professor will talk Marxism and the people will be able to make up their own minds between the two."

Negrea gave me a long stare. "You're provoking us, Mr. Wurmbrand. That's what I like about you. It's just the way we Communists used to answer the bosses in the old days. So let's not argue. I'll make you an even better proposition. Nobody wants you to become an atheist propagandist. If you're really so attached to an outworn faith, though I can't understand how a cultured man can swallow such nonsense, then keep to it. But also bear in mind that we have the power. Communism has conquered a third of the world; the church must come to terms with us. Let's put our cards on the table, for once. Frankly, we're tired of church leaders who do everything we ask, and

sometimes more. They've thoroughly compromised themselves in the eyes of the people; they're no longer in touch with what's going on."

One by one, Negrea ran through the remaining bishops of Rumania. All of them were powerless, he said, or mere Party tools: the trouble was that everyone knew it.

"Now if a man like you became a bishop, you could have your faith and still be loyal to the regime. Your Bible says you should submit to authority because it comes from God, so why not to ours?"

I said nothing. Negrea asked the other officials to leave us alone for a moment. He was convinced I would accept the offer and wished to tell me something in confidence.

"The Party made a mistake," he began, "in attacking your World Council of Churches. It began as a spy ring, but the pastors concerned are often of proletarian origin; they aren't shareholders, so to speak, but superior servants. Instead of opposing such men, we should win them over to our side. Then the Council itself will become our instrument."

He leaned urgently over the desk. "Mr. Wurmbrand, this is where you come in. You've worked for the World Council. You're known widely abroad. We still get many inquiries about you. If you become a bishop, you could help our other WCC allies to build a bulwark for us, not of atheism, but of Socialism and peace. Surely you recognize the universal human idealism behind our campaigns to ban the bomb and outlaw war? And you'll be able to worship to your heart's content: there we won't interfere."

I thought for a moment. "How far must this cooperation go? Bishops who've worked with you in the past have had to inform on their own priests. Will I be expected to do that, too?"

Negrea laughed. "You'd be under no special obligation by virtue of your office," he said. "Everyone who knows of any act that may harm the state is obliged by law to denounce the man who does it, and as a bishop you'll certainly hear such things. But let's get down to brass tacks. As you know, the present Lutheran bishop of Rumania is very old. You'd be bishop-elect and effective head of your church in Rumania from the start. Shall I activate the machinery for your take-over now?"

When I replied that I should like time to reflect, Negrea agreed. "We'll meet before I leave again for Bucharest to put through your release papers," he said.

Locked once more in an isolation cell, I was torn by indecision. I couldn't help remembering the traditional Jewish story of another man who asked for time to think: a rabbi, facing the Inquisition, who was asked to deny his faith. The next morning the rabbi said, "I will not turn Catholic, but I will make one last request—that before I'm burned at the stake my tongue be cut out for not replying at once. To such a question 'No' was the only possible answer."

But that was only one side of it. On the other hand, I knew that the official church in a Communist country could survive only through some compromise with the Party; after all, even by paying taxes to an atheist state a Christian compromises. It was easy enough to say that the church could go "underground," but an underground church needs cover for its work. Lacking this, millions of people would be left with nowhere to meet for worship, no pastor to preach, no one to baptize them, marry them, bury their dead. An unthinkable alternative, surely, when I could help to avoid it simply by saying a few words in favor of collectivization—already in force—or of the so-called peace campaigns. And then, I hadn't seen my wife and son for years: I didn't even know if they were still alive. The political officer had said that Sabina was in prison; what would become of her and Mihai if I refused their proposition?

I needed strength from above to say no, when doing so meant serving another eleven years, with the sacrifice of my family and almost certain death under terrible conditions. But at that moment God's face was veiled and my faith failed me. I saw before me the huge shape of Communism, which already covered so much of the world and threatened to cover the rest, as well; and my imagination was overcome by the danger of dying, of being beaten repeatedly, and of the hunger and privations to which I was condemning my wife and son. I drank in those hours the cup of Christ; it was for me the Garden of Gethsemane. And, like Jesus, I threw myself facedown upon the earth and prayed with broken cries, asking God to help me overcome this profound temptation.

