

DET 119 (1)
 Jan P.
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WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES
 LUTHERAN WORLD FEDERATION
 Joint Service to Refugees

C I R C U L A R

I enclose a copy of a letter recently received from a reliable correspondent in Harbin. When you have read it, please refer back to this following paragraph.

The people being herded and threatened in this way by Soviet Russia are the same people who were issued with visas for Brazil, which the Brazilian authorities have since suspended. Even if, by some miracle, the machinations of Russia could be overcome, we should at this moment still be unable to resettle them, in spite of all the work spent on their case.

Here is a body of human beings deprived of elementary human rights. In spite of the high talk and aspirations of the age, must we admit that we can do nothing to save these children of God?

I beg and implore that all those in High Places, whether of Governments, United Nations, or Churches, might lay these matters to their hearts and leave no possible effort unattempted.

I quote from the letter: "Is there no public opinion, no law, no power of any kind that could deliver us from the fate awaiting us?"

Please let me know your answer.

Sincerely yours,

L. Stumpf

L. Stumpf,
 Director.

Hong Kong,
 November 3rd, 1954.

Encl.: Letter.

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LETTER FROM HARBIN

20th October, 1954.

I beg to submit for your consideration a short report on the state of things in connection with departures from China that is prevailing locally.

As you are no doubt aware, after the Soviet Consulate had opened the registration for departure to "Zelina" (virgin soils) - all work in connection with the movement to foreign countries was practically suspended under pretext that the staff of the Consulate was all engaged in putting through the repatriation of the, as they called them, "patriots".

At the same time, though it was publicly declared that Soviet citizens are perfectly free whether to register for the "Zelina" or not - and that only those fit for manual labour are expected to enlist - facts showed a different attitude and gave place to serious misapprehensions. Thus, in the Young Men Organization ("SSM") members unwilling to register were threatened with expulsion and publicly condemned and reviled at special meetings which were given the form of Court proceedings. Also, those employed in the Society of Soviet Citizens and other Soviet Organizations and enterprises were given to understand that unless they show themselves willing to move to the "Zelina" they are likely to lose their job. Now, it should be taken into consideration that all those employees are paid so poorly, that they hardly make the two ends meet: they have no savings, are clad but scantily and stand in need of almost everything over and above the bare necessities of life. They live from hand to mouth and for such people to lose their job means starvation. Therefore, it is obvious that they had no alternative, but to register and depart to the "Zelina".

Please understand me well: I am far from asserting that ALL of those departed were unwilling to go; there were a certain number animated with patriotic feelings - the call of one's native country is something beyond reason and has a magic power appealing to something concealed deeply in every man's heart. But the only thing I am trying to convey to you is that MANY were forced to go under direct or indirect compulsion.

Then the following peculiarity of this movement should be noted: the word "repatriation" was NEVER mentioned; people were offered to go to work on the virgin soils and those not strong enough or of an advanced age were refused admission, if they had no strong and physically fit members in their family.

By the end of August the last parties of "Zelina" people departed from Harbin and the Consulate declared that now they were prepared to start normal work and to consider the applications of those willing to depart to foreign countries. I wish to mention here that there is a considerable number of persons who had applied to the Consulate for that purpose as early as August or September of the past year and whose case is still in a state of suspension.

At that time approximately all members of Soviet Colony received enquiry sheets the most important question of same being - whether you intend or not to leave China for some foreign country. Most of the people intending to go, replied in the affirmative, even those who had not yet on hand the respective visas.

Now, those who had not yet applied to the Consulate, were supplied with a different kind of enquiry sheets prepared specially for those desirous to go abroad; they had to be filled out and submitted to the S-ty of Soviet Citizens with an accompanying letter stating to reason of your intention to depart.

Meanwhile, people, especially those who have been awaiting for so long a time, began to go to the Consulate on reception days and kept enquiring as to when may they expect to get a reply on their case. However, they only reply that was given by the Officers of the Consulate was: either - "You will not go" (and to those with children - "we shall not allow you to ruin your children's future), or "Wait, all applications are now under consideration: when this work is finished you will receive a notification." That was all; no argument, pleading, entreaty could move the indifferent coldness and decision of those in charge of these proceedings.

Well, on October 18th written summons from the S-ty of Soviet Citizens were served to a great number of persons (approximately to 400) offering them to appear at public meetings to be held on the 19th in the Soviet Clubs of the city, one at Pristan, another - at Modiagow. Now a short report of what followed, (it refers to the meeting in the Pristan Club).

