

Maria Bruss
Diary

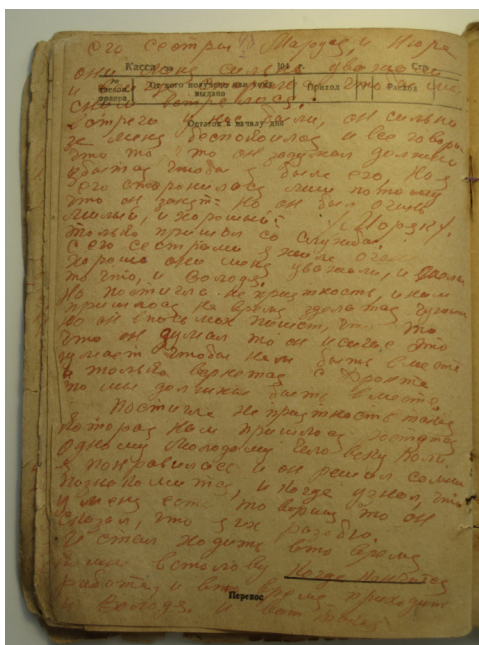
Translated by Iannis C. Carras¹

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1) When my two brothers grew up, it became a lot easier for dad and mum. But still, being poor always kept us down. Just when dad was about to stand on his two feet, the harvest would suddenly fail, and hardship would hit again.

2) At around the time of the October Revolution of 1915 the Whites almost took dad away, because he was in the underground. They were a group in the village of Voznesenka made up of six people: my dad, uncle Meltsov and a bunch of others organised by the school teacher. When the Whites arrived she went into hiding and dad brought her to the village of Ostrakhanovka, to uncle Muisei Krimenko who worked in the post office. They knew each other, the school teacher and Muisei, and he gave her



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Materials and Discussions

the chance to hide... they almost shot my uncle because he didn't tell where she was. But my uncle had a dog.

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And when the officer hit my uncle with a lever, the dog lunged at the officer and he shot the dog.

3) They also arrested dad, they took him away. But they let him go with a few hits across his back.

In 1918 there were Whites in the village of Voznesenka and they wouldn't leave our family alone, and especially my mum and brothers. They made them play the accordion every night - my brothers took turns - they played two nights, and in the end they got tired of this rubbish, and made up their minds to hide and not to go, and mum hid the accordion.

And what happened! They came at night and fell on my old mother to get the accordion from her. Dad wasn't home. Both me and my little sister were small. We sat on the stove. My sick aunt was also there. We were very frightened when the Whites started threatening mum

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that they'd shoot her for not giving the accordion. Mum quarreled, half lost her patience, grabbed an iron poker and chased after them. But it didn't end in victory for mum.

1919 The Brusov Family had all been ill with typhoid. Dad was scarcely alive. When everyone had got better, my older brother Kolia went off to harvest.

1920 The harvest failed. Nothing came from it. We therefore came together with all the strength we could get up and planted three hectares, on land which was not needed by the kulaks, so it was occupied by the poor class.

Unfortunately, nothing grew

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and we collected only really little. But the kulaks had bread. Hunger came. The poor class gave the Kulaks their very last items of clothing and everything else they had for bread, all for nothing. We really suffered and lost everything we had.

Dad went to Akbulak. My older and younger brothers too. My dad was sent as an plenipotentiary to Moscow in 1920-1921. Mum remained behind with us the small ones. She had to deal with really big problems here, and went from house to house and asked for a slice of bread, for help. And she fed us, small and hungry, and filled herself up, poor thing, with grass. She had some tumbleweed and she dried and ground it down and ate it.

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She went out to beg. Some gave help and others who had more threw the help back in her face, and that's when they gave anything at all. We owned a small hut, a road-cart, a plough, a harrow, a barrel... a dog and a cat.

And when things got really hard, we reckoned we still had a dog so we'd still live another day. But something we hadn't expected happened. Someone stole the dog and ate it. But we still had an animal. That "cat". Well, our dear unhappy mum prepared a very tasty something for us...

I just don't have the strength to tell what we lived through. My heart beats and I lose consciousness and I

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can't keep writing.

20 January 1920

It was evening and the hut was cold. There was no fire and we lay down to sleep. Then, suddenly, we heard footsteps and someone comes into the hut, and asks whether there was anyone alive in there? Mum answered and it turned out it was my brother Vanya who'd gone with dad to Akbulak. It turns out he'd come to take us with him to Akbulak. As dad had become a plenipotentiary in Moscow the family had an income. And we got ready to go.

But how could we get there?

But how could we get there? The winter was cold. There was nowhere to rent a cart. But my brother rushed from Kulak to Kulak in search of a cart that could take us to Akbulak. It really was difficult to find one.

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What did we pay? See, to move five members of a family – they naturally took quite a lot of what we had for that. Except for our hut. We sold our hut to someone rich for two poods of wheat². We arrived at Akbulak. There we were given rations, an apartment and heating, as regulated. Dad didn't come back from Moscow soon. Me and my sister were taken by our mum to "ARA"³ that is to the kitchen where they fed children. They provided help. [...] Almost as if life had turned bad into good, but not long afterwards we got a sudden blow.

Last hour

What happened was unexpected. It was spring, green grass, snowdrop flowers arrived, starlings came flying, everything smelled of spring. With my sister I

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began to walk into the street, to pick flowers and breathe in the fresh air.

Suddenly, my sister Niunya! She caught a cold and fell ill and the next day my older brother's son became ill. They were ill for a week, and both died. Two coffins in the house were a horrible blow. They buried them in one grave. When dad came back from Moscow his daughter and his grandson were not there.

At the orphanage

Returning from Moscow dad was made overseer of the children's' orphanages. Dad was really loved by the children. When dad came many children asked things of him, the director. One girl "Vera" loved my dad very much and called him "dad". But dad did not work there long. In 1921 he was relocated...

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At the tomb

Mum was very grieved at the burial of my little sister. Every day we walked to the grave to visit her. But we had to say goodbye to her... in May of 1921 we left for Khobda.

² A pood is a unit of measurement. One pood is approximately 16.38 kilograms.

³ The American Relief Administration, which provided assistance to Russia during the famine of 1921.

1921-1922, Khobda

1923 Arrived in Khobda, and stayed in a temporary apartment. Dad worked at the combine harvester (VIK) and worked all the time.

1924 Moved to an apartment, to Kuzmenko. Dad worked at the RIK⁴. Kolia worked at the post office, for hire; and I was still small.

In the winter.

Brother Vanya was married. Wedding. Life goes on.

1925 We built ourselves a small hut. Bought two camels.

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We two kept the house and its products... I found it very hard because my dad and my brother worked in the organization and my brother Vanya was drafted into the army. I had to gather in the harvest with my mother, and mow the hay, and do all the work in the fields.

We gathered everything in and we prepared ourselves for winter. We saw my brother off to the army.

In the winter.

I had to clean the courtyard and around the camels, and [...] I was then still quite young, about twelve years old, but I had to clean up around those bastards. They were nasty and vomited at you from head to foot.

1926-1927-1928

These four years weren't so easy for me just because I had to work [only] with mum. In 1927 my brother finally returned.