After prayer, I felt a little quieter. But still I saw before me Nichifor Daianu and Radu Ghinda and so many more, from the Patriarch on down the line, who had harmed the faith. They numbered thousands, and now I had become a man mean in faith and would be swallowed up like them for the weakness of my flesh. I began to think carefully of all the times I had argued the truth of Christianity. I repeated to myself the simplest questions: Is the way of love better than hatred? Has Christ lifted the burden of sin and doubt from my shoulders? Is He the Saviour? There was no difficulty in answering yes. And when I had done so, it was as if a great weight had been removed from my mind.

For an hour I lay on my bed, saying to myself, "I shall try now not to think of Christ." But the effort failed: I could think of nothing else. Without Christianity, there was a void in my heart. For a last time I thought of Negrea's proposal. I numbered to myself the tyrants from Nebuchadnezzar, who set a king over the Jews, to Hitler, who set his puppets over Europe. I would be given a visiting card: Richard Wurmbrand, Lutheran Bishop of Rumania, by appointment of the Secret Police. I would not be a bishop of Christ in a holy place, but a police spy in a state institution.

I prayed again, and finally I felt tranquility of soul.

The next day I was called again. Commandant Alexandrescu was there, among several others around Negrea, and when I said I could not accept, the entire question was argued once more. Only when we reached the World Council of Churches did Negrea again ask the rest to leave. Then he urged me to reconsider.

I said, "I don't feel worthy to be a bishop; I wasn't worthy to be a pastor, and even to be a simple Christian was too much for me. The first Christians went to their deaths saying simply, *'Christiamus sum.'*—'I'm a Christian'—but I haven't done that; instead, I considered your shameful offer. But I cannot accept it."

"We'll find another who will," he warned.

I replied, "If you believe you can prove me wrong, bring me your atheist arguments. I have the arguments for my faith, and I seek only the truth."

He asked me, "You know, of course, what this will mean for your future?"

"I have considered well and weighed every danger, and I rejoice to suffer for what I am sure is the ultimate truth."

Negrea gave me the sour look of a man who realizes he has been wasting valuable time. Polite to the last, he nodded to me, closed his briefcase, stood up and crossed to the window, where he stood looking out while the guards handcuffed and led me away. Now he himself is in prison, "purged" by his own comrades, and knows what it is to have manacles on your hands.

For a long time I remained in the Special Block; for exactly how long I'm not sure. Time has telescoped all the days of certain periods in my prison life into one enormous day. The brainwashing increased in its intensity, but changed little in method. The loudspeakers now said:

Christianity is dead.
Christianity is dead.
Christianity is dead.

I recall one day clearly. They had given us postcards on which to invite our families to come and see us and bring parcels. On the day named, I was shaved and washed and issued a clean shirt. Hours passed. I sat in the cell staring at the glittering white tiles, but no one came. Evening brought only a change of guard. I was unaware then that my postcard had never been sent, and that the same trick had been played on other stubborn prisoners. The loudspeaker said:

Nobody loves you now.
Nobody loves you now.
Nobody loves you now.

I began to weep. The loudspeaker insisted:

They don't want to know you anymore.
They don't want to know you anymore.
They don't want to know you anymore.

I couldn't bear to hear these words, and I couldn't shut them out.

The next day brought a brutal struggle meeting, confined to the disappointed men. Many other wives had come, the lecturer said. We were the fools. We had been abandoned. Our wives were in bed with other men at that very moment. He described what was happening between them with all the obscenity at his command. And where were our children? Out in the street, atheists every one. They had no wish to see their foolish fathers. And how stupid we were.

In the Special Block, I listened to the speaker, day after day:

Christianity is dead.
Christianity is dead.
Christianity is dead.

And in time I came to believe what they had dinned into us for all those months. Christianity was dead. The Bible foretells a time of great apostasy, and, I believed, it had arrived.

Then I thought of Mary Magdalene, and perhaps this thought, more than any other, helped to save me from the soul-destroying poison of this last and worst stage of brainwashing. I remembered how she had been faithful to Christ even when He cried on the Cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" And when He was a corpse in the tomb, she had wept nearby and waited until He arose. So, when I believed at last that Christianity was dead, I said, "Even so, I will believe in it, and I will weep at its tomb until it arises again, as it surely will."

