



# THE NEW MARTYRS AND CONFESSORS OF RUSSIA

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## Hieromartyrs and Martyrs of Solovki

Archimandrite Benjamin, the last superior of the Solovki monastery, was born in 1868 or 1869 in a peasant family in Shenkursk uyezd, Archangelsk province. He finished six classes at the Solovki theological school. He was tonsured and ordained to the priesthood in Solovki monastery. In 1912 he was appointed superior of the St. Anthony of Siya monastery with promotion to the rank of archimandrite. In 1917 (according to another source, 1918) he was appointed superior of the Solovki monastery in place of Archimandrite Joannicius. He was a delegate to the Local Council of the Russian Church in 1917-18.

This was the beginning of the time of troubles, and Archimandrite Benjamin and the brotherhood had to endure many hardships. The cheka of Archangelsk province robbed and looted the monastery, while many slanders against it appeared in the press. In 1920 the monastery was closed and Archimandrite Benjamin was arrested and sent into exile for three years.

In the reminiscences of F.P. Kononov, who worked for several years on Solovki during the last years of its existence we read: "... A commission arrived in Solovki which removed the church valuables and arrested Archimandrite Benjamin and Hieromonk Nicephorus and exiled them for three years. They were in a camp somewhere in Archangelsk province. They were not compelled to do labour there. After three years they were released. They arrived in Archangelsk and lived there with one admirer.

Then they decided to settle in the wilderness sixty kilometres from Archangelsk on the shores of the fish-rich Layats lake. (According to another source, they lived first near the village of Izhmy and Lodma, and then by Lake Volk.) A former novice of Solovki monastery helped them to settle in. He constructed a hut for them and brought in food and kerosene. Archimandrite Benjamin and Hieromonk Nicephorus set off for the wilderness. On the way, in the village of Lodma, they ordered shoes from a cobbler and cotton jackets from a tailor.

"Two young lads [from the Komsomol] learned who these desert-dwellers were. They decided that the superior must have some gold. With the aim of seizing the gold the lads went up to the monks.

"Hand over the monastery gold!"

"Not even our buttons are made of gold," replied Fathers Benjamin and Nicephorus.

"The lads did not believe them. But they did not find any gold. They found an axe, a saw and some nails. They boarded up the doors and windows with boards. They found a supply of kerosene. They poured this kerosene onto the walls and set the hut in which the desert-dwellers were living alight. Afterwards they found only a small bone from them...."

According to one source, this took place on the second day of Pascha, 1928.

(Sources: Russkij Palomnik, Nos. 11 and 12, 1995, pp. 77, 85; Protopresbyter Michael Polsky, *Noviye Mucheniki Rossijskiye*, Jordanville, 1949-57, part I, p. 211; *Za Khrista Postradavshiye*, Moscow: St. Tikhon's Theological Institute, 1997, p. 237; I.I. Osipova, "Skvoz' Ogn' Muchenij i Vody Slyoz...", Moscow: Serebryanniye Niti, 1998, p. 285)

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Igumen Antonin, in the world Alexander Pavlovich Chubarov, was born in June, 1875 in Astrakhan. He struggled in the Simovo monastery and became its superior before its closure. In 1925 he was sentenced to ten years' imprisonment without right of correspondence. He died in December, 1926 in the Golgotha Crucifixion skete on Anzer island.

A former prisoner in the Solovki camps recounted the following story about him:-

"While I was in the Solovki camp, one prisoner who worked in the fishery suffered very much from eczema on his legs. He sorrowed greatly about this for a long time, and then, finally, on entering the church of St. Onuphrius which had been kept open for the freelabour monks to worship

in, he saw a coffin with a deceased monk lying in it and said with tears:

"O Lord, if this now reposed monk has been pleasing to Thee, accept his prayers for me, a sinner, and cure me of my illness."

"On returning to his place in the fishermen's barracks, and wishing to change the dressing on his leg, he suddenly saw that his eczema had disappeared. In his great joy he told his neighbour and fellow-worker, Bishop Sophronius of Selenginsk, about this, and the latter told all of us clergy, who were nearby. The monk who had been buried that day was our fellow-prisoner, Fr. Antonin, from the Simonov monastery in Moscow. In 1925 he had just begun his term of imprisonment, and he could not endure it. Because of his weak health, he was given the job of sweeper of the courtyard in Solovki. God had given me the joy of meeting him often in the courtyard, of sitting and chatting with him, and of seeing how he was wasting away from his illnesses. The unfortunate elder had caused inconvenience to his neighbours in his cell because of his illnesses and the abundance of lice on his body, and everyone breathed a sigh of relief when he went into the hospital. There he departed to the Lord, having trodden his way of the cross in a fine manner."

