PERSONAL MEMORIES OF THE FATE OF THE FAMILY OF 1939 ESTONIAN PRESIDENT PÄTS

Helgi-Alice Päts was daughter-in-law of Konstantin Päts, President of the Republic of Estonia when the Red Army came in and occupied the nation. Below is her chronicle of the ordeal that Päts and his family endured.

The Reminiscences of Helgi-Alice Päts

For many years I have thought that I should write down what happened to my family in 1940, for it reflects at the same time what happened to the Estonian people. I dedicate these pages to my older son and to his children, Madis, who is now seventeen years old, and to Madli, who is fifteen.

My younger son, Henn, died at the age of seven of starvation at the Ufa orphanage either on February 1 or 7, 1944. The exact date is not known.

JULY 30, 1940. It was a cool, rainy day. In the evening, about 7 o'clock, cars roared into the yard of Kloostrimetsa farm which had been developed by Konstantin Päts at the formerly named Ussisoo as a model farm.

Maxim Unt, the Interior Minister at the time, and four men emerged from the cars and came into the house. Some of them remained standing by the door and one, quite naturally, sat by the phone.

Unt wanted to speak privately with Konstantin Päts and my husband, Victor. They went to talk on the closed-in porch.

In connection with this event, I remember a conversation with Konstantin Päts about a week before this date. He said that we might have to go to Russia for a while. I should come along with the children because we'd be safer there than here right now. My sons were then seven and four. I told Konstantin Päts that under no circumstances would I go with him to Russia with my little sons. I have feared Communists since my childhood. I think it was in 1917, I can't remember the exact date, when the Communists in Viljandi imprisoned my father, Jaan Lattik. Although he was arrested for only a short time, the incident made an everlasting impression on me. My fears of Communists are not baseless. In 1919, they tortured to death my mother's brother, Edgars Hassmann, the pastor of Salatsi Massalaste.

After a short time on the porch, Konstantin Päts came to me and said, "Go now, child, without a word of protest, and all of you start packing things to take along. We haven't been given much time." My children's faithful nanny, Olga Tunder, begged us to take her along. J said to her, "Dear Olga, we cannot do that, because we don't know what is going to happen to us." Then she asked my husband and said to him, "If something should happen to you, then I will care for and raise your sons." A year later, when we were imprisoned on June 26, 1941, in Ufa, Bashkir, she too was imprisoned. Anyone leaving Independent Estonia could not foresee such brutality.

We packed whatever we could, basically clothes, especially for the children, and some food. All of this took place under the surveillance of guards.

All of us were weeping and my son, Matti, asked Konstantin Päts, "Grandfather, why aren't you crying?" He answered, "I have used up all my tears for the Estonian nation; I have no more tears left."

Dusk was approaching and it was still raining when we got into the car. My brother Leo and our ever helpful cook, Juuli Meibaum, stood by the car. They were not taken along. And then we drove away.

At the station, the car drove to some side tracks where a train was waiting. On either side of the door was an armed soldier. We waited there a long time, but toward morning we reached Narva. All the windows in the train were covered with curtains and we weren't allowed to look out. After we had crossed the border, we were allowed to stand by the window. They no longer feared that someone would recognize us. We reached Leningrad in the morning. We were taken to the "Hotel Astoria." The table was prepared with a variety of foods and the waiters wore jackets that had frayed cuffs and lacked the whiteness of former days.

Our journey to Moscow started the next evening. All the trips started in the evening after the children had already been put to bed. In Moscow, we were quickly driven from the station to a wide highway. We traveled for a long time and we didn't know where. It was night. After about an hour and a half, the car turned onto a road cut through the woods. We came to a high wooden fence topped by barbed wire. A large gate opened and the car drove up to a rather attractive summer house dating back to the Tsarist times. A large, lovely garden surrounded us and in the distance was an even lovelier lake. Then, again, one evening after the children had been put to bed, cars pulled up to the house and we were told to get our suitcases and that we had been assigned to live in Ufa, Bashkir.

