

KAMMO



**The life of a great
revolutionist**

by R. Obolenskaya

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“KAMO”

(SEMENO ARSHAKOVICH TER-PETROSYAN)

PREFACE

IT is the aim of this pamphlet to acquaint the reader with the heroic figure of Comrade Kamo. His Party work was not only closely bound up with the entire Russian Labour movement—but played a significant role in the revolutionary struggle of the Georgian workers and peasants—a role interwoven with romance and superb enthusiasm.

The beginnings of the victorious struggle of the Soviet working class go back many decades. The path to victory was both long and fraught with difficulties. The preparations for the ultimate victory were laid by heroic revolutionary fighters who possessed an unusual combination—iron will—dauntless bravery firm purpose—and striking resourcefulness—and above all—undying devotion to their Party. One such fighter was Comrade Kamo.

The materials consulted for this pamphlet were: an article (*Comrade Kamo*) by S. F. Medvedeva which appeared in *The Proletarian Revolution* (1924, Nos. 8-9) and the book, *For a Quarter of a Century*, written by Comrade Baron and published by the Young Guard Publishing House.

I

CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

COMRADE KAMO, Semeno Arshakovich Ter-Petrosyan, an Armenian by nationality, was born on May 15, 1882, in the town of Gori, Tiflis Province. His father was a well-to-do contractor.

His mother, considerably younger than his father, had scarcely turned sixteen when Kamo was born.

At the age of eleven the boy was sent to the town school, where he was taught in Russian—to him a strange and alien language. This circumstance as well as the strict school régime and formal method of teaching turned this naturally studious boy from his studies.

His facile, observant mind, not receiving any stimulus from the school curriculum, turned towards practical interests. Senko appointed himself the carpenter and locksmith of the house and even tried his hand at inventing. He constructed a home-made hand-mill, built a hen roost and fashioned a conduit to carry away the rain water from the courtyard. Inventions, however, only occupied Senko's spare time when he was not participating in boisterous games and daring raids on other people's orchards.

At fourteen, Senko was expelled from school at the instigation of the priest, for bad conduct and audacious free-thought. Bad conduct lay in the fact that Senko liked to ask the priest embarrassing questions. On the occasion that caused his expulsion, he had asked whether Christ was a real

person and whether he had actually returned to earth after his death. Under tsarist autocracy one such question was sufficient to take away one's right to an education.

His family loved and spoiled Senko. But the father considered Senko a good-for-nothing, showing particular displeasure at his son's democratic tastes in the choice of friends.

Senko reciprocated his father's dislike. He could not forgive his father's captious manner towards his mother, nor his stinginess towards the family and the poor relations, when he himself was squandering money to entertain his wealthy friends.

Senko frequently jumped to the defence of his mother in the oft-recurring marital quarrels. The father detested the self-reliant streak in his son. He would often say: "Who is master in this house, I or this young tiger?" Once the father decided to give his refractory son a lesson, but Senko picked up an axe and made his father understand that there would be no meek submission on his part. Senko was deeply attached to his mother and she returned his affection with wholehearted love. He tried to brighten his mother's unhappy life in every way. During the long illness that resulted in her death, Senko was at his mother's bedside constantly. By this time the father had lost his fortune and Senko was driven to despondency at his inability to procure the necessary medicines and nourishment for his ailing mother.

After her death, Senko and his sisters went to live with an aunt in Tiflis.

II

EARLY PARTY WORK

SENKO had formerly been to Tiflis and had stayed for a long time with his aunt. There he came under the influence of his fellow townsmen from Gori, Djugashvili (Stalin) and Vardaryants, who acquainted him with the fundamentals of revolutionary Marxism and began to draw him into Party work. Comrade Chadroshvili recalls, that as far back as 1887, Zakro—a friend of his—brought a young fellow of about sixteen or seventeen to his workshop.