Source: Protopresbyter Michael Polsky, *Noviye Mucheniki Rossijskiye, Jordanville, 1949-57, part I, chapter 26; Za Khrista Postradavshiye, Moscow: St. Tikhon's Theological Institute, 1997, p. 99)*

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During the time when the executioners Dzerzhinsky and Bahrman were in charge of Solovki, there was exiled a priest by the name of Uspensky and his son. The son soon got a job as a guard. He would escort groups of prisoners from one camp to another; apparently his cruelty earned him the trust of the NKVD. One winter, during a blizzard, he had to escort a group of prisoners which included his own father. Already old and sick, the father could not walk straight through the deep snow; he would often stumble and fall and apparently slowed the procession. Then the depraved son ordered his father to step aside into the bushes, and there he shot him. The shots echoed through the forest, and the Solovki blizzard, to the singing of the north winds, buried the new hieromartyr in snow-white vestments. The next spring, they discovered the body of the archpriest with a bullet in the back of his neck. It was incorrupt, the holy relics of a saint.

But the son Uspensky, having performed such an abomination, was rewarded by the NKVD bosses with a promotion and for a while enjoyed their confidence. For the next several years he was the chief in the Bear Hill camp and all concentration camps beyond the Onega Lake, until he was shot in the Yezhov purge.

(Source: I.M. Andreyev, *Russia's Catacomb Saints*, Platina, Ca.: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood Press, 1982, pp. 401-402)

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The clergy exiled to Solovki usually spent some time in the Transfiguration cathedral in the Kremlin, and then in the sixth company. Among them was Fr. Nicodemus. He came from Poltava region. Stooped, approaching 80, he was nevertheless fit and healthy for his age. He had been imprisoned because he did not fulfil the new rules of the Bolsheviks concerning witnesses for weddings, doctor's certificates for funerals, etc. He had been sent first to Kemi, where they took away his pectoral cross, epitachelion, riza and kamilavka, leaving him only with his Gospel. He wore a red army hat with the red star cut out. This didn't put him out.

"The people say that you can recognise a priest in bast matting. Besides, everyone knows me. And I'm not wearing bast matting, but good material, I bought it in Kiev.

As night was falling, the prisoners, starving and exhausted after a long day's work, asked Fr. Nicodemus to tell them a story. They meant by that a story from the Bible. Every evening there was an attentive crowd in front of the old altar. The prisoners interrupted the story-telling with critical or enthusiastic remarks (Fr. Nicodemus was a very good story-teller).

They particularly loved the parable of the Prodigal Son. Identifying themselves with him, they wanted to know the story to the last detail. At the point that the son returned to his father, only sobs and sighs could be heard all around. Some animated opinions were expressed: some found the father's loving behaviour in receiving the rogue again unacceptable. Others, putting themselves in the place of the father, wondered whether the return of the son would have given them joy.

The next day, after work, Chirayev wanted to meet the story-teller. He was sitting on his bed, on the third level. A ray of sunlight was playing on his face, and one could see the pleasure this gave him:

"What sunshine today, what happiness!"

They started up a conversation. The father wanted to know the life of Chirayev. On learning that he had ten more years of his sentence to serve, he said to him:

"My son, don't be sad, you are still young, you have the whole of your life in front of you... Only thank God."

"Why the devil should I thank him? How can I be happy with this dog's life?"

"Don't speak like that, don't speak like that. No joy comes from the devil. Only sadness and despair come from him. But from God comes joy and gaiety."

"One is not a man here, one is nothing, just a protoplasm."

"I a nothing, a protoplasm?! I am a child of God, no-one can take that dignity from me. God has placed me in the middle of a community which I must protect."

He spat on the earth in indignation. Chirayev retorted:

"What a fine parish you have - these thieves, these filthy bandits, dressed in rags, covered with lice and starving, these fallen officers, these shipwrecked clergy, what miserable pariahs!"

"So that you may know once and for all, this is the most beautiful parish I have ever had. Look: what splendour, three levels!"

He pointed to the camp beds superimposed on top of each other.

"Christ would be proud of this community. Do you think that it was only the scribes who went to Him? No, it was the wretched ones, the starving, the crippled who sought healing, the blind, the epileptic, the possessed, the sinners, the thieves, the peasants and the fishermen. Do you think that they thought that God had come to bring them salvation? No, my little one. They had heard that an extraordinary man was going round the country healing the blind and the paralytics, and cleansing the lepers. No! They went to Him to see what kind of man He was. They listened to Him and some began to understand. With the eyes of the body they saw nothing extraordinary. However, some had the eyes of their souls opened. It was the same as with the lepers; He had cured that one of his ulcers, but hundred by His preaching. What a fool you are! You've read the Scriptures only with your carnal eyes and your materialist spirit."

"What miracles are you talking about? No-one here needs to be healed, we don't have lepers any more!"

"You say that we don't have lepers any more! You see nothing, look around you. Who is lying down over here, who is dragging himself along over there, who is coughing? All of them are lepers who are asking for forgiveness. They don't know that they're asking for it, but they're doing it without words. And not only here, it's the same throughout the world. Everyone is hungering and thirsting for the word of salvation which

comes from God."