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And with my mum we hardly found the strength and gave it all we had... we were paid day by day, almost nothing... I was all puffed up, and had calluses. 50 kopeks a day on dry bread and warm water. Need meant that I had to go to work for 30 kopeks, because neither my father nor my brother gave me even a kopek for my few expenses. That was little money, but it was necessary, as I was already a young girl, and there was nothing for me to get dressed in and I went around in my father's torn coat and too large tatty shoes, and when in 1927 snow fell and the uncollected potatoes remained under the snow, I had to dig. I

⁴ The Raion Executive Committee. A 'raion' is a geographical division. It is slightly larger than a 'district', or volost'.

cut the sleeves from my short coat and put them on my legs and rubbed my feet with pepper [...] – I was cold [...]

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14 October 1928

My girl-friends came to me, and suggested I go with them to plaster walls and I went and caught a cold and fell ill and was ill for three months with sore ears and inflammation of the meninges. For a month I was ill, then – threatened by the doctor – dad drove me to Aktiubinsk⁵ and there I was operated upon – after that I began to feel a bit better. The operation was performed by Professor Smagilin. After that I returned home.

Meeting!! With Vania.

After being away for so long, I hadn't met with my girlfriends. and then I returned and my friends came with such happiness, and we all went out into the street. Somebody played the accordion and balalaika and danced and sang songs. And then Vaniushka Kudinov appeared. He was my beau.

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He ran up to me so happy that he couldn't find the words to say anything. After my three month illness we hadn't met, and then finally we met; and there was so much happiness, beyond belief, I don't need to say that I just can't express it, because Vania felt it most. You see, I wasn't really interested in him, but he was fine-looking.

Parting from my boyfriend V.

It was early spring when the snow melted. Vanya and me left one another for a time, as his father decided to move to the farm "Sabankul" and so they moved there. And we said goodbye to one another. But Vaniushka gave his word that he would come and meet with me and ordered me not to forget him!!

But the wind changed... I met Petia Mikhailenko, and I forgot

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my Vaniushka.

⁵ Present-day Aktobe.

I forgot Vania

On one occasion Vanya's mother came and spoke with my mum, asking mum to convince me to marry into their family, to be Vaniushka's. You see, he said he wouldn't marry otherwise!

And what happened

Vaniushka! After our parting he married twice, but he didn't live on with them, and he declared to his parents that he wouldn't live with anyone except Maria Brusova, and then he decided it was better to end up in prison.

In the end he was sentenced to three years, after which I didn't see him. But in the end I'm sorry for him if only because he didn't end up happy.

1929. These were the first days of collectivisation. For the first time, Dad and me became members of the Kolkhoz named "Budynnoi" at Khobda.

5/ii 1929 New acquaintance at the post

With my friend Marusia we went to the post and received two letters from the village of Astrakhanovka.

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And we began to read: one letter was for my girlfriend from her beau and the other for me, from the same guy. Of course we all know what the beau wrote to my friend. But I received an unusually interesting letter. When I read the letter, I found out he was recommending I meet with a buddy of his, right out from the army. They asked me to reply, but I didn't.

15/ii. I received a letter from that same guy whose buddy suggested we meet... he sent me his photocard and asked me to agree, and to answer, and for a photocard back. I don't answer.

20/ii 1929 I get a third letter. At last I answer and send my photocard. And that's how we got into contact and kept up writing for a year, though we didn't meet except through letters.

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Our love was fired up, brighter and brighter. But I didn't know him. I only knew that he was Petia. Mikhailenko...

First meeting with Petia

After the Christmas holidays there are usually weddings.

And my friend Motia Ponpushno... married Spiridon Goncharenko. We went round there to party. Me and my girl-friends were all bridesmaids.

We partied at the bride's and then went to the groom's. We went into his room. And that companion of my girlfriend was sitting there, and also another young guy I didn't know. As usual I was bubbly – and gutsy. I went up to him, to my companion Fedia, and said hi and shook his hand, but to the second guy, I only made a gesture, nodded my head, that's how I said hi. And I started to dance and sing, and I didn't even notice that this was Petia.

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And in the end Fedor comes up to me following the dance and calls me out to the street. And I went out and he told me that that young guy was Petia and he wanted to be with me.

So we meet after a year and spend the evening together and then parted. He left, and I left for the Nabalovsk Plant but we promised each other not to forget and to love one another. And we kept the promise and kept up our writing and acquaintance for exactly a year. And in 1930 in July I got a letter from him and he asked me to agree to go with him to Leningrad. But I didn't answer and I got a second letter of the same kind. I answered that I was still young and wasn't yet thinking of getting married and so I wouldn't go. And also dad didn't give me an earful for not going.

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And so we separated, me and Petia.

I was very sorry about it. He was a good lad.

We will become like everyone else.

1929-1930

I was a candidate for the V.L.K.S.M.⁶ I finished my programme. In 1930 I received the Komsomol card⁷. I was a candidate for a year and in 1930 I was accepted into the Komsomol and took part in the Light Brigade during the collectivization. I showed initiative for which they were grateful to me.

In the Brigade

It was spring we worked on the Kolkhoz⁸, on sowing crops. 1929. We sowed. The scything started and then the threshing. I worked. They

⁶ The All-Union Leninist Young Communist League.

⁷ The card for the Young Communist League.

⁸ A collective farm.

were all pleased with me, I received the booklet given to superproductive-labourers. Autumn was spent doing the work in [...]

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All lay down to rest. I didn't sleep and approached the sleepers and would sow: I'd sow one person to another, and when I sowed something to someone, at least once this got me into trouble, "Fedka Isaev" ran after me, but I grabbed him and threw him over my head. He lay there for 20 minutes. I got scared thinking that I killed him. So after I fought the man, they gave me the nickname fighting-girl, i.e. athlete. Soon after that I left and on the 22/viii of 1929 took up work at the Sovkhoz⁹ as a record keeper of dairy products at the Saranobdinsk Plant.

24/viii 29 In Saranabad. Sign, Iasha and me

For the end of 1929 and in 1930 I worked as a record keeper of dairy products... but at the plant, there was... Stepan.

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A technician in the plant Iasha Ivanenko was also there! There was nothing personal between us. He didn't give any sign that he was interested in me, and didn't dare to admit he loved me, yet he kept on with me as if I were a fellow worker. And I didn't guess that he was in love with me and thought of him simply as a fellow worker.

29/x 30 There was a decision of the Trust to transfer the Sarakhobdinsk Plant to Bishla. And on the 23/x they moved, and at the same time I went with them to the Central Offices of the Sovkhoz. In Rotovsk I go up and took my luggage, and said bye to Varia and Stepa. And I began to say bye to Iasha! I just didn't do anything: but he shocked me. When we were saying bye to each other, Iasha told me quietly, Marusia he told me, why stay at the Central Offices! you should

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come with me.

But I just laughed and thought it was all a joke. But it wasn't at all.

At the Sovkhoz I parted with Iasha.

⁹ A state-run farm.

I stayed at the Central Office, spent the night at my brothers and next day, which was market day, I decided to go with the Sovkhoz carts to Khobda, to dad and mum. When I arrived, I met Varia, and she said that Iasha had told her to take this note and bring it to Marusia: “she shouldn’t go to the Sovkhoz otherwise we’ll come there and I’ll take her away with me”. And he was angry with himself that he hadn’t told me about his love earlier. And when Varia brought me the note and passed on all his [plans]... I couldn’t believe it, and I thought it was just a joke, and I didn’t stay and went away to the Central Office. [...]