We rode through the dark to the railroad station in Moscow. We walked down a long, long platform, holding on to the hands of my sleepy children. I noticed that Konstantin Päts had difficulty walking so fast, for his legs hurt. He clenched his teeth and leaned on his cane. My husband wanted to help him, but he refused assistance.

Again, we were in a train for two nights and a day. We reached Ufa, our so-called destination. Ten months later, all of us were separated from each other. Communism showed its true face. Upon arrival, we were taken to the NKVD house and placed in a tiny apartment consisting of 2 rooms and a foyer. We were here for two days and two nights. Prepared food was brought to our table. Then once again, after nightfall, we were taken to a little house off the courtyard on Lenin Street, the city's principal artery. Here we had the little house to ourselves. The house even had a bathroom, and on the living room walls were portraits of Lenin and Stalin!

We were somewhat freer now and were allowed to go to the city. We were warned, however, not to go too far from the main street, because it could be dangerous. We were convinced of that when we saw how poorly people were dressed and how empty the shops were. One or two men always accompanied us at a certain distance during our excursions.

Konstantin Päts had been assigned 2,000 rubles per month in living expenses or pension, I don't remember what it was called. A young Russian girl named Liisa came every now and again, and we would give her some money to buy us goods from the NKVD store. She came with considerable regularity. She said that she had come barefoot from the country near Ufa and gotten a job with the NKVD. There was nothing to buy in the food stores except champagne and canned lobster. And there were ration cards for bread! For ten months we stood in long lines for bread, never knowing when bread would be delivered to the store. And one could only get bread in person with the card. Konstantin Päts, of course, could not stand in those lines, but the rest of us did, including our young sons, weather permitting.

The winters in Ufa are extremely cold and snowy. The area around the store was always filled with boys and girls in rags and asking for bread. And this was true even before the start of the big war.

I can't remember if it was in 1938 or 1939 when I had gotten a phone call in Tallinn from the Russian embassy, and Ambassador Ustinov's wife had asked me if she could come and visit me at our apartment on Toompea and at what time. I had told her to please come. I can't remember whether we conversed in German or in French. At that time, I did not speak Russian. She brought my children a large basketful of the most beautiful grapes. She added that in Russia all children eat such grapes. What fateful irony! I was to see for myself not too much later what the wretched children ate or did not eat. And in Ufa I remembered those grapes of Mrs. Ustinov's.

While we were still in Estonia, Ambassador Ustinov, who was a fine man, shot himself to death in the embassy building. He had been called to Moscow and he must have known what that meant during those Stalinist times. The Estonians and foreign diplomats who had to attend Ambassador Ustinov's funeral later talked about the gloomy feelings they had experienced when Mrs. Ustinov gave a fierce revolutionary speech by her late husband's coffin. I wonder if she really was his wife.

To return to Ufa. Two men from the NKVD started visiting Konstantin Päts. They came to chat, so to speak. We knew what that meant. Päts wanted to retire at a normal hour; his legs hurt him often and his diabetes was not easy to manage, given the lack of a proper diet. He finally said to the men one evening, "Leave me alone. My life's work, the establishment of Independent Estonia and the years that followed, have been an open book. I have no secrets to disclose and you know that well enough." After that they did not come as often or as late.

Their plans to liquidate our family went back in time. I have thought about it very much. Konstantin Päts did not believe that Stalin would treat him so brutally, in such a barbarian fashion. After all, only a year ago he had received from Stalin personally a large photo inscribed with a dedication. Thus, he hoped deeply that no harm would come to me and my
little boys if he took us along. My feminine intuition, however, did not deceive me. When I tried to warn K. Päts before our departure, he became angry with me.

Olga Tunder, who spoke Russian, sometimes met in the yard the woman who lived in the house facing the street. She lived with her grandson, Misha, a youngster of fifteen or sixteen, who built snowmen with my elder son. One day the old woman told Olga, "All the people that have lived in the house you're in now have disappeared without a trace. Nobody has ever returned to it."

Somehow we lived through the fall and winter. Days were separated from nights by standing in line for bread. Before the 7th of November the shops sold sugar and cookies for cash; also before the 1st of May. What a party. Spring arrived. Ufa is situated in a naturally lovely setting, surrounded by the Ufinka and Belaya rivers. During that time I think we got one or two parcels from home and we were allowed to write home. I wrote a short letter to my mother and father, saying that I was alive.