“Here, old chap, is one young comrade more, brimming over with energy.” During the conversation with Chadroshvili, Senko warmly expressed his desire to work actively in the Party. When he was warned of the danger that constantly menaced revolutionists, he answered, “So long as my head is on my shoulders, I am not afraid.”

The very same day he began to transport literature from the outskirts of Tiflis (Nakhalovka, Naulazadevi, revolutionary sections of the region).

At first, Senko busied himself with the performance of various minor errands which he carried out to the letter, displaying unusual courage and resourcefulness. He was soon given more important and complicated work.

The year 1903 found him working at the transport of illegal literature for the Bolshevik United Caucasian Committee of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party

and taking part in the organisation of underground printing shops. Senko was by this time known to all his friends as Comrade Kamo. The Russian school had not taught Senko the rules of the Russian language, and his comrades often good naturedly teased him about his atrocious pronunciation. Once he had asked “Kamo otnesti” instead of “*Komu otnesti*” (To whom shall I carry it?).

“Oh, you Kamó, Kamó,” laughed Stalin. From that time on he answered to the nick-name of Kamó. Many of his comrades who worked with him afterwards in the Caucasus, in Petersburg and abroad knew him only by that name.

Sometimes people would point out to Kamo the difficult material conditions under which his aunt and sisters were living and about which he apparently did not care. He would always reply:

“There are tens of thousands of proletarian girls who are driven to the streets by hunger. Why are my sisters any better than others? It’s this damned order that must be destroyed.”

When transporting literature and printing-type, Kamo used to disguise himself with extraordinary ingenuity. His use of make-up was so effective that he easily foiled the vigilance of the police and spies, and escaped recognition even by his closest friends. There runs a *kinto*—(a Tiflis street pedlar). On his head he balances a basket of vegetables. He is pushing his way through a motley, noisy bazaar crowd of Georgians. Shouts, curses, rough jokes follow his advancing figure.

But our kinto has a ready retort for every gibe. With an imperturbable air he saunters past spies and policemen. Kamo delivers his literature and type, running every gauntlet successfully. A trim young engineering student, resplendent in his new uniform, enters a second-class railroad carriage. Young girls and older women look interestedly at their attractive fellow passenger. They press closer to make room for him. The time passes quickly in pleasantly trivial conversation. The station is reached. Kamo picks up his grips and walks out under the very eyes of the gendarmes who smile affably as he passes them.

Once on a fête-day afternoon, when the trains were crowded with passengers going back to the city, a disreputable looking peasant clad in rags tried to force his way into a second-class compartment, with a large basket of eggs. The lady passengers were horrified.

“Gracious, what a filthy man! How dare he come in here? Conductor, put him out!” . . . “In god’s name,” the cringing peasant supplicated, “where are you driving a poor man? In the third class there is such a crush that my eggs will be broken, and then what shall I sell!”

After a lengthy discussion, the kind-hearted conductor allowed him to leave his precious basket on the rear platform. So, Kamo travelled near acquaintances who failed to recognise him, and delivered the “eggs” to their destination.

His comrades had great faith in Kamo as an experienced conspirator. They constantly consulted with him and entrusted him with the most hazardous undertakings.

Kamo was the only man to whom Comrade Baron (Bibinoshvili)* confided the address of a large concentration point for illegal literature belonging to the Kutais Party Committee. Comrade Baron had organised this cache in a soft-drink factory, and during the whole of its existence it was never found out by the police.

Conspiratorial work did not however fully occupy Kamo. Sometimes he ceased underground work for a time and took part in open demonstrations.

On April 27, 1903, Kamo took part in the May First demonstration in Tiflis. The Caucasian Social-Democrat Workers' Union fixed the May First demonstration in Baku, Tiflis, and Batum on that day. The militant demonstration passed off with great enthusiasm. At noon the red flag was to be unfurled. Kamo raised it aloft and despite the vicious onslaught of the cossacks, he succeeded in carrying it and at the same time avoiding arrest.