Big tears flowed out of his shining eyes and stopped, clinging to his white beard. Seizing Chirayev's head, the priest turned it towards the frescoes blackened by the smoke. One could only see one figure prostrated on the ground and another with his hands raised to heaven in thanksgiving. It was the father with the prodigal son.

"Look, open your eyes, rejoice!"

Fr. Nicodemus had arrived in Solovki a few days earlier, in a convoy. They had spent nine days in a train. In the railway carriages there had been cages which each contained three people. They were so crowded that in order for one to move the two others had to change position. The guards patrolled between the cages.

In Fr. Nicodemus' cage there was a robber and a Muslim Tartar. During the night the priest read and chanted the services in a low voice. He murmured the evening hymn: "Now that we have come to the setting of the sun, and behold the evening light, we praise the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, God..." The Tartar understood immediately. Although he did not understand Russian, He nevertheless began to pray in his way. The thief was silent, crouching like a rabbit. He had stubbed out his cigarette-end in his pocket. Fr. Nicodemus continued to pray: "From my youth have many passions warred against me. But do Thou Thyself defend and save me, O my Saviour.. In the Holy Spirit every soul is given life..." At the words during the Great Doxology, which he said in a soft voice: "O Lord God, Lamb of God, that takest away the sin of the world, have mercy on us...", the thief immediately made the sign of the cross.

Fr. Nicodemus said to Chirayev: "And so we have served God for nine nights, for one can serve Him anywhere. God has said: 'There where two or three are gathered together in My name, I will be in the midst of them.' But we were three! What joy that gave me! We couldn't move, we were frightened of speaking out loud, but the spirit was free and this silent communion with our neighbours was magnificent."

"But they didn't understand your prayers!"

"Why should they not have understood them? They prayed all the same, that means that they understood. They understood with the heart."

No one knew his surname, but that was unimportant. The priest-consoler was known everywhere. He told stories in a wonderful way - stories from the Bible and the lives of the saints, but also simple, real-life stories from his former parishes. One day, a commissar was passing the night in the barracks.

"Pope, I want to bring a woman here for the night, what do you think of that?"

"What do I think of it? In my seventy years I have seen many things; you are young and full of passion, if you cannot do without her, do as seems best to you."

"Shall I bring you one, too?"

"No, my child, don't worry about me, I have been a widower for fifty years."

"Has the devil never tempted you?"

He replied: "Of course he has tempted me. Isn't a pope a man? We all have human feelings, and it is the devil's task to tempt us. And so he tempts me and I respond with prayer."

They conversed like this for a long time. The commissar did not bring in a woman, but two packets of tobacco.

Another time, he was summoned for an official discussion. The commissar asked him:

"Answer me, minister of the cult, can you confirm that God created the world in six days?" he laughed sardonically.

"I confirm it, it is written in the Scripture."

"But modern science proves very clearly that that's impossible. Such a process required thousands of years, not just days."

"But what days are you speaking about?"

"Ordinary days of twenty-four hours, of course."

"Hasn't science taught you that one day on the planet Saturn lasts two years? And what days does the Creator of the universe employ? Do you know whether they are terrestrial days, saturnian days or days of some other planet?"

They called him secretly to come and visit the sick and the dying so as to say a prayer. All those who were heavy laden came to him in secret.

One day, a thief, a big, loud fellow who was always blaspheming, was crushed by a tree. They called Fr. Nicodemus; he came, but a guard was already there who wanted to drive the priest away. Nicodemus said to him calmly:

"A man is dying, he needs a last word, that's not going to last a long time, step aside a little."

The chekist obeyed. The thief could no longer speak. Stretching out the three fingers of his hand, he indicated that he had killed three men. The father gave him absolution and he died in peace.

He was a great connoisseur of the human heart. Like a woodcutter, he went from one part of the camp to the other. Someone was despondent, so he sat down beside him and talked about everyday things. Without beating about the bush, he attacked the problem. He said:

"My child, pray to Saint Nicholas and the Mother of God of Tenderness and say to him: 'Your servant is suffering, he is sad, take his pain upon yourself and intercede for him. Drive away my sadness, Saint Nicholas.' He will help you, but you must pray to him and remind him often. He has a lot to do. The whole world is asking for his help, at his age he could forget. But you remind him."

In the evening, when he was telling his "holy stories", as the thieves called them, the great, sombre church was full of people. He spoke a language which they understood. He told the stories with the aid of images, embellishing the scene so that one would have thought one was with Abraham under the oak of Mamre when the three visitors approached. He had himself given the order to his wife to bring in the veal, and he himself had been the father of the prodigal son who was so moved by the return of his child.

Boris Shiryayev writes: "The face of the old priest shining with light stood in front of me and blotted out everything from me: both the rows of hard-labour bunks, and the human mish-mash crawling on them, and the charred, smoky walls of the defiled, desecrated church."

