

1781

1929

147 år i främmande land

Livet i Gammalsvenskby



## Preface

During our first visit to Sweden in 2004, we had the opportunity to reconnect with my Grandfather Annas's family who all remained in Sweden when he immigrated with his family to Canada in 1930. It was 35 years since his two brothers, Teodor and Andreas with his wife Margareta visited our family in Canada.

During our visit with Andreas's son Nils's family in Sala, I was presented with this journal as translated into modern Swedish by Nils.

It was an incredible gift and my job was to translate it into English for our Canadian relatives. It was a daunting task, requiring two years of Swedish classes at the University of Alberta. While much of this manuscript is a direct translation with little consideration for proper English, I could not have completed this without the generous assistance of my Swedish teacher, Marianne Lindvall. She provided invaluable assistance on colloquialisms, archaic and technical terms.

Karen Wright  
August 24, 2008



Nils Taknelid, Forrest, Karen, Andreas, Göran, Märta, Sebastian, Peter



## Forward

I will, in this writing, give my interpretation for what my father, in his hand written journal, told of his life in Gammalsvenskby, Ukraina. His knowledge in the Swedish language grammar and spelling was perhaps not always good. He wrote in a mixture of Swedish and Old Swedish and my intention is to, as accurately as possible, try to reproduce what he has written in a little better Swedish. My father's name is Andreas Pettersson Annas and he was born March 22, 1901 in Gammalsvenskby, Ukraina. There he lived and worked until the end of July 1929, when, after 147 years in a strange land, he had the possibility to return to his beloved fatherland, Sweden. He assures on his honor that his writing in his book is truth and not imagination.

The group of a little more than 900 Svenskby dwellers, who after a lot of ifs, ands and buts had the privilege to return to Sweden in 1929, was probably seen by the population in Sweden as a homogeneous group whose members were peers and on equal footing with each other. This was however not the case. Even in Gammalsvenskby there was a class society of big farmers, small farmers and farm workers without land. This and many other things has my father described in his book. The original is found at Nils Taknelid's house, his son who lives in Sala. This is also I who am attempting to write what my father wrote in his book.



## **A Little about the Svenskby Dweller's History**

### **From Dagö to the Arrival in Gammalsvenskby, Ukraina**

Most people know that the Svenskby dwellers have their roots on Dagö, the second largest of the islands off the Baltic Coast. How and when these Swedish fishermen and farmers came to reside on the flat limestone island is disputed and partially lost in history's mystery. The village's own tradition speaks of a garrison ordered out from Roslagen in the 1600's while a second names the Gutasaga (an old legend) emigration tale from around 1130. Both are, however, equally unlikely, since preserved documents show that the settlement on Dagö occurred, some time between 1250 and 1470, probably around 1300. The nearest certainty is that the settlers came from the neighbouring island of Ösel, there is also much talk that the Swedish settlements in Estonia and other Baltic States were first connected to Finland's Swedish villages. Real proof does not exist however.

Dagö is a flat limestone island, in terms of area, barely a third of the size of Gotland. The Swedish came to settle on the barren and rocky northern portion of the island, and, for their salvage, was, besides the farming, also fishing and a seal hunt of large importance.

At that time for the settlers, the island belonged to a powerful German Order. In a document from 1470, the Order's master of the army assured the Swedish people "eternal freedom from all serfdom". The struggle to keep these rights and get to live as free Swedish farmers placed their stamp on the almost 500 years that the Swedes lived on Dagö. So gradually it resulted in most of the people being banished from the island.

From 1563 to 1710, Dagö was in Swedish possession and during this time, the island, in reality, was governed by a series of Swedish Counts, the Dagö farmers' situation deteriorated sharply. Taxes and daily work obligations were decreed and those who protested were harshly punished. The farmers' leader during the last part of the 1600's was Kidaste Jürgen (Kittas Irja), who several times with varying success, transported the farmers' cause before the council in Stockholm. He was in the end sentenced to death, the sentence was changed to deportation from the country. But Kidaste Jürgen hid himself and is believed to be left on the island for twelve years until his death in 1679.

When the Russians captured the island in 1710, they brought with them a severe plague which stripped the island of a large part of its population. The conditions under the new German authorities otherwise seem to have been fairly good, but in that the descendants of the old owners, the Swedish counts, through personal contacts with the Russian empress, quickly regained the right to, among other areas, Dagö, the situation once again darkened for the Dagö Swedes. Count Carl Magnus Stenbock treated them all with immense ruthlessness, the offensive

ones he sold as animals or exchanged them for horses and hunting dogs. When the farmers still would not give up the fight, he said finally he would move them out, at the same time as he sold the property to a Polish nobleman. Then, in February 1718, the Russian Empress Katarina II, however, who evidently received knowledge of the troublesome Dagö farmers, had already signed a public notice, in which she gave orders that they would be “transferred” to New Russia, that is, to the land that was taken from Turkey, the recently conquered Ukraine. Behind the idea to deport the Swedish there as a colony, together with Russian criminals and foreign immigrants, certainly laid one of the empress’ favorites, Prince Potemkin.

The farmers did not want, of course, goodwillingly, to leave their island and the land which their fathers broke and tilled for so long. But with promises of fertile fields, the fish-filled waters, a church with a Swedish minister, exemption from taxes and generous help with housing and living for the first year, they were able to accept the deportation. At the end of August 1781, the 1,200 Swedes and their escort of fifty Cossacks went 2,000 kilometers on foot to the Ukraine. The farmers could only take with them all the most necessities: household utensils, carts, horses and oxen. For their farms they received no pay, they were perceived as belonging to the good master, and livestock and remaining personal property was taken over with insignificant compensation.

After two months walking in the ever-advancing Russian winter, the pitiful procession arrived in Moscow. Already in the first stage, 200 of the wanderers were said to have succumbed from cold, starvation and disease. In the capital, they took winter quarters and recovered their strength during the coldest months.

In February 1782, they continued southwards. When the provisions they had brought with them were finished, the horses dropped and the carts broke, the walk in the cold and snowstorms began to be all the more like a death march. It is believed that the Cossacks’ commander, Captain Makaretov, mercilessly drove on the increasingly exhausted group. They could not take themselves more than 10 kilometers per day. The strong winds gripped them and no quarters were available before the procession reached a Ukrainian place by the name Resjetilovka, about 20 kilometers west of Poltava. Here, the village tradition tells, so many of the Swedish died that the village inhabitants, who in compassion attended the burials, learned the Swedish funeral psalms by heart.

When those remaining collected new strength, the walk continued, and then they reached the Dnjepr river in front of the them, the women, children, the sick and old sat on rafts while the men alone got to walk further along the riverside. May 1, 1782 they arrived finally to the place by the river which they saw and which would come to be Gammal Svenskby. A little Cossack garrison was attached to a fort in the vicinity, and the more than 500 Swedes, who survived the death walk, lodged in the soldiers’ camps.

More than half of the walkers had thus succumbed on the way. The primitive houses and the unaccustomedness about their new circumstances in combination with diseases, particularly malaria, would quickly decimate the numbers further. A year later, according the church book, finds only 150 persons in the village, the others are, as from July 1782, carefully recorded in the death book by the village's first minister, Johan Adolf Europeus who, from his residence in Finland, connects to the new villagers. 1795 finds only 135 persons in the village. What the organizers of the transportation pointed to as such a beautiful example of how the colonists in New Russia would be treated ended thus with nine-tenths of them dead.

Some finished houses and waving cornfields were not waiting on the Dagö farmers for their arrival to their beautiful promised land, but only some weeks after the arrival to their new living place, every colonist family received receipt of a pair of oxen, a cow, a plough and a harrow and a little corn seed for sowing, and so gradually the village procured a good animal herd. During the first ten years the village was ravaged by wolf packs which came and took them to eat. To this came numerous bands of plunderers who nourished themselves by terrorizing the village colonists.

This area of the world allotted every newly constructed family home through drawing lots, and houses erected under management by an old Cossack from the fort. It mastered the shortage of wood in New Russia, so the Governor decided that the house would be built of limestone, which would be broken by the farmers. The house was erected so that one first excavated a square cavity in the hard clay about 120 centimeters deep, and around the edges of this "foundation" rests afterwards four equally high walls of stone and clay. Afterwards on these walls lay next a flat roof, consisting of some simple rider on a donkey with a plait of thick willows and on top of it straw or grass and dirt – and so was the house finished.

During a time period of 147 years with hard work, the huge hardships of bad harvests, famines, diseases, recurring attacks, fires and wars. During the whole time, the Swedish new villagers fought stiff-necked against the Germans and the Russian over loftiness to get to preserve their Swedish customs. They never gave up the fight to get to have their own church, get to practise their Christian beliefs and to get to have their own minister and to get to teach their Swedish language. From this embryo Gammalsvenskby grew until, at the end in July 1929, it was time for another parting, the longed-for journey home to our beloved fatherland Sweden who helped and aided those in many difficult situations.

This above history is in abbreviated form taken out of the book "Svenskbyborna" by Jan Utas published by Nature and Culture Stockholm.

In the sequel and with the above history as background, I want to tell how one lived in Gammalsvenskby, customs and practices but also hostilities between the

big farmers, farmers and non-farm owner workers. My father Andreas Pettersson Annas, born in Gammalsvenskby on March 22, 1901, has by hand written down his memories in a book. He writes in a language which is a mixture of Swedish and Old Swedish. My ambition is to try to write down his story as well as I can in Swedish.

## **Father Tells of the Life in Gammamsvenskby**

First I want to give a warm and heartfelt thanks to His Majesty King Gustav V and Queen Viktoria, Sweden's government and all the Swedish people at home in our fatherland that we got to come home again after 147 years absence in a strange land. We also want to give thanks to Tavaritch Stalin and the Russian government for, in the end, allowing us to return to our fatherland.

I will now write a little about my childhood home in Gammalsvenskby. My father and mother were ordinary workers. We were 12 children, 5 of them died before they were 15 years old. One brother fell in 1916 in Caucasia near the city Jorokovnich during the First World War. My father died in 1917 and my mother died in 1945, she is buried in the churchyard in the Bäl parish on Gotland.

When I was little, I thought that when I was big I shake up the whole world, but there not much happened with that. My mother and father did not have much. My father was very sickly but was still forced to answer for the family's maintenance. In the winters, he was made wicker baskets and in the summers, he worked as a day laborer for the farmers, the daily pay was one ruble (about 2 krona) per day, or a pound ( about 16 kilograms) of corn, rye or wheat. In the winter, it was bad with work.

As children, one enjoyed themselves in the winter with tobogganing on the toboggan runs and also skiing and making snowmen. Snowball wars were also fun. In 1908, I started school, I did not like it. The next year I got a job as a farmhand for a farmer, it was only during the spring tilling from March 1 to May 1. Pay for the first year was 3 rubles, some used clothes and a pair of used shoes. My job out on the steppe was mainly to go behind the harrow and raise it so that it did not drag the dirt piles together, the one day it was like the others, so long one kept on with ploughing, harrowing and so on. The work already began by five or six o'clock in the morning and kept on until eight o'clock in the evening with an hour break for breakfast and an hour for dinner at noon. It was quite light so one could work until ten or eleven o'clock in the evening. Many times one was so tired that one next had no energy to eat in the evening, but one must eat otherwise he could also get a beating despite his miserable condition. The food we ate outside was free. For to get light and warmth, one lit a fire, some other light finds none. After the food, the horses who got to stand outside under the bare sky, were tended to and they would get food and water. When this was done, the farmhand/farmhands got to turn in under the wagon on a bed which one prepared by laying some straw on the ground, on top of that a couple of sacks as sheets, a little pillow under the head and an old feather bed or a coat as a covering. To get shelter, one lays the straw along the wagon's one side and every time the wind turned, one also got to move the wagon. Many times it was cold, rainy and windy, yes it was hard to take for a little boy. Many times one cried on the sly, because one felt ashamed for the farmer to see it. It was father and mother who negotiated with the farmer when one would go out and take the

job. So here said father to me the first time I would take the job: "Now I have dealt you away, or now you get to take the job at the farmer's place, and stay on the job and try not to be cheeky towards the farmer and try not to leave from there, you do it, so no more showing yourself at home, because now you no more have a home and neither do you have a father or mother. Yes, remember what I have said to you, and good luck Anders." Yes my father, he was strict.

My birthday on March 22, I always got to celebrate outside on the steppe. Many farmers had their land situated far from the village, it could be up to 15 km. to those areas located farthest away. So when one left on Sunday afternoon or early Monday morning, one did not come home until Friday evening. Each and every farmer had built a little shed which one could lie in at night but for the most so could one lie under the wagon or the rack. The rack was full of ears which were used as feed for the horses. At night, the farmer fed the horses at the same time as he kept watch, because there were horse thieves always on the go but they steal even the seed for sowing and food that one had with him, the needs for a whole week. The food one had with him for the whole week was added at home before departing for the steppe and was fairly monotonous: for breakfast "gruel" (unleavened thin dough scattered in small pieces boiled in some kind of broth) or dry bread slices (fried with onion), for lunch it was the yellow grain porridge and milk, in the evening, it was the "ribbel" gruel (unleavened dough crumbs boiled in milk) or bread gruel, some morning or after dinner coffee did not exist.

On Sunday afternoon, it was time to begin to prepare next week's work out on the steppe, it could consist of filling the sacks with sowing seed, to load wood, load ears in the rack and so on. Those who had their land nearer the village could drive home every evening. It was even the same during the summers and the harvest times. For the poor landless workers, it was not some halcyon days. The farmers cared not about us poor, no, you dears. I remember, it was at Whitsun, I was 9 or 10 years old, father was sick and it was Whitsun Eve and we had not a piece of bread in the house, Whitsun Eve, mother boiled potato peelings with salt and we drank it like tea. When mother invited us to the table and read the table grace in Jesus name for the table we got, bless God for the food we received and so on, then she further said: " My dear children, you get to eat what we have, yes, you see the farmers, they have an abundance but no one thinks about you my dear poor children and your sick father. Yes, she said God is high and he looks down. And it was the same food even on Whit Sunday and Whit Monday. On the third day of Whitsun, mother rented out the front part of the house for a dance from noon to midnight for which she received 3 rubles. In Gammalsvenskby, there was a store which sold ready baked bread. Mother went there and bought some bread which we received first and our sick father tried a piece of bread. In early summer a year later we were eating without bread, mother went to a farmer in Gammalsvenskby and asked to buy 160 kg of wheat. The farmer answered, " For 160 kg., it does not pay to stand it on the scales," and mother left without receiving some. I believe my brother served as a

farmhand at his house. Mother then went to another wealthy farmer, he first scolded her and said that “the only thing you are rich with is children. Have you some money to buy it with?” he then asked and mother answered him that she had it, so she got to buy 160 kg. of wheat. So we were treated by our farmers in Gammalsvenskby. They were no compassionate Samaritans, they didn't notice us in our need only when they themselves needed help economically and politically, then we were good. I said to my mother and my sick father that there will come a day when even they will get to starve and go and beg, and it also came true. Before the journey to Sweden even they got to feel the need. At another occasion the family had put themselves in debt, it was 30 rubles which would be paid, on a certain date. Father and mother asked several farmers if they would loan them this sum but no farmer took part. It was so long that there was a seizure auction. We had, of course, only two horses and 2 cows but even so they came and measured out the one cow and sold it for 35 rubles. Which you see, so was helpfulness not particularly big. After what I now have here at home in Sweden have read in books, newspapers and let myself tell so have the folk here at home in Sweden sent down help for the sick and the destitute in Gammalsvenskby but, neither my father and mother or some other poor have seen the smoke of this help, this money landed in the Swedish Village farmers' pockets. We were regarded as lazy beggars who could not save. I remember so well it was a poor man who went down to Pastor Hoas and asked for a loan of 10 rubles from him, Hoas answered him; “Firstly I do not get my money back and secondly you do not become better for it.” But this man answered Hoas and said; “Had you given me the same amount as you gave Buskas, so had even I become the same big farmer as he is”, but the man went from there without getting to borrow this little sum.

In the village there were about 40 wealthy farmers who decided everything, the others had nothing to say but got to resign themselves to their decision. But other times would approach. After 1917, even these farmers got a taste of the bitter medicine.

In the school, one got to go until one reached 15 years old, it was understood that one month to the 15<sup>th</sup> birthday, one did not get to quit school but one got to continue to the end of the year. Had you on the other hand afforded to pay a ruble for your children, then you got to quit school and be confirmed. Those who could not afford to pay, his children got to go to school a year before the child would be confirmed. The rich looked down on the poor, they were regarded as lesser intelligent and were poorly clothed.

In Gammalsvenskby there were two schools in which one was taught in two languages, it was Swedish and Russian. The one school was called the Small School and was divided into three grades, the other was called the Big School and had two grades. In the Small school, there were about 125 students (Grades 1, 2 and 3) and the Big school 60-65 students (Grades 4 and 5). In the Small school one went one year and in the Big school two years in every grade,

7 years in all. We had only two teachers in Swedish and one in Russian. Pastor Hoas was a Swedish teacher until 1922. Then he was ordained (in Uppsala). (Who was the teacher in Russian and who was the teacher in Swedish after 1922 is not clearly noted). The teaching was so inclined that one taught in Swedish in morning in the one school and Russian in the other, in the afternoon, one exchanged teachers. We were taught to read, write and count in as well Swedish and Russian. All educational material like reading and writing books, pencils and pens, ink with more, our parents got to provide us with. The Swedish lesson books which were used in teaching were: Bible Tales, The Catechism, the Swedish reading book, the Geography and Map book, Science lessons, the Psalm Book, the Sunday School book and Zion's notes and Russian Language (Grammar). The Swedish lessons began at 8:00 a.m. and ended at noon, the Russian lessons began at 1:00 p.m. and ended at 3:00 p.m. In the school yard there was a little clock stack with a clock. The first one at school in the morning got to ring the clock so all the school children could hear that now it was time to leave for school. There were some who skipped class, he/she got to pay 5 kopek in fines. Every morning when the teacher came in to the school room we would rise up out of our desks and jointly read "Our Father", when we went home, we read The Lord's Prayer. The same ritual applied to the Russian teacher although in Russian. After 1917 one also sang, "Stand Up, Stand Up Oppressed Crowd" and so on in Russian. The school term began on the 1<sup>st</sup> of October and ended the 1<sup>st</sup> of March except the new beginners who started on the 1<sup>st</sup> of August. During school holidays, we went outside and worked for the farmers.

During my childhood and youth, I experienced three wars, it was the Russian-Japanese war in 1905, the First World War in 1914 and the Civil War which began in 1917 and went on until 1920. Other events were the big solar eclipse in 1914, then it was really dark for 10 minutes. Gammalsvenskby was also hit by four hurricane-like storms, the last in 1925 in early summer. When the storm had blown over, there was completely still wind, then there fell a rain consisting of soot and ashes. The rain was so thick that the sun was not able to shine through but it was dark for two hours, then it began to lighten. The white painted houses were completely black and it had also forced inside the houses, it stank and smelled burnt. One night some Swedish Village farmers and a worker went out and partied., it ended with the worker killed. Who or what caused the death was never cleared up but it quieted down.

In the area there, Gammalsvenskby lay, stood also 5 other villages plus a monastery (Manastir in Russian). It was German, Jewish and Russian villages. All the villages together had about 10,000 inhabitants. Gammalsvenskby was central to all these villages and there one had built a municipal house which in Russian was called Vållost. There sat a committee which was common for all villages. The committee was elected for a period of three years and consisted of a chairman, two to three men from every village and the monastery. In addition to the committee, there was a secretary and some other employees. In the

government was included as well Germans, Russians, Jews and Swedes. In Vållost there was also a lawyer (who was Swedish). There also was held court proceedings regarding minor offences. There was also a little prison and gatekeeper. Every village had its municipal chairman and a secretary who answered for the village's municipal information. The municipal chairman we called såtske (in Russian starchena and in German chols). The municipal chairmen ran in their luck under a boss who sat in Vållost.

I have now reached my 15<sup>th</sup> year. It is time to be confirmed, it was important for us Christian Swedes. The war was fully going on still and we still have not received a Swedish priest. The German village has their own priest and there exists no obstacle, for a German priest would know how to conduct the confirmation but the committee in the Swedish village and our parents did not want their children to be confirmed by a German priest. The Germans worked namely to take over and incorporate the Swedish village with the German village but the Swedes fought always stubbornly to preserve their Swedish village. Hoas who was then our teacher in Gammalsvenskby requested, before he was pulled into the war in 1914, the parents to wait with the confirmation, for within the near future he said, certainly comes a Swedish priest here to us, either from Sweden or from Finland, so it was also. On Whitsun in 1916 came Pastor Neander from Uppsala to visit down in Gammalsvenskby and now there was confirmation. There were two years of classes which were confirmed.

Yes, now one was a big man, but was never some other than an ordinary worker for it. The pay was little better, now one could get a ruble a day and not like when one was under 15 years old – 20 to 25 kopek per day including food. Now one could get seasonal employment with the farmers. The year was divided into two seasons, a summer season from May 1 to October 1 and a winter season from October 1 to May 1. During the summer season, a fully capable worker earned 60 – 70 rubles and during the winter season 40 – 50 ruble plus free food and lodging, one was responsible for one's own bedding as well as for the washing and mending of one's clothes. When it pertained to lodging, so the farm hands got to lie outside in the summer, one lay for the most outside in the open. The maids or "mavdana" as we called them got to lie in the kitchen and they were also responsible for their bedding. As a farm hand, one got, during the summer, every Sunday and public holiday morning, to get up fairly early, take a pair of horses and ride down with them to the beach, there, one got to bathe and wash them properly clean.

In 1916, we got to see the first automobile roll through the village. To get to see a way to roll without horses, it was a big experience for the big as well as the small, both the old and young ran out to look at this wonder which came whizzing through the village. We saw the first bicycle in 1908, even it was a big experience.

The summers were very warm 30-35 (Celsius) degrees in the day and 20-25 degrees at night. There were fine bathing beaches and one could bathe from the beginning of May to the middle of October. In the winter, it could sometimes be cold – about -15-20 degrees but it could change quickly, up to 0 degrees and over. It was the coldest at the end of January and the beginning of February. Already during the month of March, one began to plant potatoes and onions. Yes, it was beautiful to live down there, you may believe. But times change and we ourselves become old and worn-out. When it pertained to taxes so a worker paid 75 kopek per person in state income tax, regardless of how much he earned and a small municipal tax. The farmers got to pay 1 ruble per hectare in state tax and a couple of rubles per hectare in municipal tax, it was reasonable and nothing to complain about.

As I earlier told about how one was fined 5 kopek every time one was absent from school without permission. Had one not paid off the debt earlier, so one must pay it before the confirmation otherwise he would not be confirmed. The day before the confirmation's ceremony, the church was decorated with flowers and aspen leaves. In the morning on confirmation day, the way from the school to the church would strewn with green grass, wide enough so that two persons could walk together. At 9:00 on Whitsun's morning, all of the confirmands gathered in the big school. At 9:30, the priest came in his black coat and we put ourselves in twos behind him, first the girls, then the boys, then we marched on the grass-strewn path, during hymns in front on the church and right up to the front of the alter, the song stopped and the girls got to sit on the left and the boys on the right. Then the church service began and continued until 12:00. It was very beautiful. Despite that one was already confirmed, one must go to Sunday School every Sunday between 1:00 and 3:00 p.m. until one is 18 years old, in addition, one must go to church every Sunday. If one cut class some Sunday from Sunday School, he got fined five kopek every time he cut class. Had one not paid the total amount of the fine when one finished Sunday School, it stayed with him until it was time to take out a bann. If one could not pay then, the priest refused to marry the bridal pair.

Now I will tell a little about how we celebrated Christmas, New Year's, Easter, Whitsun and May 1<sup>st</sup>. The Christmas was celebrated on December 25 by Swedes as well as Germans and Russians. Christmas was the absolute biggest celebration of the year. It was celebrated for three days. There was no forest in our parts so it was only the rich who could afford to buy a spruce Christmas tree, the rest obtained a Christmas pine and all the poorest contented themselves with a little aspen as a Christmas tree, which one brought home from the islet and then dressed it as a Christmas tree. On Christmas Eve, everything was put in order for the festivities. The Christmas tree was dressed, food and drink was put in order so that it only was to take out as needed, there was both wine, aquavit and beer for those who wanted it.

Christmas Eve is inside and at 3:00 p.m. begins the church clock to ring and call the villagers to the church service, which began at 6:00 p.m. and ended at 7:00 p.m. All the people of the village went to church, except in every family, one stayed at home with the small children and made food to eat for the mealtime for the church visitors when they come home from the church. Those who stayed home from the church also had another important task namely to, prior to the dark's burglary, go out and close all the gates and doors and with a chalk draw a white cross on the inside, a white cross would also be drawn on the outside of all doors and windows. One time when I was still little, I asked mother, "Why do you make all these crosses?" "Well," she answered, "you will also do it when you become big. We do it because during all these big holy nights there goes an evil spirit and sneaks quietly around and there, where he then does not see white crosses, there he goes in and destroys everything and brings woes for the future." Such was our customs and practices in Gammalsvenskby.

It is 6:00 in the afternoon, the Christmas tree, the chandeliers and the candles are lit in the church, the tri-part harmony choir begins to sing, they sing three parts of Christmas songs, then follows a common hymn and the pipe organ plays so that the diamonds rattle in the windows and Pastor Hoas proceeds up to the pulpit and begins to preach. Yes, you dears, it was a priest who could preach, he did not need some draft or some book. He knew his stuff, that you can be certain of. After the sermon, the choir sings "Silent Night, Holy Night" after which the church service ends with a common hymn.

Coming home from the church, we surely let ourselves taste the Christmas dinner, it consisted of roasted goose, alternatively duck, hen or cock with plums or apples, sausage, ham and bread and butter and wine, a glass of beer and some schnapps, to bring to the close, one drank tea. It will be pointed out that, unfortunately, that it was not everyone who could afford all of this. Rice pudding or lutfisk did not exist. Before we began eating father read the table grace, as he did after the meal ended. When everyone was now full and satisfied then one did not clear the food from the table but mother laid a clean tablecloth over the food and it was left on the table over night. I questioned mother as to why one did it in this way? Well she said it is so that on Christmas Eve, there the holy and blessed Christmas Santa Clauses go around and look in all the houses and chalets to get to pour out their good fortune to us and their blessing over us, yes, over everything which we own and have, but there, if they do not find any food on the table there, they do not go in. Any presents did not exist. The children got a little Christmas candy and gingerbread horses or other figures which were beautifully decorated. Christmas Eve's mealtime ended with psalms from the psalm book. Even the animals would know that it was Christmas. Mother had baked a special bread for the animals which now father took from, he divided into as many slices as he had animals, sprinkled on a little salt, then he went out to the stable and gave every animal his slice and said, "Christ is fed today. In God the Father's, the Son's and the Holy Spirit's name, take care of all of my animals", then he gave the animals the night fodder. When all of this was over,

said father and mother, “now our children, it is time for you to go to bed before the Santa Claus comes, if you are up when he comes, you can get a thrashing.” The Santa Claus with two padded elves were in the habit of going around to the cottages and knocking on the windows and doors. One let them into the cottage so the children would know to read something Christmassy for Father Christmas. When the children had read their poems for Father Christmas, he stretched forward his stick, which he had in his hand, and then the children would kiss it. Then if they did not do it, they received a strike from the stick. As the demonstration, so would the Elves also kiss the stick, the one made it but the other did not want to and then he received a strike of Father Christmas’s stick with a blow over the back end. The Santa Claus and Elves got a little coin or a couple of glasses of snaps then they trudged away to the next house.