I can't find the words to comment on a film shown here in our cinemas and TV a few years ago depicting the last days of Independent Estonia. The film's narrator, academician Habermann, said the following: "Konstantin Päts asked the workers of Estonia if they would let him take jam and potatoes to Russia with him. And, of course, the workers let him.... " That is the explanation of an academician who doesn't have the slightest idea how we were taken away or with what. It's just one lie after another, and so it will continue for the rest of my days, and there will be plenty left over for the generations to come, because justice does not exist anymore.

World War II broke out on June 22, 1941 (*sic*). We heard it over the radio in Ufa during dinner. On June 26, that is, 4 days later, a car pulled up after lunch. In walked the two men who now and then had come to chat with K. Päts. He and my husband were to go with them because the NKVD Chief wanted to talk with them. Terrible fear ran through me. I helped K. Päts put on his coat and said to him, "Dad, what is going to happen now?" He shrugged one shoulder, a motion he made whenever he was under stress and had to make a quick decision, and said, "We'll see what happens, child." Those were K. Päts' last words to me. He kissed me on the forehead. He himself looked so grave. Perhaps at that moment he felt that he should not have brought me and the children along. And so they went, my husband and K. Päts, and they never returned.

About an hour or more after that, a car came to get me. Olga Tunder translated to them that I would not go anywhere without my children. They permitted me to take my sons along. After we entered the NKVD building, I was taken through a door and told that someone inside wanted to talk with me, and the children would have to wait outside. I stroked their heads and told them to be good, and that I would be right back.

I came back five years later. By then, my younger son, Henn, had died. At the first interrogation session I immediately asked, "Where are my young sons?" The uniformed interrogator smiled and said through the interpreter, "They were your sons. Now they are ours!"

Six months of solitary confinement, and for company – hunger, cold and lice. Countless tears and immeasurable anguish during all those years. And always that one question: why all this brutality, and who has been given the right to inflict it? Despair and loneliness. After a couple of weeks of confinement, a uniformed man entered my cell and read from a paper that I had been sentenced to five years of imprisonment under Paragraph 7/35, in other words [I was guilty as a] "socially dangerous element." All of this had been decided in secret. "Give me your signature to show that I have read you your sentence." That was all!

After that, the real interrogations started. They were always at night, even during the 1950's when I was arrested for a second time, and between 6 o'clock in the morning and 10 o'clock at night I was not even permitted to even lie down.

After the six months in solitary confinement, I was taken to a general cell. As I stepped over the threshold, I immediately stepped on somebody and stumbled. The floor was covered with prisoners and behind me the iron door slammed shut. In this cell I saw Olga Tunder, who had been arrested on the same day that my children and I were arrested, June 26, 1941. Until that time I had hoped in the bottom of my heart that Olga was with my children and that they were only trying to scare me when they said that my sons are theirs now. Even this last hope of a mother perished. Olga had been sentenced to five years in prison as a spy.

During the course of the next year I was taken from one prison to another. Then a long train ride, 350 km to the north of Sverdlovsk in a train full of prisoners that had all the windows barred. On the road we were sometimes given extremely salty fish and not one drop of water... I was separated from Olga already in the prison and we were placed in different cells. I knew nothing about my children. Almost all the prisoners I rode with on the train were criminals. Finally, we reached the Turinski prison camp. Its population was about 700 men and 50 women. The women's barracks were filled to capacity with different nationalities, and most of the prisoners were rogues.

But there were also some educated, intelligent people. Most of them were political prisoners. Inside the camp there were all kinds of lower and higher superiors taken from among the prison population, all of them sentenced under the criminal paragraph. They supervised the political prisoners

everywhere. I was neither, having been sentenced under paragraph 7/35 as "a socially dangerous element." To this day I don't understand what it means.