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When Iasha arrived at the plant, he sent me two letters at the Sovkhoz. He said that he was stupid that he hadn’t told me he loved me earlier. In the letter, he asked my for my consent and that he’d then come after me, and that I’d be his wife. But to me it all seemed just like jokes and I turned him down sharply. He was hurt, still despite everything he sent his Old Man after me, and he wrote a letter. But I interrupted the Old Man, I didn’t believe anyone and I sent him a no – one more time.

In the end Yasha married a milkmaid... to whom he was married off, and he lived simply without any real desires. Soon after that, Yasha became director of the plant, and I became the plant technician. I found it really difficult to work and no one helped. The director Yasha didn’t help just because he was angry at me! And time after time he kept taking offense at me. In 1932 he threatened to pay me back for my pig-headedness.

Then something happened that no-one expected.

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At the Sorokhobdinsk and Sechensk Butter Plant on the 22/vi of 1932 they robbed me, took my clothes and money and 15 kg of butter.

Laboratory Assistant. Getting to know Petia

16/iv I arrived at the Habolovsk Butter Plant as a laboratory assistant. There were two girls there, Masha and Marusia. They were familiar with two lads at the plant M[isha] and Petia. When I arrived, this girl told a girlfriend that bad luck had come. They thought that I was their bad luck, because they were afraid that their beaus would dump them.

And they guessed right. Petia started going after me. I chased him off. I cried and asked him not to go after me, but he insisted that I go with

him. Forcefully. I didn't like him and I couldn't stand seeing him, and I begged him not to annoy me and to leave me alone

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but he made sure I got used to him, and we spent two years together. In the end, he began to make proposals about getting married, but I said that we'd wait on it. Then all of a sudden the instructor Vania Kolosov came to the plant. And he proposed to marry me. I wasn't sorry for Petia, and I completely turned my mind to Kolosov. Kolosov and me wrote letters for two months, and then we got married. And when I left Petia I kept remembering his words that I shouldn't get married to Vania K., as I wouldn't be happy. But I didn't listen and didn't believe him... and I didn't look at all of Petia's tears – I wasn't sorry for him then, but later, as soon as I'd married Vania and I'd lived a bit with him, then I remembered that Petia's words were totally right.

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23/iii 33 Alekseevskii Butter Plant

After a lot of my trips in snowstorms to agencies, where I got lost and frostbitten and was almost frozen, I handed over my obligations at the plant. And on 25/iii I made it to my wedding. And we began to live with Vania Kolosov – and Petia was left all alone.

Unhappy marriage with Kolosov

In my marriage, I got it all wrong. My husband was seventeen years older than me, compared to him I was still a child, but it wouldn't have mattered that he was older, if only he'd been half human. My man was cruel and dull, and from the very first he was a complete pain and treated me badly.

I was so young I probably couldn't have put up with such sadness day in day out. He was so cute and so good when he wasn't drunk, but alcohol turned him bad. I got marriage wrong big time 30/iii 33

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At the registry office.

I/iv 33 Kolosov and me, we went to the rural Soviet¹⁰ to register. He did not want me to remain Brusova, but to be Kolosova, and that's what we did.

Departure, with Kolosov after the marriage

3/iv 33

3/iv we decided to go to Akbulak. That's where Kolosov lived. It was so hard to say bye to dad, mum and all my other brothers. After he'd seen me off, Vanya nearly died, his heart wasn't too strong.

5/iv We arrived at I.K. Kolosov's apartment in Akbulak. I met with Tamara and Tserush. And with Lukanina Nikolaeva. Tamara and Tserush lived in the same apartment as us.

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And Lukanina, who was an ex-girl-friend of Kolosov's.

When Vania Kolosov married me, he swore that he was alone and had no wife, but I didn't believe him, and that's why I didn't marry him for two whole months. I wanted to know for sure. One time, Galushka the manager and Kibilnyk the instructor came to me, and they began to tell me that Kolosov was single, and lonely, he had already been working with them a year, and they knew him – I trusted them, and all my family believed them and the family conferred and my father decided to give me to Kolosov.

But when we came to Akbulak and I met Lukanina and this friend of Kolosov's first wife, and she blurted out that Kolosov had had a wife, and he'd got rid of her when he went after me – I went into a fit and fell unconscious. They tried to save me, but she didn't know that he'd lied to me – that

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I didn't know about it, and from that time on I didn't trust my husband, because he didn't own up and he'd lied to me. And after that I just couldn't trust him for a moment. Despite that, after a while together I did fall in love with him, and loved him to lunacy. There was not a business trip that I didn't see him off to, and didn't cry, and I was afraid of us separating. If we were to separate, then I'd kill myself.

Hard-hearted husband. Remembering

¹⁰ The rural council, the lowest level of the state structure.

I wasn't happy. My husband was very sly, and loved to insult the female staff and he was an old-time sexist kind of a guy. For a long long time I put up with it all. I couldn't quarrel, I only cried. During work, in the laboratory, I wanted to kill myself, but Sergey Kuzmich Pukhnachev calmed me down and convinced me not to. On the 24/x 1935, I realized that I was pregnant

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and – as the marriage was so unhappy – I decided to abort. But my man set about pleading and doting upon me and kissing me, just as long as I gave birth to his child. He promised to dote upon me and the child. I gave birth to a lovely girl 9/vii 1935. We called her Nelly, but he didn't keep his promises.

5/ii 1934 Blow

Dad saw mum off to me in Akbulak, and my brothers also came to Akbulak with a report. And dad stayed with his companions to have a good time. They drank and played it up. Dad then said to his companions... you keep on going, and I'll rest, and he leaned on the table and died.

We buried him on the 12/II, when all the children came together. We were all really sad, all of us cried and especially I was in hysterics, they were scarcely able to protect me... I tore up everything I was wearing.

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Goodbye

25/iii 33 We separated with Peter, I left him and married I. Kolosov. With Kolosov we lived badly, he was a very hard man, and cunning and he offended me – I put up with it all and only cried. In the end, after four years, I couldn't put up with him anymore. I stopped being silent, and we started quarreling and fighting.

20/vi 37 I drove my husband out of the house and threw all his clothes after him. We lived apart exactly three days. Then he came back to me – to the apartment – at night when I was asleep. The grandmother who lived at home as a nanny opened up for him. I began kicking him out, and he started to cry and beg that he wouldn't be like that anymore – and he gave me his word that he wouldn't quarrel

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and we'd live normally. And he didn't quarrel for exactly a year. But then he went back to form, again.

28/viii 38 In the city Belebei

We were transferred with the plant from Adulaka to the city Belebei. My husband was called to work in the Pasturising Centre and I was a laboratory worker there. Work went badly. Kolosov tried to skip work and I was responsible for everything. I began to argue with him for wasting the day, and finally he didn't get on with the overseer, Burtsov: the Trust fired him and put me in his place.

Threats.

When I took up Kolosov's work on 28/ii 39, he argued with me and told me not to work but I didn't listen to him and I started working at the centre.

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I worked well, but Kolosov blocked my work. He came to me at the plant drunk, he had fights, he swore at me with all sorts of words and got in the way of my work. He used to come, be jealous of somebody or other, and beat him up.