Everything was calm and quiet Christmas morning and the whole day. When one “cleaned the barn floor” in the stable and barn, so in the morning the manure was left lying in a heap in the stable or barn. At first, in the evening, one carted it out to the manure pile out in the garden. So it was even with garbage and ashes which one scraped out of the fireplace (gruba), it was left lying indoors until the evening. It was so that on Christmas morning everything would rest. It would be quiet and calm for Christ was born on this day and he has a good will to us all. Our God is on high and peace on the earth, it was as this newborn child wanted to have it. During Advent and up to Boxing Day, one did not hold a dance or carry on games about money, even card games were forbidden, neither did one get to have a wedding nor did one get drunk. So it was even during the fast from Lent Sunday up to Easter.

The New Year’s celebration followed about the same pattern as the Christmas celebration when it applied to the preparations, food, closing of gates and windows, writing of crosses, spreading of manure, garbage and so on. The church service followed the same ritual also as the Christmas celebration but the difference with it was what the subject of songs, psalms and sermon dealt with this time – and it was the New Year. The priest speaks also of how many have passed on, were born and how many were married. Divorces did not exist. On New Year’s Eve, at 10:00 p.m., the choir gathered in the school to see the New Year in. Many folk gathered around the church to take part in the New Year’s celebration. At 11:30 p.m., the organist and the choir climbed up in the church tower to sing out the old and bring in the New Year. The sings out the old year and 10 minutes before the midnight, one begins to ring the old year and the choir sings in the new, at midnight, the church clock strikes 12:00 and then all the church clocks ring in the New Year. Now waiting with excitement, everyone standing on the ground, for the New Year’s greeting and now it comes: “We wish you all, young and old, big and small, a happy and blessed Good New Year” and now comes the long-awaited first salutation from up in the church tower, none get to fire some shots before this, it is then followed by hundreds of shots and more down on the ground. Now the New Year was seen in, most of them walked home now and crawled into bed but some continued to celebrate. When the

Gammalsvenskby people first began with since the singing up in the church tower at midnight on New Year's night, so heard the songs yet away in the nearby Russian village, one went out and listened and believed that it was angels who were singing from the sky. Those who continued the New Year's celebration then went further to wish their parents, relatives, fiancées and other friends Good New Year. When one came in front of the house, one knocked on the window, one then answered from within the house so one wished one "Good New Year" and fired a shot, then the master came out and opened the door and said "You are welcome and step in", one was invited for some snaps, wine or aquavit and sometimes one also got a little coin. One thanked and went further to the next house, there repeated the same procedure. So one kept on up to 7:00 or 8:00 a.m. on New Year's Day so when one went home one was fairly round under the feet. If one was a child and went to the school, one got up at 5:00 a.m. on New Year's Day, prayed the morning prayer and read the Lord's Prayer, washed themselves and dressed themselves and then the children went out and wished their relatives Good New Year. It was mostly the poorest children, even Russians and Germans, who did this. I myself went out and did these rounds every New Year until I was 14 years old. Every child had taught themselves by heart a New Year's poem or a rhyme, Russians in Russian, Germans in German, we, of course, understood what they said. I had taught myself three verses: number 1. The old year has now passed, A new one comes here instead, etc.; number 2: Give O Jesus peace and happiness, A new year is here again, etc.; number 3. Please, renew our mind in this New Year; Let us remember how time quickly passes, etc. As soon as one came inside the door of the house one visited, one began immediately to read one's lines, then one greeted "good morning" to the father and mother of the house and they answered "yes, good morning and thanks you want to have, boy, it was good but you read a little too quickly, read a little slower so we understand it better", then came the housewife and offered candy, small cakes, nuts and sunflower seeds, from the man of the house could one also get a little coin, then one bowed and thanked and went further. The goodies I got, I put in my pocket but when I got out, I moved them over to my school bag, which I hid inside my coat and carried in a string around my neck. We kept this up until eight o'clock in the morning, and then we went home, changed clothes and went to church. Unfortunately, we were not always let in. I remember to this day how I came home one New Year's morning after having done my rounds. Father, mother and my other siblings went to church. I did not go with them but went to the neighbour's boys, and it was not long until we began to play cards for money and I lost every single öre I had scraped together. The next day, father found out and did not have mercy on me, I got a real licking. Since then, I have never played for money and I hope, my children won't either. Don't play for money.

At Easter, it was not so big of a ceremony, one baked and cleaned the whole house and on Holy Saturday, one cooked and coloured eggs. The children prepared a nest, in a carton or such which one placed out in front of the cottage, because in the night came the Easter hare and laid eggs and candy. The eggs

which the hare laid in the nest mother had secretly coloured in another colour so that the children would believe that it was the hare who laid them. So quickly as the children awoke on Easter morning, they were rushing out to the front of the cottage to see what the hare had laid. As usual, one must then go to church.

At Whitsun, the church was decorated for the confirmation, how it was done, I have already told, also all the houses were decorated with green aspen leaves. The confirmation was a big event in Gammalsvenskby. May 1, 1782 was the day the Svenskbyborna, after a long and adventurous walk through Russia, arrived in their new countryside beside the river Dniepr in Ukraine. May 1 was therefore celebrated as a sort of national day with the church service out in the open air on the steppe. It was a custom that during the night before May 1, "to make mischief" but one had to be careful so that one was not caught for because then it was a fine. One knew that some had fiancées (girlfriends) so one marked the way from the fiancé's to her fiancé's by sprinkling straw or lime along the road. Other "pranks" were to gather together the milk pail, the milk pots, the carts, hoop nets and row boats from the lake, we were also in the habit of putting up old men and women of straw, flower pots and many others. All these things, we were in the habit of carrying in front of the town hall and standing them up on the ground outside. In the morning on May 1, there stood lots of things by the town hall, yes, it looked like the worst market. It was fun, but if one was caught then one counted on a punishment. In Gammalsvenskby, a man (herdsman) lived who tended the whole village's cows. At 5:00 in the morning, he went from the one end of the village to the other and blew his horn. One May 1 night, we were a gang of boys who snuck in to the herdsman's and stole his horn and his big whip. At 3:00 a.m., we started to sit and began blowing the horn, one of the boys blew the horn and another struck with the whip, as protection, we had some boys who went a little in front of us and some behind us. The village's old women and maids thought that it was 5:00 a.m. and it was time to milk. When they came out and did not find their milk bucket and milk pots, it was fast on them, you may believe. Now it was our luck to throw both the horn and the whip and flee the field on foot ever quickly. We cleared ourselves from the adventure and unpleasant consequences. The old ladies got to first go up to the town hall and picked up their things before they could begin to milk. We were even in the habit of taking off the gates and carrying them up to the town hall, sometimes we threw them down in the wells. In the morning when the farmers would draw up the water for the animals, they first had to pull out the gates from the well. By this time of year, there were already many who slept outside, sometimes they slept in the carts, we knew about who was in the habit of sleeping fairly hard, when they were sound asleep, we crept in front of the cart and drug it out on the street, it was later a violent awakening on the street for the befallen. Yes, it was fun when one could carry out his boyish pranks without being exposed.

When one was about to marry, he turned to a married man who could be relied on and who could surely put the word before the proposed bride's parents. This man called for the suitor. He and the suitor went together to the fiancée's

parents, in front of which the suitor presented his matter and tried to convince the parents of how excellent the proposal was that he offered to their daughter. One succeeded to get the parents to go with on this association and answered yes so one called in the fiancée. The suitor then told the fiancée what happened, there after the father and mother spoke to their daughter and asked: "Will you take this man for your husband?" Even the suitor wanted confirmation of the answer yes. Even he asked the daughter: "What do you say now, Miss, yes or no?" If the answer was yes, the two took each other's hands and kissed. An engagement ring did not exist, but it was customary to give the fiancée some gift, it could be five or ten ruble or so one bought a shawl, fabric for clothes or something like that. When the proposal was clear, it was celebrated by taking a suitor's glass of snaps and perhaps a little food. If the fiancée changed her mind after a time, she gave back double the presents she received from her fiancée, then both were free again. If one had not paid his prior fines, when he went to the priest to take out banns, he must now pay, otherwise the priest refused to marry the couple. If it was so, that the bride was pregnant when one took out the banns and he told the priest about it, the priest fined him five rubles and then he could get married, but it was so that one tried to conceal the condition at the banns and when it was discovered later, so came a message from the priest or he came himself and let the bridal couple know that they would present themselves at church on a fixed Sunday, for then it would be proclaimed for them a new "no longer available" except if they would pay their five rubles in fines. Brides who were pregnant when they married did not get to wear a veil or flowers or greenery, whereas the bride got only a headscarf. If this was the case, the priest plucked away the flowers and leaves when the bridal couple came to the altar before he married them. I did not like it. I, myself, did not tell the priest that my bride was pregnant when we took out the banns. The unpleasant consequences came in a letter by mail for five rubles in fines and a new bann "no longer available", but that was it. We got to be married, in any case, with the veil and flowers and celebrate a traditional wedding.

I was very interested in fishing and there were a good many different kinds of fish in the Dniepr River, especially in the spring. A burbot (freshwater cod) could weigh 80 – 90 kilos, a pike up to 25 kg., a sturgeon 100 kilos and a "beljogar" 150 – 200 kilos. There were even a good many smaller fish. We fished with fishing-rods, fishtraps and hooks which we called "karmake" and "premät". On the "karmake" we had 5 – 6 hooks and on the "premät" up to 300 hooks attached to the line. We also used to fish burbot with hooks which we called "kodolle" hooks. We also fished with small and big seines (fishing nets). In the spring, the water level was 5 – 6 meters above the average water level in the Dniepr, all of the islets and small lakes were over flowing and it was then all the big fish came up from the Black Sea and the Volga River. When the water was at its highest in the spring, it was forbidden for small children to bathe in the water, it had happened a number of times that a burbot had bitten small children. One sometimes saw how the burbot took geese and ducklings by striking them with its

tail and then emerging on the surface and taking them in its mouth. Around June 1<sup>st</sup>, the water level had fallen so that all the islets were dry again.

In Gammalsvenskby, we had our own church, which we were very proud of. The area surrounding the church encompassed about one hectare. The churchyard (cemetery), however lay directly outside the village. It was comprised of about two hectares and was fenced with a stonewall with two entrances, one centered in the front and one from the side. The churchyard outside the village was divided up so that every family was allotted a certain area which they got to tend and keep tidy. Even the area around the church inside the village was divided up in the same way. There one planted trees, ornamental bushes and flowers, each and every one got to tend their little piece and keep tidy and nice, and tidy and nice it was, I can confirm it. Every Easter morning at six o'clock in the morning, we gathered for a moment of worship outside in the open air in the churchyard outside the village. It was a custom which accompanied the Swedes who emigrated from Dagö, and settled down in Gammalsvenskby in 1782. The custom we firmly held on to and celebrated it right up to 1929 when we once more moved and left our dear and beautiful birthplace by Dniepr's glistening shore. Yes, it was a beautiful place to live. There one is born and has grown up there, one has their roots. I remember so well the bird songs out on the islet, in which we even got to join in with our delightful voices. When the last day arrived and we took the last step before the departure from our father's home, there fell as well tears of sorrow as tears of gladness, because we were, of course, at last on the way to our fatherland Sweden. Yes farewell, you, our Gammalsvenskby, farewell, you, our birthplace, we will never forget you.

Our old wood church had served out and would be torn down. A new church would be built in the same place as the old one. The Germans in the adjacent German villages wanted to force the Swedes to build a common church for the Swedish village and the German villages and the church would then be situated in one of the German villages. The Germans tried in all possible ways to Germanize the Swedes, who were in the minority, and incorporate them under their rule. The Swedish language was even forbidden during part of the 1800's. The Swedes enjoined stubborn resistance and fought with tooth and nail to protect their Swedish language and their own church, like their forefathers always did. The Germans, of course, did not think that the Swedes could raise the funds to build their own church. They taunted the Swedes and said, "Until you get your own church, so it comes that hair grows in the palms of our hands." Through collections and donations at home in Sweden, for our cause, so we could build our church in stone, and it stood completed for the inauguration on June 24, 1885. The Germans could first open their new church a year later. Yes, we Swedes fought hard for our cause and we showed both the Russians and Germans that a Swede was a difficult person. We said to them, there is a land in the north called Sweden. Yes, you have not read or heard about Karl XII, he was Swedish and then, you know what has to be done for you sort of people, of

course in a substantially lower tone of voice. Many times they said that those there Swedes are damned folk, one could not get at them in any way.

During the First World War, 200-300 Swedish villagers were called in to military service. Twenty of them never returned home again, they had fallen or died of diseases. Of those returning home from the wars some had been promoted because of their bravery in the fight, four of them had been promoted to non-commissioned officers and two of them to officers. The Russians said many times, Swedes are people one can rely on, they are not afraid of anything. You, here at home in Sweden, then ought to understand that the Swedes had a good Reputation abroad and that we Swedish villagers have contributed to upholding this reputation in our part of the world. Therefore you Swedes ought to regard us as real Swedes and not as foreign immigrants. Some discrimination of us Swedish villagers should not exist. We have had enough suffering abroad. I will here point out that there was never any discrimination among the Russians', Germans' or Swedes' dependence on national belonging. However, the Swedish villagers have been discriminated against here at home in Sweden. For example, if a Swedish villager applied for an available job and had equally good or better marks and references than a Swedish applicant, it was the Swede who got the job. When one saw the name Utas, Knutas or Annas or Buskas, they were already disqualified. On one occasion, someone said to me that you are, of course, from Gammalsvenskby and then I answered him, "Yes I am, but think how happy I am not to have been born on Gotland." Then he was silent. As well, there were even people who treated us well.

Up to the end of the 1800's, farm tools were still very primitive. One sowed by hand and afterwards plowed down the seed with a plough which looked like a plough prong with a seat out in front, with two wheels and pulled by one or two horses, afterwards, one harrowed with a harrow made from wood but with iron points. The scythe was generally used as a harvest tool, with it one cut hay as well grain. The hay was raked up by hand with rakes of wood and the grain was taken up by hand and bound together in sheaves. This way of harvesting was still used by many small farmers up to 1929. At the beginning of the 1900's, the more well-to-do farmers could buy themselves more technically advanced tools like ploughs of cast iron, these could be three or four furrows with a furrow width of, respectively, 24 and 32 inches. Later, during my time, there were even 5 or 6 cutting ploughs with a breadth up to 48 inches. There was also a plough called a "skumplog". It was two-furrow plough and was used mostly to plough fields that lay fallow and for planting potatoes. The ploughs were pulled, depending on size, by four to six horses. The first sowing machine came to the village in the 1890's, it was very simple but was still a step forward. At about the same time came the first cutting machines to the village. It was a type of hay mower with a seat in front where the operator sat, which was pulled by three horses. The furrows were 6-7 feet wide. On one, the operator who drove the horses sat on a seat in front, and on the machine's right side, sat yet another man whose duty with a fork with two horns to carry away the grain from the knife and it collect

together in small piles right on the machine table and then down on the ground. The next version was a self-shooter, which worked largely in the same way as the former machine, but the person who sat on the right side was replaced by four blades which performed his job.

At the beginning of the 1900's, even the first threshing machine came to the village. It was a smaller threshing machine, which separated the seed from the straw and ears. The seed was not completely clean but one then got to drive the seed through an apparatus, which was called the fanning mill (or like we said "tulkvånne"). The threshing machine consisted of a horizontal horse treadmill with four bars sticking out from the treadmill. On every bar, two horses were fastened so there were four pairs of horses, which pulled the treadmill. Above the treadmill was placed a little boarded floor where a man with a long whip drove the horses. From the treadmill then went a long iron pole to a largely flywheel and from there the threshing machine was driven by a five inch wide driving belt up to the thresher's cylinder. The feeding was done by hand. Yes, it was a wonder when one heard how it droned. In 1904, a roller mill was built on the boundary between Gammalsvenskby and the German villages. It was Germans who built it and it was equipped with two pairs of rollers and two pairs of stones. It was driven with steam and used straw for heating. In Gammalsvenskby, there were even two windmills, a lime oven and a fire pump. There was also a big Co-op store and a beer store. The beer cost 10 kopek per half a quart, one could buy wine at whichever farmer's house one preferred for 20 kopek per half a quart and brännvin (aquavit) could be found in almost all stores for 65 kopek per half a quart. We had to go twelve kilometers to Berislav, which was our nearest town and ten kilometers to the nearest market town which was Kachovka. It was situated on the other side of the Dniepr. One would row there by boat. Two times a year, May 9<sup>th</sup> and October 10<sup>th</sup>, there used to be a big market in Kachovka.

In 1912, the first self-binder arrived in Gammalsvenskby. It was a big event, you may believe. Lots of people gathered to inspect this wonder. One could not, in his wildest dreams, imagine that a machine alone could cut the grain, bind it in sheaves and then throw them out the back, but it was true. In 1913, the first steam-driven threshing machine came to Gammalsvenskby. It was a so-called modern threshing machine, which was self-feeding, and the grain was directly clean and flowed down into sacks. The threshing machine was driven by a tractor that used straw for heating. The times began to be better and better in any case for some, but not for everyone. The farmers of small means could not afford to get the new, modern tools but had to make use of the old tested and laborious methods, like, for example, the flail (triskelava) to thresh. All of the bigger farmers now had, in later times, their own thresher, which was driven by a horse treadmill. There were only four threshers which were driven with steam tractors and one which was driven with a crude oil motor. The smaller farmers got to use the tramp stones. The plot or the farm field was divided in two parts, the small farm (inagårdn) and the big farm (reagårdn). On storgården (the big

farm), one had built a tramp floor. One swept away all of the trash and dust from around it on the ground which one then treated with water. When it was dry, it constituted a hard surface, which we called the tramp floor. The tramp floor would be round. Some of the farmers had several tramp floors. The grain was laid/ strewn out over the round tramp floor in about a one-meter thick layer. Depending on how big the tramp floor was, one could spread 2 - 3 racks of grain at a time. After it dried a little, one brought in the horse/horses that had to walk around and tramp down the layer a little. Then one hitched the horse/the horses to the tramp stones and let them run around on the tramp floor. A man directed the horses that had to run fairly quickly. The tramp stone was about 1 meter and 30 cm. long and it was 5 or 6 angles. It looked like a roller. One drove until there was only straw left, 1 – 2 hours. Then one took out the horses with the tramp stone, unfastened the horses and gave them food and water. Then one took the rake and raked away the straw from the tramp floor and carried it away with a wooden hayfork to a straw stack. One loosened up that which was left on the tramp floor, then one drove in the horses with the tramp stone again. This procedure was repeated three times. Then what was left on the tramp floor was shoveled together in a pile on the tramp floor. Then one took the fanning mill and drove it through two times. Then it was clean and fine. Some farmers had two tramp floors. Then one could lay out four to five loads at a time and drive with two or up to three tramp stones at the same time, because when one began to take off the straw from one of the tramp floor beds, then one drove over with the horses and tramp stones to the other bed and continued there, so one changed between the tramp floors until it was ready. By dinnertime one had, in most cases, finished two layers. After dinner, the same procedure was repeated and was done by evening. Then the grain was separated from the chaff which was left. One did this through driving the grain and chaff through the fanning mill. This work could go on until midnight or one o'clock in the night because everything would be ready to drive a new round the next day. Any proper sleep was not to think of during the peak of the harvest. One was happy if one could doze for a couple to three hours before it was time to start working again. Sometimes one did not even get that. During the day, one tramped and at night, one fanned. Yes, it was strenuous. There were farmers who had two fanning mills. Then it went, of course, considerably faster to separate the grain and then one did not need to be busy so long into the night. There were also the smaller farmers and the destitute who did not have their own fanning mill. They were dependant on borrowing from those farmers who had one. There were, unfortunately, some farmers who would not loan out their machines to others at all. Yes, the poor did not have it easy, you may believe. The farmers, on the other hand, had it fairly good. At least some of them had the power to decide over the others. One certainly did not get to lie lolling on the sofa when there were jobs at the farmers' places. We had to toil and work, day as well as night, for the bread and butter when the opportunity yielded itself.

As I already told earlier, the farm site (field) was divided into two halves, the one part called the little farm (inside farm) and the other was the big farm (rear farm).

These two parts were separated by a wall or a fence. On lillgården (the little farm), there was the residential house itself with a yard and a vegetable garden, cattle barn, smithy, cabin (summer residence) consisting of a kitchen, a dining room, one more room and a laundry room. On storgården (the big farm), there was the already mentioned tramp floor, the wagon, machine and tool sheds, corn shed (avenskure), store room for the seed they drove home before beginning to thresh, and for the straw when they had finished threshing. There were also a storeroom for wood, which they drove home from the islets in the winter, and a place for composting of manure from the stable and poultry house. The size of the farm field (plot) varied from a half to one and a half hectares depending on how much land the owner owned. The landless did not have a bigger field than about a half-hectare and hardly that. There were farmers in Gammalsvenskby who owned up to 100 hectares of land, and in addition some of them leased equally as much. 60 hectares counted as a homestead. The smaller farmers owned 12 hectares which was called "frajvärtar". These small farmers' fields were located together in the same place which was called "frajvärtsland". Not everyone in the village owned land. Approximately one quarter were landless, and those who were landless didn't own islets either. The islets, which were flooded every spring, were the village's common property. On these islets grew feed for the animals, also willow trees (hälstrar), and aspen (aspjar) and osier bushes (ris). On part of the islet closest to the village, the landowners as well as the landless were allowed to plant and harvest willows as they saw fit for their own use. My father had planted 300 trees which he had at his disposal for his own use. Felling on the islands occurred alternately so that the re-growth was secured. In the winter when it was time for the cutting of wood, it was decided on which of the islets would be cut. When the farmers had their shares allotted then one also divided a piece in the outskirts. There the bad wood grew, for the landless to divide up. This part was divided in many similar pieces as there were landless villagers, the pieces were numbered and then it was the drawing of the lots. Of the thicker twigs, one wove fences, and of the finer twigs, one wove baskets, etc. For the poor, the allotment of forage on the islets went the same way as the allotment of the wood, the worst we poor got, the best forage was divided up in shares and sold at an auction. By the auction, the farmers drove up the prices so that a poor person had no chance to bid on some. Yes, so they did with their poor, the one who has nothing will not receive anything either. The fishing grounds around the islets, the marshes and the rivulets were leased out by the municipality to Swedes as well as Russians and Germans. The proceeds from the islets and fishing grounds gave a good income to the municipal cashbox. The islets encompassed approximately one thousand hectares, including the fishing grounds which constituted about one quarter.

We had about three thousand hectares of arable land, which we harvested once a year. Almost everything grew in the fine humus there. We grew fall wheat, spring wheat, fall rye, but not spring rye, barley, oats, corn, sunflowers, millet, rape, flax, mustard, etc. Of vegetables, we grew tomatoes, cabbages, red beets, pumpkins, several kinds of onions, dill, fennel, melons, peanuts, French pepper,

cucumbers, potatoes, carrots, etc. Of fruit, grew apricots, peaches, cherries, gooseberries, pears, apples, grapes were grown in hectares by the farmers. Arctic raspberries (psalmbär) were only found out on the islets, not on the steppe. Of flowers, there were many kinds which do not grow here in Sweden. They grew a lot of garlic down there, because the doctors said that one should eat a lot of garlic because it protects against contagious diseases and one does not need to be afraid of germs. We boiled watermelons and made syrup. I was very interested in hunting and fishing. There was really good fishing but the game was worse. There were simply hares and wild ducks. There was also fox, it was bigger than here in Sweden. It was as big as a German Shepard dog, for the hide one received 25 rubles. There were also partridges and grey geese. The arable land of 3,000 hectare lay a bit outside the village. A 15-kilometer long road extended straight through the cultivated fields, and along this road lay four excavated wells with 3 – 4 km. intervals. Three of the wells had a depth of 30 arm-lengths and the fourth of 12 arm-lengths. The one well was called a dammbrun (dam well), the second a middle well (mitte brunn), the third a deep well (djupsvarsbrunn) and the fourth which had great spring water was called "hävaldsbrunn". The water was drawn up out of the respective well with the help of a horse treadmill which was connected with double ropes up to a hoist block, which was assembled straight above the well, through the block and down to where its barrel containing 150 – 200 liters each, with which one drew up the water and emptied over in a basin containing 150,000 liters which was placed next to the well. So that the basins, always during the summer time would be filled with water, the farmers had hired two persons to tend to this assignment. One man answered for two wells. My father was hired to draw water in these wells for a right many years. The pay was between 300 – 350 rubles for the time from February 15<sup>th</sup> to October 1<sup>st</sup>. Yes, there, I also trotted many steps around these horse treadmills and drove the horses. Father stood up by the well and emptied the barrels into the basins. When the barrels were emptied, I turned the horses and drove in the other direction and so it continued. The soil in Gammalsvenskby consisted of almost only black humus. It was fairly fertile but often the harvest was destroyed by drought. The yield per hectare compared to what one gets here at home in Sweden was 50%. One did not have artificial fertilizer and ordinary natural fertilizer only made the grain grow in length and then it turned into layers (lodged). The price the farmer got for the grain varied a little up and down. One got about 1 ruble and 5 kopek per pound for wheat and rye and for barley and oats 90 kopek. At the threshing, the grain which would be sold directly, was driven down to the Dniepr shores, there it was loaded on ferries or barges which then was taken on trailers by river steamboats (parachod) which towed them up and down the river. It was mostly Jews who bought up the grain.

To warm up the cottages in the winter, an oven (grubba), which was heated with straw or dung (dinge), which was dried in briquettes, was used for baking and cooking food. In the summer, one used the fireplace (grituen). The dung briquettes were made of horse and cow dung, which in the winter, was driven up to the tramp floor and was laid up in a pile. When the spring work was over, one

spread out the dung piles on the tramp floor in a 50 cm thick layer. Thereafter, one drove over the bed on the tramp floor with a harrow to level it and then, in with the horses and tramp stones, until it was properly hard packed. There after, one went with a fork and levelled the holes which come up after the horses troughs. Then the worst remained when one himself and so many as possible would go in the tramp floor and tramp it level and hard with their own feet. Then it got to lay and dry for about 14 days before one, with a sharp spade, cut up square pieces in sufficient size. These pieces were then put on the high edge so that they dried even more. Then the pieces were laid in piles on the tramp floor, there they dried even more so they were really dry after they were plucked away from the tramp floor and piled in a shed (dingeskure). It was an excellent fuel and it did not smell. The farmers sold a lot of these briquettes to the city people and even to the poor, who did not have any other fuel, either straw, dung briquettes or wood. I remember that we also bought straw for fuel. It cost three rubles per arms' reach. Because to scrape together some to burn with, apart from the little one was allotted on his little lot on the islet, one got to go out, in the winter, to the islet on the other side of the Dniepr and rake together leaves and small wood which was thrust in sacks. One could also cut little reeds which one bundled together. Then one got to carry everything home on his back. One did not get to borrow a horse from the farmers so that one could drive home the little fuel for himself and his family. Yes, so rotten they were and it is pure devastation, the truth. Then they went and laughed up one's sleeve at the poor. Think only of all the money which they begged and got from Sweden on the poor's account. The money we poor did not get to see a glimpse of. I remember still, when I was smaller, Father and Mother were short of fuel, and the whole village's cows were put out to pasture in one and the same place. There were, of course, a whole lot of droppings after the cows which laid in big cakes on the ground and dried. At this time, we still had two horses and a wagon, so I followed my father out and picked up these cakes and drove home several loads which were then used for fuel for the winter. Those who did not have horses and wagons got the carry home everything on their backs. It was equally as bad when one would go to the town. It was 12 kilometers to walk by foot. In the town one bought some things and, on the way home, one had a lot to carry. So many times came the farmers, who also had been in town and drove past in a wagon home, but you will not believe that they stopped and invited the walking to go with them. No, and if one happened to ask about a lift so one was determined to turn you away. Yes, many times one was confounded and thought, may there come a time that you also get to taste how it is to go by foot, and then so the time came gradually. There were one and another farmer were helpful but they were easily counted. Fuel like wood, straw or dung briquettes, one could buy from the farmers if one had money and most of them did not have it.