In my barrack there were three Germans from the Caucacus, a Jewish pharmacist from Moscow, two Latvians, one Finn and many other nationalities from Russia. Here I used German in order to communicate. The head of the camp was Jewish and spoke German. I learned Russian quite fast. The Jewish pharmacist helped me look for my children. She knew where to write, knew where the lists of all the orphanages were assembled. I assumed that they had been placed in an orphanage. Even the children had been separated: the older boy, Matti, was in a Russian orphanage and the younger, Henn, was in a Tatar orphanage.

There were also Estonians in the camp, mostly men. There were also Crimeans, Germans, Rumanians, Jews, also from Tallinn, Latvians from Riga, Greeks, Poles and Lithuanians.

In time I received a message that my sons were in Ufa in separate orphanages. Then I sent my first letter, in Estonian, to my son Matti. I imagined that he had learned to write by now. And then came the much anticipated letter from him. He had drawn a silhouette of Toompea castle with a blue-black and white flag on the paper. He wrote about his little brother, saying that they too were separated and that Hans (that's what we called him at home) does not yet know how to write. Matti asked why dad and I did not come home to where they are, and where are we, anyway. And really, where were we? How to answer? In his first letter, Matti was already using some Russian letters. When I replied to him the following month, I told him to write to me in Russian, because he was going to a Russian school. I was allowed to write one letter per month. He was beginning to forget Estonian and I would not have been able to read his letters. I tried to impress upon him to be a good student and that I would surely return to him shortly and we would all go back home.

But then I had a dream; whoever doesn't believe in the significance of dreams doesn't have to. In my dream, I saw that only I and my elder son remained alive. We were standing in an open field. In the distance appeared to be my father's farmhouse in Viljandi. I knew that my younger son was in it and it was on fire. Then I saw my husband go along the road, passing me and Matti and going into the forest I called and screamed to him that Hans was in that burning house and that he must go and rescue him. My husband did not look at us and continued along the road. Then, a huge bomb fell on the spot next to where Matti and I were standing, but it did not explode. We were both in shock but still alive.

There were Jewish merchants from Tallinn in the Turinski prison camp. They were in the offices and the medical center where the work was lighter. They did not work in the forest. But they helped me a lot in ways that helped me stay alive. They helped me get a job in the camp hospital. The prisoners' documents were in the hands of the office workers, and they pretty well determined which prisoners went to do heavy work at the bottom of hell and which ones would be spared that stage altogether. When I said that I didn't know medicine, the Tallinn Jew said to me, "If someone complains of pain above the waist, give him valerian, and if the pain is below the waist, give him castor oil." And really, there were not many other remedies available.

In 1945, amnesty was given to those sentenced under paragraph 7/35. My sentence was reduced to 6 months. I was released on December 26, 1945, instead of June 26, 1946. Even this did not come to pass for me. While I was waiting at the gate, standing there in a worn quilt jacket, felt boots, and a chronically empty stomach, and the knowledge that I would very soon be going directly to Ufa to see my surviving son Matti, I was suddenly called back and told that the amnesty did not apply to me. I had to go back to the camp. Such unbelievable cruelty and ridiculing! Many must derive pleasure from such authority.

I was released on June 26, 1946, when my five-year term of punishment had ended. Punishment – for what? What had I done to whom? I had not lived a single day in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

On a wondrously beautiful June day, I went on foot along the railroad tracks to the city of Turinski, about five kilometers away, because only there could I find out how to get a ride to Ufa with my release papers from prison. I was wearing a quilted jacket and size 42 boots. At the market I sold my winter coat, which I still had. I needed money for a ticket for and, from Ufa, a ticket for my son. I thought about my father and mother and wondered if they knew the blessings that were mine, thanks to Soviet power.

The train went to Sverdlovsk. It is impossible to describe the appearance of the trains and stations with their masses of people in rags after the war. Nobody knew the times the trains arrived or departed. After a long search, I got to talk to a cargo train conductor who said that they were going to Ufa via Chelyabinsk. I could hop aboard. The simple Russians are really helpful and they trust strangers. I have experienced this firsthand.