20/v 39 My husband – still without work – came drunk and attacked me. The overseer Novikov defended me and Kolosov beat him up. They drew up a report against him. It all went favourably.

Without work

Kolosov was without work. I allowed him to rest one month and then to work again. But he lay about for exactly five months. In the end I sent him out to work. He found himself a place as a recruiter of the Chelyabinsk Swine Plant Named Ordzhonikidze, he had the second haul. Finally they let him work

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at the plant warehouse.

He invited me to go to look for an apartment there. I went with him.

In Chelyabinsk.

We arrived there, me and my husband. I went on the tram. The city seemed pretty, and the plant even better. I gave my word that I'd move there too, and left for Belebei. I sold all we had and got ready to leave, only not to go to him, but to Aktiubinsk.

29/ix 39

Guests.

My brothers Kolia and Vania, and my daughter in law Marusia with Fizochka, came to us as guests. Mum also came to my place. We had a good time.

Husband came

My husband also came. We went out to town and he left – 9/x, and didn't come back. And after that I saw him all in all just two times.

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Then we separated, probably once and for all.

14/x 39

We departed

I saw my brothers home, and we remained behind. I resigned and left with mum and with my daughter Nelly to Aktiubinsk. We left for home on 12/i 40.

At work

At that time, when I was working at the plant of Belebei, I clashed with the overseer Titov, and with the accountant Grigorev. They wanted to chuck me out of the plant – to make it impossible for me and to block my work.

And they made an accusation against me. Chief engineer Lobanov helped them, and master Zakharevich. Finally, we wrote to Moscow about these insults, and a man was sent as a commission, but

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he didn't uncover anything, as, it turns out, he'd been bribed by Lobanov. Kolosov and me and a group of other workers wrote a second time to Moscow. During this period there was sabotage at the plant.

The engineer Lobanov, the technician Zakharevich, the production engineer Lest, and the director of the plant Kolesunik, were there. And the director of the Trust at Chekalov, Rusman.

Spies. Startling

When the second commission came from Moscow it uncovered sabotage at the plant. After that Lobanov was sent here with Rusman, Lobanov has drawn "Zakharevich" and "Lesta" and Kolisunina into the job, who completely ruined one meat-Sovkhoz. They made Lobanov plant director.

It turned out

Zakharevich was taken away for being a spy. He'd twice run away from Poland.

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And he was sent money to the plant equivalent to 24 times what he received during the time of his work at the plant. They put him in prison. After some time "Lesta" was arrested as an Estonian spy. And they also took the director of the Trust Rusman as a saboteur. Eight days later they also took Kolesunin the plant director away. He was not in fact Kolesunin but Kosulin. He'd been involved in the shooting of sixteen commissars in the Kuban. They fired Lobonova. They sent Zubkov as chief engineer and Shimin Ivan Anisovich as plant director. It looked like the job had been done but there still remained the question the role of the overseer Titov and of the accountant Grigorev, who oppressed me Kolosova as much as they could, as we'd helped to identify the sabotage. Titov and Grigor[ev] made a false case against me and they wanted to remove me from work. Others wrote to the director of the plant

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for an order removing me from work. There, Shimin did not properly consider the case and gave his consent. But when I found out about it they left me at work and removed Titov. Only Grigorev was left. I made a request to be released from work or transferred because I found working with Grigorev impossible! But Shimin insisted and persuaded me to wait out a season, so I stayed.

The roots of sabotage

We did not get along, me and Grigorev, and he tried to make life difficult for me in all sorts of ways. He made me to blame the whole time. And he wrote to the plant that I was a thief. And through the raion organization he managed to get me kicked out of it. Grigorev announced to the plant - The Director sent an auditor and ordered that I should be removed I made a public complaint about Grigorev. He found out about this, and sensed that

the auditor would come and make clear that it was Grigorev himself who was a out of order and that he was gathering rumours against me. The auditor was supposed to come.

30/vi Grigorev. In the night of i/vii, Grigorev took public money worth 5000 rubles! And he ran away, and he took all sort of checking documents and tore them up and threw them away in the office.

1/vii 39

I come to work and to the office. Torn documents everywhere. I don't guess what's happened. When a full four hours have passed and there's no Grigorev, we still didn't guess. At long last the auditor who'd come with the order releasing me arrived. When he asked where Grigorev was, we replied that we didn't know. And when they went to his apartment the landlady said that he wasn't there. He left for somewhere during the night.

We spent two days with the auditor and put the torn documents together again. It turned out that he stolen 5000 rubles and carried them off. The auditor

immediately made an announcement at the plant about these things.

8/vii 39

Telegram

We received a telegram to immediately leave Kolosova at work. But as a point of principle I didn't want to work since my enemies were bad-mouthing me, and the managers believed them. But I worked on for one month nonetheless, and then I resigned and on the 12/i I went to Aktiubinsk to the Butter Plant where I got a job as a specialist in the City Dairy Plant.

City Dairy Plant

I worked there. It was OK. But in October I resigned because I didn't go as a technician to the Alginskii Butter plant. I resigned and got a place at Bukhvetchits Catering. That was a bad place to work.

[photo of Vanya Bruss; back of photograph – markings are chicken scratches – Ed.]

Meager earnings

I was fired from catering for the loss of 200 rubles. I took one barrel of vodka where packaging was valued at 50 kopeks. And after the sale, it appeared that the packaging was 68 kopeks. Why the difference? The vodka was still in the barrel, but I did not issue the document setting the price in time. And I had to suffer for the loss 200 rubles.

I remained without work for a month. I put up with a lot of difficulties. Was hungry for three days, and so was my child, though the grandmother fed it quietly, in a corner, so that her daughter in law didn't see. It was very hard to survive.

My brothers and in laws shunned me because I was poor and they lived better. My child Nelly was bullied and pushed about, like an unhappy child orphan, who lives without a father and mother. I can't gather the strength to bring some well-being to our life, and to raise a child without misery. But because of my enemies and sycophants I keep being stopped in my tracks, because I don't like to be a sycophant and like to live in the truth, and the truth in fact does not exist.

[Pages 43/46 are missing / Ed.]

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I suspected something and finally I asked: "Young man, what is it that you need?" He smiled and answers that it just is so: I tell him so, do not stand around the buffet, the shift workers laughed, they were aware of the fact that this man wants something from me. And he appeared very often, and finally he comes up and gives me a note to ask for my acquaintance. I told him that I didn't get up to this sort of thing. But he became more and more insistent. And we got to know each other. This was Vova! But I just didn't want to go with him because he was taken, but he always came up to me and called and told me the place where he'd wait for me to see me and talk to me. I tried to leave him, but he was helped

See

reverse

the acquaintance with
interesting.

Volodia was very

[This is written on two pages and it reads: "See reverse. The acquaintance with Volodia was very interesting". – Ed.]

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His sister Marusia, and Niura, they really respected me and always tried to arrange it so that we met up. When we did meet, he really looked after me and kept saying that his plan should come about, that I should be his, but I kept away from him, just because he was taken. But he was so cute and good. "A sailor" he had just come back from service. I lived with his sister, I lived very well, they respected me, and [...] then that, and Volodia.

But something unfortunate happened, and we had to keep our distance from one another, but he wrote his thoughts in letters, that even now he thought we should be together, and that just as soon as he had come back from the front that we should be together.