In Gammalsvenskby, including Nya Sveskbyn (New Swedish Village) and Svenskåker (Swedish area), lived 895 persons divided into 196 families and they lived in 132 houses. To incorporate more land into Gammalsvenskby, two colonies were built, Nya Svenskbyn and Svenskåker, in the years 1920 and 1925

on a combined 1,300 hectares. Each and every one who wanted to have land could get themselves allotted 3 – 4 hectares per person. In the new colonies' area, there were no permanent houses but only temporary houses and ground caves to live in so far. One was greatly awaiting to build out the area depending on the instability which existed. The tax burden hardened and the policy seemed to go towards collectivization.

It was a big dilemma for the large farmers. In Gammalsvenskby, there also lived four Russian families who did not get to go to Sweden with the Swedish families. It is believed that they wanted to. It was a pity about these wretches, you should have seen how they cried, shrieked and swam when they heard that they could not go to Sweden. The Russian authorities asked them, "Why do you want to go from here? You are Russian. You are at home here." The authorities had written with steel pens and said no and so it would be forbidden.

The roofs of the houses in the village were made of sheet metal, roofing tiles or reeds. The ground caves had earth roofs. The church, the rectory, municipal hall (vållost), and some of the other buildings in the village had metal roofs. There were twenty-five flat-bottomed rowing boats in the village. We also had a fairly big rowing bow which we rowed with six pairs of oars. We used it to row the animals for sale to the market on the other side of the Dniepr. It was around ten kilometers to row. The market used to be on March 9<sup>th</sup> and October 1<sup>st</sup>. With the boat, we could carry ten to twelve animals at a time. The boat was also used to transport the animals, horses and wagons over to the other side of the Dniepr and the islets in the summers. One even carried home fodder from the islets with it. It held about four to five loads. Before 1920, in the Swedish village, there were also 347 work horses, 273 colts, 483 milk cows, 237 calves and between 400 to 500 swine, and plenty of chickens, ducks, geese and pigeons. There was a spinning wheel in every home but, on the other hand, there not many looms. We had a big pipe organ in the church and an additional four smaller organs in the village. There were 20 threshing machines, 150 tramp stones, 600 wagons, 3 cab wagons and a one-ton.

In the Swedish village, we also had a police chief (korjattnik) who was paid by the government. At his disposal, he had two persons who were specially chosen by the villagers. They called themselves police and were equipped with police badges. Their pay, as I recall, was five rubles a month. These police were elected every year. In the winter, the guards in the village were reinforced through the nights with two of the village's male population (they were called apchåd). Every night the village's area was patrolled after an expressly fixed timetable and reported discovered incidents such as fires, thefts, fights, etc. to the police who in turn reported to the police chief who gave orders about which measures would be taken. These two watchmen's spell of duty began at nine o'clock in the evening and went until five o'clock in the morning.

In 1917, the Russian Revolution broke out and that same year, in the month of September, we saw the first airplane glide over the village. It was a great event for us villagers. On March 17, the Russian Czar, Nicholas Nikolajevich in St. Petersburg was deposed. The first to hear the news that the emperor was arrested and beheaded and that freedom was won were the soldiers on the front. But the Czar's son was reported missing without a trace. The crown was lost but unfortunately, freedom was not yet won - it had to be earned. Great disorder arose in all of Russia. The officers urged their soldiers to not leave the front because the German army pressed harder and harder. The soldiers answered, "We have fought and waged war for three years now and what have we gained? We're going home." After some time, the officers also began to doubt and agree with the soldiers' revolt. Finally, the officers said to their soldiers, "Those who do not want to stay behind and fight against the Germans of their own free will may go home. But remember that freedom is not yet won; it still has to be won. So take all of your equipment with you, including weapons, ammunition, hand grenades, cannons, etc. Take apart the weapons, pack them well and bury them and hide them well. A day will come when they can come to be of great benefit, if not for you, so for our descendants. Dear comrades, don't forget these words. And one more thing, my brothers, tear off all badges of rank and distinctions, which you so well deserved, and destroy them. They can otherwise mean your death; from today on, everything will be red. A new army will be established and organized and it will be called the Great Red Army and it will win the freedom. Supporters of the deposed and executed Czar will also set up a bourgeois army called the White Army, which will fight to regain the old Czar empire. The Red leader urges his soldiers to stay away from the White Army and the White leader said, "Whatever you do, do not join the Red Army because then you are lost forever." We sat, so to speak, between two fires. Yes, dear friends, now it was "koka gröten stekt" (now the porridge is in the fire!) but no one wanted to dislike it because it was both sour, bitter and heated and who would it be possible to eat up? Many millions of people gave their lives to this porridge bowl before the porridge was finished. For a short time one could exhale lightly. Now the newly promised freedom would be carried out. The new temporary Kerensky government was not successful in winning the peoples' trust. There was anarchy in the land and each and everyone did what he wanted. For the others, the German army pushed everything they had farther and farther into Russia. In the spring of 1918, the Kerensky government was dismissed and Lenin and Trotsky took over the power. What was the result? Well, toward the fall of 1917, several parties had organized, which in larger or smaller groups went off to steal and plunder landowners and farmers and burn down their farms. Even the poor suffered.

In the fall of 1917, the first band of plunderers came to Gammalsvenskby. It was a gang of sailors of about 100 men armed with rifles, machine guns, pistols and hand grenades. They travelled in cab wagons with two to three horses in the shafts for every cab. They drove in front of the municipal hall (Vollost), there they stopped and about ten men stepped out of the cabs and went directly into the

town hall. There, inside, sat the municipal leader (oberchols) with his employees, which represented the right wing forces in the village and worked calmly and peacefully. The Oberchols welcomed them and asked what was on their minds. "Yes," their Colonel said, "we are sent out from higher authorities to collect money for our White Army's existence. We will strike down the Red bandits and its army and reintroduce the old Czar rights." One could not, of course, believe other than that they were out on a legitimate commission. Oberchols ordinarily asked, "How much money is it about?" "Yes," said the Colonel, "after the information which we have, as the number of people in the village will amount to 10 to twelve thousand persons, it will be twenty-five thousand rubles." Oberchols and his personnel answered a short, "No "as we have no such authority." The Colonel answered, "Whether you want to or not, we will not leave here until we have received the money. By six o'clock this afternoon, at the latest, the money must be here on the table. If not, we will settle the account in short order. We will not spare bullets and gunpowder on traitors. And the money, well, we will take it anyway and then we will burn down the villages. Oberchols called the chairmen in the adjoining villages to a meeting to discuss the placed demand for payment, but it still did not help. They had to whip together these 24,000 rubles and hand it over to the trespassers. The Colonel's gang then drove away. On the journey through the village, they fired each and every shot in the air to scare the people. Yes, dear friends, it was only beginning. A lot would happen ahead. Dear children, those are fortunate who have not experienced anything like this, and I hope that you will not have to.

In 1918, the bourgeois Kerensky government was deposed in all of Russia. Now, everything bourgeois was to be removed. Lenin and Trotsky took over the power and built a new government in the spring of 1918. Now, Russia would be freedom's betrothed land and the paradise on earth. The new government was called the Worker's and Small Farmer's government. The new government and also the committees in the cities and villages out in the land now consisted of members which were workers or small farmers. The Bolshevik Party took the government and the land was called the Russian United Soviet Republic. Some years later, the designation was changed to the United Soviet's Socialist Republic (USSR). Now the land was governed, cities and villages, by the Soviet people and the ordinary people got their revenge. There still prevailed immense disorder in the land; laws and regulations were no longer there. Each and every one made a few as he saw fit. Some of the warlords built their own war bands, or plundering bands which ravaged and plundered a little as they wanted. In Russia, there were big landowners who owned twenty-five to thirty thousand hectares. A normal farmer owned about one hundred-fifty hectares. This was something other than what we are used to here in Sweden. These landowners and farmers had earlier oppressed and exploited the workers and now they would get to atone for their sins. The land stood as good as lawless and now there began immense plundering of estates and manors, burning them down and the owners were driven out. In the spring of 1918, there came a message to Gammalsvenskby's Soviet Committee that they should get started with the

dividing up of the village's land so that everyone would get a piece of it. Should the farmers not agree with the division, it was up to each one of them to help themselves, to start plowing and sowing wherever they wanted to. The fall seed was also divided up. Should someone not accept this decision, the Soviet Committee immediately reported this to the County Soviet Committee. Some agreement of the division of land between the farmers and the rest of the people in the village was not so. The landless took action after the directive they received from a higher authority. They took for themselves there, the land which suited them best to plow and seed, without asking the farmers. You can, of course, think yourselves that the farmers were not particularly happy about these measures and the hate even grew more towards the poor. They called themselves Bolsheviks. The time was finally ripe for the poor to get ours too and decide. No comprehensive law existed. It was the County Soviet Committee and this Council and the villages' Soviet Committee decided what would be done and it would be accomplished. If one did not follow their decisions, there was a court martial and the process was made short. The sentence was most often a bullet in the forehead or a noose around the neck. That was the only trial.

The first thing Lenin did when the revolution broke out was to release several million prisoners of which a large part later came to be included in different plundering bands. Lenin had not only the revolution to think about, he also was at war with Kaiser Wilhelm's German well-equipped army which forced everything farther and farther into the heart of Russia almost without resistance. The newly built Red Army was still always too little and badly equipped and could only offer small resistance. In Russia, several millions of Germans lived who were Russian citizens. These saw the German Army as liberators and made hardly any resistance. The White Army also fought against the Red Army. Furthermore, innumerable bands of robbers wreaked havoc in the land. The plunderers plundered and sabotaged so much, one barely managed with it. The Germans in Russia greeted the German Army as liberators but who would liberate us Swedish? The Swedish Army kept themselves on home ground far from us. We had only ourselves to rely on. You can probably never understand how we struggled ourselves out from under all this misery and stress, but our fatherland Sweden had always found itself in our fathers' and our own hearts.

In the new government which would encompass Gammalsvenskby and the adjoining German villages whose common inhabitants amounted to eight to ten thousand people, would now only elect workers and revolutionaries. The new administration which was named Gammal Svenskby Sel-Soviet (in Russian Starosvedskoj Sälsovjet) located themselves in the town hall (vollost) in Gammalsvenskby. The committee (Soviet Committee) consisted of ten to fifteen members, two to three from every village; sometimes there were even two women. For the farmers, this was a staggering blow, to be governed by what they called the barefoot people. They could not accept it. On the sly, the big farmers organized themselves in the Swedish village and they marked off the German villages for an attack against the members of the Soviet Committee. In

the afternoon on a beautiful spring day in 1918, it was fourteen days before the German Army also poured in over Gammalsvenskby, these big farmers gathered outside of the town hall (Vållost) in which the Soviet Committee, which consisted of, as well, Swedish, German, Russian and Jews, sat and worked in peace and calm. In a second, the farmers stormed into the municipal office in order to weed out, from their viewpoints, the hateful Soviet workers who sat there inside. One by one they grabbed and plucked them out, assaulted them, beat them unconscious and laid them on the ground. Then they carried them away and tossed them in the little prison which was in the yard. There after came, eventually, a barber-surgeon who sewed up their wounds and dressed them, then put the lock on the door and the Champion of the guards saw to it that no one was allowed to come in or out. As to the weapons of the physical abuse used by the farmers – door bars, logs, stones, yes, whatever some found at hand. The victims were battered and bloody. Yes, it was terrible to see how the heaps looked, abused by the insensible Swedish, German, Russian and Jewish farmers. The barber-surgeon wanted to go in and see to the injured but was stopped by the farmers who shouted, “together they will be shot, we will give those bastards to land and freedom so that they will be satisfied. The municipal office now stood empty and what would now happen. The hatred between the farmers and “the traitors” now escalated further several steps. Was it then wise of the farmers to behave like they did? On the second day, at seven o’clock in the morning, six cars arrived in the Swedish village, sent from the town of Berislav. There were two passenger cars and four trucks with red guardsmen which were armed with rifles, pistols, hand grenades and machine guns and lots of ammunition. By the entrance to the Swedish village, there was a little hill, which these cars were to ascend. As ill luck would have it, two of the trucks had engine failure on the hill. The whole column, except the two private cars that continued on to the municipal office, stopped to help out and tow up the broken-down trucks up the hill. When they went into the office, they discovered that there was not a single person inside, the office was empty. Then, they went out to the jail, knocked off the lock on the door and released the mangled prisoners; some were so exhausted that they scarcely could walk. The prisoners now got to tell to the red guardsmen what had happened and who had performed it. The mangled prisoners then got to go home. The rebellious farmers were proud over what they caused and went around and secretly smiled. The Red Guards’ leader returned with his two passenger cars to the other columns which only stood and waited to get orders to get started on their operations to punish the rebellious men and their instigator. It would rain hand grenades in through the windows and doors of the guilty, and outside the machine guns would be deployed so that no one would be able to get away. Everything went calmly and clean at the Red Guards’ place. They stood and studied lists over who had been in the revolt and tried to point out where there farms lay because not doing something erred and so that no innocents would be affected. But can you think, these farmers had this day really more luck than sense. The Red Guards was just ready to start their operation when another band of robbers of three to four hundred men stormed in over the German villages and also our village. The Red Guards felt

themselves inferior and pulled themselves back, pursued by the plundering bandits. A distance outside the village, however, they entered into a fight with the pursuers, a fight that lasted two to three hours. At that point, the Red Guards found themselves defeated and drew back. The bands of robbers took two cars as booty and in two, they tossed in hand grenades and burned them up. They also took seven prisoners. They took those who had fallen in the battle with them in their vehicles. The seven prisoners were conveyed to the Swedish village and put in our jail because later they would be forwarded to Berislav. There they would be executed by a firing squad. Well, what kind of mess was this? The farmers who here, in some ways, had escaped their antagonists and avoided making amends for their deeds, now went and forged plans on how they would retaliate. The seven prisoners who were now sitting in the lockup, they regarded as prospective executioners. They were part of the forces that were going to punish them and even execute themselves, their wives and children. The farmers decided that they would, in some way, get hold of these seven prisoners and shoot them dead. Was this decision really so wise? It was, after all, themselves who started the trouble. Yes, dear friends, this was not finished but only the beginning of the spilled blood which we experienced. The County Soviet Committee had reinstated the Soviet Committee who had been beaten by the farmers in the municipal hall, so now it is they who govern and stand again. A couple of days after the fights, three men came out from the town of Berislav to the Municipal office. They also called in representatives for the rebellious farmers. Now, the seven prisoners would be interrogated and judged. The farmers had already made up their minds; the prisoners should be executed by a firing squad. The Soviet Committee called for their acquittal and release. The three visiting men supported the farmers, and all seven prisoners sentenced to death by a firing squad. If they were guilty of some crime, we did not know. They had, of course, only carried out the orders they received from those in command, these poor prisoners. The execution began immediately. The prisoners were led out one at a time and placed up against a wall, there after a volley of about ten bullets were fired and the prisoner fell bleeding to the ground. So they shot down all seven prisoners. Those who shot them were both Swedish, German and the three selected men. I was only seventeen years old then, and I said to one of our Swedish farmers, "Dear friend, what are you up to?" But I had to slip away from there on the double and hide; otherwise I might have shared the fate of the prisoners. Outside the churchyard, a mass grave was dug in which the bodies, after they executed the prisoners, were tossed and covered with dirt. The proverb says "What one sows, one also gets to reap."

Eight days after the execution, when we, on a beautiful spring morning, rose from our beds, were the German villages and the Swedish village surrounded by four to five hundred robbers. No one could come out of or in to the villages. All of the roads were blocked. When it was really light, the robbers began to invade the villages. They took everything that they come across, money, clothes, silver, gold, jewellery, shoes, boots, horses and wagons and that which they could not take with them, they destroyed. Cupboards with china were overturned and

everything broke into little pieces. Down in the wine cellars, they first drank themselves drunk and took with them as much as they could. Then they smashed the bottoms out of the wine barrels so that the wine flowed on the floor, fifteen to twenty centimeters high. The women were attacked and physically abused. Several of the men had hidden themselves but the robbers, nevertheless, grabbed one Swedish farmer and six Germans, which they took with them when, at four o'clock in the afternoon, they drove away to the monastery which lay five kilometers north of the Swedish village. These prisoners were tortured very hard and executed two days later in the monastery. However, one got to pick up the bodies and bury them in their home villages. You will not believe that the farmers were calmer after this here blow. Oh, no, the hate towards those in control grew only stronger and stronger. The one does not tolerate the other and the poor heard nothing other than that he was a Bolshevik who took their land from them and divided it up so everyone could have a little bit. "You would regret it." It was, of course, not our fault that the land was divided up. It was, as you know, the land's new law and decree which forced us to do so and both you and we had only to comply with it.

One beautiful spring day at the beginning of May, 1918, the German army poured in over our village and a couple of days later, the whole Soviet Committee was arrested and barred in the jail. Everything proceeded fairly cleanly, without any executions. The whole Soviet Committee was released except for one Swedish villager who, by the Germans, was regarded as the biggest scapegoat among the whole Soviet government. He was sent on towards Germany for further questioning. After about four months absence, he returned to the village, to his wife and children. He reluctantly told about what he had been through but hid it in his heart and bided his time, and he did not need to wait so long. In October 1918, the German army withdrew and left Russia. England and France had declared war on Germany and the Germans were now forced to go home and take up the fight towards these countries. During the German occupation, the bourgeois had taken the power and governed now after the old laws. Now the farmers had the power back in their hands. When the German army withdrew from the Swedish village and the German villages, the Germans handed over weapons to the Swedish and German farmers so that they could defend themselves against the bandits. There were three to four thousand rifles, a number of machine guns, ammunition and some other things. These weapons were divided among the people so that they could defend themselves against intruders. The farmers now began to carry out the distribution of these weapons, but it was only those who, according to the old order, were land owning farmers who got any. The poor, whom they called Bolsheviks, they could not have any. They were afraid that they would use the weapons against them if the occasion presented itself, and there were no poor who received any allotted weapons. The farmers still had the power and government in their hands and now they also had weapons so that they could defend themselves, but we said to them, "Do not count your chickens until they are hatched".

About fourteen days after the German army had withdrawn, the Swedish village and the German villages were again attacked by a robber band. Thanks to the weapons which the German army left, the Swedish and German farmers could defend themselves and drive off the attack. The survivors buried any fallen. It was not long between the assault and in a day they attacked our villages again. After violent fights during three to four hours, they had beaten the Red bandits and the farmers could declare themselves the proud victors. Such smaller assaults occurred fairly often, but we always succeeded in defending ourselves and drove the intruders away. The attacking bands began to be bigger and bigger and the assaults began to occur more often and more often and the pressure became harder and harder. One day three Red bandits came in to the Swedish village and asked to get a lift to the monastery. "Yes", said the leaders at the municipal hall. "You can surely go but the coachman, horses and the wagon must be back here in the village by six o'clock in the afternoon at the latest. The bandits promised on their honour and conscience that it would happen. It was a German who got the assignment to take them to the monastery and they set off. It was six o'clock but no coachman, horses or wagon appeared. The second day in the morning, a monk from the monastery came down to the Swedish village and told about a robber band just now ravaged the monastery and that our coachman would be executed at twelve o'clock today. How large the robber band was, he didn't know. You may believe that now there was speed on the Swedish and German farmers, within three hours, they had whipped together and organized a group of two hundred men. Some additional men stayed in the village and held watch around the village. All of these two hundred men rode on horses or were conveyed on sleds up to the monastery. Just by this time, there were two national Swedes by the names of Nilsson and Rasmusson visiting in the Swedish village. They were also allotted rifles and participated in the liberation of our coachman. The Swedish-German force surrounded the monastery on three sides and then went to attack the robber band inside the monastery. The bandits bravely defended themselves but after three hours of steady fighting, they gave up and in an organized manner, withdrew. Our coachman was recovered alive but there was no trace of the horses and wagon. The bandits' numbers were estimated to have totaled three hundred men, of these seventy died during the fights while the Swedish-German force succeeded without losses or injury and took a machine gun as war booty. Three days after the monastery war (klosterkriget), Nilsson took his "Matts out of school" and left Gammalsvenskby. He went away to Turkey. There, according to information, he owned a separator business. Rasmusson stayed, on the other hand, left in the village for an indefinite period. When the farmers went away to the monastery to liberate their coachman, there were a handful of them, who tried to recruit workers, for payment, to take their weapons and replace them during the fights. The need was huge among the workers and what one didn't do for money. So there were some workers who bit on their invitation. Yes, then they were suddenly completely trusted to carry weapons.

The mess became only bigger and bigger and worse and worse. In the spring of 1919, in March, a band of one thousand and seven hundred men attacked the Swedish village and the German villages. The Swedes and Germans together resisted and fought for their freedom. The fights began at three o'clock in the afternoon and continued all night without a break. In the morning, by dawn, the enemy forces withdrew to a Russian village farther away. According to information which we got later, the enemy forces had lost three hundred men in death and many were injured. Our own forces succeeded without losses or injuries. This time the Red bandits were not successful in breaking through our barriers. At eleven o'clock in the morning, we saw a cab driving towards one of the German villages. It was the Red Guards' five man delegation, which under white parliamentary flag, was on the way to the villages' council in the municipal hall for negotiations of a peaceful settlement with the people in the Swedish village and the German villages. With the white flag, one did not shoot, so they passed through the barrier and came in front of the municipal hall in Gammalsvenskby. There, the governing council sat and worked in its entirety. The Red delegation was invited to sit down and take a place at the council's table, which they did, then Council's chairman talked and asked, "What do you have on your minds?" They answered, "We have come to negotiate and our demands are firstly, that you surrender and hand over all your weapons and ammunition. Secondly, everyone who participated in the fights against us and our comrades in the Red Party will immediately be exposed to us. Thirdly, those who also participated in the marginalization of Soviet seal in this office will be exposed and fourthly, everyone who participated in the monastery war, there seventy of our Red Guards died, will be exposed to us. All of these which we here now, have requested, we will have, otherwise we will level these four villages flat to the ground and burn everything we find. The decision concerning our demands will be ready within one hour." To begin with, the council and the people said no to the Red Guards' demands and justified it. "We have nothing against you, you want to walk or drive through our villages, you are more than welcome to do it but you don't get to discharge a single shot when you approach our villages or when you drive through them. Remember that, you Red Guards, you don't get to touch any one or any thing in the villages. So do not come to attack any of us, neither will we fire any shots and neither will we do bad things, we guarantee it." The Red delegation's answer was an inexorable short and pleasant, "No". The council and the people were irresolute. The ammunition began to reach the end and one had not much to put up. The Swedes decided to hand over all of their rifles, a machine gun and all ammunition that was left but we didn't expose any people. "We had only these weapons for our own defense. We attacked no one but only defended ourselves." "Yes, men," said the Reds, "your defense made us lose three hundred men in the battle." "Yes, men, but it was not our fault," we answered. "You didn't need to attack us, you have yourselves to thank. We want no ill towards you or any other. We wish for nothing other than to get to live in peace. We defended ourselves successfully against many attacks and always successfully scared away the fiends and luckily enough we escaped the loss of men. Only a couple of Germans and one Swede

were slightly wounded. We carried out no actual attacks except on some occasions when we must save the lives of some of our villagers, not otherwise. We sat behind our walls and in our ditches and set up watch so that we would not be surprised if someone should think of attacking us." Well, it was now probably for certain a new blood bath in our village also. It had now struck twelve o'clock in the day and the Red negotiation's delegation left the municipal hall in Gammalsvenskby and returned to their Red unit. But before they set out, they said, "Two o'clock in the afternoon, the three of us will return to the Swedish village and pick up all the weapons and ammunition, the Swedes' as well as the Germans'." There were 1,500 rifles, 24 machine guns, and hand grenades. We had only two machine guns for all three villages together and the hand grenades were finished. All of the collected weapons were left together and loaded on wagons. At two o'clock, the three Red Guards came, to every village, to pick up the collected weapons. The horses were already in the shafts in front of the wagons and could begin the transport. The Red Guards who would lead the transport swore, were enraged and incensed. Yes it was terrible to listen to them, the three rode at the head of the transport. The teacher Kristoffer Hoas went in front of them and asked if he could possibly go with the transport and talk with their leader. He followed the transport to a Russian village called Dremalovka, his purpose was to try to mediate and ease the tension between the Reds and the village people. Well, when the transport arrived and Hoas strode by the wagon and told them who he was, why he came and what he wanted, then the reds directly hauled out their shiny sabres from their holders and threatened to kill him. Hoas asked their colonel for permission to only say some words. Then they could execute him if they considered that he had deserved it. "Yes," they said quickly, "what do you have to say?" "Dear comrades," said Hoas, "firstly, we are not Germans." "We are certain that you are," they answered. "No", said Hoas, "we are Swedish. You have not heard or read the history of Karl XII who waged war against Peter, the big emperor in Russia and also founded Petersburg. Karl XII was Sweden's king in the 1700's. He was all the way down to Poltava and laid waste. In Poltava, at that time, lived a lady who called for Mazepa. She stated that she could conjure and she had firmly conjured the Swedish cannons so that they would not shoot. These cannons would certainly be left standing in the same place even today. We are many of Karl XII's people who were taken prisoners and later sent down to Gammalsvenskby." Well, the guards were still standing around Hoas with shiny sabres drawn, yet nothing happened. The threat on his life remained and the guards only waited for the order. Hoas continued his story: "We Swedes are happy for the promised great freedom and we want, as it were, to help you put it into effect so that it will be a real and certain freedom for all the people in all of Russia and mostly for the down trodden the country. Then perhaps we Swedes can also get the right to reunite with our fatherland. Our forefathers' tried a couple of times during the Czar's time but were turned down with the justification that 'you are, of course, Russian citizens and belong to our people and don't come with some applications because we consider it as treachery.' We considered it as a sorry answer from the Czar's government." After these final

words and a plea: “spare me and my people, dear friend”. I saw how the temperature sank in the leader’s house. He ordered, “sabre in” and the guards went out. Then everything was friendly and easy and Hoas went home to the Swedish village with his life safe and sound.