Soon after, Kamo took an active part in the sending of delegates to the II Congress of the Party.

His part in organising illegal print shops was immense. The police records show that he was responsible for the organisation of eleven printing shops. Kamo participated in the arrangement of the Avlabar printing shop. Kamo unearthed a dilapidated shack in the workers' part of town. In the courtyard there was a large shed, built over a well. Soon a "washerwoman," the revolutionary Comrade Babe was installed there. She took in washing, and dried it in the shed during damp or rainy weather. There was a passage

* A member of the Kutais Party Committee.

that led through the wall of the well into a room. Here it was that this ingenious print shop was located. It was a very risky affair to excavate and remove the displaced earth. The installation of the printing apparatus was no less hazardous, but in a short time the press was at work.

The “washerwoman” revealed an extraordinary capacity for work. Baskets filled with “laundry” were delivered to her and taken away in record time. She made friends very easily and her courtyard soon became the meeting place for youngsters who made it their playground.

As can be seen, the business was well arranged and the print shop amply justified the high hopes that had been placed in it. Comrade Kamo also played an important part in the organisation of the illegal print shop in Kutais, which was tremendously effective in the West Georgian revolutionary movement (1904–1906). This print shop was planted in the house of a land surveyor, one Vaso Gogiladze. Gogiladze wrote an advertisement offering a room for rent and let it to his friend, a barkeeper. On the next day, Comrade Valiko Lezhava came to this barkeeper and asked questions about the room. The latter described it in detail. Valiko took the room at four rubles a month under the name of André Nemsadze and immediately began to work. He was very careless, often leaving the print shop with printers’ ink and lead dust on his garments. His comrades categorically demanded that he observe the *strict rules* of conspiracy.

It was decided to remove the print shop to a more secure place. A wall was broken through. Behind this wall, a blind corridor three and a half metres long and one metre wide

was tunnelled. Taking out the further wall, they adjusted a solid wooden door. This door they camouflaged with bricks and cement, so that all that was to be seen was an ordinary white-washed wall. The spring latch of the door was opened by a concealed cord which ran to the other end of the passage. When leaving his house, Valiko simply shut the secret door. But in order to get in, he had to find the end of the cord in the dark passage (Valiko was forbidden to use matches). To work in the narrow stuffy room was difficult, especially since intensive production was demanded from the print shop. The ordinary hand-machine was not capable of coping with the demand, even in a twenty-four hour working-day. It was decided to install an “Amerikanka,” which had to be brought from Tiflis.

This was a very difficult undertaking. Kamo was given the job.

One fine day, with characteristic skill he descended his upon startled comrades with the coveted “Amerikanka.” The “Amerikanka” needed more room. The house had to have a kitchen with an ample cellar. This would enlarge the machine department.

Gogiladze so arranged matters that the workers who were engaged in building the kitchen were not for a second suspicious of the purpose for which it was all being done. All the secret construction details were done exclusively by Vaso and Valiko. Ventilation vents were built. These were very useful for the burning of superfluous paper, etc.

“I shall never forget,” relates Gogiladze, “Valiko’s beaming face when he learnt that Kamo was not able to locate the

entrance to the print shop. Valiko was overjoyed. If Kamo was not able to find the printing shop, the police never would.”

Valiko was a tireless worker; at night Gogiladze took his place. One of the workers of the printing shop was always on the watch and whenever any carriage drew near, the “Amerikanka” was silenced.

For a long time money that had been confiscated from the Kviril treasury was kept in this print shop. Afterwards it was sent abroad for the purchase of arms.

A police hunt for the print shop began. To leave it at the old place was dangerous. Comrade Baron, who had charge of this work, was at that time imprisoned, so he detailed the work to Vaso Lomtadze. When Comrade Baron was released from prison and returned to his flat, he found the printing shop installed in his room and working at top speed. This was an infringement of the most elementary rules of conspiracy.