This was the unfortunate event, which meant we had to separate. A young man, Kolia¹¹, fancied me and he decided to meet up with me... and when he found out that I had a companion, he said that he'd give him a beating. And he began coming to the canteen at closing time, and at that same time Volodia also came.

And this

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situation continued for a short time, and in the end we quarreled with Kolia, because I didn't want him to come up to me, because I had a companion, and he said to my face, that you Marusia will not keep on going out with him, and you'll be with me.

I'm always tried to avoid Nikolai, to get away from him, but he found me everywhere, and I couldn't get away from him. He had enough impudence to come and sit in the cafeteria until I finished work.

If I remained behind and didn't leave, then he'd sit until morning and you couldn't get rid of him. And if left, then you couldn't get away from his hands. And Volodia would also sit at the same time and wait for me, and Volodia got tired of this act, and he started coming to me more rarely, and only left me letters, and we talked through letters, and saw each other during the day, and he started coming only very rarely. And

¹¹ Kolia is the diminutive for Nikolai.

Nikolai for his part kept his post by me so that I wouldn't go out with Volodia. I tried not to tell Kolia exactly when I'd come home, and if I said that I'd be home at 8 in the evening, then I tried to come at 12 or 1, and I'd be at my friend Lena, or her companion Sasha.

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One time I deceived him and didn't come home early but arrived at 12 o'clock at night. And there I saw him standing in the hallway with my brother, Vania, and they were speaking.

And the whole time I couldn't get away from him. According to my brother, he just waited for me doggedly. Nikolai was waiting for me right from the start of the evening. There were times when we met up with Volodia and he took me home, and there, at the doorway, was this same Nicholas, waiting for me. And so Vova and me, we agreed not to meet for a while, and I quarreled with Nikolai, and he didn't come for two days. And finally he sent someone for me.

Evening at [words crossed out – Ed.]

I was about to go to sleep, and my friend Lena with her companion Sasha came, and told me to come and spend some time with them, and to bring a guitar. I said I really didn't want to, because Nikolai might be at their place. But she said that no. And I could see in fact that there wasn't a light on in Sasha's

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flat.

I put on a coat over my nightgown, and went along with them there. I sat down and started playing and then Nikolai came out from behind the stove. By this, I lost it completely, and got angry at Lena and Sasha, but I couldn't do anything. I was in Nikolai's hands already, and he didn't let me go all evening. He made me play and sing.

And so we made up, and I started seeing him, but, of course, it was always against my will, and I thought about Volodia. But Kolia loved me more, and he caressed me till I was tired of his kisses.

10/vi 41 At Lena's with Kolya

We were all at Lena's and I played the guitar, and I sang a song and Kolya gave me a kiss after every verse, and I was fed up with it already, but he liked it. Kolya was never the sort who left me without food.

[margin on original paper in notebook was marked for dairy production in 194-. – Ed.]

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In other words, he fed me at the canteen spending 30 to 40 rubles on me and at that time, I'd been a month without work.

25/vi Proposal

Kolia had the nerve to say that after payday, on the 5/vii, he was going to marry, but he didn't say to whom. I laughed at him.

28/vi 41 I met with Volodia who was very bitter at me... he said that I was that sort of girl who messed up his happiness. But all the same we decided to keep it in our souls.

15/vi 41 About Kolia

Kolia got his pay and gave me 150 rubles for whatever I needed, and I didn't take them, but when I got home, well, they were there in my pocket.

3/vi 41 I got work at the Butter Plant as a technician.

[Signed:] MK

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20/vi 41 Kolia began to pester me to marry him. I insisted that I had a child, and that for her another man as a father would not be the same as her own! Kolia was offended by this and said "as I want you, so I'd care for the child". But I still dithered and didn't give a reply, and suddenly war came, 22/vi, "and I then said that that's all, and there was no point in even talking about it. You'll be enrolled", and so we left our plans at that. We didn't meet me till my departure.

25/vi 41 We met up with Volodia's sister. She gave me a letter from Volodia. I also sent him an answer.

15/vii 41 Order

Because of the war they were sending all the men to the front. And they were placing us women in men's positions. 15/vii I got the order, I was to be sent as a technician in the

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Rodnikovka Butter Plant. I get ready to go.

17/vii 41 All about Kolia

Summons

Materials and Discussions

I got home and the summons were lying there. They're taking my brother Vania to the front. Everyone was very sad. All night long we got his things together, and saw him off, and at the same time I got ready to go to the plant.

18/vii 41 At 8 o'clock we accompanied my brother to barracks. I was preparing to go to the plant. I left my daughter with grandmother. Nikolai did not come. 17/v he was late.

18/vii Evening Kolia came to me, but I wasn't there. I'd already gone. He spoke with mum. He left when mother told him I'd gone.

19/vii 41 I set to work at Rodnikovka Butter Plant. It was hard work. I was a technician and laboratory assistant, and as there was no cooper¹² I made a box for the butter myself. With the collective we began to get along. With time the workers got used to me and liked me. The work went along normally.

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20/viii 41 I went to Rodnikovka to sell dairy products, ice cream, etc. And all of a sudden I got a postcard from Kolya! He sent it from his barracks. It turn out that he'd been called up and he was being sent to the front. After the card I didn't get any news of him. And there was no news at his home either. There're rumours that he's been killed.

28/viii 41 I got a letter from my Sister, Valia, that they'd called Volodia up to the front.

29/viii In the evening Niura, Lida, Misha, Kolia and me all went swimming. We swam in the Chan. Zviagin and Fedor Fedorovich sat on the shore.

3 September My nephew Shura came to see me. He stayed a while and left, 6/ix.

Autumn came, then winter. We all lived together in one flat. Dziuba, Savin, Oreshko, Volovatin, Sokolov, Urban and me.

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Life together went badly. The conditions were bad. There was not enough bread. And there was no firewood. We used to go out and bring some back on our shoulders.

¹² A cooper is someone who makes wooden, staved vessels, such as casks, barrels or tubs.

5/ii 42 We saw Mikhail off to the army.

10/ii 42 The evenings were boring... well actually really often Kovrygin's gramophone played. The girls came around and we had fun all together.

15/ii 42 With Dziuba

We had a fight for the first time with Fedor Fedorovich, the director. For me, this bust-up was really hard to take.

31/xii 41 We discussed my own personal reportcard¹³ with Efymenko who put all sorts of rubbish to be reported, and I was big time to blame.

- We started quarrelling and he began to threaten me.

10/i 42 We compiled a joint accusation against the accountant that he

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got up to looting the property of the furnace, and food from the plant. Efymenko learned of these accusations, and he began banging on the table, and he said that I should remember. He requested butter and cream, and I didn't give it. I refused. Immediately our relations were wrecked.

12/ii 42 Prepared a package as a present to the front.

11/ii 42 We began to prepare the ice. At first there was a man to help, and then there wasn't. I began to break up the ice myself. I felt very poorly. I felt my health was very poor and my side hurt very much, and my head, but no one believed me, and if I lay down to rest then they'd surely say that I was lying? I should get up and they said that I was deliberately making it up and that nothing really hurt.

But it was very difficult for me to work, my side hurt very much, and we had to break the ice - a man's job. It was very hard, and hard too to bear the attitude of all those around me all winter long, and especially those who did not trust me in other words, Dziuba, [...] and the time would come when they would

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believe me.