The train stopped a long time at Chelyabinsk and then went on to Ufa. It was probably between two or three o'clock at night when we reached Ufa. I had waited for that day and that hour for five years, fearing all the time that my older son had suffered the same fate as my younger one. Nights in Bashkir are pitch black. They don't have our white summer nights. On the square behind the station lay thousands of people, mostly women and children, waiting for their trains. I made my way through them and headed for the road that leads up the hill to the city. My father and mother, here walks your daughter, completely humiliated and punished by Soviet authorities. I've lost my husband, my younger son, my home, and my country? Why?

I walked through a large unlit park directly to the orphanage where my son Matti was. It was a large three-story, unlit building. I knocked and banged. Finally, a woman's voice asked, "What do you want? Who is there?" I said that my son was in this orphanage and that I had come for him. The door was opened and a second woman stood in the doorway, indicating that I should enter. Not one light was turned on, only a faint light came through one of the windows. The women discussed something among themselves and one of them went to wake Matti.

I waited in a large room. I don't know whether it was a hall or a dinning room. I held my breath and listened. Suddenly I heard running feet on the stairs. It was my son Matti, still alive, and now 13 years old. I embraced him and through my tears I said, "My dearest, I have come for you." He tried very hard to look at me and said only one word in Estonian: "forgot." After that we spoke in Russian.

They let us in the kitchen until morning and even offered the large kitchen table for us to lie on if we wished. Neither of us was sleepy. In the morning, as the whole orphanage got up, the director and custodian started to process Matti's departure. All kinds of documents had to be completed and Matti's fifth grade report card had to be issued. And I had to go to the station to get tickets for the ride home.

When I finally got back to the orphanage with the tickets, one of the custodians said that Matti had sat all those hours at the table, his cap pulled over his head, felt boots tied to his feet, refusing to take a meal. He was very afraid that I would not return again. But this time I returned.

I am heir to my ancestors' strengths, passed on to me by my parents. Thanks to them, I endured and survived the "humanist conditions" created by one of this world's most powerful nations. As its victim, I would occasionally hear someone remark that I can learn about life this way. Why should one be born into this world to learn how ugly and merciless life can be? The prisons and work camps are called "centers for re-education" in the Soviet Union. I have sat in the basement of twelve prisons, on Pagari Street, in Patarei, at Lasna Hill and in three prison camps.

To return to Ufa. I thanked the custodians of the orphanage for Matti and I heard from them why my younger son had died in the Tatar orphanage. Vassilyeva, the director of the Tatar orphanage, had profiteered with the food assigned to the children, and the situation was discovered only after a large number of children had died.

The train tickets home were for the following day. We left the orphanage as soon as all the documents were in order. I decided to go to the place where we had lived for 11 months before our arrest. We had to stay somewhere for the night. Matti and I went to the basement of the house where Misha had lived with his grandmother. The grandmother still remembered us, but Misha was in the army. As the simple Russian is always generous, she spread an old fur coat on the floor and asked us to spend the night with her. In the basement of that house on Lenin Street, still in Ufa, I prayed for my younger son and said the Lord's prayer.

In the morning, Matti and I went to the station. I wanted to thank Misha's grandmother with something, but I had nothing other than words of gratitude. In the midst of tremendous pushing and shoving, we made our way to the train. We got aboard and headed for Moscow. From Moscow we went to Leningrad. In Leningrad, I sent a telegram to my brother in Tallinn, telling him that we would be arriving toward the morning of the following day. Nobody came to meet us. It was July 8, 1946. Toompea shone in sunlight; flowers were blooming. We took a cab to Liivalaia Street where my brother and his wife lived.

I thought that they probably had gone away somewhere in the middle of summer. During our trip, I spoke in two languages with my son: first in Russian, and then I immediately translated it into Estonian. I rang my brother's doorbell, but no one came to the door. We went two floors down where my sister-in-law's mother lived. An old person opened a crack in the door and wanted to shut it immediately, thinking that we were "bag men." There were a lot of them wandering around after the war, dressed poorly, asking for bread and carrying bags.