However, apparently his comrades had no other way out. They concluded that since the owner of the flat was in prison the police would not think of looking there.

At the end of 1903, Kamo was arrested at the Batum railroad station with a suitcase full of illegal literature.

Kamo at once began to concoct a plan of escape. But it was not until nine months had passed that he was able to succeed. During the exercise hour he had often observed a scarcely perceptible projection in the prison wall some three yards high. Using a lucky moment when the sentinel’s back was turned, Kamo dashed for the wall-ledge, seized the top

of the wall with both hands and vaulted over the top to freedom. It was some time before his absence was noticed. No one imagined that he had escaped over the wall. While a minute search was being made in the prison yard, Kamo covered up his tracks.

Kamo immediately returned to active Party work. Even while in prison, Kamo joined the Bolsheviks as soon as he heard of the split at the II Congress. When the struggle between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks intensified in connection with the convening of the III Congress, the Mensheviks toured the various organisations for the purpose of severing them from the Bolshevik United Caucasian Committee. Kamo fought the Mensheviks' disruptive work.

At that time he was managing the illegal print shop of the United Caucasian Committee in Tiflis. When the Tiflis city committee went over to the Mensheviks and wished to take possession of the print shop, Kamo opposed them energetically and succeeded in keeping the shop for the Bolsheviks.

During this period of rapid revolutionary growth throughout the entire country (1904–1905), particularly after the Bloody Sunday of January 9th, and the tsarist defeat in Manchuria, the revolutionary tide in Georgia rose ever higher and higher. It was because of the mass character of the movement that the revolutionary organisations worked in an atmosphere of general sympathy which guaranteed success to the most daring and audacious actions.

The authorities and the police were so terrified that they avoided any sort of conflict with the population and practically ceased to function.

The worker and peasant movement poured forward like a mighty flood. All Georgia was in turmoil.

At the highest point of the 1905 revolution, many districts and counties of Georgia created their own revolutionary governments.

Subsequently, during the years of the reaction, the trials which arose from the setting up of the republics of Guria, Senak, Kviril, Sochi, etc., kept the courts busy.

The “president” of each of these was the Party committee, the “legislator” the revolutionary people who suddenly awoke to the possibilities of a new and brighter life.

The most significant and singular of all these republics was Guria. Here the revolutionary movement embraced the toiling population, one and all. Political consciousness, organisation and revolutionary discipline reached a remarkably high level.

A boycott was declared against the government institutions and the church.

The toiling population supported the organisations by monthly money contributions. The money so collected went for the purchase of arms. The revolutionary people took the arms away from the agents of the old régime, confiscated whatever they needed from the government institutions, and in general prepared themselves for stubborn resistance in every way possible.

The revolutionary staff of the Party committee of Guria directed the disarming of the old régime's agents.

The old tsarist court was replaced by judges elected by the revolutionary people. The municipal government of the chief town of the district was replaced by a new people's municipality. A people's school bureau was formed to manage the schools.

The peasants refused to pay land rent to the landlords whom they boycotted.

The people ruthlessly suppressed spies, provocateurs and thieves. As a result exemplary order was established in Guria. Thefts and brigand raids ceased. National antagonisms lessened and relations between different national groups of toilers assumed the character of mutual help and confidence.

Guria won for itself such freedom that "political criminals" from Tiflis, Kutais and Batum went, not abroad but to Guria. There they were in perfect safety.

In October, 1905, the revolutionary movement throughout the tsarist empire was united into one single, mighty upsurge—the country was under the sway of a general strike. The tsar was obliged to make concessions and issued the manifesto of October 17th, which promised constitutional freedom. Nevertheless, the tsarist government despite these promises, soon began the organisation of the Black Hundred. National pogroms in the large towns and in the provinces were instigated.