By 6 o'clock the room assigned by the Club for that purpose was packed with people anxious to know their fate. At 6 o'clock exactly the representatives of the Consulate (Blokin acting Consul, and Serebriakov, vice-consul) appeared before the meeting accompanied by three members of the Administration of the S-ty of Soviet Citizens. It was Ser. who took word. He said: "I was directed by the Consulate General to make known to you the list of persons who had applied for permission to depart to capitalistic countries and whose request was turned down by the Consulate". He offered to one of the members of the S-ty of Soviet Citizens to start with the reading. And now there followed an interminable list of persons who were refused their natural right to be their own masters.

The reading finished, Ser. again applied to the audience with the following words: "You assembled here, more than 200 persons, young and old, men and women, but the one thing you all have in common is that you are Soviet citizens. And now I wish you to understand that there is only one way for Soviet citizens to follow, and that is the way to their native Country. Some of you had the cheek to write in their applications that they were desirous to go to their native land - Palestine. For a Soviet citizen there is no other native land but USSR. Please think twice before you come to any sort of decision and make up your mind WITH WHOM YOU ARE (these words sounded like a concealed threat).

He then said: "In general I must warn you that from now on this problem of departure to foreign countries will be a very hard one".

He sat down. There was a general commotion. People began to ask questions, to shout... "where is your freedom", - "Why didn't you offer us to go to Russia earlier?" - "Nine years we have been treated by you like dogs, and now you wish us to go to USSR". - "Are there not Soviet citizens residing abroad". (To which Ser. replied:- "Yes, to our regret there are".)

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It was obvious that Ser. began to grow angry. He had a short consultation with Blokin. Then he rose and declared, that the present occasion was not a meeting, that no questions should be put and no answers given: the only purpose of the meeting being to make known the decision of the Soviet Consulate. All this was said in a rather aggressive manner. But people could not be kept quiet. Ser. lost his temper and applied to the audience with the following words which were hardly to be expected from the lips of a responsible member of a Consulate: "Well, is your desire to go abroad a very strong one?" (Shouts - "Yes, yes, we wish to go, let us go etc..."). "Then (with a sharp sidewise movement of the right hand) **THROW YOUR SOVIET PASSPORTS TO THE DEVIL** and do whatever you think best. That is all."

I cannot describe to you what followed. At first we were all literally stunned. Then there was a general outcry, people rose from their seats, I saw all around me flushed or pale faces, nothing could be made out in the general brouhahah, in the general confusion that ensued. Ser. grew pale. All of them in a haste gathered their papers and eclipsed themselves through a side door (to the restaurant of the Club).

In the outer hall (foyer) of the Club a great number of people were gathered, likewise on the street outside the Club itself. All were excited, many desperate, furious, depressed or otherwise, according to everyone's temperament and nature.

Taking into consideration that approximately 400 summons were told to have been served and served only to the heads of families, over 1,000 persons were on that day refused the right to depart from China.

It is believed that at least some 2,000 persons are still awaiting decision. It makes a considerable group of over 3,000 people; you will easily understand that the whole town is in commotion...

Now what are we to do? All those you applied for departure to capitalistic countries are marked men. There is no way for them to USSR whose Government NEVER forgives or forgets. It is obvious. To relinquish Soviet passports? But how? Taking into consideration the hostile attitude of Soviet Consulate, it is most likely that they will refuse acknowledgement of the fact of surrender of the passports; therefore, no alteration could be made in Chinese Residence Certificates, failing which Chinese Authorities will still consider us as Soviet citizens and refuse exit permits.

Another thing: many fear, that many among us could be victims of violence similar to that which we had all witnessed in 1946 when over 10,000 people were taken by sheer force over the frontier. What can we do, if one day a truck will be brought up to our doors and we most civilly offered to pack some of our belongings and to mount for departure in a well known direction? Once already we went through this kind of experience (never to be forgotten or forgiven) - what then, now again? Is there no public opinion, no moral laws, no power of any kind that could deliver us from the fate awaiting us.

Another alternative: we are allowed to remain in China. But we cannot remain here for an indefinite time. We have no work, no property to speak of, most of us no savings.

What shall we do? How keep our families above the level? In the long run, many may be compelled to submit and to go to their certain doom.

That is all. Every word of it is true. Nothing is exaggerated or contorted. Things hardly to be believed, but very real and dangerous for many thousands of decent, peaceful people, meaning no harm but considered and treated like criminals.

P.S. One thing more I want to mention: We are getting AFRAID. We begin to have the feeling of being trapped. I know many people who would rather make away with themselves, than submit.

22.10.1954 It is said that there will be a 2nd round and that more summons are expected to be distributed to-day or to-morrow.

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RECORDS RELATING TO THE 'TREASON TRIAL' (REGINA vs F. ADAMS AND OTHERS ON CHARGE OF HIGH TREASON, ETC.), 1956 1961

TREASON TRIAL, 1956 1961

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