I started to work as a weaver at the former "Homecrafts" on Harju Street. My son and I got a room at Mrs. Tickenberg's apartment on Liivalaia Street. I enrolled Matti at the Real School where my former teacher from Viljandi, Hanschmidt, was the director. I thought that the biggest obstacle for my son would be the Estonian language, which he could not speak anymore. Hanschmidt thought awhile and said that we should place him in the sixth grade after all. He had completed the fifth grade in Ufa and had a report card to prove it. If he could not manage, he would repeat the grade.

I wove for a year and then got a job at the former private hospital on Narva Highway, which was then the First Children's Hospital. While there, I started to attend nursing classes in the evenings, which I finally completed on October 31, 1949. It was difficult attending lectures every day after work and then studying late into the night. But I liked my work, and I liked to study.

How I would like to finish my diary by saying that all this brutality was over and the big war had ended, but in my case, it was not yet over.

I worked, studied medicine, and occasionally, the NKVD called me in for interrogation. They would call at work and tell me where and when I was to appear. Sometimes it would be the Palace Hotel and sometimes an apartment on Aedvilja Street No. 4. One or two men in leather coats, caps and boots always stood at the apartment door. Aedvilja No. 4 is a large building with apartments and shops near Narva Highway.

Sometimes a young man named Mummi would come to my home, always to ask about something and to make conversation, so to speak. The chief questions involved: who were K. Päts' family friends and who were my personal friends? Where had I traveled abroad and with whose permission? When I replied that we had simply bought tickets and gone, one of the interrogators said, "Do you take me for a fool?" Finally, I was called to Pagari Street, the NKVD headquarters. I was taken into an office. Behind the desk was a colonel with manicured nails and two men standing near him. Questions were only in Russian, of course. How do you live, how much do you get paid? When I mentioned the pitiful amount, the colonel said that it was amazing; how did I manage to educate and raise my son on it. I shrugged; I did not know what else to do. Then he suggested that I start to work with them, and my situation would improve considerably. You help us and we'll help you. It was clear to me that I could never work "together" with them. He added that I didn't have to decide right away, I could think it over... I asked in passing what I would have to do. First, you'll only have to visit the forest where you'll find a friend and meet with him, then report to us. That would be in the beginning. After you agree, then we'll talk more. I wanted to scream at such a degrading proposal, but I controlled myself and asked if I may leave.

So the day and the weeks passed, working and studying and raising my son. And always the question: why don't they leave me alone? I had the constant feeling that an invisible noose was tightening around my neck. On March 7, 1950, a Women's Day ceremony was held at the Children's Hospital. I was given a letter of merit for outstanding work. On the evening of March 8, I was summoned again to Aedvilja No.4. On the way there from work, I stopped at home. Matti was sitting at the desk studying. I stroked his head and said, "May the Lord protect you." I put some soap, a towel, and a toothbrush in my bag.

It was the familiar scene at Aedvilja – two men guarding the apartment door; inside, behind the desk, a new colonel flanked by two men. The colonel hit the desk with his fist and said, "We will force you and under peril you will work for us!" I said, "I will not." I was shaking all over. That was all. Then the colonel said to the two men, "Keep her!"

The night was dark. In the air, one could feel the approaching spring; the snow was melting. The three of us – me in the middle – went along Karu Street which was badly lighted, to Meri Avenue, and from there to Pikk Street. Finally, to the Pagari Street basement.

In that basement, the single cells are small and narrow like cages. A stone seat, which was attached to the wall, was so high that one's feet could not reach the floor. When one lies down to rest swollen, dangling feet, one finds that it's impossible to stretch out because the cell is too narrow. On the third day I was taken to be interrogated. This interrogator was already familiar to me. Over the course of the years, I had met most of them. This one was Andreyev. I did not know all of their names, nor do I remember them. Andreyev tapped his pen on the table and said, "Well, Helgi Yanovna, you did not want to work with us. So, now you to sit in jail. That's all for now!"

Then I was transferred to a larger cell where there were already fifteen or twenty female prisoners. Many of them were from the country, some farmers' wives, some lovely maidens and anybody that was somehow connected with the partisans. There were also some from Tallinn, of various ages.