My friends, everything was still not over. One hour after Hoas returned to the village, so a big robber band poured in over the Swedish and German villages. They shot at people, dogs and everything which came in their way. It was a frightful shooting. During the time Hoas was away and negotiated with the Reds, the male population in the villages had gone under ground. They hid themselves in straw stacks, corn sheds and corn heaps, out on the islets and here, there and everywhere. When the trespassers didn’t get to take the men and their sons, it was the women who suffered. They were assaulted and physically abused. Even a national Swede by the name of Rasmusson was by this time down in the Swedish village. The wretch had hidden himself in an old house. The straw roof had collapsed there. There, he laid underneath the straw when, as he said, the die-hard Russians shot their bullets so that they whistled around him, but luckily enough, he managed unhurt from the adventure. Well, he got to see how it really was. Rasmusson was a farmhand for the churchwarden, Buskas, and a little after this uproar, he left the Swedish village and travelled home to Sweden. There, he owned a big farm down in Skåne, which we found out after the homecoming to Sweden. Well, the poor creature got to experience a lot down here in freedom’s land. There, in the most fervent hours, the rain of bullets was the order of the day.

The robber bands spared no one, be they poor or rich. The devastation and destitution now befell the rich also and perhaps these the most because there, they found something to take. This made the wealthy wives and children take refuge in the poor’s wretched houses and ground caves. Now, all of a sudden, the poor had been housebroken and regarded as good people. Now, we first got to hear that we also were their sisters and brothers. Before, we were called the bare-footed bastards, but now they didn’t consider it beneath their dignity to live in the poor’s wretched houses. Now one could even raise their hat or cap and greet a poor, which they didn’t do earlier. The robber band would stop at nothing. Now the plunderings and the killings were full time in the Swedish village also. He, who has the rifle in his hand, also has the power and his own laws. In the robber band’s wake came their relatives, wives, children and parents with halters and ropes in their hands. They took horses and cows and led them away. They loaded furniture, household utensils, hams, sausages, grain, clothes, shoes, wine barrels, yes, everything of value, on wagons and carried it to their homes without respect. Yes, so it went in a land where anarchy prevailed. Each and every one took matters into their own hands and did what he wanted. Be happy, all of you who have not had to experience anything like this. The robber band left towards the afternoon, to come again the next morning. They kept it up for three days and then they disappeared.

One after one, the daring men began to creep out from under their hiding places and after eight days, everyone who hid themselves returned to the village again. Now it was to set about with the clearing up, but first and foremost, to take care of and bury those who died during the plundering. In the Swedish village, there were three men, two married and one single, who had given their lives and the grief was great. In the German villages, there were several who died and some who were wounded. There had likely been many more dead if the men had not hid themselves. The members of the Soviet Committee, whom the farmers had earlier knocked out, did not hide themselves but remained in the village during the plundering's procession. They were spared and neither plundered. Yes, justice will prevail even if sometimes you have to wait for it. Yes, dear friends, in times of danger and need, one asks God for help. One ought to always have God's commandments in one's thoughts and love one's neighbour as oneself regardless of race, birth, status in the community, ethnic belonging, color or nationality. We are all sisters and brothers. If we did that, such terrible events would not need to happen. Every person carries the responsibility for their actions. Behave towards your neighbours as you want them to behave towards you, take into consideration and help each other in all situations.

The teacher Hoas, who later on was the priest in Gammalsvenskby in 1922; he had the gift of the gab, he did; it rescued both him and the rest of us in many difficult situations. He was one of those who didn't have to hide themselves when the Red bandits wreaked havoc in our village and demanded money and weapons. He was exposed to great trials, yes, even put up against a wall to be executed, but in some strange way, he always managed out of the serious situations. Smaller robber bands like these we had to do put up with until April 1920.

Every day, one heard rumours that the regular Red Army was on the march south out from the interior of Russia down towards the Ukraine. But even this army run into big difficulties and opposition in the form of Red free companies and the right-wing White Army which could turn up almost everywhere. One fought meter for meter and weeded out the opponents, and it took time. There were many parties in Russia who fought for power, some of the strongest were: Pekbjorovze, Chochin (Tjotjin), Mensheviks, Bolsheviks, Spartakovze (Spartakist-movement) and Makhno. It was not only that the regular Red Army had fought against these domestic opponents, also foreign intruders took the opportunity to attack Russia by this time. At the end of May 1919, Generals Denikin and Vlasov disembarked with their White Armies on the peninsula, Crimea's northwest coast in the vicinity of the city of Sevastopol and General Koltchak attacked with his army from the north over Siberia and the Ural mountains. The armies, which disembarked on the Crimean Peninsula, advanced fairly quickly and after fourteen days they had reached right up to the Dniepr River. The Red units had not managed to deploy themselves to a defense so it was a fairly easy task for the White Armies to take over the river with help of boats and bridges and then to advance on Moscow. Almost at their

destination, they ran into stubborn resistance from the Red Army. The supply transports from abroad had stopped, and the White Armies now had great difficulties getting replacements and supplies to their troops. The Red Army was well organized and well equipped and was successful resisting and forcing the Generals' White Armies to retreat. General Koltchak's army, which attacked from the north, was also stopped by the Red Army and driven away across the Chinese border. Yes, now the three White Generals' wounded armies were put to flight. General Denikin's and Vlasov's defeated armies pulled back southwards to the same place, where, one time, disembarked on the Crimean Peninsula by the Black Sea in the vicinity of Sevastopol. There, they loaded themselves into their boats and disappeared out to the sea away from their foes.

In April 1920, General Wrangel disembarked with his army, back again on the Crimean Peninsula by the Black Sea. His army was equipped with tanks. It was the first time that we and the Russians beheld such a monster. Wrangel's army advanced fairly quickly and in the middle of May, he arrived by the Dniepr River. There, he stopped. Opposite, on the other side of the river, lay Gammalsvenskby in the fight's center. All attacks and retreats went through the village. Wrangel had now stopped and deployed themselves on the east side of the river and the Red Army on the west in our village and the German villages. The Red Army was, to begin with, not so many men. In the beginning of June, they got reinforcements so that it roughly totaled sixty thousand men. Yes, it was so full of soldiers that one could almost not get through. All the soldiers and horses would have food and the army seized everything it found. One took all grain found in the storerooms for bread for their soldiers and fodder for their horses. One even cut many hectares of green grain in the steppe for fodder for the horses. One seized and butchered all pigs, cows, geese, ducks and chickens without us having anything to say about it. It was only to keep silent if life was dear and we received no pay for anything. After such plundering and destruction, there could not, of course, be other than famine. Here, in our villages, stood the front, from May to the beginning of October, so you can imagine that there was not much food left for us villagers, everything was over. 1919 was actually a good harvest year, but for us, almost everything was destroyed. Farther inland, they had not suffered as much of the war and could take care of their harvest.

In October 1920, the Red Army started its attack against Wrangel's White Army on the other side of the Dniepr River. After two days of fighting, Wrangel's army gave up and the Red Army went over the Dniepr River to the other side. The devastation in our village was terrible to see. Three houses had been struck by grenades and were more or less destroyed. Even our house had a direct hit but, as luck would have it, no one was at home at the time. These here critical days found a large group of the people out on the steppe and those who were at home sat tucked down in their cellars to protect themselves against bullets and grenades. Now it is calm in the village again and no soldiers in sight.

They White Army pulled back in stages and offered stubborn resistance against the Red Army which pushed on southwards. They fought three hard battles before General Wrangel gave up; the first by the Dniepr, the second by the village of Perekop and the third by Sevach by the big salt sea on the Crimean Peninsula. Even I and some other villagers took part in the fights at Perekop. Here it was a frightful bloodbath. The fights continued for a whole week until the Whites yielded. Then only small fights occurred here and there. When the Red Army came right up to Sevastopol in Crimea, Wrangel, his staff and every higher commander had left his unit and saved themselves, not a single boat was found in the harbour, everything was cleared out. Now, those remaining splinters of the White Army could not come further, but the only way out was to surrender or succumb to the cavalry's and the Cossack's sabres and they let themselves be captured. There were thousands of prisoners which the Reds took. The prisoners were dressed so that they wore only their underwear, some were barefoot and some were without headgear. Then one released them and they took the way where they wanted. Yes, is it not terrible to cause war to torment each other. Thank heavens now all of Russia was cleared from the robber bands and the foreign trespassers. Now all enemies are defeated and cleared out of Russia, but there would quickly come to happen other things. The Red Army had triumphed and the Red's flag flew over the land of freedom, Russia and now it should, of course, be free. Lenin and Trotsky had now taken the power into their hands. Lenin was now the great leader and Trotsky, the commander over the assembled, glorious Red Army, but the land was laid waste and riddled with bullets, buildings were burned down, mines stood under water or so burned them and the oil wells were on fire. It took almost a whole year before the Bolshevik Socialist Government was ready and could establish laws and regulations so that the new Socialist form of government could begin to function. The new government would be the little people's government in which even workers and small farmers were elected. The new laws would be democratic and favour the little people.

As I earlier said, I participated in the campaign with the Red Army from Gammalsvenskby down over the Crimean Peninsula and up to Sevastopol, not as a soldier but as a coachman. I and several with me were, by the Red Officers, forced to harness, the last horse we had, to the wagon and, without grumbling, follow the Red Army on their commission. It was only to keep silent and obey orders otherwise the process made short with one. I wanted, of course, to know how long I must drive or how long I would be away. The answer I got was that I would be away until the whole Crimean Peninsula was conquered and cleared of Wrangel's bandits. I was away from October 1920 to December 15 of the same year. Then, one had occupied Sevastopol. The day after, I went to my Colonel and asked to go home. He seemed to be in good humour this day, "Only because you are Swedish and have managed well, so I will let you get your wish fulfilled." He wrote out on a paper that I was returning home with horses and

wagon and signed his name. Then he said, "It is 20 – 25 miles to Gammalsvenskby." The other villagers continued on the way towards Yalta.

On the morning of December 17, 1920, I drove away from Sevastopol with my horses and wagon, actually, there was only one horse that was mine, the other belonged to another Swede in the village. I drove the whole day without food either for myself or for my horses. Towards the evening, I arrived at a big Russian village. There I stopped because the horses were tired, hungry and thirsty and I, myself, was hungry and frozen through. I strode into to one of the Russian farmers and asked is I could get a piece of bread and a little fodder for my horses. "It is impossible to procure bread," said the Russian, but I did get some cabbage soup and some bad fodder for the horses, I did. It was cold but no snow. Then we began to talk and I tried to ingratiate myself a little toward the farmer. When he was aware that I was Swedish, then things took on a new note. Then I was invited to stay the night and put my horses in his stall and they were provided with fine fodder. I was invited to tea and fine bread, ham and homemade vodka. Yes, we had it really pleasant. "Listen you Swede," he said to me, "it is always better to have a hundred friends than to have a hundred kronor." Thereafter, he described the way for me and told me how to go so that the Red Guards would not appropriate me and my horses and carriage again. "Today you have driven four miles," he said, "you drive two days until you probably reach up to Perekop on the Crimean border and from there, you have between seven to eight miles left to Gammalsvenskby. When I left at five o'clock in the morning, I received a packed lunch and fodder for the horses. Then I drove the whole day long and in the evening, I came to a new Russian village. I knocked on some of the farmers' houses and asked about lodging for myself and to put my horses under a roof. The first and the second said no but the third received us and we got to stay over night. Now, I was really angry, it looked like no one wanted to receive us. In this place, I received no food. I had, of course, the packed lunch with me from the previous place so I still managed. At three o'clock in the morning, I drove on. I knew the way again, I drove the whole day and, at nine o'clock in the evening, I reached Perekop. Here, I knew my way home. Here, I drove directly into a well-known Russian house where I was lodged for a whole week before we went over the Crimean boundary on the way down. Here, I asked for lodging and food for both myself and my horses for the night. During the Red Army's march down towards Crimea, it fought out a terrible battle when they occupied the village of Perekop. The army stopped a week there before they continued their offensive down over Crimea. On the battlefield, thousands of dead soldiers laid abandoned. My boots and clothes were torn and worn-out; it was the same with the Russian. We decided to equip ourselves with some finery. We went out on the battlefield and dragged boots of some of the dead soldiers and the same with the clothes. They had, of course, no longer any use for them. I could not take more than I could wear because I had nowhere to hide the things but the Russian provided himself with a little more. Yes, necessity knows no law. This constitutes a little parenthesis. At six o'clock in the morning, I went away. I drove the whole day and, in the evening, I

came to the village, Lill Majatchka, a Russian village which I knew again earlier and here I had some acquaintances. I drove in to one of the farms and drew in the horses. Then came the farmers out and invited me in for food and drink and there I stayed the night. Now, I still had three and a half miles left to Gammalsvenskby. The following morning, I went away again and at two o'clock in the afternoon, I was in front of the Dniepr River's eastern bank by the Kachovka market. In order to come to the town of Berislav, one must take themselves over a bridge. Today it is December 24, Christmas Eve, and I hope I will be able to get home in the evening, but it is uncertain. Swarming all over were Red Guards. When I came down to the bridge, I was stopped by watchmen who inspected my paper. The watchmen talked with each other and said that "we still need a couple wagons", but when they were aware that I was from Sjelo Starochvedskoj (Gammalsvenskby), they said: "Yes go then, so that you reach home by the evening." I thanked the Russians, "spasiba tavaritche" and then continued over the bridge up to the town of Berislav. When I was half-way to the town, I was stopped by a riding Red Guard. He was some kind of officer and armed. He asked me where was going and I answered that I would go home to Gammalsvenskby, I had been out driving for the Red Army for two months and now I received permission to go home. "So," he said, "when did you believe that we get to go home? Turn about and drive in here in the yard," he screamed like a madman, "because in the morning we will drive southwards to Kherson." Nikolayev, Odessa up against the Romanian border because there the war is still in full progress against the White Army and the den of thieves. No pleas helped, so I drove into the yard, unbuckled the horses and gave them a good amount of food. Then I patted them and said, "Farewell, my dear horses and comrades, yes, goodbye to you and thanks for everything that has been." When it was dark, I slipped out and trudged away alone towards Gammalsvenskby. Unfortunately, I was not alone in my clothes, I had lots of comrades of the smaller pleasant kind with me on the way home, it was lice. On Christmas Eve, at eight o'clock in the evening, I was home in Gammalsvenskby again. When I met the villager who owned the other horse and told him what I did, I said to him that "now you must go into the town, take care of the horse and drive for the Red Army", but he did not want it and not for I to return either so we never saw the wagon and the horses again. I was not the only one who did so. There were thousands who did the same just to stay alive, and far from everyone returned home with their lives in tact.

In Gammalsvenskby, there were left only thirty workhorses and a hundred colts and about 150 milk cows, almost no calves and heifers were left, and the same with wagons, there were fifty pigs and here and there, one can get sight of a hen. The spring is now approaching but we have no sowing seed, the little area of fall seed which was sown in the fall has, during the winter frozen away, A green straw is visible here and there and famine stands at the door. We asked the public authorities about sowing seed but they had none to give us and no others either because the land was plundered by the bandits and front-line soldiers, "comrades, you manage as good as you can", was the answer we received.

Yes, what would we do and what would become of us? Here, the land is lying unseeded, it was the common topic in the village.

During the civil war, I was arrested ten times. Two times I was put up against a wall for execution by a firing squad but it was always in the last second someone came and screamed, "Wait, we will question him yet one more time." But somehow, with God's help, I pulled through and saved my skin. The methods of interrogation in Russia were layered with questions and torture. Certainly, we were tormented and badly beaten. It was not only I who was exposed to these interrogation methods, no, there were several other villagers who also had the same treatment. One day, twenty villagers were arrested, I and two more Swedish villagers already sat in the prison, when these twenty were tossed in the same prison. Here sat both Swedes, Russians, Germans, Jews and even Russian women and all in the same premises. The prison was made up of a cold cellar place with small, small windows at the top and without warmth and lighting. It was cold and we got to sit and lie together on the cold floor without any sleeping pads. Yes, you may believe it was terrible. Thanks to the lice that gave us no peace to sleep, we escaped from freezing to death. The food we received was a mark's worth of unfermented bread per day and water. For performing our needs of nature, we were, in the best cases, under guard, to perform in an outhouse or they put a barrel in the prison cell and one did his needs in it. It often happened that, in the morning, the barrel was so full that it ran over. It was those who were arrested who got to carry out the barrel, empty it, and then carry it back again. One night, they took out of our prison 29 Russians, one of whom was a woman, and a Swedish villager, who were all executed. The victims were buried on the place of the execution. All the arrested Swedish villagers but one got to return home. In the whole time, the Swedish villagers managed fairly well through the whole civil war of 1917 – 1920 pertaining to the loss of people's lives. Five Swedish villagers were shot and two disappeared without a trace. For the German villagers, it was worse. They suffered a good many greater losses than the Swedes. We fought for our freedom and also for our home in Sweden, we showed the Russians that Swedes are difficult people.

Worse and worse times we got to encounter. The spring of 1921 is now ripe and things don't look too bright. The new government looks to start to function but the land is plundered and ravaged. There is nothing to get, the government has not a seed of corn to hand out for sowing. The fall seed has almost completely been destroyed by the cold winter and this spring, only three hundred hectares have been sowed. Nine hundred hectares lie uncultivated. At the beginning of May, we received a welcome rain and the spring looked fairly good but then it was dry and we received no rain until the middle of October and it was too late. Yes, it was warm that summer. It could be up to 40 – 45 degrees in the shade. The ground was cracked by the warmth in the same way as it otherwise used to be by the cold in the winter. If one raked together a little heap of dirt and drove a match down in it and held it there for a minute, it would ignite. In the middle of the day, one could not go barefoot. The marshes and the small lakes dried up,

the wells run dry and the fish died because the water was too warm. It looked very bad. What are we to do and how should we go about it? Dear children, the famine and the starvation beat on our doors. Yes, he will step in any minute now, you see the harvest time is ripe but none of us in the Swedish village or in the rest of the Ukraine needed to take up the scythe or some other harvest tool because there was nothing to harvest. Everything had dried up. There was some occasional straw with some corn seed on so the steppe rats and the birds ate it up. One did not get so much as the sowing seed back, neither seed nor straw. It was as bad with potatoes, fruit and vegetables. The leaves on the fruit trees fell off during the middle of the summer and hundreds of fruit trees dried up. It looked as if a prairie fire drew over the area. The famine has now moved in to our home, the children cry and beg their parents for something to eat because they are so hungry and don't understand what is going on. Yes, even we parents are heartbroken and cry because we have nothing to give our children but what could we do? Some families still have some house pets left but at least half of the people have nothing to be had. Now remains only to slaughter the last horse, pig and cow and then lay down and wait for death. Those who had nothing to slaughter already now have to live off a kind of acidic leaves from a creeper that grows out on the islets. Those leaves we called "sirar". These leaves we cooked together with fish for a fish soup which we called "sirvälling" (sir gruel). The winter is now approaching and no longer to go out and pick the sirar. Instead, one now gets to dig after a kind of root out on the islets and boil for to sooth the worst hunger, but the roots are bitter and the children cannot eat them. We grownups ate but it was not very good, but we thought if we and our children ate these roots, perhaps we shorten the pain and die quicker. We wished ourselves dead but it did not come. It just got darker and darker. The thefts increased because necessity knows no law. There were a handful of farmers who tried to withhold grain by digging it down in a hole in the ground. This rumour reached the authorities and one told those suspects that they would report their holdings to the Soviet Village Council (sälsovjet) so that one could divide it out to everyone in the village and "you did not do it voluntarily so we come ourselves to go out and look to find the hiding places." Certainly there were a handful of farmers in the Swedish village who had dug down grain but any report of holdings came not in to the Soviet Village Council (sälsovjet). The search got started and in the Swedish village one found a little grain here and there at a handful of farmers' places. The grain was taken up, filled into sacks and placed in a storeroom. Then it was divided out to the poorest families who had several children but the farmers who had neglected to report the holdings, he got nothing. They were, instead, called bloody kulaks and so one said "you take care of yourself probably still because you certainly have more grain stowed away in several places." The found grain was like a drop in the ocean, and it only caused more disagreement between us villagers than it did good.

75% of the Swedish village's people suffered now of starvation and the winter was approaching. The ground was frozen, it was cold and snowy and the roots in the ground could no longer be dug up. Some of the villagers' bodies begin

swell up, mine also. The difficult and painful death of starvation is near. In the village, there are many who cannot manage on their own legs. Starvation is a cruel and painful death and we can do nothing but only wait and trust that our God the Father in heaven sees us and helps us out of our need. We, ourselves, are capable of nothing more. A little ray of hope we still saw if we could get contact with our motherland Sweden in some way. One beautiful December day in 1921, our school teacher, Kristoffer Hoas, travelled to the Swedish Embassy in Moscow to beg and ask for help from our native country, Sweden. With God's help, Hoas arrived in Moscow and met the Swedes there. Hoas had luck because the same day, a Swedish train would depart from Petersburg to Siberia loaded with provisions for thirteen thousand hungry Russian children which the Red Cross undertook to support. Pastor Wilhelm Sarwe was leader for this transport and accompanied the transport to the destination in Siberia. During Hoas' stay in Moscow, the Swedish Embassy got in touch with the Red Cross at home in Sweden and received permission to unconnect three railway cars from the train transport and send them down to Gammalsvenskby instead. As head of this transport down to the city of Kherson was appointed engineer Södergren who by this occasion was present in Moscow. It is eight miles from Kherson down to Gammalsvenskby. The Dniepr River was frozen so it was not able to travel by boat. Hoas came home to the village some days before the train transport arrived and began to organize the transport from Kherson to Gammalsvenskby with horse-drawn transport. We did not have so many horse-drawn transports ourselves so we borrowed from our neighbouring German villages. It took almost a whole week before we had transported everything to the village. The transport itself back and forth only took four days and one day to load everything from the railway cars into our horse-drawn wagons. When the help arrived, with engineer Södergren at the helm, in the Swedish village on December 21, 1921 at three o'clock in the afternoon, the whole village's population gathered and bid Södergren and the longed-for help - that our Lord Jesus Christ and his people had sent us in the nick of time - welcome to Gammalsvenskby." Starvation, at least for a shorter time, in reality was vanquished. The relief transport consisted of some sugar, some dried potatoes, flour, hard bread but the biggest part consisted of salted herring. When the flour and the bread were finished, we ate pure herring. The sent help held out for about two months. Then it was the same misery again. We were promised a new relief transport but not before the beginning of spring. The food was finished and the need is as big and hard as earlier. The inhabitants of the Russian villages, farther toward the interior of the land, had been spared from the Red Army and the other robber bands ravaging, in which they themselves partly participated in the plundering of the German and Swedish villages and the big estates. In these Russian villages, there was still some grain, flour, and house pets so the people lived so-so tolerably. The need was huge in the Swedish village. For that if possible to manage to save one's skin, the farmers began to gather bricks and sheet metal from the buildings' roofs to exchange with the Russians for some grain, flour, a calf or cow. But what could the poor do who did not have roofs to demolish or owned some other object to exchange? Well, they

slaughtered the last cat or dog and ate it. Many were so impoverished that they did not have the energy to bring home fuel from the islets. One gathered straw and lath from the roof to burn with. One had no belief in the future but tried to hold on to the life for the moment. The body was already swollen up and one thought that death is not so far away. The hunger made a constant reminder and because to extend the life yet one day, one took off his sandals, which one had made of untanned hides with the hair on. One laid these in the pot, boiled them a while so they were soft and then one ate them. This was the last one still had left to feed oneself on. We poor had nothing to exchange away so that we could get food for ourselves and the poor children. You perhaps have difficulty to believe that it is true what I write, but I, myself, have experienced these difficulties and swear on that everything is the truth and no fiction.

The shortage of food made the people certainly harsher and harsher. One shrunk from no means to find something eatable. Breaking into mills, storehouses and anywhere one could imagine to find something eatable was legion. A handful of thieves were caught red-handed and were reported but the robbed received no redress. The answer they received from the machinery of justice was: "The hunger has no law. You know that everyone wants to save his life." Yes, it was terrible. Now, it began to be warmer and those who still had the energy went out to the steppes to capture the steppe rats to calm their hunger. The rats were skinned, the guts taken out, then they were tossed into the pot and boiled in water and salt, then one ate them. Even the birds and animals who died on their own were man's food. I even heard talk that a handful of Germans had eaten snakes but if it is true, I cannot confirm it. Everywhere one could daily find someone lying dead on the ground from starvation but still none of the villagers. No, so far, it was still not the time but the last hour was very near to us. Yes, God protect both people and land from such a famine as we experienced in our time in Gammalsvenskby and it still not over.

The spring now made its entrance and the days became longer and longer, the sun warmer, and the snow melted but the famine continues. The melting snow made the water levels in the Dniepr River rise and the islets lay under the water so therefore, one could not pick anything useful nor could one fish. The only thing that one could feed oneself on is the steppe rats. People in the village staggered around as if they were half drunk. They walk sorrowfully around and talk to each other with crying in the throat and prepare themselves for the worst. The rest walk around with swelled up stomachs and have no energy to go out to the steppe to catch rats. Now, before long, have the last hours struck.

Today, a letter came from Sweden. In it was written: 'Dear Swedish villagers, try and hold out for yet another fourteen days for help is on the way and we count on an Italian boat loaded with provisions and seed for sowing under management of Pastor V. Sarwe arriving in Turkey during the nearest days. The ship will then pass through the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus for to then continue out on the Black Sea for to then go direct to the Soviet harbour city of Odessa. If everything

goes well on the journey and nothing unforeseen occurs, we count on that the help will be arriving a couple of days before Easter on April 22, 1922.' A couple days later, a telegram came "Sarwe has left Turkey." A day later, yet another telegram, "The ship with Sarwe on board has, in thick fog, collided with a Turkish guard boat in the Bosphorus. Machine damage." The ship was tied up in a Turkish harbour to repair the damage and clear up the circumstances about the collision. It took three days. Three days later came a new telegram, "I am now back out on the Black Sea again but have encountered a difficult storm. Signed Sarwe." Then all was quiet, no telegram and no letters appeared. After the arrival in Gammalsvenskby, Pastor Sarwe told about his trip: "The boat was Italian and the crew were made up of Italians, very good people. I was the only Swede on board. Out on the Black Sea, there we had a violent storm. I took off my hat and asked of our God the Father: 'You who have all the power in the heavens and on the earth, you who can still the storms and make everything well. Help me and our crew on this ship to happily get to come to our final destination. There your children sit emaciated and long for food. Like young ravens in their nests, they sit and wait on that their father or mother will come with food for them.' The storm was soon over and we found ourselves out on the Black Sea with course for Odessa. We laid to in the Odessa harbour but had still three to four days journey by boat in front of us before we arrived at Gammalsvenskby. In Odessa, there I saw," said Sarwe, "how they drove with wagons on the streets and gathered together the dead, threw them up on the boards and drove them away to the big mass graves. There they were tossed down and covered with dirt, without any ceremonies. It was the worst I ever experienced."