The tsarist viceroy of the Caucasus, Count Vorontsov-Dashkov, found it advisable to assume a liberal role for a

short time, so powerful was the revolutionary feeling. He issued six hundred old and imperfect guns to the Tiflis workers so that they could defend themselves against the Black Hundred pogromists whom the worthy count, by the way, supplied with the latest rifles. He evidently thought the gesture a very wise move at that time. No one could accuse such a democratic governor of having instigated pogroms.

But soon the first news of the disruption of the general strike and the failure of the December revolt in Moscow and other cities reached the Caucasus.

Reaction in Georgia raised its head and gradually assumed the offensive. The trans-Caucasian railways, Tiflis and a number of other cities were placed under martial law. The authorities in Tiflis suggested that the workers should disarm and return the rifles that had been given them.

The workers, who were under the leadership of a Bolshevik group (Eliava, Kamo, and others), refused to hand over their arms and organised the defence of Nakhlovka, the proletarian suburb of Tiflis.

The revolutionary staff was composed mainly of Bolsheviks (among whom was Kamo) but there were some Mensheviks on it also. The defenders distributed their forces so as to beat off attack on three flanks.

The fourth side, the mountainous one, was considered impregnable. Kamo disapproved and insisted that this side also be guarded. Finally he occupied the elevation with a hand-full of workers. It was as Kamo had feared. The cossacks attacked on this poorly defended flank, cutting down the brave but sadly outnumbered defendants. Kamo

was wounded and arrested. For hours on end he was tortured by his captors. They beat him with the gun butts, hung him up by his wrists—trying by every conceivable torture to wring from him the hiding-place of the arms and the names of his comrades. They “permitted” him to dig his own grave in the intervals between the hangings. At last he was led to prison, through the streets of Tiflis, a blood-covered, half-naked, bruised and mangled body. Passers-by stopped horrified, and shouted out indignantly at his guards.

The city prisons were overcrowded. Without distinction, hundreds were brought from all parts of town. The Russian officials worked furiously writing down the names which to most of them were as familiar as Chinese.

Kamo had against him a long record of revolutionary activity, crowned by an escape from the Batum prison. And, now he was held for armed resistance against the cossacks. His record was not very promising as far as the judge was concerned. He decided to take advantage of the confusion and exchange names with one of the chance victims of police zeal—a medical student called Shanshiashvili.

Under cross examination Shanshiashvili refused to give evidence and the pretended student appeared to be a talkative, half-witted fellow. When they asked him if he knew Kamo he answered:

“I would be a fool if I did not know. Of course I know Kamo.”

“Where did you see him?”

“What do you mean where? As often as I want to . . . in the field.” (Kamo in the Georgian language is the name of a wild flower.)

The naive Shanshiashvili was set free. And so after having been confined some two and a half months, Kamo walked through the gates of the prison accompanied by the policeman who was to register him with the local police station in the part of the town where the real Shanshiashvili lived. To go there meant certain discovery. They got in a cab. This well-behaved and to all appearances fully respectable young fellow began to ask the policeman not to compromise him in the eyes of the entire neighbourhood. People might think that he, Shanshiashvili, was in reality a political criminal or a thief when they saw him in a cab in the custody of a policeman. His pleas were made more effective by a sizeable bribe. The policeman got out of the cab, after instructing the driver to drive straight to the station. The cabman drove away.

When the policeman arrived at the station he found himself quite alone and with the uncomfortable job of explaining to his angry superior how it had all happened. A harmless student would not object to a short visit in the police station. There was something queer—they became dreadfully worried. Soon the entire truth about their stupid blunder confronted them—but all they could do was rage impotently. The bird had flown.

III

MILITANT WORK

“KUTAIS province is virtually in the hands of the revolutionists. Although there are garrisons in Poti, Ozurgety, and Kutais, they are not sufficient to re-establish our authority. Kutais province can only be retaken by the concentration of at least a division of both infantry and artillery who could effect a landing from the sea. The delivery of supplies should be secured by sea. Any action must be begun before spring, for later the revolutionary movement in this province as well as other regions of this part of the country will grow in intensity.”*

This is how the tsarist viceroy, Count Vorontsov-Dashkov, summed up the situation in Western Georgia.