Epilogue

IN June, 1964, all prisoners were gathered in the main hall. The Commandant entered with his officers, and we prepared for a new stage in the struggle campaign. Instead, Major Alexandrescu announced that under the terms of a general amnesty granted by the government, political prisoners of almost every category were to be released.

I couldn't believe it. Looking around, I saw blankness on every face. Then Alexandrescu shouted an order to thank the party for its generosity, and the entire hall broke into cheers. If they had been told, "Tomorrow you will all be shot," they would still have cheered and cried, "That's quite right, we don't deserve to live." They had become automatons.

The announcement was not, as we first thought, another trick. The summer of that year saw the release of innumerable thousands of prisoners. For this we had to thank another so-called thaw between East and West, and also—though I did not know it at the time—a true change of heart in our Prime Minister Gheorghiu-Dej. After many years of doubting Communist dogma, he had returned to the faith in which his mother had raised him and followed all her life. Dej had been converted through a maidservant in his home and her uncle, a good old man who often spoke to him of the Bible. Christianity, although he did not confess it openly, gave him the strength to defy his Soviet masters. Ignoring their threats, he opened new relations with the West, and in doing so set an example to other captive

countries. Unhappily he died a few months later, his end being hastened, it's said, by Soviet agents.

My turn came for release. I found myself among one of the last groups of a hundred or so men gathered in the main hall. We were almost the last prisoners left in Gherla. A strange silence had fallen over the deserted corridors. Our hair was cut and we were given worn but clean clothes. While I wondered what had become of the original owner of the suit I wore, I heard a man call, "Brother Wurmbrand." He came up and said he was from Sibiu, so I supposed that he was a member of our church there.

"I've heard so much about you from your son," he added. "We shared a cell together."

I said, "My son—in prison? No, no; you're mistaken!"

"But we were together," he said. I couldn't grasp it.

"You mean you didn't know?" the man continued. "He's been in prison for six years now."

I turned away. The blow was almost more than I could bear. Mihai's health had not been good; he would never stand up to the strain of prolonged prison life.

My mind was still frozen with pain and shock when Commandant Alexandrescu came up. "Well, Wurmbrand, where will you go now that you're free?"

I replied, "I don't know. I've been told officially that my wife is in prison, and now I hear my only son is, too. I have no one else."

Alexandrescu shrugged. "The boy, too. How do you feel, having a jailbird for a son?"

"I'm sure he's not in prison for theft or any other crime, and if he's there for Christ's sake, then I'm proud of him."

"What," he shouted. "We spend all this money keeping you for years, and you still think it's something to be proud of to have a family in prison for religious reasons."

"I never wanted you to spend anything on me," I said.

So we parted. I walked out of prison in another man's clothes and into the streets of Gherla. Cars roared past and I started nervously. The world seemed so astonishing, almost frightening. The colors of a woman's coat, of a bunch of flowers, shocked my eyes. Music from a radio, drifting through an open window, had

a texture as rich as oversweetened coffee. The air smelled so clean and new, as though hay were being carted outside the little town. But everything was saddened for me by the thought of my wife and son in prison.

I took a bus to the nearby town of Cluj where I had friends and where, ironically enough, I had provoked my renewed sentence, but they had moved. I tramped from one house to another in the sweltering midsummer heat, until I found them at last. They were overjoyed to see me and brought out cake and fruit and all the good things they had in the house. But there was a round, indescribably beautiful brown onion on the kitchen table, and it was that I wanted. I'd longed so often for an onion to take away the taste of prison food. Now I didn't like to ask for it.

I telephoned a neighbor of ours in Bucharest. The voice that answered was Sabina's!

"It's Richard," I said. "I thought you were in prison."

There was a confused noise. Mihai came on the line. "Mother's fainted—hold on." There were more strange sounds. Then he said, "She's all right. We thought you were dead!"

Mihai had never been in prison. This final turn of the screw had been arranged to test my reactions to brainwashing.

I took the train to Bucharest. As we drew into the station, I saw a crowd of forty or fifty people, their arms full of summer flowers, and I wondered what lucky person was receiving such a fine welcome. Then, recognizing faces, I waved. They knew me, changed as I was. As I climbed down, it seemed as though all the people of our church were running to meet me, and then my arms were around my wife and son.