Fr. Nicodemus never feared the wrath of the bosses, and never refused to carry out his pastoral duty. They led him secretly "to those women who wished to receive Communion. The rabble contrived to push him through the window into the hospital to the dying, which was very difficult and dangerous."

It was inevitable that Fr. Nicodemus should receive the crown of martyrdom. At Christmas they had asked him to celebrate the Divine Liturgy in one of the barracks. Two guards entered unexpectedly:

"Again you are spreading your opium!"

Making the sign of the cross in their direction, he let them understand that the Holy Rite must not be interrupted. Then they led him into the



death-cell, which had no heating. They stripped the prisoners of their outer clothing. The temperature in the ancient chapel was the same as outside, much lower than minus 20 degrees centigrade. To protect themselves from the cold, they piled up on the straw mattress, four lengthways, four sideways and four diagonally. Those who were on top protected themselves as best they could with long strips of material. During the long dark nights, Fr. Nicodemus was right at the top, telling them his marvellous stories. On Holy Saturday, radiant with joy, they celebrated the Liturgy. After embracing and kissing each other three times, they heard Fr. Nicodemus tell the story of the Crucifixion and Resurrection. The next morning, they did not wake up. Their bodies were already cold. He had shown each of them the way to his last hour, then he had had to go the way he already knew alone...

(Sources: "Le Monastere de Solovki", L'Orthodoxie, 41, December, 1991, pp. 14-21; Boris Shirayev, "Utshitelnij Pop", Pravoslavnij Kalendar, St. Petersburg: Satis, 1996, pp. 203-211)

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Protopriest Alexander Sakharov, from the Petrograd diocese, died on Solovki in 1927. Another priest Fr. Alexander took part in secret services on Solovki in 1929.

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The Petrograd priest Fr. Michael Yavorsky was first in the Solovki camps and was then condemned for ten years. He did not return.

(Sources: Protopresbyter Michael Polsky, *Noviye Mucheniki Rossijskiye*, Jordanville, 1949-57, part 2, pp. 71, 227; *Za Khrista Postradavshiy*, Moscow: St. Tikhon's Theological Institute, 1997, p. 51)

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Fr. Michael Glagolev served as a priest on the other side of the river in Moscow. Once he was told that there was going to be a dispute on a religious subject in a theatre. Lunacharsky himself would be speaking. Fr. Michael's parishioners urged him to go. They said it was necessary to fight for the souls of the young. Otherwise they would say that he had nothing to say and was giving up. Fr. Michael did not want to go, he felt that no good would come from it. But he had to carry out his duty. So he went.

The theatre was packed with people. Lunacharsky spoke ardently against religion and God. In particular, he said that the soul did not exist. Not one of the exact sciences confirmed its existence. It was comical to

believe in such a thing in the age of radio and electricity. All talk about the soul and the spirit was the raving of fools...

Fr. Michael could restrain himself no longer. He got up.

"Allow me, my friends," he said, "to tell you of a dream I had recently. I dreamed of our deeply respected commissar, Anatoly Vasilyevich Lunacharsky, whom I wouldn't want to offend by my story - God forbid! I know him to be the most intelligent man, I have never had the slightest doubt about his remarkable qualities...

"Well, then, I had this dream that our dear Anatoly Vasilyevich had died..."

As he said this, a deep silence descended upon the crowd, as in a church. Then, without hurrying, he continued:

"You know, a dream can bring such sorrow... Well, okay. Our Anatoly Vasilyevich had donated his body to an anatomical theatre. Of course, it doesn't matter, matter is the same with all of us. Let Soviet students study on my dead body...

"And so they laid the mortal remains of him who was once our dear Anatoly Vasilyevich on an anatomical table and began to cut him up, divide him up into bits. It didn't take long for the young but curious hands to cut the body up. There again, it's not every day a commissar comes your way... We-ell, soon everything had been divided up into its constituent parts. And they found the stomach, and the heart, and the tongue, and the brains. But then they looked for the soul and mind, and they just couldn't find them... What a commotion there was!..

"Well, let's suppose that there is no soul in a dead body, but you would think the mind could be found! After all, it was clear to everyone that our dear deceased one - the Kingdom, hm, hm, of heaven to him - was a very, very clever man. But hard as they tried, they just couldn't find his mind. And after this, here you are talking about the mind... How embarrassing it was! I woke up covered in sweat... Lord, forgive me, how stupid dreams can be."

For two minutes the whole hall laughed, with a joyful fire in the tired eyes of the people. But Lunacharsky didn't like it at all. The discomfiture of religion that he had counted on hadn't happened. Two days later, the chekists came to Fr. Michael at night. He was exiled to Solovki. That was in 1926...

On Solovki Fr. Michael once said: "The Bolsheviks do not so much fear weapons as faith, and ideas. But how can a real priest not be their enemy?"