Easter arrived. The bells of St. Olafs Church reached the cellar at Pagari Street, as did the bells of the Cathedral at Toompea. About three or four weeks later we were taken to the Patarei The interrogations took place during the night. The cells in the Patarei were larger. Each had six bunks which were pulled up during the day. There were 22 of us in our cell!

I was in Patarei prison all of spring and summer of 1950. We were stuffed into that cell without light and fresh air. Toward the end of August I was taken to the prison at Lasna Hill. All of us at that prison waited to find out what enviable destination in the big and wide Soviet land would be ours. I reached Kustanay oblast, in Kazakhstan, at the beginning of November 1950, after passing through many prisons en route. I had been sentenced to ten years. I was being punished for the second time.

Every Russian in Kazakhstan called every Kazakh, a "damned Kirghiz" right to his face although the Kazakh was living in his own homeland. I did not have my nurse's certificate with me. It had been taken from me at Pagan Street.. Thus, at the Bakanski sovhoz, located in the Kustanay oblast, I was immediately assigned to shovel grain in a big shed.

I lived with a German family, a relatively young couple with three children. We all shared a single room in a mud hut. I had a bed made of iron and so did the family. Every mud hut in that region of the world was located in front of a shed with a cow, a horse, or a pig.

There were quite a lot of Germans there. All of them had been deported to Kazakhstan during the war from their permanent settlements in the Crimea and the Caucasus. Most of the men, of course, had been arrested. Roosters and hens nested under my bed. The rooster's first crow was at 1 a.m.

Once, the Kustanay militia chief stopped at the sovhoz. I told him that I was a nurse, sent here for ten years. He told me that I should immediately write a request to the NKVD in Tallinn. He took the request from me and, amazingly enough, I got my certificate a couple years later. Then I went to the district center in Karasu by horse. It was the middle of winter and a blizzard raged.

Karasu is a relatively large district center. Health Director Yuri Alexeyevitch Firss, a rather young man, put me to work immediately. At first, I was the nurse at the women's welfare center, then at the hospital and later director at the Svyatogorski mid-wifery center, ten kilometers from Bakanski. I was given a horse and wagon for transportation, and a sled in the winter. I myself was the driver.

Later, I was at the Bakanski sovhoz once more, where real houses had been built in the meantime. I was to set up a dispensary in one of those wooden houses which had two rooms and a kitchen. I used the smaller room for the dispensary, and in the larger room, I lived together with a veterinarian who had been assigned there for three years after finishing the institute at Ufa. We had an old Latvian revolutionary, Pauline Blum, for a sanitarian. She had already served her 10-year term and had been sent to Bakanski for internal exile.

I had to report to the Karasu NKVD every ten days to show that I had not run away. When Stalin died in 1953, I received amnesty. The ten-year sentence was changed to five years and that left two more years in Kazakhstan for me. Toward the end of 1954, K. Päts was taken to the Jämejala Hospital in Estonia. Later, Dr. Nõges told me in Viljandi that he had been summoned to examine K. Päts. I had not returned home yet. K. Päts, totally wasted from malnutrition, did not have diabetes anymore. In the mornings he was conscious, but in the evenings he appeared to fade. My sister-in-law, Erna Lattik, with whom my son Matti stayed after my second arrest, went to Viljandi to have Matti visit his grandfather. The chief of staff, Dr. Lellep, did not allow Matti to see his grandfather.

I will explain the unusual return of K. Päts to Estonia in the following way. Some time after Stalin's death, I received orders as the head of the dispensary in Kazakhstan to send all the disabled internal exiles back to their homes. No doubt such orders went out throughout Russia. At that time, they were also sending released prisoners back to their homes. And then, in the summer of 1955, when I had returned to Estonia for the second time, I was summoned to Pagari Street. And why? Again some chief asked me if I had heard that K. Päts had been in Viljandi, at Jämejala. I said nothing. Then he continued, "There was a deranged man who imagined he was the president!" That was the extent of our conversation. But great fear had gone through me again when I got the call from Pagari Street.

I hope that these lines in this notebook will serve to remind us that it is from home and our homeland that we derive our strength to travel through today's storms and the darkness of suffering.

Translated by Ilvi Jõe-Cannon