That night Sabina told me that although she had been officially informed of my death years before, she had refused to believe it. Then strangers called on her, offering condolences and claiming to be ex-prisoners who had attended my burial. "I will still wait for him," she had insisted. The years passed, and no word came until my telephone call. For Sabina it was as if I had been resurrected from the dead.

I was allowed to become pastor of the smallest Protestant parish in the country. My congregation numbered thirty-five. If thirty-six people entered the church, I was warned by the Minis-

try of Cults, there would be trouble. But I had much to say, and there were many who wished to hear. So I decided that every Sunday I would drive to a different church in the countryside to speak. By the time the local police got wind of a strange priest in their area, I had always moved on; and they were never very energetic on Sundays. But it couldn't last. Pastors who helped me were dismissed by the State. I was a burden to those I wished to serve, and a danger.

Friends urged me to try to leave the country so that I might speak for the underground church in the West. It was plain from the statements of Western Church leaders, that some did not know and others did not want to know the truth about religious persecution under the Communists. Prelates from Europe and America came on friendly visits and sat down to banquets with our inquisitors and persecutors. We asked them why. "As Christians," they said, "we have to be friendly with everybody, you know, even the Communists." Why, then, were they not friendly to those who had suffered? Why did they not ask one word about the priests and pastors who had died in prison or under torture? Or leave a little money for the families that remained?

The Archbishop of Canterbury came in 1965 and was permitted to preach a sermon. He never realized that the congregation consisted of officials and Secret Police agents—the same audience that turns out on every such occasion. It has listened to visiting rabbis and muftis, bishops and Baptists. After they had returned home, we read of their approving comments on freedom in Rumania. One British theologian even wrote a book in which he declared that Christ would have admired the Communist prison system.

Writers around the world protested when two Communist authors, Andrei Sinyavsky and Yuli Daniel, were sentenced to prison terms by their own comrades. But no one—not even churchmen—spoke up when Christians were jailed for their faith.

Meanwhile, I lost my license to preach. I was blacklisted and constantly followed and watched. Even when I took a group of children to the Bucharest Zoo one Sunday, Secret Police agents

came, too, and stayed at the gate—ready to follow again when we left.

I led the children who were soon to be confirmed to the lions' cage and gathered them around me so that I might speak quietly.

I said, "Your forefathers in the faith were thrown to wild animals like these. They died gladly, because they believed in Jesus. The time may come when you, too, will be imprisoned and suffer for being a Christian. Now you must decide whether you are ready to face that day. With tears in their eyes, each in turn said "yes." I asked no other questions in this, the last confirmation class I held in Rumania.

I occasionally preached privately at the homes of friends who did not count the danger, so I was not surprised when, sometime after secret negotiations had begun for my departure to the West, a stranger invited me to his home. He gave the address, but no name. When I called he was alone.

"I want to do you a service," he said. I recognized that he was a Secret Police agent. "A friend of mine with official connections says that the dollars have been received for you. Probably you'd like to leave the country at once. My friend is worried. You're fresh from prison, and we know you're a man who speaks his mind. They think it might be better if you were kept here a while—or that a member of your family stay behind as a hostage, to ensure your good behavior. Of course, your release will be unconditional . . ."

I gave him no assurances. They had the dollars and that must be enough. Christian organizations in the West had paid approximately $10,000 in ransom for me. Selling citizens brings in foreign currency and helps the Popular Republic's budget. The Rumanians have a joke: "We'd sell the Prime Minister if anyone would buy him." Jews are sold to Israel at $2,000 a family, members of the German minority to West Germany, Armenians to America. Scientists, doctors and professors bring approximately $15,000 apiece.

Next I was summoned openly to Secret Police headquarters where an officer told me, "Your passport is ready. You can go when and where you like, and preach as much as you wish. But don't speak against us. Keep to the Gospel. Otherwise you'll

be silenced, for good. We can hire a gangster who'll do it for $1,000—or we can bring you back, as we've done with other traitors. We can destroy your reputation by staging a scandal over a girl, or money." So I was given my "unconditional release."