Look, it's laughable to say it, but they're very frightened of us old men [there were more than two hundred Orthodox priests on Solovki at that time.] How that can be was well explained by someone: the most explosive thing in the world is thought and faith." He was shot together with S.A. Grabovsky and D.M. Shipchinsky in the autumn of 1929. He did not recognize Metropolitan Sergius.

(Source: Protopresbyter Michael Polsky, *Noviye Mucheniki Rossijskiye, Jordanville, 1949-57, part 2, p. 225; Ikh Stradaniyami Ochistitsa Rus'*, Moscow, 1996, pp. 109-112)

In the summer of 1929 there came to Solovki about thirty nuns. The majority of them were probably from the monastery of Shamordino, which was near the renowned Optina hermitage.

The nuns were not placed in the common women's quarters, but separately. When they began to be checked according to the list and interrogated, they refused to give the so-called basic facts about themselves, that is, to answer questions about their surnames, year and place of birth, education and so forth.

After shouts, threats and beatings, they were placed in solitary confinement, and were tortured by hunger, thirst and deprivation of sleep; that is, all the usual methods of pressurizing them were applied. But the nuns remained unbending and were even bold enough - a phenomenon very rare in the concentration camp - to refuse any kind of forced labour.

After several days, I, together with Professor Dr. Zhizhilenko (the secret Bishop Maximus of Serpukhov) were called to the chief of the Sanitary Division. We were confidentially ordered to conduct a medical examination of the nuns, with a hint as to the desirability of recognizing them as unfit for labour, so as to have an official basis to free them from forced physical labour.

It was the first time in the history of Solovki that the administration found itself in such a complicated situation. Usually in such cases they acted very severely and cruelly. After a serious beating of those who refused to work, they were sent to the punishment island of Anzersk, from where no one ever returned alive.

Why these rebel nuns were not sent to Anzersk we could not understand. We gave this question to the chief of the Sanitary Division of the whole camp. He explained to us that the silent, restrained protest of the nuns was not in the least like the protests with which the administration was used to dealing. These latter protests were usually accompanied by a scene, shouting and hooliganism. But here there was silence, simplicity, humility and an extraordinary meekness.

"They are fanatical martyrs seeking suffering," the head of the Sanitary Division explained. "They are some kind of psychic cases, masochists. But one becomes extraordinarily sorry for them. I cannot endure to see the humility and meekness with which they bear the pressure. And I am not the only one. Vladimir Yegorovich, the chief of the camp, also could not bear this. He even quarrelled with the chief of the Intelligence Division and he wants somehow to soften and iron over this matter. If you find them unsuitable for physical labour, they will be left in peace."

When I went out to the barracks where the nuns were being kept, I saw extraordinarily sober women, peaceful and restrained, in old, worn-out and patched but clean monastic garments. There were about 30 of them. One could give their age as an "eternal thirty", but there were both older and younger ones. In all their faces there was something from the expression of the Mother of God "the Joy of all who Sorrow", and this sorrow was so exalted and modest that I was involuntarily reminded of certain verses by Tyutchev. Their meek appearance was of a spiritual beauty which could not but elicit a feeling of contrition and awe.

"So as not to upset them, I'd better go out, Doctor," said the chief of the assignment who met me, who should have been present as a representative of the medical committee. I remained alone with them.

"Good day, Matushki," I bowed down low to them. In silence they replied with a deep bow to the waist.

"I am a physician. I've been sent to examine you."

"We are well. You don't need to examine us," several voices interrupted me.

"I am a believing Orthodox Christian, and I am confined in this concentration camp as a prisoner for Church reasons."

"Glory to God," several voices again replied to me.

"Your disturbance is understandable to me," I continued, "but I will not examine you. You only tell me what you have to complain about and I will assign you to the category of those incapable of labour."

"We are not complaining about anything. We are quite healthy."

"But without a definition of the category of your inability to work, they will send you to extraordinarily difficult labour."

"All the same, we will not work, whether it be easy or difficult labour."

"Why?" I asked in astonishment.

"Because we do not wish to work for the regime of the Antichrist."

"What are you saying?" I asked, upset. "After all, here on Solovki there are many bishops and priests who have been sent here for their confession. They all work, each one as he is able. Here, for example, there is the bishop of Vyatka, who works as a bookkeeper at the rope factory, and in the lumber department many priests work. They weave nets. On Fridays they work the whole twenty-four hours, day and night, so as to fulfill their quota extra quickly and thus free for themselves a time for prayer in the evening on Saturdays and Sunday morning."

"But we are not going to work under compulsion for the regime of the Antichrist."

"Well then, without examination I will make some kind of diagnosis for you and give the conclusion that you are not capable of hard physical labour."

"No, you needn't do that. Forgive us, but we will be obliged to say that this is not true. We are well. We can work, but we do not wish to work for the regime of the Antichrist and we shall not work even though they might kill us for this."