In the Swedish village, the situation is precarious. We go and wait for the rescue and today it is Easter Saturday but no help appears. Apathetic people say to each other, "I and my family probably don't come to experience tomorrow, so it is perhaps best to do as many German families did, they lit a fire in the fireplace in the evening so that it glowed. Then they closed the damper again and went to bed. In the morning, the family never woke up but had succumbed to carbon monoxide poisoning. So that's the way it was. They escaped experiencing the terrible anguish that starvation involved. In all despair, was still the hope for the Divine God that he would help them and their children in this difficult time. Today it is Easter Day, April 22, 1922. At six o'clock in the morning, we gathered, everyone who was able to, for a moment of worship outside in the graveyard, which one always did in all times. When the schoolteacher, K. Hoas was well under way with his sermon, suddenly a signal was heard from a steam whistle from a boat out on the Dniepr River. The sermon was terminated immediately and Hoas said, "Now the help is here." Everyone was very happy and those who still were able to and could run, went quickly down to the Dniepr beach to mark the place where the ship should put in. Yes, now was the happiness complete. Everyone cheered and thanked God and the people at home in Sweden. Yes, it was a wonderful morning, this Easter morning, when the help at the last moment came to us and saved us from an impending, painful starvation. This morning,

we experienced like a resurrection day and many happy tears fell, not one eye was dry and down by the shore, everyone joined in with the Psalm, thanks God, everything, people, and so on. The ship with the help shipment would be unloaded within two days because otherwise one would have to pay an extra delay fee. So the church service which should have been held at ten o'clock on Easter Day was cancelled and the unloading of the ship got started and was cleared within the stipulated time. The ship then set the course for Italy but Pastor Sarwe stayed behind in Gammalsvenskby for one month. In the relief transport was included a fair amount of foodstuffs but it mostly consisted of sowing seed. It would, according to the paper, be two different kinds of spring wheat, the one kind had coarser and the other a little finer grain. We said at once that the coarser grain is fall wheat and the smaller is spring wheat but the farmers supported that which was on the paper and both kinds were considered to be spring wheat. One had hoped that already during Easter Day, a first round of provisions could be divided out to the hungry people but one must first unload the sowing seed to get at the food provisions. On board the ship, the sowing seed would first be filled in sacks and then transported to a storehouse up in the village. There, the sacks' contents were emptied on benches. One worked in two teams. In the morning, the one team filled the sacks with seed, on the ship, and then unloaded the sacks on wagons for transport on to the storehouse because then, in the afternoon, the wagons were unloaded at home by the storehouse while the second team worked on the ship. I, myself, was part of the first work team who began to unload the ship during Easter morning and, in the afternoon, I worked at home by the storehouse carrying the sacks up to the storeroom and emptying them on the benches. I remember that I had on my feet a pair of tall boots, so when we finished the work in the storehouse in the evening and went home, I took the chance to fill my bootlegs with seed. When I came home, I took off my boots and emptied them. Mother took care of the stolen seed, washed it, then put it in a pot and boiled it soft. That was our evening meal on Easter Day, April 22, 1922. Easter Monday, the unloading had advanced so far so that one reached the foodstuffs and made a first, temporary distribution which would last a couple of days. When everything was unloaded, everything would be divided fairly, one hoped. Everyone suffered, of course, equally as much, but as usual, it was the big farmers and farmers who lined their pockets at the expense of the poor. Envy and injustice prevailed in the village. Already, they had forgotten how God punished us. The sowing seed was divided so that the big farmers received the largest part of the finer wheat and a smaller part of the coarser while the rest received more of the coarser and less of the finer wheat. We received so little of the finer wheat, there was not enough even to sow a quarter hectare in the spring. We sowed, in addition to that, three hectares out of the coarser wheat which we feared was fall wheat. The wheat germinated and came up fine but towards the summer, it dried away and there was nothing left of it. The farmers who received sowing seed of the finer kind got a very fine spring wheat. Yes, they had now eaten bread while we still had it very scant. We were, well, not completely without bread but we had nothing to expect ahead. Since it was not successful as well with this sowing seed, one received a

promise about a new shipment from Sweden but it would not reach Gammalsvenskby before the fall. When this relief transport reached Gammalsvenskby on November 1922, I was not at home in the village but I carried out my recruit training in the Red Army, but after the homecoming, I was told how the dividing went.

Pastor Sarwe stayed in Gammalsvenskby one month. When he returned home to Sweden again, K. Hoas followed. Hoas had been the schoolteacher and spiritual leader for 25 years in Gammalsvenskby. Now he wanted further education and to be ordained in Sweden. During Hoas' stay in Sweden, a collection for the needy in Gammalsvenskby went on. This relief transport reached Gammalsvenskby in November 1922 under management of a man from Sweden by the name of Hebbel and Pastor Hoas. In the collection, part of the cash funds was also included to purchase horses for such as were in need of it. Hebbel purchased and paid for the horses but there were some of them who had it best put as arbitrarily suggested to Hebbel who should allot the horses and who should not get any. Those who were in an unfortunate situation with the big farmers received none. So it went when one divided up the remaining help. It had been decided that those who were allotted horses bought with money from this collection would pay back to Pastor Hoas the sum which the horse/horses cost by the purchase, by annually paying a sum of money or grain as corresponding to sum of money. How much the horses cost in the purchase and how much was paid to Hoas was kept secret for those of small means. Some wanted to maintain that the money one purchased horses with was a loan from Sweden and should be paid back. "It is not true," stated the others. Any clarity in how matters really stood was not received. In the help shipment was also included a caterpillar, three hay mowers which would serve the whole village. The hay mowers would be stationed with one by Taknegårda, one by Näalinja and one by Nybyn. But who it helped, those who could talk best and scream the loudest, they cut the feed with the hay mower. The remaining stacks, as usual, were cut with a scythe. So it went and so it was with all divisions and allotments. When it came to the caterpillar, it was always a dispute about which priority would apply. First, the big farmers would manage their chores, then the small farmers. The rest had no chance. Any experienced caterpillar operator was not found in the village and the tractor was short-lived. Soon everyone got to plow and so it was the old usual way and the tractor fights were over.

In October 1922, I joined up to do my compulsory military service in the Red Army. There were eleven of us from Gammalsvenskby who joined up. We were picked up and went by a horse-drawn conveyance eight and a half miles southward to the city of Kherson. There, we were medically examined. One of us received an exemption warrant but the ten remaining got to continue their service in the Red Army. For a month we were stationed in Kherson. Every day we were outside and exercised and learned left and right of, etc. One beautiful day we left the barracks and went on board on two riverboats. We were 1,600 men who were on board. There were Germans, Swedes and Russians. We

travelled on the Dniepr about 30 miles from Kherson to Alexandrovsk (now Zaporozhye) in the north. The trip took us two and a half days. The boats were fueled with wood, there was no coal, and was as quick as “the sun on the wall”. So it also was with the trains. One could hop off and run by the side of the train and still catch up. After a five and a half day train trip, we finally arrived at the station Begarlov. There, we finally got off and then marched to the barracks. When we arrived at the barracks, we could establish that it was vandalized. There were no doors which closed, all the windows were beaten out, the kitchen was burnt out, the kitchen equipment was broken and not a wood stick was found to light a fire with. Inside the barracks, both man and animal had performed their need and no fireplace was found. Outside, it snowed and blew like hell. The first thing we set about with was to nail the windows back with old sacks and pieces of board so that the snow did not whirl in. To start a fire and warm up, we carried in sand and made sand beds in a few places in the barracks on which we then made a fire. The next to do was to scrape, sweep and wash the floor to remove most of the shit. Gradually, one began to arrange with windows, doors and wood bunks to lie on. Before this, we had to lie like swine. We were full of vermin, yes, lice, there were plenty of them. Today, when one thinks after, it was perhaps luck that one was so lousy as one was, otherwise one had probably frozen to death. It was, of course so, that one could not sleep in, sit, lie or stand still because one must always scratch and turn, yes, the lice gave one no peace and it was cold. The temperature went down to minus 30 – 35 degrees. The food we received was constituted of a herring and two marks of bread per day, so a whole month passed. Then the kitchen got decreed in order and we began to get a little prepared food. For breakfast, we received tea and bread, lunch consisted of cabbage soup and buckwheat porridge or porridge made of sweet corn and for dinner we received mess of pottage with rapeseed or sunflower oil and some pieces of meat in it. The menu looked the same every day for a year and a half. Later, they increased the bread ration to 2.5 mark's worth (slightly less than 1 kg.) per day. We were not given clothes until after six months. We had to wear the clothes we had on when we joined up. Things were so bad that military training or other outdoor work could only be carried out with half the force at a time. We changed so that one day one group borrowed clothes from the other - mostly footwear - to be able to be outdoors, training or performing other tasks, while the other group stayed in the barracks. As footwear, we were allotted sandals, which the Russians called “lapptje”. Some were plaited of twine and some were manufactured of bark or a material resembling chip baskets. We had no socks, we were allotted two pair of coarse rags to wrap about the feet. These two pair would hold out for three weeks. Yes, you should only have seen how handsome we were. Rifles and lice there was no shortage of but in the rest was found nothing. The days and months went and it began to be better and better.

The next year we moved into a really fine and prepared barracks in the city of Brjansk. Here we had it fairly good. Now, we had received clothes, blankets and mattresses and the food was also better, cabbage soup, potato soup and the porridge was enriched with a little more meat. During my 18 months in the Red

Army, I had been tested in many different situations. First, though the infantry, I served as a carpenter while I was a coachman and drove provisions to the kitchen. Then I went over to the field artillery, where for three months, I went through artillery training. After that, I went through one month's signal training and then to be a horse keeper for the battalion's commander (bataljonschef) for three months. After that, I applied to go back the field artillery and there I stayed until I had completed my military service. The last time, I was the only Swede amongst all Russians. The group of ten Swedes who joined together had divided up. One tried for different ways to get it so good as possible during one's service. Our salary was 75 kopek (75 öre) per month and everything, such as, accommodations, clothes, tobacco, matches and laundry was free. When one had completed one's service and got to go home, one got to keep the Crown's clothes. During my 18 months of service in the Red Army, I also visited the prison for three days. On one occasion, I had, in the barrack's yard, gotten into a fight with some Russians. I wanted to show that you cannot treat a Swede any old way, one of the combatants was carried away on a stretcher. The other managed to leave on his own. Myself, I came away with a black eye. The last part of the service we had it very good, fine clothes and good bedding, neat and clean in the barracks and the officer was very good. The discipline was tough, but that was a good thing. Otherwise nothing would have become of us. No discrimination existed, regardless if one was Russian, German, Swedish, Greek or Turkish. So one was only addressed by name or comrade (tavariche in Russian). Any officer training was not for me. In April 1924 I and the remaining ten Swedish villagers came home to the village again. That's the way it was, one was home again.

In the fall of 1924, I was elected to the Soviet Committee which sat in the Municipal Office in Gammalsvenskby. At the same time I was elected to the Municipal Chairman (opolnomachi in Russian) for Gammalsvenskby. I was also included in Sälsovjet in the municipal hall. There, the highest Chairman sat. I was included in many plenary meetings and conferences - open as well as secret ones - at the County Committee as well as in Sälsovjet in Gammalsvenskby. It could be fairly lively and malevolent meetings. In the fall of 1926, there was a new election and I resigned the commission as Municipal Chairman but I remained in the Soviet Committee. I was also elected to Chairman in the Socialist Democratic Party (K. V. P.). This organization had at its disposal 15 hectares of earth. This ground would be plowed, sowed, reaped and threshed by the villages' farmers, those who had no horses got to help with other work. Those who had horses ploughed and so they escaped reaping and threshing. The state provided the sowing seed. For the most, the distribution of the work went well but it was always the next in some conflict. I would take care of the harvest from these 15 hectares and divide out to the needy, lesser well-to-do and destitute in the village. In the election in the fall of 1927, I got out of the commission as chairman of the workers' party. I was elected again into the Soviet Committee and was later chosen as auditor in the kitchen for the children's dining hall. I also audited the Swedish Village's income and expenses

up to the trip home to Sweden on July 22, 1929. These tasks were not so onerous and not nearly as full of risks as the earlier tasks I had had. One always had to be careful, regardless which commission one still had. One was subjected to strong control from the County Committee.

Yes, dear ones, during this year I was part of the Soviet Committee handling many big and difficult to solve questions. You often heard from superiors "If you do not fulfill and carry out your commitments and obligations, you will be sent to kingdom come on the double-quick. What we order you to do, you will do, and you will not yield to pressures from the kulaks, because they have no influence on us today." Some of the big questions which would be solved was the land reform; which I talked about earlier, the school children's dining hall and the restriction of the right to vote. The division of the land according to the new laws met with big opposition from the farmers' side. When the land surveyors came to the village to divide the land, they would stay with the farmers. They were supposed to be equipped with a fatigue party and some materials that the farmers' were to supply. It came across some resistance but it was solved in the end still fairly well. It was only to follow the laws. When it pertained to the school children's dining hall, it was difficult to solve question, you may believe. The task was to start a kitchen which could feed all of the children between the ages of one and five. Those who considered themselves as a little more well-off said in this way, "Why would we allow our children to go to school and eat that there Communist food? No, so curse me, our children will not eat the food, let the poor's Communist children go there and eat but not ours. Yes, it is unbelievable what those damn Communists can think of, only so we also will be Communists." Yes, they were completely crazy and the proposal was voted down at a village meeting. But in Sälsovjet, we then decided that all the poor workers' children would be fed and get food from the kitchen and that one would get to pick up food for the small children and take it home. We got the activity started and it went well. The right to vote question was difficult and provoking. It went out to make all the bigger farmers and their families lose the right to vote. We received the order from the County Committee to immediately begin to investigate the question concerning their kinship several generations back in time. They wanted to know about the descendants from any priest, big farmer, businessman or persons in command, right down to group leader. The kinship that could be derived in any of these categories would lose the right to vote and could not vote in general elections or in other meetings. They would quite simply have nothing to say about it. This applied not only to Gammalsvenskby but also to the three German villages, a Russian and a Jewish village. We would review between five and six thousand people's family relationships, family after family. This was something that we absolutely did not want to carry out and discussed it endlessly. One beautiful day, two men came out from the security police (G. P. U.) and asked to see the list of how many without the right to vote that we had in Gammalsvenskby. We had, of course, done not a bit towards the matter. We received a thorough telling-off and an urgent request to immediately set about the task. It was only to apologize that we didn't manage to get on with this task.

This time we got away without reprisals. Now we must get started. The first time, we took only some names from every village, but it was not accepted. We did up the list several times and it resulted in that some of those who had the most onerous family ties lost the right to vote. The befallen were naturally showed annoyance and the hate towards the lesser well to do grew again. Constantly we heard, "It is only our own damn Communists who did this to us." Yes, they did not grasp how the matter was and that we did everything to prevent this. The taxes were a big problem for many. They lived under terrible circumstances and had no possibility to pay and it was the duty of Sälsovjet to collect the taxes. One day, a tax collector from the County Committee came out to us to hold interrogations with those who absolutely could not pay. A Swedish villager who could not pay received the question, "Why have you not paid your tax?" "I cannot afford to," he said and asked to be excused, "the children sit a home without food and starve. I cannot pay." "Of course you cannot pay," said the tax collector, "run out in the street and scream, 'I am a Swede who cannot pay my tax', so Sweden sends down money to you so that you can pay." Such humiliating expressions were frequently occurring. Many of those who could not pay his tax were given a prison sentence and were driven away to the prisons, on foot, like a big flock of sheep.

The need was the worst between 1921 – 1923. During this time, there was nothing to buy; matches, for example, were impossible to procure. For to hold the fire alive, during the night until the morning when one got up, one laid in a coarse firewood or a piece of dried dung in the fireplace when one went to bed in the evening. If the fire had gone out, in the morning, one went out on the step and searched out over the village to see if there was smoke out of some chimney. Then there was to only grab a pail, rush there and ask to get a little ember and then to quickly return home and try to get the fire to take off. We manufactured matches ourselves of thin wood sticks which we dipped in melted sulphur. One could get these sticks to burn if there was a little spark left in the ashes in the fireplace and one touched the matchstick's sulphur to the ember. Between 1918 and 1923, there was nothing to buy; all of the stores were empty of goods. There was not a nail to buy; neither sewing needles, matches, fabric, thread nor even empty sacks to make clothes from. There was not even a short piece of board to buy so that one could put together a coffin. To make a coffin, one took attic boards from storehouses and outhouses. One took the old nails to be straightened out and used new or one used wood plugs. There was not sewing thread to be found, so the women had to unravel their old laces, tablecloths and curtains, which they crocheted when there were good times, and use this as sewing thread when mending and patching their sack clothes. Sewing needles, darning needles and knitting needles, we made with steel wire. Yes, there was nothing to get, everything was destroyed, smashed or burned up; so it was, not only in our village, but in the whole of Russia. Everything was at a standstill. The country was lawless, and there was anarchy. There was plenty of money about but it was emergency coin. An old horse could command a price between four and five million rubles. Education was at a standstill. and the

injustices – which mainly struck the poor – were huge. I will, here, tell about an episode which happened between the years 1925 – 1926. Then, a sum of three thousand kronor was sent to the needy in Gammalsvenskby from the Cathedral in Sweden. The recipient was Pastor Hoas. The poor needy families saw no trace of this money. No, it was divided out to thirty or forty farmers but we received not an öre despite that the need was big among us. The idea was that the distribution of this money would occur in secret and that we poor would not know anything. Just during this time I was included in the Soviet Committee and was also the head in Gammalsvenskby (municipal chairman). One morning I and the chairman of the Soviet Committee went up to the Säl-sovjet (town hall), on the way, we met a worker who served as a farmhand for a big farmer. We began to talk with him and asked where he was going. “Yes,” he said, “my master sent me away to the priest because he will write on a bill of exchange so that my master can borrow money.” “Is that so,” we said and went on and the farmhand went on to the priest. We began to think about what the farmhand said and came to the conclusion that here everything was not right, there was something suspicious about this, because a priest in Russia had, by this time, nothing to order about and such a name would not be accepted in any bank and for the other, there no longer existed bills of exchange in Russia at this time. I said then to the chairman, “that in a couple of days we will, of course go to the County Committee in the city for the conference. Then we can pass by and go down to the post office and hear for ourselves if any money has possibly come to Gammalsvenskby from Sweden.” “Yes, we can do that,” said the chairman, as he was also a Swedish villager. We went away to the conference a little earlier so that we would have time to go the post office before the conference, which began at eleven o’clock. Well, arriving at the post office, we knocked on the door, a man opened and asked, “What can you have on your mind?” We presented our matter and said that we only wanted to ask and inquire if there had come any money from Sweden to Gammalsvenskby. “Yes,” he said, “there arrived money to Gammalsvenskby about fourteen days to one month ago.” “How much money was there then?”, we asked. “Yes, I will see”, the postmaster said and came forward with a book, “There has come three thousand kronor to Gammalsvenskby from Sweden and as the recipient, stands Pastor K. Hoas.” Yes, now we had black on white. When the conference and everything was clear, we went home. Upon our return, we told what had happened to us, and the rumour spread like a wildfire through the whole village. A couple of days later, some housewives went down to Pastor Hoas and asked where matters stood with the money which the Swedes at home in Sweden sent down to the needy in Gammalsvenskby. Hoas answered that they had borrowed this money from the Uppsala Cathedral in Sweden and that “I have already divided it out to forty farmers, but,” said Hoas, “you can, of course, gather together yourselves and form a group and write a prayer petition which you send to Sweden’s cathedral in Uppsala and ask about borrowing money to relieve the need in Gammalsvenskby on your account. When you are ready with the prayer petition, you can appoint someone as responsible and who will tend to the whole affair. He can then come to me with the papers so I can send them away to the

Swedish cathedral in Uppsala.” It did not take many days. Our group was formed, the prayer letter and all the papers signed and ready. Now remained only to appoint two people who would go with the papers to Pastor Hoas. Those who were appointed to this assignment were I and a woman by the name of Maria Norberg who was also elected to Sälsovjet. The day we both subsequently went to Pastor Hoas, he received us and thought everything looked good and everything was in order and promised to send it away as soon as possible. It was spring, in April or May. It was days and weeks and, at regular intervals, we visited Pastor Hoas to find out if we received an answer from Sweden but the answer was always, “No, there has not come any answer yet.” One month went by but no answer. But one Sunday at the end of July, after the sermon, Pastor Hoas said, from the pulpit, now he had received an answer from Sweden and they wrote: ‘We at home in Sweden’s cathedral cannot lend out more money to the Swedish villagers in Gammalsvenskby before the old debt of three thousand kronor is paid back. After that, the cathedral can lend additional money to Gammalsvenskby. After some days, we went down to Pastor Hoas asked to see the letter which came from the cathedral in Uppsala and which he had stood and read out in the pulpit inside the church. “Yes,” said Pastor Hoas, “that is to say, that I know not where I have laid this letter,” he asked his wife also, but neither she knew where the letter went on the way, and we saw no letter. Yes, now you think perhaps as so here, you can, of course, yourself, have written to the cathedral in Uppsala and found out about how it was with the three thousand kronor and how it was with our prayer letter but it was not so easy. Dear ones, we were isolated; we had no addresses to Sweden. So we could not come in contact with Sweden in another way than through him. Yes, it was, probably a lot which we found out. On another occasion, between the years of 1927 – 1928, the Swedish government sent over money to the Swedish Embassy in Moscow to buy grain, for bread, for the needy in Gammalsvenskby. In cooperation with the Russian government, 1,500 pounds of barley was bought. There were no other kinds of grain to get hold of. We transported the grain to the village with horses and wagons to then empty them out and store it in a storehouse of one of the big farmers. He also received the trust to store the keys to the storehouse. Now, first one counted out how much every person should be allotted because each and every one would like to get a lot and one arrived at that the allotment would be 1½ pounds (24 – 25 kg) per person. The grain was fairly clean and fine. After some days, we started with the allotment. Everything went well the whole morning but toward the afternoon, some who received their grain in the morning came back with sand in their sacks. They were angry and in despair and shouted, “You believe, you devils, that we will eat sand; we wanted to have grain and nothing else.” Yes, we really did not know how we would solve this situation. What should we do and what should we say to the worked up people who stood outside the storeroom with their sacks of sand. After a moment, we decided that we would take in some of the sacks with sand and weigh the sand which was found in the sacks. We first took in a sack from a person who had received 4.5 pounds (72 kg) of grain and could establish that it contained 20 mark (8 kg) of sand. Another person had received grain for ten

persons and he returned with a whole pound (16 kg) of sand. Now, we stopped the allotment and reported the matter to the Chairman in Sälsovjet and the County Committee, which sent out two men to the village to examine the grain and the sand. These men could only establish that the grain had been stolen out of the storeroom and that shifting sand had been mixed in instead so that the weight would agree. The rich watched each other's backs and saw to it that they received grain for bread and sowing. The poor could, well, eat sand. Those who were guilty were never to be investigated; the suspicions fell naturally on those who had access to the keys. Yes, such was the fairness in Gammalsvenskby. By this time, Pastor Hoas and the churchwarden, Buskas, were in Sweden to negotiate on the Swedish villagers' eventual return to the fatherland, Sweden. Here, down in Gammalsvenskby, I went around and pondered how I could get an address to someone in Sweden; so that I could write and tell the Swedes at home in Sweden how unfair it was down here and how we poor and our children were treated. Yes, now you will get to hear how I solved the problem; but, unfortunately, it gave no practical result. One beautiful spring day, in the evening, I stood outside by the gate to our house; there, I saw Mrs. Hoas walking along the street and went in to her neighbour. Now, it happened that I had been going out with the neighbour's daughter and the neighbour was going into the city the next day. A little later in the evening, I visited my girlfriend and after a little conversation about this and that, I asked her what Mrs. Hoas's errand was when she visited them. "Yes," said my girlfriend, "she had heard that we would go to the city tomorrow morning. So she came with two letters which she wanted us to take to the city and mail for her." Then, I asked if I could possibly see the letters and she went in and got them. I looked at the one letter – it was addressed to Pastor Neander in Uppsala. where Pastor Hoas and the churchwarden, Buskas, stayed during their stay in Sweden. Under this address, there was not any idea to write something because then my letter would only end up directly in the waste basket, I thought. So I looked at the other letter and it was addressed to a young lady at a school in Uppsala. I wrote this address down. The next day, I subsequently sat down and wrote a letter to this lady in which I told her how we had it down here in Gammalsvenskby and how we poor were treated and discriminated against; I wrote, among other things, about the interference by sand in the grain which we received, and asked the lady for a quick answer. I sent the letter as a registered letter. Weeks and months went by but no answer on the letter came. When three months had passed since I wrote the letter and no answer had come, I went to the post office to make inquiries about the letter. After fourteen days I received an answer and an acknowledgement with the lady's signature that she received the letter; but I never received any letter from her and its explanation would appear later. In 1929, we arrived home in Sweden and, on the fourteenth of March, 1930, I went to the Snäckarve farm in the Stenkumla parish on Gotland; the same year we celebrated, on August first, our homecoming at the Snäckarve farm. Many Swedish villagers and also Gotlanders and some mainlanders had gathered to celebrate our commemoration day. There, among other things, was conducted a church service and when it was finished, everyone took their packed lunches which they

brought with them and sat down in the green grass in the garden and enjoyed existence. Then followed speeches and talks but afterwards, it was free; from there one went and greeted each other and had a little small talk. About the matter that Pastor Hoas and his closest friends during the first time here at home in Sweden spread propaganda that all Swedish villagers could keep together and travel to Canada because there, to build, in the same way, a new Gammalsvenskby and it was that that he wanted to talk with me about. We had a little different opinion about this here journey to Canada and in the end I said, "You may travel, but what will we, the poor sheep, who do not have an öre (Swedish coin) in our pockets do in Canada, and then one does not understand the language either." "Yes," said Hoas, "you understand Andreas if we travel altogether, we also get to take the collection with us and it is, in any case, one million crowns." Then I said, in this way, to Hoas, "I have, in black and white from the Swedish villagers foundation, that they placed no obstacles in the way of those who want to go to Canada, but the Swedish government will not hand over one öre to Canada even if all of us would travel over, so it is said and decided. So if only two or three families remain in Sweden, it is they who get to have at their disposal the collected funds. I will not travel to Canada, not even if the Swedish government could deport all of us Swedish villagers and say travel to Canada, I would rather return to Gammalsvenskby in Russia." But then 'the shit hit the fan'. "Of course," said Hoas, "then you can immediately go and call on the Communist Gustav Kaspersson so he can come with an airplane from Stockholm and fly you over to Russia." "Yes, thanks, my friend," I said to Pastor Hoas, "and you can gather together your forty blessed and travel over to Canada so that we do not have to see and hear you. You want to have us with you only so long; until you receive the collection of funds. Then you will treat us poor exactly the same way as you did down in Gammalsvenskby. No thanks, not to Canada. I would rather go here in Sweden and sweep the streets." The farm foreman stood nearby and heard our conversation so Hoas turned to him and said, "This Andreas here was a big-mouth down in the Swedish village and so he is here in Sweden too. Not only that, he was also part of the Worker's Party in Gammalsvenskby." "Yes," answered the foreman, "such as the associations that we have many of in Sweden." Disappointed, Hoas continued, "It was the same as with that letter you wrote to a lady at the School for the Blind in Uppsala." "Thank you, my friend," I said. "Finally I found out where my letter went, and wasn't it true what I wrote in the letter?" Hoas was completely quiet and said nothing more. The letter which I wrote to this lady in Uppsala, she was blind, and went to the School for the Blind in Uppsala. She received my letter but could not read it herself. Presumably, the headmistress of the school read the letter to her and then handed it over to Pastor Hoas in Uppsala. It was very interesting to hear what had happened to my letter. The matter was, of course, clear that Hoas would swear that what was in my letter was not true and therefore I received no answer. I could, of course, not in my wildest dreams, believe that my letter would land in Pastor Hoas's hands but it did.

Already on the third day after we had arrived in Sweden and settled in the barracks in Jönköping, Hoas summoned all of us to a meeting in the dining room, where he spoke to us and pleaded with us to stick together and propagate his trip to Canada. Among us in the dining room, there were also some national Swedes, so that they would not hear what he had to say about his Canada propaganda, he had the audacity to ask them to leave the room. Despite Hoas and his followers' propaganda, there would be no journey to Canada.