I came to the West. Along with some sixty other ransomed men, women and children I boarded the plane. Sabina was beside me and Mihai, in the seat in front, peered fascinated out of the window. I had spent fourteen years in prison, the same number that Jacob had worked for his beloved Rachel: "and the years seemed to Jacob a little time, because he loved." The years were not too long for me either, because I loved Christ, and worked for Him.

My new pastorate for the Underground Church began. I met friends of our Scandinavian Mission in Norway, and when I preached there, a woman in the front pew began to weep. Later she told me that years ago she had read of my arrest and had prayed for me ever since. "Today I came to church, not knowing who would preach. As I listened, I realized your identity, and so I wept."

I was given new clothes—a black clerical suit with a white collar. It didn't fit me; I was too thin. The first doctor to examine me said, "You're as full of holes as a sieve." He questioned me about my broken bones and tuberculosis. At the close of the examination he said, "Don't ask me about treatment. Ask the One who's kept you alive, and in Whom I don't believe."

We came to England. Mihai refused to believe me when I said a man might stand in Trafalgar Square and call Prime Minister Wilson a rogue—until he saw it happening. I spoke in churches and universities from Oxford to Glasgow. Once some undergraduates told me that there were twenty Russian students in their town on a visit. They had refused the offer of Bibles in Russian. "They really don't want to know," said the undergraduates. I told them, "See each Russian separately. They are secretly terrified of each other." Sure enough, every young Russian came to an appointment in the men's room, and secretly accepted a Bible.

In Italy, I was asked to preach at the main Baptist church. I

spoke about Christ, but when I said a word against Communism, the leader of the Italian Baptist movement interrupted me. My sermon was cut short. I asked him why. "I'm a Marxist Christian," he said. "I accept all Marx's teaching except atheism." I replied, "I am a Baptist, then, who accepts everything from the Baptists but baptism. It's exactly the same." But the students crowding around us at the church door agreed with him. They were Communists, they said.

The next day I talked to them for four hours about Marxism and its relation to Christianity. "Our Communism isn't like the Russian brand," they said. Rumanians also thought that—once.

In other European countries I was told, "The Communist Party is small, it does no harm, it's a joke." We said that in Rumania—once. The world is full of these tiny Parties awaiting their chance. When a tiger is small you may play with it; when it grows up it will devour you.

I met Western Church leaders who advised me to preach the Gospel and avoid attacks on Communism—words very like those of the Secret Police in Bucharest. But wrong must be called by name. Jesus told the Pharisees that they were "vipers," and for this, and not the Sermon on the Mount, He was crucified.

I denounce Communism because I love the Communists. We can hate the sin, while loving the sinner. Christians have a duty to win the souls of Communists, and if we fail to do so, they will overwhelm the West and uproot Christianity among us here as well. The Red rulers are unhappy and wretched men. They can be saved, and God's way is to send a man. He did not come himself to guide the Jews from Egypt, he sent Moses. So we must win over Communist leaders in every field—artistic, scientific and political. By winning those who mold the minds of men behind the Iron Curtain, you win the people they lead and influence. The conversion of Svetlana Stalin, only daughter of the greatest mass murderer of Christians, a soul brought up in the strictest Communist discipline, proves that there is a better weapon against Communism than the nuclear bomb: it is the love of Christ.

I can write only words, and words can never express the suf-

ferings of a priest who returns home after years in jail to find his children have become militant atheists—taught not only not to believe in God and Christ, but to hate their names. This book is written not so much in ink, as in the blood of their sufferings. But it is without bitterness. As in Daniel's time, the three young men put in the fiery furnace were delivered from it with no smell of fire, so Christians who have been in Communist prisons don't smell of bitterness. If you bruise it under your feet, a flower rewards you with its perfume. And Christians, tortured by the Communists, rewarded them with love, and brought many of their torturers to Christ. We of the Underground Church are dominated by one desire: to give to the Communists the best we have—the salvation that comes from Our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Underground Church works under very difficult conditions. It has scant means to oppose the vast forces of a totalitarian state. Its ministers have no theological training. A young secret minister from Russia told me how he had been ordained: "The official bishop refused to ordain anyone without Party approval. So ten of us went to the tomb of a bishop who had died as a martyr. Two of us put our hands on his gravestone. The others formed a circle around us and we asked the Holy Spirit to ordain us."