I didn't pay attention to my health, and I tried to prepare the ice, and in spring I tried to cover it. We collected all kinds of rubbish in my yard

¹³ *Lichnaia kartochka*, a personnel document that would contain information on an individual's party affiliation, education, occupation and other details.

and covered the ice. As for myself and for the purposes of production I tried to ensure a quality product during the season.

20/iii 42

I wrote a report to the Trust for the third time on the doing of improprieties by the accountant Efimenko. The aim was to get them to come from the Trust and to investigate the situation. And I asked that they remove either him or me from here. But no-one paid any attention to my warnings.

And Efimenko continued to burn out the papers ... I argued with him about this, and our quarrel got worse continually.

Director Dziuba didn't do anything, just like before, and Efimenko came to think of me as bad. And Fedor Fedorovich didn't help me.

27/iii 42 Offense

I went to the main office in Kolinovka through a strong snow storm. I got completely soaked, and dried myself

<...>

with moon-shine, and was locked up. On the next day they let me go, and when I arrived then the workers almost lifted me off the ground from their joy, that I'd come back.

1/vi 42 Audit

Kovaleva the production engineer came and audited my shortfall during 5 months all in all at 8⁹ kg of butter which was acceptable. In addition I had found that Shakhrai had in his pocket 0350 grams of butter, a practice that he repeated on a daily basis, I'm sure. Kovaleva wrote an explanation to the investigative organs. The consequences are not yet known.

But the fact is that Efimenko wanted to get rid of me because he wanted to eat as much butter as he wanted. He put together a quarrel and put his signature on the accounts and used a number of deportees, who had a look not of human beings, but of spies.

I handed over the plant to someone else. And they put me in prison... and there was no one to hand the plant over to. I put a seal on it. I was in a very bad state. I almost went mad and almost killed myself, but managed to hold myself back. I had wanted to drink amyl alcohol, but Kurmansaitov prevented me – when I departed I said goodbye to the workers Niura, Nadia and Niusia and with all the others, they cried bitterly. And I did too. And I sat on the carriage and they took me away. I started to sing a song and with this song we raced to Shimenevki. All the women cried when they heard that I had gone to prison and with a song.

Goodbye my dear daughter.

And you my dear family.

I will not come back here again.

I ask you to forget about me.

and at that all the women cried. All the way I was in a bad state and I either sang or cried or had a row with the policeman. We arrived at Rodnikovka and I [got out].

10/vii 42 I received a letter from my brother that they were sending him and my nephew Shura to the front.

13/vi They proposed we get out of the apartment. I was very distressed – when you work they need you, and when you don't work then everybody turns his back on you, you are not needed by anyone and there is no truth.

15/vi 42 I finished reading Gorky's book *The Mother*.

What really struck me in the book is how people struggle for truth and for the liberation of the poor class, so that everyone could live equally, so that there would be fewer people put up in prison and fewer deportations. And how to bring about "something better", what they went through, Pavel Samoilov, Andrei – Nikolai Ivanovich, his sister Sofia, Sasha and Natasha, Egor Ivanov and the one who died from being deported, and when they buried him then the police beat up a lot of people and placed them under arrest because they had been present at the coffin of their comrade. How much his girlfriend Liudmila and his Mother endured. They were all shut up and worn out through deportation.

<66?>

17/vi 42 Book on Bruska

I read the fourth book of *Bruski*¹⁴ and was very struck by that book, in particular by Kyril Zhdorkin. /Panferov was the author/ and Stesha Ogneva – Kyril was very unstable in love. He cheated on Zinka, Ul'ka fell in love with Steshka, then fell in love with Masha and in the end fell in love with Fenia Panova, and when he started to become uninterested in Steshka, she left him, and she went to Bruska where she started working as a foreman in a female tractor brigade There she received a medal, became famous, and then Kiril Zhdarkin fell in love with

¹⁴ The four-volume novel *Bruski* (1928-1937) by Fedor I. Panferov was one of the first works in Soviet literature about collectivization.

Steshka again, and they started living together. Steshka was at a meeting in Moscow. Kyril was also an orderly.

In love for a time everything goes swimmingly between husband and wife, and the wife is very good but at some point another woman appears and he immediately cheats on his wife.

I also left my husband and separated from him because he was a very harsh man and it was very hard to live.

Mania Kolosova

<...>?

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17/vi 42 Coincidence

My dreams have come true, it's what I dreamed about a "brunette" who a year ago set a blazing fire alight in my soul, all the same I managed to kiss his sweet lips. I remain captured, but the fire in my breast does not cease glowing.

16/vi 42 Yefimenko, my enemy, took cream from the plant, and it was discovered. That's what he wanted... that's why he starting forcing me out of the plant, so that he could have cream, and butter, and all that kind of stuff.

15/vi 42 His wife left for Aktiubinsk and took a bucket of curd. That was suspicious – the driver Urbanov found butter under the curd on route – the consequences are not known.

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21/vi 42 Home

I went home with a car and arrived home at Aktiubinsk, and then they all gathered together: my Aunt Anuita whom I hadn't seen for 7 years. Shura my nephew was still at his headquarters, he hadn't been sent to the front. My brother Vanya was also still home.

22/vi Seeing off

We had a day off and we had guests, it was the day when we said good-bye and we saw off my brother Vanya.

23/vi At the headquarters.

I went to my nephew Shurochka, to the camp. I met up with him. I went to see him every day at 8 o'clock in the evening. They'll soon send him to the front.

24/vi I went to the city park to the Ukrainian Ensemble.

25/vi 42 Brother at the front

We accompanied my brother to the station and he went to the front. We said goodbye, not knowing whether we'd meet again, and when.

26/vi 42 Went to the base to find out whether there were carts from the Dairy Plant. I stood beside the porch – Livonov, the manager of the trust, saw me. So too the engineer for Ukharov. They called me into the office and treated me very well. They told me to hurry up with the analysis of my investigation, so that they could re-employ me again soon [...]... “it would seem that they were taking a cut”.

27/vi I arrived at the factory – I met with Dziuba. He immediately astonished us with the news that he had a summons to the Army. His wife began to cry. For my part, I also didn't find it pleasant. But then it turned out that they again left him out. We were very happy.

30/vi 42 I dug a flower bed and planted tobacco – it wasn't easy and I got three calluses on my hands, “very painful!” Also unpleasant that I was hungry the whole day and now it was already 5 pm, and I still hadn't eaten anything.

I just don't have the strength anymore!!

30/vi 42 I'm in such a difficult situation, I am sitting without work and have no money, and I have nothing to eat and am hungry – “and why?” Because in winter in the storms in the cold to keep the furnace going I had to go myself, and prepare the ice, not thinking of my health and of my strength – I always thought that they would take my work into account – but it turned out that they listened to that chatterbox, two times embezzler, and they accused me, and removed me from work, and I ask myself what for?

And there were the investigative organs. They're already coming down on me... and I'm sitting without work and that'll continue as long as they continue to terrorise me. It turns out that it's not the plants in Abdulino, but the enemies of the people and the spies that wanted to kill me and my husband, and that a certain Lebedev even tried to kill him.

But it turned out that they were found to be enemies, and all of them were arrested 1937. But we had to put up with a lot because of them. So here it turns out that some are granted life, and steal 4-5- or even 9 kg of butter a day.