In Gammalsvenskby, there was a church cashbox – I didn't know how much was in it – but shortly before the journey home to Sweden, the contents were distributed. However the poor, who perhaps needed it the most, got nothing. They were seen as people without legal rights or as if they did not exist.

Between the years 1925 – 1926, a group of forty of the biggest farmers, and their families, organized themselves in secret. This group would work so that these members would get to travel home to Sweden. The lesser well-to-do knew nothing about this secret. When the group was ready with their work, they called together the village assembly to get everything sanctioned, entered in the minutes and signed. At the village assembly, they were forced to present their matter and we asked the chairman to pronounce its meaning concerning this secret trip. "Yes," said the chairman, "we have gathered together, around forty families, who now are about to leave the Swedish village and return home to Sweden." Then 'the shit hit the fan'. "Yes, Mr. Chairman, how is it with the others who will be left?" called someone. "Yes, you can, of course, gather yourselves together and build a group, like we have done, and apply for travel home to Sweden." The answer to these forty blessed ones, as we were in the habit of calling them, was: "Remember that of this flour, there will be no bread (nothing will come this), because the first among you to place himself in the wagon outside to travel to Sweden, we will execute. Remember this for all times." Here, they could not get what they wanted and their plans were crushed. In the spring, April 1928, a Mr. Olsson came from the Swedish Embassy in Moscow down to Gammalsvenskby. He went around to all the houses and spoke with all families. It didn't matter if they were poor or rich, he treated everyone the same. He never asked anyone if they wanted to go home to Sweden but in every house he visited, he heard that we wanted to go home but Olsson did not answer this question. But a couple of days before he left the Swedish village to return to Moscow allowed a gathering of the village assembly and there he said: "I have gone around the village and talked to everyone and seen how things are, and a general theme has been that 'we want to go home to our fatherland Sweden'. Then all I want only to say is – not that I can influence you or decide anything, that I cannot – but one thing I want to say to you, people of the Swedish village: - and remember this – it is either all or none; we cannot have groupings." And the day after, he left the village. Immediately after Olsson left the Swedish village, the work started with everyone to return home to Sweden. One week later, the village meeting convened again. There was only one question on the agenda – to discuss the journey home. Everyone who was

18 years old and over, men as well as women, got to vote. Then followed the voting about the home journey, by the counting raised hands. The result was a unanimous yes and no votes against. "Yes," said the chairman, "now hold fast by this which you now, today, have decided and keep your own counsel because it can be a matter of life or death." After a moment, the secretary A. Utas had the minutes ready and before it was read out, the chairman said: "Now listen really carefully when the minutes are read out. If there is something wrong, say so it is the same." The secretary read out the minutes and it was accepted as it was. Then everyone who got to vote went and signed the minutes. Everything went well and smoothly but the worst remained, to get the approval of all superior authorities, it would be approved by the county committees in Berislav, Kherson, Odessa, Kharkiv and the government in Moscow. There remained a lot to do. Our forefathers tried during the Czar's rule to return to their homeland but they were threatened with their lives and had to shelve their dreams. But we are in full confidence because there was namely a law in Russia which said that every little national group in Russia had the right to join with their motherland if their kinsmen are prepared to receive them. The next step was to appoint three delegates who would handle the task and lead it further from authority to authority. A new village meeting was called and on the agenda were two questions. 1. Election of delegates. 2. Financing of the delegates' trip. The delegates would be appointed so that one came from Gammalsvenskby, one from Nysvenskby and one from Svenskåker, the last two are daughter colonies of Gammalsvenskby. The delegates elected were Johan P. Buskas from Gammalsvenskby, Gustav S. Hoas from Nysvenskby and Andreas Kristiansson Sigalet from Svenskåker. What pertained to the financing of the delegates' trip was resolved that some of the money would be taken from the islet money, which was in a special fund in addition one would make a charge of five kopeks per person. These five kopeks would be paid last within eight days. The chairman said further, "as early as today or as late as tomorrow, the delegates will receive the information about what they shall do and the day after, they will start their work in earnest and we wish them good luck."

The first task for the delegates was to present the application, about the journey home to Sweden, before the chairman of Sälsovjet. It went well and they got our papers passed and signed. The next day for them – away to the county committee in Kherson – there, it could probably be a little tougher, and they would probably need to have a little money with them. You know how it is: "one lubricates the cart so it goes lighter." Appearing at the county committee, the delegates presented their errand and handed over the application documents to the chairman. He looked back at the papers, handed the papers back to the delegates and said, "Njet (no), I cannot grant it" and the delegates left the room and went out. We Swedish are not in the habit of us being so afraid, so they decided to wait for him outside on the street, when he would go home and eat dinner in the middle of the day. At long last, he came walking down the street. The delegates began to talk with him and suggested that he should follow them so they could invite him to dinner at a restaurant but he declined. Then they

asked him if they could not get to make a visit to him at his house, but the answer was no, but he said to the delegates, "With such questions you will not come to me inside the big hall but come in to my workroom at two o'clock in the afternoon so we can discuss the question." At two o'clock, the delegates went in to the chairman in his office and within an hour, they discussed and answered his questions. Now it began to take off and it felt as if they were on the way to victory. They got their papers signed, thanked the chairman and, in high spirits, they returned home to Gammalsvenskby. A day later, it was time to go away to Kherson and take a battle with the gentlemen there, the highest boss there – he was a Jew. Well, arrived in Kherson and inside the chairman's office, they presented their errand. "Yes," said the chairman, "according to Russian law, I cannot deny you to grant your application for the journey home to Sweden, but" he said, "you shall know that in Russian law, there are loopholes and a fairly big elbowroom." He wrote on the application and wished us good luck. The delegates returned to the Swedish village, happy as musicians and everyone was happy at home in the village. The next trip was to go to Odessa, twenty miles southwest of Gammalsvenskby. Now, it happened that Pastor Hoas, by this time, had personal errands which he would accomplish in Odessa. He would try to obtain passports and permission to travel to Sweden for himself and the churchwarden Buskas for, as it stated, Pastor Hoas was sick and needed care abroad and Buskas would follow him as his assistant. Hoas had been in Odessa several times earlier and was a little familiar with the chairman for domestic and international affairs so Hoas got the commission at the same time as he also performed his private errands. So he would also bring the documents of the passage to Sweden and get them signed. In a telegram from Hoas, he announced: "All is well, the matter is clear and it will probably succeed. Tomorrow I will go up to the chairman a second time." On his return to the village, Hoas explained that everything was successful and laughed so that his stomach jumped. There was a connection between Hoas and Buskas' trip to Sweden and the preparations for the journey home for the remaining Swedish villagers to Sweden. Hoas's sickness was only a designed excuse for going home. The strategy was that Hoas and Buskas would try to get to Sweden, so that from there, can easier negotiate and prepare for the journey home for all of the Swedish villagers to their fatherland. Hoas and Buskas received their passports and travel permission and succeeded, in a round about way, to get to Sweden. In spite of cleared papers, the Russian authorities tried to stop both travelers and their lives were at stake. Before Hoas and Buskas went away on their dangerous trip, they wanted to first find out how the gentlemen in Ukraine's capital city, Kharkiv, stood on the joint journey home to Sweden. The delegates travelled now to Kharkiv to get the travel application approved and signed. Coming up to the domestic and international affairs department, whose chairman was called Slinkov, they were referred to the international and domestic committee. One of the gentlemen on the committee asked about their errand. The delegates brought forward their task and put forward their papers. The men on the committee looked through the papers and threw some suspicious looks at the delegates. Then followed a moment's cross-examination. In the end, they

said: "This here will probably not be approved, but we will look into the matter further and will come during the nearest time to inform you of the result." Just before the delegates were to leave, one of the men on the committee said, "It probably doesn't go to prevent you from joining with your countrymen but it comes to be very trying for you and takes a long time." When the delegates returned to the village, the curiosity was huge and one asked how it had gone. "Yes," said the delegates, "we received no definite answer. We get to wait around a month for the answer." More than one month later, still has no answer come to the village and the delegates went on a new trip to Kharkiv to inquire into how the situation is with their application. Well, inside in the domestic and international committee, the delegates put forward their task; they wondered how it has gone with their application about the journey home to Sweden which we left with the committee over a month ago. "These papers we have sent to the government in Moscow and we still not yet received any answer from there. We have done everything that we can and as soon as we receive answers from Moscow, we will come immediately to inform you", and the delegates had to return home without answers. During this time, Pastor Hoas and the churchwarden, Buskas, prepared for their trip to Sweden. All papers were ready and now it was important to get away without being caught by the Russian authorities. After some days, two men came from the County Administrative Board out to Sälsovjet and began to question us about Hoas and Buskas. They wanted, among other things, to know if they had travelled to Sweden. "But no," we said in Sälsovjet, "he is at home. We have heard that he is seriously sick and is bedridden." "Is that so," they said, "that is good but let us know when they are thinking of going because we want to meet them before the departure and don't you make it so you yourselves look badly." From now on, there will be guards down by the boats both day and night so that Hoas and Buskas won't be able to slip onboard unseen. Many rumours went around in the village that "today travels or travelled Hoas and Buskas to Sweden to speed up the journey home" but we in Sälsovjet denied all the rumours and requested everyone to hold their tongues and not believe these rumours or spread them further. "Keep silent about what you know and let us tend to the job." One morning one of the villagers came to me in Sälsovjet and related that Hoas and Buskas had gotten away the evening before and we questioned him, "You saw for certain that it was them who got away." "No," he answered, "I didn't see it myself but it was another who told it to me. He had seen it." "Yes," we said, "you stand by your words so we will immediately inform the County Administrative Board of it." "No, dear friends, don't do that," he answered. "Then hold your mouth and go home and remember to spread no such rumours in the future and remember Hoas is lying at home in his bed and is sick," I said. But knew that Hoas and Buskas travelled that evening. In the evening at twilight, I stood alone down by our gate when Hoas and Buskas drove past on the road to Berislav. Hoas waved to me but I did not respond to the wave. One can, of course, ask themselves why I did not respond to the wave? Well, I was afraid, for that reason, I was not happy that I happened to be a witness of it. There could, of course, be others who saw me standing by the gate and I had, in addition, waved farewell to them and someone

had reported me, so it would be the same as dead. If someone had seen that I stood by the gate when they drove past but did not see me wave and they made a report, I could defend myself with that one does not look after every transport that drive past one's gate. But had I known to be caught with that I had waved so would one know to say that one does not wave to someone that one does not know and then it would be more difficult to clear oneself from the situation. But a luck was, there was no one who had seen me by the gate and neither was there any report. Yes, this episode turned out happy but a lot remained. Hoas and Buskas were on the way to their trip from Gammalsvenskby to Sweden. In Berislav watchmen stood by the loading platforms to all boats so there was no chance to get away this way. Instead, the horse and carriage drove with Hoas, Buskas and two coachmen towards the south end of the village. Then they drove in the dark out to the islet which lay close to the village. There, they waited a while until it was really dark. Then they turned and drove back the same way toward the village and took a crossroad up through the village. Then they drove out behind the Swedish village and took the road to the monastery which was one half mile north of the Swedish village. They drove there instead because to go to Berislav was twelve kilometers south of the Swedish village. They would be at the monastery by midnight at the latest. Then go by the boat northwards toward Aleksandrovsk. From here, go by train Kharkiv – Moscow – Leningrad to the Finnish border. The second day, at nine o'clock, they were arrived in Aleksandrovsk and at ten o'clock they went by train, express, Kharkiv – Moscow. Arriving in Moscow, they would exchange for Swedish money and get their papers checked and stamped at the international affairs department. All of this went painlessly and then they sat on the train which went directly towards the Finnish border. There, they passed through the Russian customs and were handed over by Russian customs officials to the Finnish customs officials on the Finnish side. Now they felt that they were in safety. But everything had hung on a fragile string because at home in the Swedish village, the hunt went on to stop their trip; but about that, they were happily unaware even if they had suspected it. The third day after Hoas and Buskas had left Gammalsvenskby; two men came out from the County Administrative Board in Berislav to Sälsovet in Gammalsvenskby and asked us if Hoas and Buskas had travelled to Sweden. They were very angry and indignant. "No," we said, "We don't know that." "Really!", they screamed. "You know nothing. We will show you what you have to do. Immediately send two men to Pastor Hoas ask if he is at home." They pointed at me and another Swedish villager and it was only to obey the order and we trudged away. You can imagine how I felt; I would go down and check if Hoas was at home despite the fact that I knew that he travelled. On the way down to Hoas' residence, I said to my comrade T. Albers, who was my age, "You too, know, of course, that the priest has travelled away." "Yes," he said. "But remember," I said to him, "never admit that we knew that Hoas had travelled, for then we are lost and hold fast to your word even if they stand us against the wall. So say, no, and we come to save many and be victorious in the end, my friend." Arriving at Hoas' residence, we knocked on the door and Mrs. Hoas asked us to step in. She saw that we were indignant and she asked, "What does Andreas

want today then?" I explained to her the whole situation and then she said, "Go back and say that Hoas is sick and that he has not travelled. I will clear up the trip with them if they come here themselves and want to check." We thanked Mrs. Hoas and with a little relief, we returned to Sälsovjet. Scarcely coming in, inside the door they shouted, "There gentlemen, well how is it, he has travelled." We answered that the priest's wife said that he is at home and he lies sick. The gentlemen were strangely satisfied with this answer and returned to the town. We were very surprised that they did not ask if we ourselves had seen Hoas lying sick in the bed but they didn't do it. The gentlemen subsequently came back the next day and asked if we had seen Hoas when we were down there yesterday and we answered that we had not. "Yes," they said, "there are people who state that they have travelled. Now go down immediately and see if he is at home. Both of us who were there yesterday had to trudge away to check if Hoas was at home. We knocked on the door and the priest's wife opened it. She looked at us and said, "It is the same errand as yesterday." "Yes," we said, "that is it." "Go back to them and say to them that Hoas has went to his doctor in Odessa to take care of his sickness and say that is what he told his wife when he went away from here. If he later has travelled somewhere else, I don't know," said Mrs. Hoas and this we will tell to those gentlemen there. We went back to Säl-Soviet and told to the gentlemen what Mrs. Hoas had said to us. Then, they were furious and out came coarse swearwords so that it was terrible to hear. The last these men said to all of us in Sälsovjet before they left us and returned to the town of Berislav, was that "within a few days, we will come and pick up all of you together instead of Hoas and Buskas. As well, we were excused from seeing these threats carried out. When these gentlemen who visited us went home, they immediately telegraphed to Kherson that they should arrest Hoas and Buskas, if they got hold of them and they answered that any such persons, they had not seen. Then they telegraphed to Odessa and from there they received a similar answer as from Kherson. The next telegram went to Kharkiv and they answered that Hoas and Buskas had, three or four days ago, been noticed by the railway station in Kharkiv. The next authority the telegraphed was to Moscow and from there they answered that Hoas and Buskas were in to the International Department yesterday in the morning and in the afternoon they would travel by express train toward the Finnish border. Moscow telegraphed immediately to the Russian customs by the Finnish border. This telegram reached the Russian customs at the same time as the Russian customs handed over Hoas and Buskas to the Finnish authorities. Exactly when the Russian customs officers handed them over to the Finnish customs officers, A Russian customs officer came rushing out from the customs house and called to Hoas and Buskas that they should come back because he wanted to have some words with them. But, "no," said Hoas and Buskas, "We can talk when we return." The Finnish customs officer also said, "no, Hoas and Buskas are now under our responsibility." Hoas and Buskas had a feeling that something was wrong and during the whole trip they were afraid and on the watch. "Had the telegram arrived at the Russian customs only two to three minutes earlier, we would have been lost," said Hoas. Yes, we knew that here at home in the village also. If they got hold of them, we

would never see them again. Yes, it was God's hand which saved them and us this time.

Now, a telegram came to Gammalsvenskby with the happy announcement that Hoas and Buskas had happily arrived in Sweden. In the village was the delight huge. Everyone cheered and praised God for the huge miracle which he had done for our leader and our people and one sang hymns thanking God for all the people. Yes, now it was only to spit on the handfuls and work still harder to conduct the trip home. Now, a new telegram came from Moscow, where it was stated that: the central government has not approved your application regarding a return to Sweden. You do not get to leave Russia, your fatherland is Russia. And so we ask you that no more to return to this question and that you loyally help us to build up a new land and a new system. It was a hard and bitter blow in our camp to emigrate and travel home to our fatherland Sweden. Yes, my boys, we are tough Swedes and as long as we can stand on our legs, we come to fight for our statutory right to return to our kinsmen in Sweden. And we come to be victorious in the end.

So to try to influence us so that we would not leave Russia, they sent down a German propagandist to the village who would try to persuade us to not go to Sweden. The day after that, we had received the telegram from Moscow about turning down our trip, so I gathered the Swedish villagers and the sent-down propagandist in Sälsovjet. We were completely alone in the hall and we sat down by the council table. There, the German began to say that we should not go to Sweden. Then, I was angered and said to him, "You know what, you can go home to Germany and spread your propaganda rubbish and you have absolutely nothing to do with our trip home. Had you yet been a Swede who came down from Sweden, then we could have possibly listened to you, you jerk." Then the German said this: "Remember, you Swedes, that for twelve years we have rubbed you the right way, but in the thirteenth year, we will start rubbing you the wrong way." And he came out with threats against us Swedes. Then I said to him, "Go and do the same to the Germans at home. You will have nothing to do with us. You are still too insignificant for that. And if I should report your threats, you will not see the sun rise tomorrow. Remember that, my friend." Then he disappeared and we never saw him again.

Our delegates traveled to Moscow again, to find out why our application had been turned down. The answer the delegates received was that the application is rejected, that it is a question of time for you and us, that they have given their decision and sent all the papers to the Ukrainian government in Kharkiv.

It is there; you can wait for a clear answer. The delegates came home without getting any clear answer but one had still a feeling that it was not completely pushed without one wanting to put us through the grill to see if we were not ready to give up our fight. But we are firmly resolved – we will never give up. Now the delegates travelled to Kharkiv to get an explanation for why our application about

the trip home was turned down. The answer they got there is: "Is the application about your trip home turned down so that is it." "No, that explanation we can not be contented with," said the delegates, "according to Russian law we have the right to unite with our earliest kinsmen in another land. We want at the quickest to get this question investigated and made clear for us if it will be a definite yes or no. It was a no, so we wanted to have it in writing as a formal proof to continue our fight. "Yes," they said, "It is so that Sweden does not want to take it you and therefore we must turn down you application about your travel home to Sweden, but we will examine this difficult to solve question further and you need not come here any more. The delegates returned home and they were in a fairly good mood because they had a feeling that there still was a chance that it would sort itself out. A delegate now went in to the city to send a telegram to Pastor Hoas and let him know that we were turned down for our application about the trip home to Sweden on the grounds that Sweden would not take us, according to the government in Kharkiv. We received a quick answer from the Swedish Red Cross: "You can return home. We will take you any day, you are welcome home to mother Svea. We have sent a similar letter of reply to Moscow and Kharkiv. Signed Price Carl. A letter from Pastor Hoas also came today. There, among other things, he wrote, carefully pressure and don't take anything that they want to give you or certainly come to promise you.

Today, two men from the secret police (GPU, KGB) in Kharkiv came down to the Swedish village. They would make certain examinations concerning our trip home and try to persuade us to not go to Sweden. When they had been down here fourteen days, four cars with the head of the county administration in Berislav and the highest directors from the cities of Kharkiv and Odessa, and six police came down to the Swedish village completely without warning one evening by nine o'clock. Everyone was armed. They called together the Sälsovjet and all the directors of the village and immediately started again with cross-examination concerning our trip home. You should only have seen what an uproar it was. That evening I was really scared. They wanted to know why we wanted to go home - had they assaulted us or had they treated us in some other way they the others or do you think that you pay higher taxes? No and no came the answer from the assembled. Don't you like our government and our laws? We answered that we are grateful for the government we have because now we and everyone in this land have freedom and such a law that every nationality has their full right to unite with their homeland and also the right to use their mother tongue. "We have nothing against your government or laws, we want only to go home, dear comrades." At one o'clock in the night, meeting was terminated and the great gentlemen went away from the village. Two days later, three secret police came to visit the village. Now it was a private questioning, one at a time. It concerned only seven villagers and amongst these, I was one. This was a doomsday, you may believe. The three all sat by a table with weapons in their hands and allowed the questions to come thick and fast over one. One didn't have time to answer the one question before they put the second and the whole time they pointed the weapons at those they questioned. Curses and threats

were legion. All questions concerned the trip home. They wanted find out who first began, as they said, the uproar in the village and we answered that there is no individual person who enticed or forced us to this emigrating. It is only that we want to go home. Those who began with this, rest out in the cemetery. We are all thankful to our government and the laws which have given everyone oppressed in this land their freedom. When we requested to travel home and reunite with our ancestors, we only followed Russian law. This cross-examination was carried out by these strict gentlemen under about a half hour with every person but we who were questioned thought it was three hours. Yes, it was terrible. After the interrogation, the three police went from the village and this time also, we escaped in one piece from this adventure but I never want to experience it again, it was terrible.

Today two men from the county committee came down to the Swedish village and said that we should get started with sowing our acres so that the earth will not be lying unsowed. The village assembly was called together and there the men from the county committee got to tell the villagers what they wanted to say, and the villagers got to say their intention. The villagers answered briefly, we will sow not a grain. The gentlemen proposed that one should do a vote. One did it also and it resulted so that the proposal for sowing received not one vote while the proposal against sowing received all the votes. Now the gentlemen were upset and commented as here: "Yes, tomorrow we will come here with machine guns and mow you down altogether. You are not worth anything else." But, as luck was, we didn't see any machine guns in the village, and there was no sowing.

Now there is a letter from Pastor Hoas in Sweden. He writes that the Swedish government has granted permission for entry for all of you, and the Russian government has informed the Swedish government that it will shortly grant permission to leave for the Swedes in Ukraine. Hoas writes further: Get started at once with disposing of all property, the living material as well as dead material and hurry so you have time to sell as much as possible, because the Russian government will not buy out any of the inventory. That which we didn't have time to sell would be left in the village. Therefore, the Russian state came to repossess everyone's houses in Gammalsvenskby as well in Nybyn (New Village) but how much we got for them, it is another question, but we got to take what we got. Here in Sweden, we cannot do anything in the matter. The Russians were prospective purchasers and within the two months of April and May, everything was as good as sold.

Today, we received guests again of two men from the Ukrainian government in Kharkiv accompanied by four police as bodyguards. The one is the deputy chairman and the other is the director of the international and domestic department, comrade Slinkov. Both gentlemen behaved very nicely and friendly and they stayed for three days. They examined all books and made some notes, among other things, about how many houses there were in Gammalsvenskby

and Nybyn, how many persons we were and how much land, islets and water we owned, etc. Two times the village assembly gathered and spread propaganda so that we would put our travel plans on the so called shelf and tried to bribe us with lots of benefits. For example, we would get to live uninterrupted and, within 25 years, we would be rid of taxes and other state fees, if only we stayed. But the answer was always no, we don't want to live at the others' expense and we ask our friendly and highly appreciated government of to only get to go home. Yes we want home and we beg you, dear comrades, smooth the way for us so that we, as quickly as possible, get to travel to our motherland Sweden. "Now, we go back to Kharkiv again," said the two gentlemen, "and so we will see what we can do for you. Farewell, but we hope that you remain with us." The men left the village and now remained only to wait on the answer. We believed enough that now it would be our end to all of the guests visiting but, well, what we deceived ourselves. The communists in Sweden sent down two propagandists to the village to try to persuade us not to go back to Sweden. The one was called Gustavsson but the other's name, I have unfortunately forgotten. These two men received the same reception as all of the earlier agitators and could not influence our decision. They remained in Gammalsvenskby when we travelled away from there. They were with us down by the Dneipr banks and waved at us when we were on the way to Sweden. Later, we heard that, during the time they were down and waving at us, they had been robbed of all their belongings up in the village. Yes, it was a pity about the boys. The last day which we were left in Gammalsvenskby, I talked with Gustavsson and then he said: "You certainly will have it better in Sweden than what we have had here in Russia." He said it to me but didn't tell about anything that I had said any such thing.

Today we received a letter from Pastor Hoas and he wrote that now it is ready for the trip home. In July, we can count on leaving Gammalsvenskby and begin the trip home to Sweden. The Swedes arranged for a boat and crew who will come down and pick us up in the city of Kherson. It will be a Romanian boat which will transport you over the Black Sea from Kherson to the Romanian city of Constanta, then travel by train through Romania, Hungary, Austria and Germany up to the city of Sassnitz in northern Germany, to then take a German ferry over the Baltic Sea to Trelleborg which is situated near by Sweden's southern point. The head of the group was Major C. E. Berggren and at his disposal, he has a doctor, four nurses, two railway workers, an editor and a journalist. These personnel would be travelling to Romania within the next couple of weeks. Everything is now ready for the transport home and the expected occurred in the middle of July. Be prepared. There also came a telegram from Kharkiv: "Your trip home to Sweden is granted. On July 22, 1929, Gammalsvenskby would be evacuated. We set up two steam riverboats, which will pick you up at the Dneipr shore across from the Swedish village. These two boats will take you down to the city of Kherson, 7.5 miles south of Gammalsvenskby. There, then Swedish personnel will take care of you. Signed by the government in Moscow and Kharkiv." The happiness now stood high in the sky, the victory was won and finally we get to go home. A telegram was immediately sent from the Swedish

village to Pastor Hoas in Sweden in which one described how it was here down in the Swedish village. A couple of days later, a telegram came from Sweden in which one let us know that everything is in good order and ready here at home for the journey and the reception but that one received bad news. The Russian government had since informed that they would not let any Romanian ship in Russian water. Russia and Romania were not, by this here time, any intimate friends. Some days later, a new telegram came from Sweden: "The boat problem is solved. A Turkish boat will come and pick you up in Kherson and carry you over the Black Sea to the Romanian city of Constanta. The boat will pick you up at the latest on July 24. Everything is ready for the transport home. The Swedish personnel have travelled from Sweden to Turkey and will be on board when it comes to pick you up. Good luck on the journey and welcome home." The Germans went now with bent heads and heavy steps. Now they were not so cocky any longer, before they went around and made fun of us because we were so foolish and believed that we, in the end, would succeed in getting to leave Russia. They said that "if you get to leave Russia so it comes that hair will grow in the palms of our hands." We were successful but if they had hair grow in their palms, we didn't know. A final letter from Pastor Hoas came to us in the Swedish village in July 1929. He wrote: "Now, I will not write any more letters to you in Gammalsvenskby. I hope that you quickly get to travel home here in Sweden."