I am certain that this young man's ordination is valid before God. Men like him carry on the work of Christ. Often they can know little of the Bible. The Underground Church resembles those of the first centuries. What seminaries had they then? Where did their Bible come from? Did they all know how to read? God spoke to them.

The Underground Church is growing every day. The Russian press complained recently of the number of "outward nonbelievers." There are tens of thousands in Communist lands who conceal their faith from the authorities. They have understood why so many people in the New Testament are known by nicknames: Simeon called Niger, John called Mark. Their own work requires secret names. They know now why Jesus, in arranging the Last Supper, gave no address, but said, "Go into the town and look for a man with a pitcher." They give these secret signs of recognition in the Underground Church.

Sometimes, after a secret meeting in an attic, barn, or in the open its members are caught. But they wear their chains with the gladness of a bride given a jewel by her beloved. They receive Christ's embrace and would not change their place with kings. I have found truly jubilant Christians only in the Bible and in prison. They are ready to die for their faith.

There is a vast army of these dedicated laymen and women around the world. They are one of the three groups that make up the Underground Church everywhere. The first is the many thousands of former pastors and ministers who have been expelled from their churches because they would not compromise. On release they have promptly resumed their ministry—in secret.

The second part of the Underground Church consists of millions of true, fervently believing laymen and women. There are no lukewarm, "nominal" Christians in Communist territories—the price Christians pay is far too steep. Persecution has always produced a better Christian; one who longs to win souls. Communism has injured itself by producing men of a dedication not often matched in the West. They minister in markets, at village wells; they slip Christian tracts into the parcels of goods they sell. A Russian newspaper reveals that Christian children are copying out portions of the Gospel and slipping them into the pockets of their teachers' coats. These people already constitute a tremendous and powerful missionary force in Communist countries.

The third vital element in the Underground Church is the large body of faithful ministers and pastors in the official, but silenced "churches." The Underground Church is not completely separate from the official Church; in lands such as Poland, Yugoslavia and Hungary many officially approved pastors work for it. These ministers may not speak about Christ outside their tiny, one-room "churches." They may not hold children's meetings or youth meetings. They may not pray for sick Christians in their own homes. They are fenced in on every side by regulations that make their ministry all but meaningless. So they risk their freedom and their lives by carrying on a *parallel* secret ministry—to children and young people, to the

hungry souls around them. They evangelize secretly in homes and cellars. They receive and distribute Christian literature. They seem obedient on the surface; but they are risking their lives to spread God's word. Recently, many such men have been arrested in Russia, and given long prison terms.

These are the three arms of the Underground Church. It will endure until the Communists permit true, open, meaningful faith to be brought "to every creature." In some lands, one arm is more active than another, but all are there, working for Christ at enormous risk. Mission to Europe's Millions,* the ministry which I now help direct, has joined hands with the Underground Church in many countries.

By a miracle I survived fourteen years of torture, imprisonment and illness. By a greater miracle God saw fit to bring me out of prison, to America. Now I fulfill the charge and commission given me by the Underground Church which remains behind, daring, suffering and dying under Communism.

I speak on behalf of my brothers who lie in countless unmarked graves. I speak on behalf of my brothers who meet and pray and worship in secret. Their message is: "Don't forget us. Don't write us off. Give us the tools we need. We will pay the price for using them. Give us the Gospels, the Bibles, the literature, the help, and we'll do the rest. Don't listen to those who have taken our churches and speak in the name of Christ while persecuting and killing us. We don't ask for escape, safety, or an easy life. We long to give all we can. We are ready to give martyrs, ready to spend years in prison. But our readiness is valueless unless we have the tools with which to work."

On the wall of a civic building in Washington, D.C., I saw a large plaque displaying the Constitution of the United States, skillfully engraved in copperplate. When you look at it at first you see only the engraved words of the Constitution: then, on stepping back, so that the angle of the light changes, the face of George Washington appears, carved into the text.

* The author would gladly correspond with anyone interested in knowing more about the Underground Church and the suffering behind the Iron Curtain. His address is P.O. Box 11, Glendale, California 91209.

So it should be with this book, which contains episodes from the life of a man and the story of those who were with him in prison. Behind them all stands an unseen being, Christ, who kept us in faith and gave us strength to conquer.