I won't survive if they don't reinstall me any time soon, and won't give me the results, and I can't survive a second month of hunger, and what's more my mother's an old lady, 65 years old, and my daughter's 7 and they too are hungry. And meanwhile my brother is defending the

motherland, and so he's left his family in my care too, and things are as you see them.

They torment me

<...>?

I wouldn't have been able to survive if it had lasted longer, then I would've been forced to poison my old mother and seven year old daughter so that they'd not suffer any more, and myself with them, I just didn't have any more strength to live that way anymore. Let those who put us in prison live on!

Fedor Fedorovich!

[following paragraph was crossed through with slashes – Ed.]

You, as the director should tell all, how I worked and how Dinisov worked and why Yefimenko fought against me. I see that you too for some reason are not content with me and I want to know why? Could it be that my appearance offended you at some point?

3/vii 42 Result of my fate.

I went to Rodnikovka and went to the police.

They told me there that my case hadn't been followed up. They returned my documents and recommended I take up my place again, at the plant.

[A note on the margin – Ed.]

Many pages destroyed, which'll remain a secret in my soul.

<...>

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...from the accountants, and drew up an accusation against him and handed it over to the oblast' party committee¹⁵.

February 43 Shakhrai was then a master, and they sent butter to the base and according to the instructions of Shvatskii they put a 5 kg weight into the butter. In this way they wanted to set me up, but they didn't succeed. On the contrary, an investigation was opened against Shakhrai. Shvatskii didn't manage at all in getting rid of me, nor finding me guilty. Instead it was determined that I should begin working here again.

¹⁵ An *oblast'* is an administrative-territorial unit. It is sometimes translated as 'province'.

He began to criticize me in every way.

22/ii 43 The main engineer Iavich and the laboratory worker Zoi Panchenko came to the plant.

They called me up to the office.

Iavich asked for a cup of tea. My mother prepared it, he drank it and left. He had a very severe quarrel with the director Shvatski, partly about my return to work.

23/ii 43 An audit of the master Shakhrai was made. It turned out that with Shvatski he'd wasted 28 kg of butter, and Shvatskii made me pay for 4 kg.

<...>

I answered that if they'd stop obstructing my work I was always ready to work with him, and we decided to work together again. They gave me an order to become the head of the butter plant. Shvatskii left and they sent me to Martuk to lead a master-group according to the new methods of work.

9/iii 43 We came to Martu[k]. There was work until the 15/iii. Things went poorly there. We ended up being hungry.

<...>

[Remainder torn - Ed.]

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10/iii 43 I was in Martuk and went to the apartment of Olia Movzuleva. I stayed there.

11/iii 43 I lost the mouthpiece [for a cigarette] which had been given me. It was very fine. I was very sad.

15/iii 43 We left from the work at Aktiubinsk. We came to the Trust.

17/iii 43

<...>

[Remainder torn - Ed.]

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Materials and Discussions

He kept getting into squabbles with the workers in the area. He swore with the workers in production, and the work went to pieces under his leadership. His wife runs the plant and leads him by the nose.

The workers became good pals with me. It was fun in the workshops... the work went quickly despite that there were few workers, not enough, and we had to work day and nights without thinking about our strength.

Shvatski got angry that the workers liked me, but he wasn't able to hurt me at work.

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He began creating all sorts of intrigues against the workers, and against the laboratory worker, and also called a commission of the raion party committee and the chief engineer of the trust in order to investigate. All came and revealed that he'd spent his whole time plotting intrigues.

I/v

We were in the city. We partied at the wedding of the groom Shura.

25/v 43 For a short time the military worker comrade Fed. Marikhovskii came. We met and he used to come to our house often. He was very good to mum and to my daughter Nelichka. I didn't suspect anything...

2/vi 43 Marikhovskii calls me and starts telling me that he wants to have a word with me.

<...>

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And suddenly he tells me that he's being called up to a N.K.V.D.¹⁶ unit to work. But it was obvious that he didn't want to go. We bade each other farewell and he asked me to write letters to him and he'd write to me. And I promised and he left.

20/vi 43 I received a letter from Marikhovskii and I answered.

30/vi 43 I received a letter from Marikhovskii.

¹⁶ The People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs, or the Soviet secret police.

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16/vii 43

My brother called to say that they were taking him into the army. There were a lot of tears.

But in the end they did not call him up because of his illnesses.

21/vii 43 My nephew Vitichka came by... he was at my place up until the 23/vii and he started complaining that he wanted to go home. We asked him to stay, but he left.

25/vii 43 Sad news

Called us on the phone. I hear that they are calling me. I arrived and Nina told me that Vitia

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died.

I was shocked as only two days earlier he'd been at our home. It seems his comrades had found a bomb in the station and they came and called him to defuse it as he was a combatant, and he went.

And when he was defusing the bomb it exploded and wounded him caused 18 wounds and tore off all his right leg and the wound was mortal, it caused a urinary bubble. He was sent to hospital 24/vii and he was operated upon, he became unconscious and at 7 o'clock in the morning 25/vii he died. A very heavy blow. How could we survive it.

26/vii We buried him.

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From the front.

Shura came wounded in the head. It was a very heavy wound. Half his skull was gone – he was already left an invalid.

28/vii 43 I got a letter from Marikhovskii. He was annoyed I hadn't written.

5/viii 43 I got a letter and a card from the front from my brother Vanya.

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15/viii 43 My brother Kolia phoned to say that on 16/viii they were drafting him into the army. I accompanied mum with Nelly in a car there.

16/viii 43 I also left in order to accompany my brother. I arrived 17/viii in the morning, but my brother wasn't there. I went to his house. I was

Materials and Discussions

very sad and scared that our beloved older brother wasn't there. Motia met me with tears and we cried a lot for our brother, and for poor Vitichka who'd died because of the bomb.

18/viii I set off for the plant. Suddenly Motia comes and tells me that

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Kolia'd come. They sent him back to Chkalovo because he was ill. How much joy! They left him at the military committee and I went to the plant.

25/viii 43. Shvatskii the director of our plant suddenly started swearing at me... he swore his head off but I didn't remain silent.

But he decided to fire me from the plant ... so that I didn't get in the way of his mischief and cheating. He started phoning the trust in order to get rid of me, and he wrote all kinds of complaints to the raion party committee.

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28/viii 43 The deputy engineer Voropaeva came. She audited me, it turned out that everything was fine with regard to the complaint against me. And she realized that Shavtskii kept making intrigues and hassling me.

28/ix 43 A commission from the raion party committee came. Tkachev called all the workers and made clear that Shavtskii had not only kept on making intrigues but had completely undermined the work of the plant.

27/viii We fought with Gritsenko because he swore his head off at me.

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30/viii 43 The senior technician of the Trust, Ganchan, came, and the newly appointed master Afanasev. And they brought an order that I should hand over the plant to him, and I was appointed to the Andreevskii Butter Plant.

9/xi 43 They finished the audit of the Butter plant. Everything was in order.

10/xi 43 I handed over the Butter plant.

17/xi 43 I went to Aktiubinsk to the Trust with the audit. I stayed in Aktiubinsk.

<...>

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14/x 43 I sent off one cart. My mother and my daughter also went and I stayed behind.

An empty room. Very boring. I worried how my mother and daughter would get there. It was very cold.

14/x 43 In the evening all the workers of the Butter plant came to say goodbye to me for the last time. We played the gramophone. And they sang and danced.