"They will not kill you, but they will torture you to death," I said in a quiet whisper, risking being overheard; I said it with pain of heart.

"God will help us to endure the tortures also," one of the nuns said, likewise quietly. Tears came to my eyes.

I bowed down to them in silence. I wished to bow down to the ground and kiss their feet.

A week later the commandant of the Sanitary Division entered the physician's office and, among other things, informed us:

"We're all worn out with these nuns, but now they have agreed to work. They sew and patch up clothing for the central ward. Only they as conditions that they should all be together and be allowed to sing quietly some kind of songs while they work. The chief of the camp has allowed it. There they are now, singing and working."

The nuns were isolated to such an extent that even we, the physicians of the Sanitary Division who enjoyed comparative freedom of movement, and who had many ties and friends, for a long time were unable to receive any kind of news about them. And only a month later we found out how

the last act of their tragedy had developed.

From one of the convoys that had come to Solovki, there was brought a priest who turned out to be the spiritual father of some of the nuns. And, although contact between them seemed, under the camp conditions, to be completely impossible, the nuns in some way managed to ask directions from their instructor.

The essence of their questions consisted of the following:

"We came to the camp for suffering and here we are doing fine. We are together; we sing prayers; the work is pleasing for us. Have we acted rightly that we agreed to work under the conditions of the regime of the Antichrist? Should we not renounce even this work?"

The spiritual father replied by categorically prohibiting them from working.

And then the nuns refused every kind of work. The administration found out who was guilty for this. The priest was shot. But when the nuns were informed about this, they said:

"Now no one is able to free us from this prohibition."

The nuns also refused to accept any camp food. The Catacomb priest Fr. Philip Anikin and other priests brought them food out of their own meagre rations.

Fr. Philip relates that the nuns lived through the summer in the camp, but then were separated and taken off somewhere one by one. Then, according to reports, they were killed.

(Sources: I.M. Andreyev, *Russia's Catacomb Saints*, Platina, Ca.: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 1982, chapter 4; *Pravoslavnaya Zhizn'*, N 1 (1574), January 1/14, 1997, pp. 11-12)

In the year 1929, in the frightful concentration camp of Solovki, beginning with the end of the winter there was a great increase of scurvy, and towards spring 18,000 prisoners of the fourth division of the camp (the division that occupied the island of Solovki itself), the number of those afflicted reached 5000. I, as an imprisoned physician, was offered, apart from my usual work, to take upon myself the supervision of one of the new scurvy barracks for 500 prisoners.

When I came to this barracks I was met by a young Jewish orderly with a very handsome, lively face. He turned out to be a fourth-year medical student. To have such a qualified helper was a great rarity and an immense help. Alexander Yakovlevich Jacobson (such was his name) went

around the whole barracks with me and showed me all the patients. Concerning each one, he told me in detail his diagnosis and the characteristic traits of the disease. The patients were all in a very serious condition. Rotting and pussing gums afflicted with the sores of scurvy gangrene, an immense swelling of the joints, bleeding from scurvy in the form of blue spots in the extremities were what came first to the eyes in a hasty examination. A more thorough investigation revealed that many of them turned out to have serious complications in the inner organs: hemorrhagic nephritis, pleuritis and pericarditis, serious afflictions of the eyes, and so forth. From the explanations of the orderly, I understood that he knew precisely what was what in the symptomatology of diseases, and he made correct diagnoses and prognoses.

Finding out that Alexander was working without stop 24 hours at a time, I sent him off to rest and began to go about and examine the patients alone. In the histories of their disease were registered all the so-called regular facts, that is, first name, surname, date and place of birth, and so forth; the diagnosis was set forth, and subjective complaints were registered. In view of the immense number of patients, I was forced to examine them very hastily and to make extremely brief notes. Nonetheless, my examination, which began at eight in the morning, ended only at 3 a.m., with two intermissions of one half hour for lunch and supper.

The next day I again came to the barracks at eight in the morning and found Alexander, who had already gone about all the patients, filling all my prescriptions and gathering information on the most serious cases. He had worked from 12 noon to 8 a.m., that is, 20 hours, again without stop. His face was puffed and had clear traces of serious blows. In reply to my inquiries he told me the following. At 7 a.m. the barracks had been visited by the chief of the Intelligence Division (GPU) in the camp. This chief was drunk. Going around the patients, he asked them whether they were satisfied with the work of the physician and the orderly. Some of the sick prisoners declared that the doctor had only come late at night, "glanced in" and "quickly" looked at "some" of the patients "without giving any help to the seriously ill", while the orderly had come to work yesterday only at 12 noon.

Without investigating whether these complaints were just or not, and without asking any explanations of the orderly, the chief hit the latter several times in the face and ordered me, as the physician in charge of this section, to come to him at 12 noon "for an explanation".

