

ner. He was arrested on the spot on charges of being an American spy and sent immediately back into Siberia. He has not been heard of since.

Shortly afterward, Mrs. Voronaeff was arrested also and sent once again to a Communist concentration camp. She was forced to walk rapidly ahead of guards. Those who grew weary and fell were shot in the back of the head.

"There were about three thousand people in the average-sized camp," she says. "We did everything from quarrying rock and loading mining cars to digging up the earth for long canals. For awhile, I had an easy job scrubbing floors in the camp down on my knees."

She was continually questioned by the police who tried to force her into admitting that she was an American spy. For not cooperating, and for insisting that she was not, she was kept in solitary confinement for one whole year.

"During that time," she says, "the Lord was closer to me than at any other time. I had no bedding, but had to sleep on the concrete floor. But I prayed to the Lord night and day. He was very real. . . ."

In 1953, Mrs. Voronaeff was released from prison when Stalin died. She returned at once to Odessa but found it difficult to find a place to live. She had nothing, and her friends were afraid to associate with her for fear of being drawn into her troubles with the police.

"I slept under a tree for four months," she says, "and ate what people gave me and did what work I could do."

She was not forgotten, however, because back in America her four sons and daughter kept up a steady fight to have their mother released from Russia so she could travel to America. They wrote letters to the press in their local cities: Los Angeles, Cleveland and Indianapolis. Paul earned quite some notoriety in Washington where he "crashed" a party given for Premier Nikita Khrushchev with a petition demanding his mother's release from Russia. The Soviet Embassy in Washington accepted his petition at that time, but it was several months before anything was done about it.

As the news stories grew, the U. S. State Department gave cooperation through the ambassador in Moscow to have Mrs. Voronaeff returned to America. Finally the day came on May 6, 1960, when Alex Voronaeff received a telegram from Thomas H. Kuchel, U. S. Senator from California. It read: "The State Department has today been advised your mother, Mrs. Katherine A. Voronaeff, has been issued visa for June 28. She is scheduled to arrive New York via Sabena Airline, Flight 553 on July 8. Regards."

Quickly the entire family gathered. From all over the country they converged on New York's International Airport to await the arrival of their long-lost mother whom they had not seen since that fateful day in 1933 so long ago.

Finally the big Sabena aircraft approached the field, circled and landed gently on the long airstrip. Breathlessly the Voronaeff children, along with reporters, well-wishers and grandchildren, watched and waited, October 1

hoping to get the first glimpse of their mother. Could it be possible? Was it indeed just a dream? Had they been given wrong information?

Then the ramp was pushed out, the door opened for the multitude of passengers that came pouring out. And then, there! there in a brightly-colored kerchief was Mrs. Voronaeff—a large woman with snow-white hair and rugged features. The family all crowded around her as she walked feebly down the ramp. Mrs. Voronaeff smiled happily. She kept murmuring over and over: "I'm so glad . . . so glad!"

There were tears and long kisses as the mother greeted a son . . . a daughter-in-law . . . a grandchild. One of the granddaughters pressed a bouquet of roses and an American flag into her wrinkled hand. She managed to keep her composure until her daughter, now a trim housewife from Cleveland, arrived.

Mrs. Voronaeff failed to recognize her daughter at first. Hope was not quite ten years old when she left Russia to come to the United States. After her son told his mother who the attractive young lady was, the elderly grandmother burst into tears and embraced her daughter.

"What is it like, Mrs. Voronaeff?" reporters asked as they snapped pictures on the happy occasion.

"It is like buried in Russia and resurrected in America," she said in her broken English. And truly the expression on her face mirrored the joy that was in her heart.

She traveled from city to city, visiting her family and speaking in Russian and Full Gospel Churches across the land. Mrs. Voronaeff, through an interpreter, told of life behind the Iron Curtain from firsthand experience. She said that most of the Russian churches have been closed and torn down. Only very few churches are permitted to remain open in a few of the larger cities for propaganda purposes. They exist, she says, to attempt to show foreign tourists and visitors that there is no religious persecution in the Soviet Union.

Mrs. Voronaeff said the government does not permit young people's organizations or youth work in these few churches, such as Sunday schools, or any religious instruction for children. It also does not permit anyone younger than eighteen to be baptized and received into the church. No religious radio broadcasts are permitted, no missionary activities, no prayer circles or cottage meetings are permitted.

In Odessa last year, before Mrs. Voronaeff left there to come to America, she greeted several American tourists in English as they visited the church. The next morning she was summoned to the secret police headquarters and warned that the next time she speaks to any tourist she will be exiled again to Siberia.

"This proves," she says, "that there are secret service agents even in the church."

In Moscow, where she transferred to the plane that brought her to America, Mrs. Voronaeff visited the Central Baptist Church. After the morning service, the pastor gave her a Russian Bible and a hymn book to take to America.

"It was a ridiculous thing to do," Mrs.

Voronaeff says in disgust. "I was going to a land overflowing with Bibles and hymn books and yet they gave me two of the most precious and prized things a Christian in Russia could own and which very few of them have!"

She did not bring them to America. Instead, she took the Bible and the hymnal to a friend's house in Moscow and made him promise to give them to a Christian assembly which had no Bible, thus foiling the attempt by the Russian state-licensed pastors to show the people in America that Soviet Christians indeed have freedom of worship.

Mrs. Voronaeff also told about a group of several thousand Christians who signed petitions appealing to the government to grant permission to reopen a church in Odessa. A delegation of several ministers and laymen travelled to Moscow to present these petitions to the central government. Instead of granting the permission, the government officials arrested the men on the spot and sentenced them to twenty-five years of hard labor in a prison camp.

Not since the days of the early Christians of the New Testament and the times of the pagan Empire of Nero have believers in God suffered such cruel persecution for their faith as those today in Soviet prisons and labor camps. "The entire country is one big prison," Mrs. Voronaeff often says.

She believes in her heart that her husband is alive somewhere in Siberia, working in a Communist prison without the privilege of correspondence. But be he alive or dead, she knows he is in the Lord's hands. And she is glad too that he had the courage to obey the Lord rather than men, even though it cost him, and it cost his family, hardships untold to keep alive the light of Christianity in a dark, dark land.

THE END

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The Moscow Patriarchate had its hand strengthened in the U.S. last week by a unanimous Supreme Court decision that Manhattan's Orthodox St. Nicholas Cathedral, completed in 1903 as the seat of Russian Orthodoxy in North America, should be returned to the control of the Russian hierarchy. In 1924 a majority of Russian Orthodox parishes in the U.S. seceded from the Moscow Patriarchate on the ground that it was a tool of the Communist state and in 1945 the schismatic group, known as the Metropolitan District, won a suit in the New York Court of Appeals to take over the cathedral.

Last week's ruling was the Supreme Court's second reversal of the original New York finding in favor of the schismatics, established a strong precedent restricting U.S. state or federal courts from interfering in a hierarchy's control of church property, regardless of the desires of the church membership.