

Yuri Fiedelgolts



This picture was taken in Magadan in 1954 by a friend, who was released from the camp 2 days before me when we were on the free side, in 1954.

Unfortunately the original photo was not preserved, it was taken by magazine staff, who published my verses. They did not return that picture. Only a poor black and white Xerox-copy is left. It was the way I looked at that time and people tried not to confront me.

In 1948 I was arrested. I was blamed in foundation of the anti-Soviet circle and participation in its activity. In accordance with the article 58 I was charged with anti-soviet activity, they also added item 11, group actions.

I was sentenced to 10 years in the maximum security camp [Gulag], and I was bereft of rights for five years, i.e. exiled. I was also sentenced to hard physical labor as the most malicious criminal. I was sent to the maximum security camp Gulag, located 4000 km away from home.

I was sent to work on the automobile repair plant. I had not stayed there for a long time. Shortly I found out that I was included in the squad to be sent to Kolyma. Our squad was put in the crammed car for cattle and taken to the port of Vanino, where Kolyma camp was being formed.

Our squad came to Vanino Sea Port [port town in the Russian Far East, 4500 km to the North-East from Moscow]. I worked there as medical assistant. In some months I was sent to Kolyma to Berlag.

I became a mediocre worker. In 1951 I was transferred to the camp, to the north from Berlag. It was a huge working zone, where the foundation, walls and constructions of some secretive site were made. It must have been some plant.

In the previous camp I was mostly working in the workshop, where it was not so cold, but in frosty winter as of 1951-52 I was to work in the open. We had an almost incessant labor for 10-12 hours per day. Our nutrition was very poor: oat gruel, rotten herring, underbaked bread. All that food was in skimpy portions.

In early spring 1952 I was sent to another place along with 300 convicts. We reached the final destination. It was the extreme point of Kolyma -Alyaskitovy. That God-forsaken place was about 900 kilometers away from Magadan, far from the high way.

There was ore mill in Alyaskitovy. I was sent to the factory crew, servicing assembly lines looking like metallic boxes the vibrating metallic nets inside. Toxic water was trickling down there, taking away the processed gob- white sand.

The work was exhausting. There was a cloud of dust. No respirator helped, the convicts were afflicted with silicosis [chronic lung disease], and died in the camp hospital. The frosts reached - 60°C. Wet sand was coming from the top freezing off immediately to the felt boots and the clothes.

In early 1954 I got ill. Pulmonary hemorrhage started. I was sent to the barrack for disabled crammed with dying people. I got more and more feeble every day. I was a bliss for me. I did not have to go to work. I was lying in my bed feeling happy and waiting for the death.

The only medical assistance I got were injections of calcium chloride. Strange as it may be -they helped and my hemorrhage stopped. I am not sure what kind of outcome I would have if I were not called by the management and read the order on my pardon in the middle May 1954.

It was the time when the campaign on the investigation of the cases of the innocent convicts was being held. When my case was reconsidered, the Supreme Court left the charge in accordance with article 58- anti-Soviet propaganda, but cancelled item 11- the criminal group.

Thus instead of 10 years of camp, we were supposed to have only 6, but I was in the going on the 7th year. Thus, I was to be released. Only in August 1954 we were sent to the military aerodrome together with the demobilized soldiers- the guards.

We took the plane to Magadan and from there to Berlag replacement depot. I got the money from my parents by wire, bought a ticket and went to Karaganda. I looked like a criminal with my cropped hair, squinted eyes and smirch. I was also told that I looked like a grinning wolf before attack. People preferred not to confront me.