"Alexander Yakovlevich," I addressed the orderly, "I have to go, as you know, for an interrogation. You yourself see how many seriously ill patients there are. Even though your work has already been going on now

for a whole 24 hours, could you not work another two or three hours until I return (I hope) from the interrogation?"

"Of course, doctor," the orderly replied meekly. "I will remain and look at all the seriously ill."

"Please do, for after all, you see what's what even in the most complicated cases, and I can only thank you warmly for your help. And for my part I will try to explain to the chief of the Intelligence Division that he has been unjust to you."

"Oh, don't disturb yourself about me," the orderly cried out in a lively way, "and do not defend me. I had to suffer much more difficult torments without any kind of guilt, and I only thank God for them. Remember what St. John Chrysostom said, 'Glory to God for all things'."

"Are you a Christian, then?" I asked him, astonished.

"Yes, I am an Orthodox [Christian] Jew," he replied, smiling joyfully.

In silence I shook his hand and said, "Well, goodbye. Thank you. Tomorrow we will talk. Pray for me."

"Be calm," the orderly told me in a confidential tone. "Constantly, the whole time you are at the interrogation, pray to your guardian angel. May God preserve you, Doctor."

I went out. On the way I prayed to the Lord, to His Most Pure Mother, to St. Nicholas the Wonderworker, and especially to my guardian angel, fulfilling the good advice of Alexander.

Going into the office of the chief of the Intelligence Division, for the last time I mentally addressed my guardian angel with the prayer, "Defend me! Enlighten me!"

The chief met me in silence, severely. With a finger he pointed to a chair. I sat down.

"Tell me, when did you make the rounds of the patients yesterday, and why did your helper, this Jew orderly, go to work only at lunch time?"

Mentally, without words, I called to my help my guardian angel. Trying to be calm, in a quiet, even voice, without hurrying, I related to him everything in some detail. I related that by the directive of the chief of the Sanitary Division I had come to take the barracks at 8 a.m. Finding out that the orderly, after opening a new ward, receiving 300 patients, and preparing everything needed for my coming, had worked without interruption for a whole day and night, I sent him to rest for several hours



while I myself took charge of making the rounds of the patients. My rounds took me from eight in the morning until three at night. And in fact, the last group of patients, in the attic, I examined only between two and three o'clock at night. The orderly, after his uninterrupted 24-hour work shift, after sleeping only three or four hours, again came to work yesterday at 12 noon, and is again working without interruption now for a second 24 hours, right up to this moment.

"Then what are those swine complaining about!" the chief interrupted me. "Tell those good-for-nothings that I'll put them in solitary confinement!"

"It's not their fault," I replied. "After all, they didn't know the working conditions. They told you the truth, that the orderly came to them in the attic at twelve noon, and that the physician made their rounds only at two in the morning."

"Well," he said, scratching his head and yawning, "well, go."

Coming out of the interrogation, I immediately set out for the barracks ward. There I found the chief of the Sanitary Division, a physician who after serving out his term on a criminal charge (for an abortion which ended in death), remained to serve as "freely employed".

The chief of the Sanitary Division was shouting at the orderly because of something that was out of order.

"What an outrage to appear so late for work," he shouted at me.

I explained, and he left.

"Why is he so angry with you?" I asked Alexander.

"Because there is a strong odour here. I explained to him that 90 per cent of the patients have pussing wounds. Then he cried out, 'Silence!' and then you came in."

"Go and sleep," I told him. "Come at six o'clock in the evening."

For a long time now I had wanted to become better acquainted with Alexander and have a heart-to-heart talk with him; but because we were so extremely busy and exhausted, we could not manage to do this for a long time.

Once, however, on the feast of the Nativity of the Most Holy Mother of God, under the pretext of an inspection of a distant work point, I managed to arrange to get both of us assigned together. Early in the morning I came with him from the Solovki monastery itself, along the St. Sabbatius

road, and after going several kilometres we went off to the side of this road into a pine forest. It was a marvellous, clear, warm autumn day, such as rarely occur on Solovki. In the rays of the sun the birch trees shone with bright melted gold as large spots in the pine forest. This Levitan-like landscape gave a quiet sadness of spiritual joy to the feast of the Mother of God. Going into the depths of the forest, I sat down with Alexander on some stumps, and I asked him to tell me about himself. Here is what he told me.

The son of a merchant of St. Alexander's Market in Petersburg, he lost his parents early and began to go his own way in life. Being a second-year student of the medical faculty, he became acquainted with and a friend of a certain geologist, a Jew who was a Tolstoyite, who attracted him with his tales of Leo Tolstoy and the teaching of the Tolstoyites. A strong impression was made on Alexander, not by the theological works of Tolstoy, but by his tales and stories: "God is Where Love Is", "What Men Live By" and others. A year later, being a third-year student, he became acquainted with an old physician who had known Leo Tolstoy personally. This physician, a convinced Orthodox Christian, explained to Alexander the essence of the Tolstoy sect, and revealed to him "the immeasurable treasury of the Orthodox Church". A year after that, Alexander was baptized and became an Orthodox Christian.