Tomorrow is the day with the big D, the day when we will begin our journey home to Sweden and leave our dear home district and birthplace, Gammalsvenskby. For the last time we hold a church service in our beloved church. Here, many tears fall, sorrowful tears as well as happy tears. Monday, July 22, 1929 is a day we will never forget, a beautiful day with fine weather and 25-30°C. At four o'clock in the morning, the boats' steam whistles were heard down from the Dneipr bank. Now, the boats are here to pick us up, is it really true? Of course, it is true. The time of miracles is not yet past. Dear Jesus, you who will bring us home to our native land, the hour of salvation is struck. We look up to the sky and see the bright star, there up in the north which shines so clear over our father's land Sweden and under this star, there we will get to build and live. Then at first, we can perhaps forget all of our suffering, threats and hardships which we and our forefathers have had to endure in this foreign land. Thank you, dear Heavenly Father for everything and we hope that now it will be over. But we are still not at home in Sweden. All the villagers bid farewell to Gammalsvenskby and walked down to the shore. There, the boats lay and wait, the one was called First October and the other, Vorovske. By eight o'clock in the morning, everyone has left the village and stands down by the boats and wait to go onboard. Now, a man begins to call up the passengers, he went after a list which is put in alphabetical order and gradually, we went onboard. Everyone went on the way calmly and tidily, but many went onboard on the verge of tears. At 9:30, everyone is onboard and at ten o'clock the boats depart. On the shore, stand thousands of moaning and crying people. They are family, friends and acquaintances who do not get to come. They are both Germans and Russians

and they asked everyone: "Do not forget us who are left in this poor and ravaged land. The Swedish choir has now gathered on the deck to sing a farewell hymn to honour our birthplace, Gammalsvenskby and to all the people who gathered on the shore to bid farewell. With tear-drenched handkerchiefs, they wave farewell to us. At ten o'clock, the boats loose the moorings, winch up the anchors, the motors begin to work and slowly, the boats glide away from the Dneipr shore. The people on the shore call out, cry and wave farewell. On board, the Swedish choir sings with tears in their eyes while the others crowd by the railings to take a last farewell of their merciless but still so loved home district, Gammalsvenskby. The boats now steer southwards with everything at high speed and our village disappears more and more in the distance. The choir is now quiet and everyone is quiet and still. Only the throb from the boats' steam engines was heard. One could hear a handful of villagers say: "Now, our village is gone. Now we see no more of it." The boats went directly to the city of Kherson and in the middle of the day we passed the market town of Kachovka and the town of Berislav. At five o'clock in the afternoon on July 22, 1929, we lay in the Kherson harbour. When it concerned food, it was a bad situation onboard. There was not a piece of bread to buy. Some had a little food with them in their baggage and divided it with those who had none. So that's the way it is. One still had the worst hunger. It was the worst for the children. We are now in front of the city of Kherson, the sun has went down and on board the boats, everyone looked for a resting place for the night. The next day in the morning, July 23, we got up, washed a little, then we held a common worship, on board the boats, with the sermon and hymns. Simon Simonsson Kotz did the sermon and the songs were led by Petter Kristiansson Annas. In the morning a big Turkish ship which would transport us over the cruel and dangerous Black Sea came to Kherson. The adversities were not finished. Today, July 24, at ten o'clock in the morning, Mrs. Kristina Kristiansdotter Annas died on board the ship Firuzan in Kherson's harbour. She was, already by the departure, very sick and the first to leave us on the journey and the last who was buried in Russian soil. Now it was a hurry to arrange the funeral and the burial to take place in Kherson on the same day in the afternoon. Officiating was Simon Simonsson Kotz. At three o'clock in the morning, July 24, we heard a signal from a steam whistle out in the bay. It was dark and we could not see where the sound came from but by four – five o'clock we saw that a big ship lay out in the roadstead. "It is, of course, the boat which will pick us up", we said. We again held our morning worship but could not stop looking out towards the big boat. At eight o'clock, we saw a Russian tugboat go out to the ship in the roadstead and, at 8:30, the big Turkish boat Firuzan came in to the quay in Kherson with the Swedish personnel on board. Major Berggren greeted us, on behalf of the Swedish people and Sweden's government, "Welcome home to our father's land" and told us a little about the circumstances at home in Sweden. After Major Berggren's speech, the school teacher Gustav Pettersson Utas gave a talk and greeted our Swedish brothers and sisters, "Welcome here to us to help us on the journey home to our father's land, this trip which we fought for, for so long." When these ceremonies were settled, Major Berggren stepped on land and the greetings and squeezing of hands right and

left were exchanged, while the Russian authorities blocked off the whole harbour area and put out guards. At 9:30 we began to go on board the Turkish ship Firuzan, but first we were carefully inspected by the Russian customs and at first, three o'clock in the afternoon, the next day, July 25, all of the Swedish villagers gathered on board on Firuzan. From Gammalsvenskby, four Russian families had also followed with the journey so far, in hope of getting to go to Sweden. In Kherson however, their trip was ended, no bitter tears or pleas to the Russian authorities helped. Major Berggren also tried to get the Russian authorities to let them follow with us but it didn't help. "They are not Swedish and do not get to go," said the Russian authorities and they got left on the quay.

At five o'clock in the afternoon, July 25, 1929, the moorings were loosened and the anchor was pulled up. The Turkish crew had now quickly started the motors in the big, ancient freighter Firuzan and slowly glided it out from the quay in Kherson. Earlier we had said farewell to Gammalsvenskby, which lies eight miles north of us, and now we say farewell to Russia. Now we are on the way, a good bit down the Dneipr, Kherson disappears out of sight and we are now out in the way, which leads directly out to the dangerous Black Sea which is never in the habit of being calm. We see the Black Sea out in front of us and the sun is on the way down, when the boat suddenly vibrates violently. Yes, it was so strong that we believed the boat would sink and it stopped in the blink of an eye. The boat had likely went on an under water wreck or some other under water obstruction. Fuming, the Turkish crew ran up and down between the boat's bottom and deck. They were angry and talked loudly with each other but we did not understand what they said. The Swedish personnel also ran up and down but we received no account on what had happened. The Russian tugboat which should have went in front of our boat and piloted us out to the open water went instead, 300-400 meters behind us. "Why?" one can, of course, ask themself. After about two hours detained at the scene of the accident, the Russian pilot came on board and our boat continued the trip, but we did not get to know anything about what had happened. Was it possibly the Russian's intention that our ship would sink with one and all in a last desperate try to stop our reunion with Sweden? In any case, they were unsuccessful. Now, we are out on the wide, big Black Sea, the sun has went down behind the horizon and the dark begins to lower over us. We did not know what comes to happen to us that night, "dear Jesus look down to us and for us to a safe port. You are the one we can trust in, none other." The Russian pilot is still left on board and at three o'clock in the night, July 26, we put in at Odessa, the last Russian harbour, to leave hold of the Russian pilot. The Turks now set full speed on their ancient, rusty ship and set the course toward Romania. It is star bright and the Black Sea lies calmly and still as a mirror. As long as we are still in Russian waters we cannot be certain that our trip will succeed but we only come over the Russian border so we can feel a little more secure. We travelled the whole day of July 26 and the whole night and, at nine o'clock in the morning on July 27, we anchored up at the roadstead outside the Romanian city of Constanza. During the whole boat trip, the dangerous Black Sea lay still and calm as a mirror, which it rarely does. That

it was God's hand which followed and helped us over this big, dangerous sea, that I am certain of. Yes, God can do big things, much bigger than what you and I can imagine. We had sat about 15 minutes in the roadstead when a Romanian tugboat came out to our boat and after another 15 minutes, it went away again toward land. Our boat immediately lifted anchor and steered slowly in to the harbour. When we put in by the dock, a Romanian brass band stood there and played. The Swedish attaché in Romania stood by the harbour and greeted us, "Welcome to Romania and the city of Constantia." A representative for the Swedish villagers conveyed our thanks to the attaché, the Romanian people and their government. For us, it was like coming from hell in to the kingdom of heaven. The people were well clothed and one did not see any beggars. For us, it was like coming to another world, my friends. Here, one could really see that there was freedom; people were happy and friendly toward us. A couple of hours later, our boat was disembarked and we found ourselves back on land. Now, at first, we got to find out about what had happened with our boat when it went on that there under water obstacle. A hole about a meter in diameter had slit open in the hull, as the Turkish crew succeeded in professionally repairing through tapping the hole again with, among other things, cement sacks. There were several Swedish villagers who were down and saw the hole. A while after we had left the boat and took our place in the fine railway cars, we could look through the windows and see how the sea was in an uproar. There were waves that were two to three meters high and think how happy and satisfied we were to be back on land. At twelve o'clock, we had lunch. Good food and lots of food, such fine, white bread as we got here, we had never tasted in many years and the music corps played, among other things, Du Gamla, Du Fria (the Old, The Free). The feeding took place outside in the air from the tent which one raised in the great natural beauty of the surroundings. Yes, we all felt as if we were newly born on this day, you may believe. We even got to bathe in the warm bath house and our clothes were disinfected. It was cramped in the railway cars so any orderly rest, one could not count on getting.

In the evening on July 29 at nine o'clock, the train began to roll away with us toward the Romanian capital city and at eight o'clock the next morning, we arrived in Bucharest. Here, we were also very well received with song, music and very fine and good food and the Romanian iron guard paraded in front of our train when it glided in to the central station. At ten o'clock, the train rolled on to Hungary and, at five o'clock in the afternoon on the same day, we arrived at Hungary's capital city, Budapest. Here, we were also very well received. We were invited to dinner at the city's hotel with very good food and so much beer one only was able to drink. Then the progress continued, the same day at nine o'clock in the evening, toward the Austrian city, Vienna. There, we arrived at three o'clock in the morning on July 30. Here, we got to leave the train and were lodged in an immigration house. There was the idea that we would stay here three days to rest up a little but the rest was not prolonged. The public situation in Austria was restless and, among other things, in Vienna the Reds demonstrated and the situation was tense. One was afraid that revolution could

interrupt when it wanted. One also heard hearsay that the immigration house and the emigration building would explode in the air. We did not receive any official reception here and the food was nothing to brag about. Already at three o'clock in the morning, July 31, we gathered together our baggage and loaded ourselves onto our railway cars. At four o'clock the train rolled away toward Berlin and by nine o'clock we passed over the border to Germany. At nine o'clock we were fed in Germany but without reception ceremonies and the meal was not so good there. At ten o'clock in the evening, we received a new meal in Germany and it was about like the last place. Here, we were informed that we would not pass through the German capital city, Berlin, because of disturbances there. It was the Reds who were busy revolting there like they did in Vienna. We began, almost everybody, to be worried and thought, from a hell we escaped to perhaps end up in another. The train was directed so that it went to the east of Berlin instead and, at nine o'clock in the morning on August 1<sup>st</sup>, we arrived at Stralsund in northern Germany. There, we met Pastor Hoas and he then accompanied us on the train to the German harbour city of Sassnitz. We arrived there at eleven o'clock in the morning. In Sassnitz, we got to leave the train and go onboard the German ferry Dutchland. Here, we received no meal but everyone was handed a lunch bag. At two o'clock in the afternoon the ferry left the dock in Sassnitz and headed out on the eastern sea's waves with a course towards our travel target Sweden. There was a little rough sea and some of the passengers became seasick and vomited, but how well it was when one shortly has reached their dreams' target. After about four hours' journey on the Eastern Sea, Major Berggren stood on the upper deck and pointed with his hand toward some high smokestacks which can be made out from the ferry, "It is Sweden and the smokestacks you see are the city of Malmö," he says, "Now we are soon at home." A while after, he points with his whole hand again and says, "Look over there toward the sunset, you see it there, it is the city of Trelleborg. There we will put in. After an additional while, we can make out Trelleborg's harbour. The Swedish choir now gathered on the upper deck and while the ferry slowly glided into the harbour and put in by the dock, the Swedish choir sang Sweden's national song "Du gamla, du fria". It was full of people over everything, the whole way out on the pier, by the harbour and even on the roofs of houses sat the people who waved and called and greeted us welcome home from the foreign land. It was seven o'clock in the afternoon, August 1, 1929, when we put in by the dock. Now, finally, we are home in our father's land. On the dock stood Prince Karl and Princess Ingeborg, representatives from the Swedish Red Cross, the Swedish Women's Mission and many other higher and lower officials and received us. On the dock not far from the ferry, one had rigged up a radio transmitter and a podium. His Highness Prince Karl climbed the podium and held, through a certainly touching welcome speech, which was sent by radio over all of Sweden's land. He spoke to us, to the Swedish people, the government and His Majesty King Gustav V and the Queen, he gave thanks for their participation because this project finally could have praise in the land, he said among other things: "Now, the Swedish born villagers stand on Swedish ground and everyone is safe and sound except for three who, as a result of sickness,

temporarily had to stay in Germany, but they will come home in the nearest days, and so he wished all the Swedish villagers luck and success here at home in our father's land. Then the elementary school teacher Gustav Utas stood up in the podium and conveyed the Gammalsvenskby people's warm thanks to the Prince, the Princess, the Royal family, the government and the Swedish people for everything they had done for us "and we hope that we also in the future can count on your support in our activity here in Sweden," he said. Yes, my friends, it was a big and beautiful reception we experienced and no Swedish villagers' eyes were dry when we went on land for the first time on Swedish ground. Now, we are at home but no one knows how it will go for us here at home. No, everything lays in God's hands. Prince Karl again took to talking and to ask us to go on board the train. "It can probably be a little cramped," he says, "but you are, of course, in any case, at home now and in the city of Lund, we will have a meal."

At nine o'clock in the evening, it was clear and fine weather and for the first time, we got to see when the sun goes down here in our homeland, Sweden. The train rolls away now and out along the whole railway tracks toward Lund, there stood people in long lines and of all ages and waved to us and called "Welcome home". By eleven o'clock in the night, we arrived in Lund. There we were fed very fine and good food and people from the city and the countryside had gathered in the city to greet us and welcome us home. They went both outside and inside the railway cars, greeting us and wishing us welcome home. Some of them had both one, two and three parcels with them which they divided out to us villagers. Yes, it was an experience. It is now one o'clock in the night on August 2 and the train is rolling on at fairly high speed toward our end destination, Jönköping. Despite that it is night, the people stand along the railway and at the stations, as we pass, and wave and call welcome home. Yes, we were very moved by all the stir which our journey home aroused and very thankful toward all these people who took an active interest in our debt. "Jönköping next," the conductor calls out and at once we are in front of Jönköping central. Here, also, has gathered lots of people, a brass band is playing, the music stopped after a while and Prince Karl stepped out and greeted us welcome to Jönköping and he said, among other things, "Here, you will get to live for a little while and rest after the long and difficult journey." It was not only Prince Karl who was here to receive us and greet us welcome home, no; there were also a whole lot of other potentates. Now, we got to leave the train compartments, for then to go by streetcars, taxis and private cars to be transported to the barracks in Jönköping which for the present time would be our home. Well, emerging at the barracks, we were received by Scouts and the Swedish women's mission. They took care of us and allotted us our rooms, which were furnished with chairs, tables and beds which were finely made. Yes, in all of my life, I have not slept in as finely made bed as the first night here in Jönköping. In addition, they decorated the rooms with flowers. The night between the second and third of August, here in Jönköping, was the first night in a very long time which we could sleep in peace and quiet, without thinking about when someone would come at any moment and arrest us. Yes, thank you, dear heavenly Father for your leading us to a better and securer

land where neither famine, torture, nor nakedness exists. Yes, you dears, it is as if one has come from hell and climbed in to the kingdom of heaven. Yes, it is true my friends. We held our first church service here in Sweden outside in the barracks' yard at five o'clock in the afternoon on the same day we arrived in Jönköping. Here, spoke the same day as we come to Jönköping. Here, Bishop Rydberg from Jönköping also spoke, also hundreds of national Swedes took part.

We would go down to the city, we would, on the coat lapel or similarly attach a note with the name and address so that if we could not find our way home, we could get help and the people could see who we were. On August third, they began to divide out clothes to us, which had been collected on our behalf. There was new as well as used clothes, shoes, socks, underwear, etc. for women as well as men and children. As long as the native Swedes managed the handouts themselves, everything went well, but after a couple of days, they brought in many Swedish villagers to help with the handouts and it was less successful. The wrongs from Gammalsvenskby times bloomed up again. The Swedish villagers who participated in the handing out gave themselves and their closest the best things and the rest, which they did not want, they divided out to the rest.

After August tenth, the farmers in the region began to come into Jönköping to ask if they could get laborers and the authorities began the placing out of us Swedish villagers to the Swedish farmers' houses. There we would learn how things are done on a Swedish farm and what conditions the Swedish farmers live under. The placements are now in full operation and every day there are a couple or three families who leave the barracks in Jönköping to take a position at some Swedish farmer's house out in the countryside. August 16 was the day for me and my family, who consisted of myself, my wife Margareta and my daughter Marta, who is three years old, to go from the barracks in Jönköping down to Torps farm in Månstad hillock in Västergötland. Our future employer, farmer Ernst Johansson picked us up in a car and drove us the 7.5 Swedish miles to his farm. At four o'clock in the afternoon we were beside our new home. We were immediately invited for coffee and a little later for dinner. "In the beginning", said the farmer, "you will go here and watch and follow us and see how we do and put you in the Swedish conditions before you then get to begin work with your own hands." When three days had gone, I said to the farmer, "No, now I don't want to go and be idle any longer. Now I want to get started and work." "Of course," said the farmer, "it is so, you want to have it so. Today we will pile hay on fences to dry." Yes, this was my first job I performed here in Sweden. Day after day passed and we had it very good at the Johansson's. We got on very well and so even with the parishioners. They liked us and we them. We liked Johannes in Sebarp the most. Here on the Torps farm in Månstad, we had an addition to the family. On November 20, 1929, Nils Pettersson Annas was born. The farmer helped us with finding a midwife and he also stood for the infant baptism. Yes, he was nice, our farmer. The first Christmas here in Sweden was an experience like I never earlier had seen the like of, with a Christmas tree, Christmas presents, and lots of good food, as our employer Johansson invited us to. Yes, it

was absolutely too much. Early on Christmas morning, the other farmhand fastened the horses to the wagon and we all got to go to the early Christmas-morning service, as it began at six o'clock in the morning, in Månstad hillock church in Västergötland. It was the first Swedish church we visited here at home in our fatherland. My pay was 35 crowns a month and as long as we did not have the little boy, my wife got to milk the cows and also help with the work out in the fields. For that, she also received 35 crowns a month. Our stay at Johansson's place in Torp was not so prolonged. We arrived there on August 16, 1929 and moved from there on March 13, 1930. It was because the Swedish foundation had bought a large farm on Gotland. Snäckarve farm in Stenkumla parish. The farm would be a model farm for us Swedish villagers. There during a certain time, we would learn how a Swedish farm would operate, for to gradually pass through as tenants on the farms which the Swedish foundation bought in. Gradually, the tenants could the freehold farms and themselves be the owners of them. On Snäckarve farm, an old age home was also started which took care of the elderly who could no longer manage by themselves. We were three families here on the mainland who decided to move to this model farm. The operation and the work on the farm was led by a foreman. The pay us who worked on the farm varied between 40 – 50 crowns a month plus state. Myself, I was a head farmhand and received 7 crowns extra to add up to 57 crowns a month. The Swedish foundation had at their disposal about 900,000 crowns in collected funds. They bought a number of farms with some of this money. On Gotland, the Swedish foundation bought about fifty to sixty farms and a number on the mainland also. The farms which were bought were the worst, poor and most indebted small farms. They were too small to live on and too big to die on. Of all the bought farms, there were at the most two or three farms that could be considered as good farms. Little by little the farms were bought and leased out to the families who wanted to have them. When these leaseholders, after a time, bought freehold their leased farms, they borrowed money from the "Own Home Foundation" with the farm as collateral. For some it was, nevertheless, difficult to borrow the whole amount, because the foundation had paid higher prices for the farms when they bought them. Every family who was placed on a farm also received 6,000 crowns. The families who did not get any farms or did not want to have one, they received three-thousand crowns in cash payment when the foundation was dissolved and those who married here in Sweden, they received nothing at all. Many gradually sold their small farms and bought bigger and better ones.

Ourselves, we stayed on the model farm Snäckarve for one year. The foundation bought a little farm for us which was called Gute in the Bäl parish on Gotland. We moved there on March 14, 1931. The farm was 18 acres of arable land and 10 acres of meadowland, which lay four kilometers from the farm buildings. In the purchase were also two horses, two cows, two pigs, fifty chickens, two wagons, a broken plough, an old harrow, a cultivator and a few odds and ends. The price of the farm was 12,250 crowns. On October 15 of the same year (1931), our third child was born – daughter Signe Pettersson Annas.

We lived and worked on this farm until the month of March 1946. Then we sold the farm for 15,000 crowns and held an auction of personal property which brought in about 13,000 to 14,000 crowns. Now, the debt of 12,000 was paid and there was a little coin left over. Within a year we later managed a farm, for a wholesaler from Visby. The farm was called Kvie and was located in Lojsta parish on Gotland. We bought the property Lindevägen 4 in Visby on March 14, 1947 and moved to the city. There I continued to work as a warehouseman for the same employer for whom I managed the farm earlier. It was Arthur Enstöm's Coal and Coke in Visby. In addition to my ordinary work, I put the house we lived in good order, sold it after a short time, bought a new property, put it in order, sold it and so was busy with it up to 1952 when the market was such that it did not pay to continue with these activities any longer. I sold The last house in 1952 and moved to an outmoded rental apartment on Stenkumlaväg 13 in Visby. In the middle of 1951, I started a new job with Andel's slaughterhouse in Visby. For six months I salted hides from slaughtered animals, then I got a job as a stoker and boiler-tender. I stayed with this job until we moved to Eskilstuna in June 1967. The starting salary for my job with the slaughterhouse was 122 crowns a week and at the end I received 174 crowns a week. I was "earthbound" and during the first year in the city I thought of buying a farm moving out to the country again, but unfortunately it was not to be. My son Nils was recruited by Stockholm's anti-aircraft regiment's detachment on Gotland (Lv3 G) on October 1, 1947 and he moved to Lv3 Norrtälje on April 1, 1952. From the fall of 1952 to August 1955, he studied with The Defense's secondary school and the Army's non-commissioned officer school in Uppsala. There, he passed the non-commissioned officer's exam and was promoted to Sergeant by Lv3 from July 1, 1955. Also both our daughters searched on the mainland, to Eskilstuna and began to work there. The younger daughter Signe married after some years to Laurids Sörensen and lived in Eskilstuna. The other daughter Marta returned to Visby again but in April 1955 she became seriously ill and died on April 17 of the same year. Now our family was divided and I and my wife Margareta were left alone here on Gotland so we decided that we too should move to the mainland. The move to Eskilstuna was one June 6, 1957. I got a job as a boiler-man with Skogaholm's bakery with a starting pay of 180 crowns a week. I remained there until I was pensioned on March 22, 1968. Then I had a salary of 374 crowns a week. The camp in the barracks in Jönköping, which was the Swedish Villager's first home here in Sweden, was disbanded in the spring of 1931. Then, all the Swedish Villagers were placed out, some on their own farms which were bought by the Swedish foundation and some still as agricultural labourers for Swedish farmers and the model farm on Gotland. The model farm and the Old Folk's Home were disbanded and sold in 1934. Now, the children, relatives and friends took care of the elderly and tended them. In 1937 the Swedish foundation was disbanded. The money was finished and now we Swedish villagers managed on our own as well as we could. We did not need to be ashamed because we managed ourselves fairly well. The best of everything was freedom here at home in Sweden. I want to direct a warm and hearty thanks to all the Swedish people for all the help you sent down to us in Gammalsvenskby and the help and

the support we received here at home in Sweden after our homecoming. The Swedish foundation's representatives did not have it easy to tussle with the intrepid, cheeky, and, by their earlier experiences in the foreign country, suspicious Swedish villagers. They were used to not relying on anything and to always be on the lookout, in addition, the jealousy was huge. They were always ready for the worst that could happen, day as well as night. Under such conditions, it was not easy for the service men to satisfy everyone and sometimes one also had to take drastic actions to calm the people and get them to understand how everything was. It was no enviable task these people had. After the foundation in Jönköping disbanded, we here on Gotland had to mostly deal with Director Karl Kylberg from Stockholm and agronomist Valdemar Eriksson in Källunge on Gotland. They were involved with buying the farms here on Gotland and they got to endure a lot of scorn and derision, you may believe. The worst was if they came into dispute with angry Swedish village women, they were not good to deal with.

How did it go with the Swedish villagers here at home in Sweden? As I have already told earlier, Pastor Hoas did not work to permanently put down roots in the native country land. Already a week after we arrived home in Sweden, he began in Jönköping to spread propaganda to continue on to Canada. This divided the Swedish villagers into three factions: those who wanted continue on to Canada, those who wanted to stay in Sweden and those who wanted to return to Russia. Pastor Hoas wanted that everyone would go to Canada and we would build a new Gammalsvenskby again. Those of small means and the poor said, "We have no money so we cannot go there and, incidentally, we do not want to travel and if we do not get to stay here in Sweden, we must return to Russia." "Yes, then you can, of course, do that," said Hoas then and he continued, "We are now more that want to go to Canada and then the thing is clear, that all of the collected money for us, we get to take with us and you will not get a penny." The answer he received read, to put it briefly, "Here in Sweden, you don't do as you want, Mr. Hoas. No, you can forget it for all time." At the same time we received the answer from the Swedish foundation who said that "only the families who stayed in Sweden would get the whole sum of money and those who went to Canada would not get a penny. This the Swedish foundation has decided and you villagers get to choose what is best for you." On the grounds of the Canada propaganda, the Swedish villagers began to be irresolute and did not properly know how they would place themselves in the uncertain alternative. There were those who wanted to stay in Sweden, those who wanted to return to Russia and those who wanted to go with Pastor Hoas to Canada. Hoas's Canada propaganda split us Swedish villagers into three factions. In the spring of 1930, four families returned to Russia. The Swedish Communists found out about the split which arose between us Swedish villagers and then they started again and spread propaganda among us. In the fall of the same year, another group of Swedish villagers moved back to Russia. Now the Swedish Communists had fertile ground for their propaganda among the Swedish Villagers because they were scattered over a fairly big area and did not have as close contact with each

other. Some were influenced and they tried their luck and influencing others by enticing them with promising the sun, moon and stars. In August 1931, another group of around two hundred persons moved back to Gammalsvenskby in Russia. That was the last group who returned to Russia apart from one villager with his family who was deported from Sweden to Russia because of illegal activities. The same year in the spring, a group of about two hundred persons moved to Canada, but you can think your selves, Pastor Hoas did not move but he stayed in Sweden. There were a total of two hundred and fifty persons who moved to Canada and as many who moved back to Gammalsvenskby in Russia. After some years, five families returned from Canada to Sweden. Yes, now the big migration was, of course, finished. Everyone had got what they wanted and were now, of course, satisfied and happy. We were about 400-500 persons who remained in Sweden. Here on Gotland, 350 persons were living and moved to the mainland. Those who returned to Russia went with open eyes to meet their fate. With the return to Gammalsvenskby, there were no promises of the sun, moon and stars which lay and waited for them. Other people had moved into their old houses and farms which they had left when they went to Sweden and the collectivization of the farms had begun. It was certainly hard times which waited for them. It began, as well, among those who returned and one began to accuse each other for having lured each other down to this misery and there arose conflicts so that the authorities in the end were forced to step in. The villagers themselves and even others began to report the troublemakers to the authorities and the cleaning out was under way. One after another disappeared. With the Swedish villagers who returned to Gammalsvenskby, three Swedish communists also followed them down to the village. These Swedes were, of course, completely convinced that everything was very good in Soviet Russia. One of them was called Gustav Kaspersson. I met him one time before he travelled down to the Swedish village. The second was called by the last name Andersson and the third was called Lauerstajn. He was German but was a Swedish citizen. These three had contact with the Russian authorities through writing for five years. But their stay in Soviet Russia was not very long. After a couple of years, they returned to Sweden again, thanks to their Swedish citizenship and their parents and siblings' insistent fight to get them home again, otherwise it had, of course, not worked. Andersson, during his time in Gammalsvenskby, also got to try out how it is to sit in a Russian prison in the city of Kherson. I have then met and talked with Andersson and Lauerstein several times here at home in Sweden and they said to me, "Yes, when we moved down there, we were fanatical Communists but now we don't want to speak about Communism." He said further: "Those poor Swedish villagers who returned to Gammalsvenskby in Russia. We were very disappointed by it. We got to see and experience in that big freedom's promised land Soviet Russia. They told what they had got to be with, among other things, they got to feel how it is to be without food for a long time. It went not to procure a piece of bread, a potato or a little grain. There were hares, however, which one could hunt, skin and boil in a pot with water and a little salt. Yes, we have through a lot," said these gentlemen. One complained to the Soviet gentlemen houses and reminded them

of what they had promised before we moved down to the Swedish village. "So," was the answer. "Tomorrow you will get what you need, but you dears, that morning never came. It was always empty words. Give us any day old Swedish. Here there is, in any case, food, drink and clothes."