15/x 43 With the laboratory worker Zoi we wrote out the words of two songs

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from the gramophone records... I wrote an album for her as a keepsake and she did the same for me. And at 2 o'clock daytime Zoi and I said goodbye to one another, hugged each other firmly, kissed each other, and cried, and we then left one another. She just left from the plant and I left that same day. She was a strong girl.

15/x 43 I left for Andreevka. All the people I knew saw me off and cried when we said goodbye to one another, and sent greetings to mum.

15/x 43 Niura my helper-technician accompanied me as far as the bridge and we said goodbye and I left.

<...>

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With the director we determined on the preparation of a dam. I sketched the plan of that day.

20/xi 43 I'll ask the director to let me go to Aktiubinsk. I asked and he agreed.

23/xi 43 With the worker Tonya we left for Aktiubinsk. We found snow there, and we had no way to get back. But Tanya and me decided to take a horse – and that's what we did and we arrived at the factory on horseback... but we were tired out because it was necessary to go 75 kilometers bareback, we arrived at the plant 27/xi 43: during the night, I kept thinking how we'd prepare the ice...

And the odd-ball-despite-everything Fedor Petrovich also set off for Ak-tiubinsk following us by car, and the plant was left without management, and he didn't entrust even half a kopek to a Komsomol accountant, to organize

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the preparation of the dam – well, just trouble, as they're uninterested in the question of production. When he'll come we'll quarrel anyway.

1/xii 43 I started to do some pouring of water for the ice but it was already useless since the ground was frozen.

So I dealt with it for a full 15 days and got nothing + the director didn't even come once, and didn't look at what and how we were doing things there, despite the fact that he'd already arrived on the 5/xii, you know, together with his... so that he didn't have any time to deal with production.

6/xii 43 V.A. Sibirev came as a plenipotentiary from the Trust in order to help with the preparation of ice. "Hey look there's something of a damp squid about him", I tell Fedor P. that he probably wouldn't really help us.

And so it happened that he stayed until 27/xii and didn't come out once to the ice in order to see the preparation of the ice, and to help in the work

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I was angry and hassled, but what could I do alone?

25/xii 43 Frankly, I'm getting nervous. Trouble of the last month, I rushed with the ice and couldn't find him anywhere and no one helped. The director was sitting with his guitar, playing, and the overseer Sibirev was making him a meal and they were singing songs after lunch, and then also in the evening they were going to catch sparrows and to roast them – it's disgraceful that I have to do everything alone and no one helps. One thing concerns me, that the Trust will necessarily put all the blame on me, on a technician. Because surely Skorobachet'ko can hardly dare criticise Gravchenko? No, she's pressed by him and she's afraid of him. Gravchenko handed the plant over to me.

Zoia.!!

I cannot imagine what sort of a director of the Trust Zoia would be.

For example Skorobachetkova arranges it so that Gravchenko directs her. He put such pressure on them with Voropaeva that the wife broke the windows. On New Year in the Trust in the laboratory Tonya broke windows... that's the way...

27/xii 43 The director Gravchenko gave me the plant and left for Aktiubinsk. The overseer V.A. Sibirev left for good with him. I was left alone. So now, I could prepare the ice as I wanted. That didn't help a lot, devil take them! But still I'll make it, I'll still prepare the ice.

And what would I do. It will be difficult to carry out the work with people without rations. And I'm quite stupid that I'm talking about rations when there's no-one to help? Well, we'll try to work as if on the front despite the circumstances.

And when I have the opportunity I'll eat, and when the time comes to advance, then there's no time to think about food, but there is time to think about obstacles. We need to hurry with the ice so as not to ruin even one kg of butter in the season, and to give it to the fighters. I'll start work tomorrow with the people, the collective is full of energy.

28/xii 43 We increased our efforts to prepare the ice – but again woe, there were no bulls, and no sledges, no transport. It was necessary to go to the Kolkhoz and ask, they wouldn't reject my request...

Discussion held with the representative about the sledges and the bulls... I got two sledges and a pair of bulls. That means everything was going fine. But we still needed to get two crowbars to shovel. I would go now to the smith Kononenko.

29/xii 43 The crowbars and shovels got the work going, but the people got very tired without bread. Keep it up, guys, as best you can, and then in spring

we'll rest a bit. The guys tried and together with me put everything into the preparation of the ice.

31/xii 43 In the evening.

I prepared a new-years tree for my daughter, and a costume for her performances...

Materials and Discussions

1/i 44 New year. Guests came. After that Nelly went to perform at the New Year's party.

3/i 44 I fell ill with a flu and lay low for 10 days, and that's an added trouble that happened to me... and what of my ice preparation...

5 August 44 I handed over the plant and left for Aktiubinsk.

6/xii 44 I fell ill with rheumatism in my feet and hands and was without work,

I went for the electro-treatment and started the treatment from the 10/1 of [19]45.

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9/v Great happiness of the people. End of the war. Our country won.

15/v I completed my cure. The doctors ordered a break. I don't see any improvement. Aching, just like before, in my feet, hands and spine.

Yes, I worked with all my heart for production, and lost all my health there, and at the moment nobody gives a damn. Astonishing.

10/v 45 We start busying ourselves with the planting of kitchen-gardens. The thick of work is starting. I go to dig up potatoes.

5 June 1945 Dig up potatoes with Marusya and I see that something fell from the train. I just wanted... but she ran, I stopped and suddenly she brought a skirt and said – let it be mine – but she hid everything...

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July 1945 Received a letter from my brother Vanya.

He wrote that soon he'd come home and that he wanted us all to live like before. If it was hard for any of us, then we'd help each other.

I wrote back this way: that had never been and never would be, because your other halves prevented that kind of arrangement, because they were never satisfied.

I got a letter from my brother Vanya, replying to mine. He wrote that no, sister, that wouldn't happen. No one would come in the way of us, brothers and sisters...

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It's very difficult when others don't allow brothers and sisters to live as a family.

Living as a family

War changed me – he said – and I’m not who I was. Those are the words of my brother, Vanya.

30/viii 45 For some reason I haven’t looked at my diary for a long time... it’s all work and I never have the time, specially during these days. We’re getting ready and collecting everything. We’re waiting for our beloved brother Vanya from the front. And we can’t wait enough for that day when I’ll meet my beloved again and hug him and tell him all my sufferings, and those of his dear mother.

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I’ll tell him a lot, if he’s interested in our former life. And if not, then everything’ll remain in our suffering soul.

We expect our brother on the 1-2/ix and I keep going to the station to meet him, already from the 25/viii, and my heart beats so hard when I remember that I’ll soon meet my brother and how his mother, and his daughter Fisa and his niece Nelly (as if he was her own father) and how his brother Kolya, all wait for him...

(And his wife’s waiting for him too)

Only with money.

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13 September 1945 This here date I can write among the most important, because this day is a great feast and joy... Today we met our brother Vanya from the front, victor of the Patriotic war, who was awarded a medal on three occasions. That’s a joy that it’s not possible to describe. And how great was the joy for mum, she almost fell ill from the joy.

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My dear brother how long we waited for you, and in the end we felt joy I can’t express. But you can’t understand it...

14/ix Upon arrival he brought me and Marousia a present, three meters of manufactured cloth, and where is Marousia? Always there.