"After my baptism," Alexander related, "I could not look with indifference on religious Jews. The atheist Jews, as the majority are now, did not interest me much. But those Jews who believed in God began to seem to me to be simply unfortunate people in error whom I was morally obliged to bring to Christ. I asked why they were not Christians. Why did they not love Christ?"

The disputes and preaching of the newly-converted Jew became known, and Alexander was arrested.

"At one of the camp assignments," Alexander continued, "where I worked at the very difficult common labours, at lumbering, there was an exceptional beast for a chief. In the morning and evening, before and after work, he would line up the prisoners and order them to sing 'morning and evening prayers': in the morning the 'Internationale', and in the evening some kind of Soviet song in which were the words: 'All of us as one will die for the power of the Soviets'. Everyone sang, but I couldn't; I was silent. Going about the ranks, the chief noticed that I was silent, and he began to beat me on the face. Then I sang loudly, unexpectedly even for myself, looking at heaven: 'Our Father Who are in the heavens.' This beast of a chief became possessed with malice, and throwing me to the ground, he beat me unconscious with his heels. After being freed from the camp, I received a 'voluntary exile' to the city of Vyatka."

"Well, and how did you settle in Vyatka?" I asked him.

"When I came to Vyatka, a city totally unknown to me, first of all I asked where the church was. (At that time all the churches had not yet been closed.) When I came to the church, I asked whether there was not an icon there of St. Tryphon of Vyatka, and when his memory was celebrated. They showed me an icon, and said that the memory of the saint was to be celebrated the next day, October 8. My heart leaped for joy that St. Tryphon had brought me to his city for his own feast day. Falling to my knees before the saint's icon, I told him that I had no friend in Vyatka besides him, and that I had no one else to ask help of. I asked that he might arrange life and work for me in Vyatka. After prayer, my heart felt simple, at ease, and quietly joyful - a true sign that my prayer had been heard. Coming out of the church after the all-night vigil, I slowly walked along the main street, holding under my arms a little bundle with my things.

"Well, my dear, have you just left hospital?' I suddenly heard a pleasant woman's voice saying.

Before me stood an old, plump, neatly dressed woman, looking at me with clear, kind eyes.

"No, matushka,' I replied, 'I haven't come from hospital; I've come from prison. I was freed from a concentration camp and have been sent to Vyatka.'

"Oh, for what crimes did you suffer punishment: for theft, for robbery, for murder?'

"No, for belief in God, and because, being a Jew, I became a Christian,' I replied.

"A conversation was struck up. She invited me to come in. In her room everything was clean and orderly, and the whole corner above the bed was hung with icons, before which three lamps of different colours were burning.

"Tomorrow is the commemoration of Tryphon of Vyatka, the defender and protector of our city,' the woman said, and showed me a little icon of the saint.

"I fell down on my knees before it and wept from joyful gratitude. And so I arranged to live with this pious widow, and two days later I found work as a truck driver. So I lived peacefully, glory to God, for half a year. But in the spring I was arrested again and this time received ten years, and came to the holy island of Solovki. Now it is Saints Zosimas and

Sabbatius who are helping me with their prayers."

In silence I walked further with Alexander into the depths of the forest. And suddenly, totally unexpectedly, we stumbled upon an old, half-ruined stone chapel, with the windows and door boarded up. The boards were old and were easily torn off with a little effort. We went into the chapel and saw on the wall a large old icon of the Smolensk Mother of God. The paint on the icon was chipped off, and only the face of the Mother of God was preserved clearly - as a matter of fact, only her loving eyes.

Alexander suddenly fell down on his knees before this icon, raising both hands high, and in a loud voice he sang: "Meet it is to bless thee..." He sang the prayer to the end. Something gripped my throat, and I could not sing with my voice; but my whole soul sang and rejoiced, looking at the two pairs of eyes: the loving eyes of the Mother of God, and the contrite eyes of Alexander.

A month after this walk, Alexander was arrested and sent away, no one knows where. The arrest of a prisoner usually ended with the firing squad. (In fact, Professor S.V. Grotov, who was in Solovki at the time and knew Alexander Jacobson well as a fellow opponent of sergianism, testifies that he was shot in 1930.)

Almost forty years have passed since then, and before me there often appears with unforgettable clarity the wondrous picture of the prayer of this Orthodox Jew confessor, before the eyes of the icon of the Mother of God. And I hear his joyful voice resounding with unvanquished faith and a flaming, deep desire to glorify her who is "more honourable than the Cherubim..."

(Source: I.M. Andreyev, Russia's Catacomb Saints, Platina, Ca.: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 1982, chapter 3)

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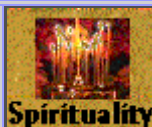
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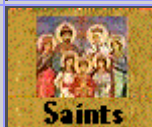
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