I received a letter from my former neighbour down in Gammalsvenskby. He was one of those who returned with the last group who returned from Sweden. He wrote in Russian and will try to translate it to Swedish. So here it reads:

Artjel Swedish Communist Party  
The Red Swedish Village, the 30/11 1931

Apologies Andreas Pettersson Annas. I must and am forced to write to you. Thanks for the greetings you sent to me and I have also read your letter. You probably certainly long to return to Gammalsvenskby again. But I am now at home, and I believe that it probably is not only you who longs for down here. It is certainly everyone who remained in Sweden. Yes, I am glad that I came from the Swedish pain. Yes, now I am at home and live in peace and freedom and here it is easier. You perhaps believe that I lie but I do not and either am not prepared to lie. You perhaps believe that I want to deceive you or, no, I do not want to. I am here and you can do what you want, my dear neighbour Andreas. I have been very busy up to this time but now I have gotten some order in my home. Now I begin to get a little more time and now I think of writing a little to you. You perhaps don't believe me, for me, it's all the same. When I say to you that I live a hundred times better down here than what I did in Sweden. I live in Vilhelm Knutas's house and here there are still empty houses which no one lives in, but is the bigger houses which no one wants. And concerning bread, so everyone is provided for and the same with fuel and no missing roofs over the head. The houses which are more or less destroyed, we put in order. We set in new window frames, doors and windowpanes. We received twenty boxes of glass and two train cars with building timber by the state and we have now taken over all of Gammalsvenskby. But there sits twenty German families who are still left in our village as tenants. Yes, we bought all of Gammalsvenskby from the Russian state for 48,000 rubles, we received 56,000 rubles for it when we went to Sweden in 1929 and so we have received a loan of 90,000 rubles by the state for thirty years. At the moment, we have only taken out 48,000 rubles. The rest still remains. We have already got hold of a lot with living and dead possessions. The crops stand fine and we hope for a good harvest. We have sowed 500 hectares of fall wheat and 62 hectares of rye and we also have 200 hectares in fallow fields. We have 38 work horses and from the town of Berislav, they are out with four tractors. The machine stores own 300 tractors which will serve all of the country. We have 38 milk cows and 100 yearling calves which we bought for 600

rubles. We also have 75 two-year old calves and 25 pigs. The county government wants to give 50 but we did not want to have so many. We also have 150 rabbits and some different machines and the work goes excellently well. All this we have in our collective or "artjel" as we say. If it continues to go as it now goes, our collective will be the premier and best of all our collectives. And with reference to the religion, it is also free as before and over all churches. The bloody priests, they still distort the minds of the people, yes, for those who are still gloomy and believe in the priests; but it deceives us no more, that is certain. I am now in front of the standard for the library and the community center and have a salary of 78 rubles a month. The community center is our old church in Gammalsvenskby. Here, we have movies four times a month and for that we pay 7 rubles and 50 kopeks a month. Yes, the people go there generally. For public holidays, is October 14, October Revolution's Day, so we slaughtered two calves and had a party in the church, dinner and then a movie and we had fun. When it pertains to goods, for example textiles and such, there is everything and cheap but out on the square, everything is much dearer. IN the cooperative it is fairly cheap. The black market transactions still go on as before. The workforce doesn't reach, over everything they cry out for workers. They build over everything and everyone has got money. Yes, the villagers who returned down here before us, they live better that they did before we left for Sweden. They each have two cows and two pigs. I have heard that a group has gathered that immediately wants to return down to the Swedish village from Sweden. Yes, don't wait very long, we sow and harvest also for you, we have not forgotten you despite that you remained in Sweden and we put in order to build up socialism also for you. I have asked in the county government concerning you who are still left there away and I received the answer, "Yes, let them only come. We take them in, one and all and we forgive them for that they have broken from us and there are houses for each and every one who comes down to the village is ours. On October 24, we had the first cold snap of minus six degrees and today we have eight degrees cold. Yes, now I end my letter and greetings to everyone who asks after me. If the school teacher Petter Andreasson Malmas has returned from Canada, be so kind and send me his address. Good health Andreas with your wife and children. Welcome home.

I beg for a quick answer.

Comrade Petter Johansson Knutas  
From Gammalsvenskby 30/11 1931

I never answered this letter because I knew that his and the other men's days were numbered. After some years, it came a beautiful night, a black car came out from the town of Berislav and my former neighbour and several others were arrested and taken away and since then, they have disappeared without a trace.

After twenty-five year's stay in Russia, the returned 250 Swedish villagers wanted again to travel home to Sweden. The Russian authorities were in favour. On July 25, 1956, all of the Swedish villagers who wanted to return to Sweden a second time, announce their interest to the Russian authorities and state which relatives they had in Sweden. The authorities took their notes and said, "As fast as the Swedish government issues passports for you, so you get to travel." In the Swedish press one could see headlines like "Return home can be repeated again after twenty-five year's stay In Russia" or " Now they want to come back to Sweden again" or "They returned to Russia, now they want to come home again". Here, I want to give some examples from the Swedish press and radio. On 31/8, it was written in Aftonbladet: "More than 150 Swedish villagers get Russian help to return home. It applies to the around 250 Swedish villagers who returned from Sweden to Gammalsvenskby in Ukraine in south Russia in August 1931." In Gotland's Allehanda on 3/9 1956 one wrote: "By U. D. One is informed of the matter about the of the Swedish villagers' return home, for Sweden's part, was handled by the foreign commission. The Swedish villagers write home to their relatives in Sweden and beg them to make an individual application about immigration visa to Sweden for them. There is, in other words, no question of any official action, but the trips were arranged from case to case. The Swedish Red Cross is, according to General Secretary H. Beer, prepared to give technical advice in relation to the homeward journey."

So here writes a man in Aftonbladet on 19/9 1956: "The Swedish villagers get help with the journey home. The Swedish Red Cross has now, together with the Foreign Commission, in seriousness, taken to heart the case of the Old Swedish villagers who have returned to Ukraine. Now, application forms for travel visas have been sent to the villagers' relatives in Sweden along with a guarantee that they will be provided for upon their return. On the Russian side, on 25/7, a salaried employee from Moscow was sent to Gammalsvenskby (Verbivka as the village is called in Russian) with applications on which the Swedes gave information about their relatives in Sweden and their wishes. The relatives in Sweden can, with great joy, greet the initiatives which were taken. Many have all of their closest in Russia, sons, daughters, parents and siblings and one is prepared to do everything to help them here. On lists they have built missed names, at the same time as their nearest relatives are informed and it is to these who handle the immigration now were sent to fill in and sign. Since the papers were filled in, they were sent immediately to the foreign commission for further consideration. A committee has been created for the preliminary work and it is in the premier room thanks to this committee that the lists could be compiled. Then, it however, can be thought that every one of the Swedes in Russia are not on the lists nor their relatives here were informed, can message about this be made to General Secretary Henrik Beer, Red Cross, telephone 67 06 85 or editor Herje Granberg, Sagagatan 12 Solna, telephone 27 56 52, which also provides information. In all, it is up to now, almost 170 Swedes in Ukraine, the committee received knowledge of. The relatives in Sweden hope now, that it will be possible for these to travel jointly home to Sweden again. The Soviet-Russian

authorities have, up to now, also shown themselves to be extremely benevolently adjusted.”

Gotland's Allehanda writes on 20/9 1956: “SWEDISH VILLAGERS TAKE HOME RELATIVES. Around 150 villagers in Ukraine have, during this last year, received promise to return to their relatives in Sweden and the red Cross has recently, in consultation with the foreign commission, sent over due papers to the Swedish relatives of which the majority live on Gotland. The journey home is, namely, completely dependent on the relatives in Sweden signing a communication according to which they accept full responsibility for the costs of the journey home and put themselves as guarantors for those returning home, for board and lodging here. Any action of collections were not planned. It pertained here Swedish villagers, who were on the journey home to Sweden in 1929 but then returned and their families. Many of them have relatives here at home in Sweden they have never met or already managed to forget. The letters home have been brief and ambiguous. But according to an article in “The Daily News”, is the general idea amongst the villagers here on Gotland that the relatives there away will be helped. Family feelings demand it. Peter Annas in Lummelunda wrote for eleven relatives, Gustav Norberg in Roma for as many, Kotz in Guldrupe and Hoas in Björke each for six relatives, and so on. Travel costs caused, of course, anxiety, no one knew what they could amount to but taking themselves into temporary custody thereafter is a trifle, they all said.

In Gotland's Allehanda, they wrote on October 11, 1956: IMMIGRATION VISAS NOW SOUGHT FOR 60 SWEDISH VILLAGERS. At the foreign commission's office is, just now, applications for immigration permission for 60 Swedish villagers. They have, nevertheless, still not been completed by the foreign commission. Then some supplements must be made to many of the applications. All the details are not clear about the housing connection in writing from someone in Sweden, who is willing to take care of and be responsible for the new arrivals when they arrive here. The supplements shall, nevertheless, delay the granting of permission more than a few weeks, says the head of the bureau, O. Wiman. Before month's end, everything will be ready, he believes. When the Swedish villagers can travel here depends completely on when the emigration formalities in Russia are ready. When it will be is difficult to comment on. In each case, those who wish to travel to Sweden must, first present clear papers granting the immigration here before the Soviet authorities on the whole consider the applications about the emigration.

Some weeks later Gotland's Allehanda writes: JOURNEY HOME FOR SWEDISH VILLAGERS GOVERNMENT AFFAIR. For to try to produce a guarantee for the homebound Swedish villagers' future here in the country, the authorities concerned have decided to apply to the government. For 88 of the approximately 150 Old Swedish villagers in Ukraine who hope to return to Sweden, the relatives have, so far, signed the necessary contingent liabilities. The other Swedish relatives are still considering if they can take the responsibility

to put up guarantees for the travel costs and room and board in Sweden. The travel costs need not cause any concern, Baron Jan Degér points out, from the Red Cross, for The Daily News (Dagens Nyheter): We have certain donation funds which can be claimed to clear the trip home. However, the big problem is the future here in Sweden. Many are old and many are children under 16 years old, some perhaps are sick and they cannot assume that one, no matter how fond of their family, could suddenly take care of perhaps an additional ten persons.

Bureau Chief Olle Wiman in the Foreign Commission said that before the visas are willingly granted, one wanted to have guarantees for the Swedish villagers to really be taken into temporary custody on arrival in Sweden. It can, of course, be thought that the Swedish relatives, nevertheless, could not take care of the sudden burden but that the Old Swedish villagers must get Social Assistance, at least during a certain time. The Foreign Commission cannot answer for the problems which then could come up. Just as it is deserving that the people in Ukraina who remain, because the relatives dare not take into their own hands the responsibility for all expenses, will also get a chance. They can get it so that their Swedish relatives will be calmed how the economic burden is concerned. Bureau Chief Wiman believes that the government is sympathetic to this problem.

Gotland's Allehanda writes on October 30, 1956: The Social Committee commits in a letter to K. M. T. that the State's powers will guarantee support and eventually care for everyone from the Ukraina Swedish villagers returning home. The government committee carries out the authorization to take into custody the waiting group with this arrival to Sweden and to pay the costs for the social benefits which these members would have received if they had been registered in the country. In consultation with the proper public authorities, the Swedish descendants should adapt here in the country's order after the principles, which the committee applies regarding the refugees. The committee reminds that about 130 persons of Swedish origin live in Gammalsvenskby in the Soviet Union and that all have relatives who are Swedish citizens. Therefore the Swedish villagers now wishing to return to Sweden have their relatives here apply to the Foreign Commission about entry visas. Until now, the applications have been left for ninety persons, of whom about half are of working age. Further, applications wait within the nearest time. According to practice, the Foreign Commission has requested that the applications shall be accompanied by relations from the applicant to look after the persons concerned lodging here in the country, so that he does not fall in the public authorities' heavy burden. For many fallen, an applicant has left a guarantee for several persons for lodging. Within the commission, one does not have to almost try out these guarantees' supporting capacity. With respect to expanse of the obligations, which many of the applicants have undertaken, it appears, nevertheless, scarcely probable that they will be able to fulfill them. The Commission regards, however, in principle, that the applications should be approved. The Commission has therefore

requested that the Social Committee lamenting because the group is taken into temporary custody which the need demands, after which the Committee, since 1950, has K. M. T. authorization to provide for, among other things, certain refugee groups adjust to the Swedish community. In its communication, the Social Committee is reminded of, that the power of state, on the grounds of the international undertaking and certain needs of labour, for a number of years in a row, has allowed a considerable number of stateless refugees from camps on the European continent - that, in addition, their families immigrate to Sweden. These refugees, who arrived in groups, have, on arrival in Sweden, been taken care of by state authorities and received necessary help to begin a new life, their families come as direct labour or receive entry permits on grounds of illness.

The Swedish villagers occupy a unique position, among other things, through their connection to the state in family connections and language. Like the Foreign Commission, the Social Committee considers it plausible that their desires of settling in Sweden happens. Then, it is reasonable that the whole group comes here at the same time. It is not probable that the relatives could house them immediately. The Committee considers it to be practical that by the reception, common lodging be arranged at one or several places. This would make easier health inspections, places to live and work placement and equipment and other necessary measures. The costs for this as for start up help and in whatever applicable support, can be covered from the proposition's grant to the compensation to the municipality according to social assistance and child care laws. Out of this grant, the Committee's costs are defrayed for the refugee assistance. The Committee's proposal was presented on Monday to K. M. T. So as soon as the government makes to a decision, the Foreign Commission comes to clear the entry visas and forward them to the Soviet Russian authorities, informed the Bureau Chief Olle Wiman.

Gotland's Allehanda writes on 19/12/1956: ENTRY PERMITS TAKE A LONG TIME FOR EAGERLY WAITING SWEDISH VILLAGERS. The Swedish villagers in Ukraine are now eagerly waiting for when it will be ready with their entry visas to Sweden, says Petter Annas in Lummelunda, who just received letters from both of his sisters-in-law, who are left down there with their grown children. Three weeks ago, Petter Annas had a conversation with UD in Stockholm and there one informed about the proposal of guarantee for the soon to arrive Swedish villager's accommodations now only will be approved and confirmed by the government before the entry visas can be granted. The papers are now on the cabinet minister's desk and one hopes that the procedure will go quickly along. Yes, so it sounds today.

The revolt in Hungary which broke out on October 23<sup>rd</sup> and the disturbances in Egypt, of course, slowed up the whole process. Yes, it rises again.

On 22/12, it sounds as here in the press: All the papers and visas with their relatives' signatures are not accepted by the Soviet government, on the grounds

that a handful of Swedish villagers have written for several persons and families, yes, as far as up to fifteen persons, which UD regarded that one family of Swedish villagers here at home could not afford to take care of so many and support them with food, clothing and lodging during an unlimited future. Yes, now it is only to begin anew and write new papers, etc.

Gotland's Allehanda writes on 18/1 1957: GOVERNMENT'S DECISION ON THE SWEDISH VILLAGERS' TRIP IS EXPECTED SOON. Entry visas for 150 Swedish descendants in Ukraine, relatives of the Old Swedish Villagers who came to Sweden in 1929, lay completed at the Foreign Commission's office to be dispatched as soon the government's decisions in the matter are met. "We have the errand to take into consideration", says the Social Minister Ericsson. The relatives have, in Russian indicted P M, to the Soviet authorities, informed that they come to manage the arrival as long as it rests in their power. The Soviet authorities put themselves not negatively but they want guarantees that the people in question get the journey's costs covered by the Swedish relatives. Swedish officials point out however that the procedure is with getting Russian exit visas will be lengthy. When one in the Foreign Commission examined the applications, they stood ready for the Swedish social assistance must connect with the arrival in Sweden. Not all of these people are of working age. It concerns also the elderly and children whose relatives have not the resources to provide for them. The message went to the Social Committee who, in writing to the government, to suggest that the group in question about the possibilities of social assistance could be placed on equal footing with immigrants. This proposal is now being considered in the Social Department.

Gotland's Allehanda writes on 21/1 1957: THE DEPARTMENT EXPLAINS Swedish Villagers JOURNEY HOME. The Russians have arranged everything for the Old Swedish Villagers' journey from Ukraine but the Swedish government does nothing to take them away or guarantee their journey home, wrote Morgonbladet (The Morning News) on Saturday, 19/1 1957. The government has delayed with the thing in a shocking way, it says in the article. It is editor Henning Österberg who relates the project's time, among other things. It is put in as editor Herje Granberg wanted to find out information about which Swedish villagers are found in Russia. Last summer, these completed forms were received and they would get to travel as soon as the Swedish entry visas arrived. The Russian Red Cross was prepared to help with the Swedes trip home, even a couple who were trained for service in the Red Army would get to leave. The state's guarantee did not need to cost the state a cent, because there was 130,000 kronor in the Swedish village funds. The question was treated now in habitual order in the Social Department, says Cabinet Minister John Ericsson to the Swedish Daily News. When we took the position, it was after K. M. T. who has taken up the decision in matter.-----Then it is only to hope that Mr. Österberg and Granberg will know how to proceed some on the usual order.

Gotland's Allehanda writes on January 25, 1957: CABINET MINISTER ERLANDER INTERPOLATED ABOUT SWEDISH VILLAGERS. Mr. Rimmerfors (fp) wonders in an interpolation if the Cabinet Minister wants to leave an accounting for what has been done up to now by the State authorities to make it possible for Sweden to bring over the remaining Swedish relatives in Gammalsvenskby in Ukraine. The questioner wishes also a reply about the government's plans to take any immediate measures to hurry on so that the folk group's immigration can be realized. One can be afraid that the favorable emigration possibilities from the Soviet Union which now believes advice comes to be changed. Letters from Gammalsvenskby breathe big unrest. Economically the transfer requested by these Swedish relatives do not make any problem, says Cabinet Minister Tage Erlander.

Gotland's Allehanda writes on February 9, 1957: CABINET MEETING'S DECISION ABOUT THE SWEDISH VILLAGERS' JOURNEY TO SWEDEN. Last Friday's cabinet meeting came to a decision about additional transference of refugees to Sweden. The Labour Market Committee has authorized themselves to, in 1957, attend to the reception of refugees for the number which the Committee estimates will be possible to prepare permanent work in the country. The job opportunities will, in this way, be the decision for how many refugees come to be received. The withdrawal will take place from refugee camps in Central Europe. At the withdrawal, as well, the labour market's masses whom humanitarian's point of view will be taken into consideration. It has further been instructed by the Labour Market Committee to pay for a number of Swedish Villagers who applied for entry into Sweden, and in other respects they take action which is necessary for their placement in the labour market or be taken charge of in another way.

Gotland's Allehanda writes on February 13, 1957: THE GOVERNMENT TAKES OVER THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE WAITING SWEDISH VILLAGERS. "The Old Swedish Villagers and their friends here, in the country, fear that the Swedish Government forgets the little Swedish Diaspora over there in Ukraine," said Rimmerfors (fp) on Tuesday in the Parliament. In an answer on the Liberal's interpellation, the Social Minister conceded that the matter has taken time but considered that one does not take too lightly concerning such questions. "A transport over first during the course of the spring would essentially make it easier for them to get work," said the Cabinet Minister. The society must assume the duty of support for these Swedish Villagers for as long as it cannot be carried out by local relatives," advocated the Social Minister. As far as the Foreign Commission is concerned, several of the Swedish Villagers in Sweden who placed themselves as guarantors for their relatives scarcely can meet the obligations. One considered, nevertheless, that the applications ought to be granted. "We are afraid that the delay with the Swedish invitation will put at risk the Russian willingness," said Mr. Rimmerfors. "Over there, one could, as you know, get the idea that our government essentially is indifferent about the Swedish Villagers' problem. It is now our warm hope that Russia will keep their word and

allow an Embassy delegation or possibly the Russian Red Cross in cooperation with the Swedish Red Cross to arrange their journey home." "Now, we grant entry permits," said the Cabinet Minister. "So the request will be through the Embassy in Moscow. First, then, we can get answers." Mr. Rimfors had, through a letter from Gammalsvenskby, obtained information that a Russian employee visited the village on July 1, 1956 and let everyone who wanted to travel to Sweden complete travel documents. Similar insurances of Russian compliance the Swedish Villagers have received to call upon the authorities in Moscow.

On the radio on February 10, 1957: Entry permits have now been granted for all remaining Swedish villagers, who are still left in Gammalsvenskby in Ukraine in Russia. Telegraphically, we have informed the Russian government in Moscow of the matter. Mr. Österberg said in the day's echo that K.M.T. decision about the villagers' transport home to Sweden will occur in May however the latest in June 1957. Everything now depends on the Russian government in Moscow.

At the end of June 1957, the longing for home Swedish villagers in Gammalsvenskby were informed that their applications to emigrate to Sweden were refused by the Russian government in Moscow. Thus it is now ended the hope to get to return to Sweden again after an additional 26 year stay in Gammalsvenskby which is now called Verbovka.

#### SO HERE HAVE I MOVED WITH MY FAMILY

With the Russian government's exit visas and the Swedish government's entry visas, we emigrated from Gammalsvenskby in Ukraine to Sweden on July 22, 1929. Our first residence here in Sweden were the barracks in Jönköping, there, we arrived on August 1, 1929.

On August 16, 1929, we took a room at the Trop farm in Månstad's parish in Västergötland.

On March 14, 1930, we moved to Gotland and took a place on Snackarve farm in Stenkumla to learn the Gotlandish agriculture.

On March 14, 1931, we moved to our own farm Gute in Bäl parish on Gotland.

On March 14, 1946 we sold our farm in Bäl and moved to Kvie in Lojsta. There we managed a farm for a wholesaler from Visby.

On March 14, 1947, we bought a house at Lindevägen 4 in Visby and moved to the city. There I worked as a stock keeper for the wholesaler Engström.

On June 1, 1949, we moved to Videvägen in Visby. The same job.

On April 4, 1950, we moved to Follingboväg 26 in Visby.

On November 1, 1950, we moved to Skrubbs just outside Visby.

On April 14, 1951, we moved to Hasselgata 4, Visby. I began a job at Andelsslakteriet (a slaughterhouse) in Visby as a stoker and boiler tender. The pay was 122 kronor a week.

On April 1, 1953, we moved to an outmoded apartment in Stenkumlaväg 13 in Visby.

On June 7, 1957, we moved over to Lindtorpsgatan 8 in Eskilstuna. I began a job as a boiler man in Skogaholm's bakery in Eskilstuna. The pay was 180 kronor per week.

On September 1, 1959, we moved to Thorildgatan 1-3 C in Eskilstuna. On March 22, 1968, I was pensioned and then had a paycheque of 374 kronor a week. In 1974 we moved to Nyforsgatan 7C in Eskilstuna. There he lived until his death in December 1978.

#### A Conversation Used to Compare Old Swedish With Modern Swedish

It can sound like this when two Swedish Villagers talk with each other: "Well, now we come home from the meeting and so the old woman asks, 'Well, what did they have new to say?'"

"Well, what do you believe that it will be for news? You know, it is starting to get cold. It is time to start fires in the schools and for the gentlemen who sit in the Town Hall and for the Priest and in the church. And we don't get enough straw so we must go out in the country and rake rye-grass and deliver it so that they have something to burn with. Otherwise the school children will freeze to death in the schools. Yes, so they hired someone to tend the fires in the schools and keep it clean. He tends the fires, sweeps and washes the floors and wipes away all the dust, so any dust does not appear on the school benches or on the pictures or on the windows or the tables. No, it will be clean."

"Yes, you, Johan, now the spring is here again. Now we will go out on the land and start to sow. What is the first you will sow?"

"I will first plant potatoes and then I will begin to first sow barley and summer wheat, and then come to gradually sow the others, of course, oats and grain and Turkish wheat. Yes, you know of course, I do not have so much land to sow. I have, as you know, only twenty hectares."

"Yes, it is, well, not so small, I have only ten hectares." What will I then say?

“Yes,” says Johan, “you get as the saying goes: Quickly finished with the work and quickly finished with the eating.”

“Yes, it is true, as you, Johan say it, but always one finds some advice. Yes” says Andech: “For you, it goes well to talk and fret. Yes, you farmers have nothing to fret about. You farmers, you have that land which you can live on, but what shall we poor wretches do? Yes, we get to work for you so that we will receive a piece of bread for us and our children, otherwise we get to say or sing as fine mothers: Yes, I am at home alone with my children, and father, he goes to Crimea for salt. The journey was long and the master was strict, and God was on high, and the children sat there at home with hot porridge spoons in their mouths and cried.”

“Yes, you fine father, now the sowing and the plowing is over. Now we get to begin with the damn steppe rats. Yes, those who are landless, they have no problem with the steppe rats, but we farmers, we have a hell with these beasts. As you know, Simon, at the village assembly, they have decided that every farmer must capture twenty steppe rats for every hectare of land. As you know, Mats, you have thirty hectares of land. You get to capture six hundred of them and then you get to cut the legs off them and then you get to carry all the steppe rats’ legs down to the Municipal Chairperson or the Secretary, who will count through the legs. So you get to leave two thousand four hundred steppe rat legs. Yes, think what the big farmers will say who have one hundred and over one hundred hectares of land, when you fret about it. Yes the steppe rats, they will be rooted out. And those who do not bring in the sufficient number of steppe rat legs, they get to pay with money. They get to pay twenty-five kopek for each and every steppe rat that is missing, and for the money pays the people who capture as many steppe rats as were missing. Yes, no one escaped.”

“Well, you Kristian, have you begun to reap the rye?” “Not yet. I and another have already reaped his rye. Yes up in Hevalln and down in Djupsvarde and in Märsvarde and here down between Dambron and Mannasersvägen and Mittbron, there they have also already reaped. Yes, it is already June 15 tomorrow, so it is time to begin reaping the grain. Yes, now it stands already above all full of rye, wheat, barley and oats – beat and stack. Well, my neighbour, you treaded (threshed) of course, the rye today. How many pounds was it?” “Yes, it was about ten pounds per load.” “How many loads did you get from a hectare?” “Yes, I have counted with about six loads, so it will be surely sixty pounds per hectare.” “What will the buyers pay per pound this year?” “Ninety kopek for barley and for oats seventy-five kopek and for wheat one ruble per pound.”

“Well, you Greis, who are an old vineyard’s man, will there be any grapes this year?” “Yes, I have went and looked at them, and I believe that it will be a good grape year. The Reisling is doing quite well and the same as Manstäch, they

have also done well, but the ordinary white grapes, they have not so many on them.”