The extent of the defeat of the revolution was up to then not clear to either side. The authorities had not yet gotten over their panic and were inclined to exaggerate the strength of the enemy.

But as the position became more defined, the viceroy took measures for the “pacification” of Trans-Caucasia, beginning with the districts least affected by the revolutionary movement. A military expedition under the command of general Alikhanov-Avarsky was sent to Guria. The viceroy gave him instructions to act ruthlessly and destroy all

* Report of the Adjutant General, Count Vorontsov-Dashkov to the Minister of War (dated 31, XII, 1905). *Revolution of 1905 in Trans-Caucasia* (Chronicle of events, documents and materials, page 142).

revolutionary organisations as well as all who offered the least resistance. The reaction soon increased in momentum and began an offensive along the entire front.

The Party organisations, driven underground once again, were re-organising themselves and working out new tactics suitable to the new conditions resulting from the temporary victory of the counter-revolution.

By this time the Mensheviks were so demoralised by the defeat, that some of them proposed at the united conference of Bolsheviks and Mensheviks at Kutais, to return the 200,000 rubles expropriated by the Bolsheviks from the government treasury at Kavaril.

This proposal, however, was defeated. The majority at the conference, under the pressure of the Bolsheviks, decided to use this money for the purchase of arms abroad through the Central Committee of the Party.

The troops of General Alikhanov restored “order” by the methods which in 1920 were so vividly described by Valiko Jugeli, with the only difference, that at that time they were not known as “democratic” and had not been recommended for general use by Karl Kautsky and the II International.

The skies of Guria were red with the reflection of fires. Not only villages were burnt. They even burnt the district town of Ozurgety.

The “pacifiers” demanded the surrender of arms from the population. They demanded that all agitators and deserters be handed over. They demanded two years taxes and new recruits for the army. But the population handed over no one, surrendered only those arms that were out of order and

antiquated. The more daring and younger peasants hid themselves in the hills and from there harassed the government troops by partisan raids.

Martial law was established. The cossacks, acting under instructions of the viceroy, killed all suspicious persons on the spot.

The revolutionary and Party organisations were all but annihilated. However, the Bolshevik Party committees suffered considerably less than the others, thanks to the fact that they had preserved their illegal apparatus.

The conditions for Party work became very difficult. Kamo, returning to his work underground as a professional revolutionist, was obliged to carry on with the greatest caution. In the town, armed sentries and patrols stopped all suspicious persons.

Kamo's ability at disguise stood him in good stead. Frequently he threw spies off his tracks on to a false trail, or by some trick led them by the nose. Kamo never lost his head and his reckless bravery often came to his rescue. Once he went to the theatre without disguise. In the corridor he came face to face with the chief warder of the prison, who immediately recognised him. With a childish smile, Kamo went up to him and said, "Yes, it is really I." For one moment the two men looked at each other silently then the chief warder whispered in an undertone, "Get out of here this minute, or I'll arrest you."

Kamo gave up his life to the revolution. Very frequently, Kamo spent the night under the open skies, or under the seats of a third-class car, or else in some filthy den. He

starved regularly, and spent endless hours sitting in an attitude of prayer, in dark corners of some Armenian church, where he kept many of his rendezvous. He forgot how to sleep soundly. When he slept, he lay in such a position as if ready to jump up and run at the very first hint of alarm.

At this time he was successfully engaged in transporting arms and arranging escapes. Among other things, he organised and carried out the escape of thirty-two comrades. It happened in this way. Metekhsy castle (a very old fortress built by Georgian kings) stands on the high bank of the Kara river. Two of its sides (the building was semi-circular in shape) were washed by the river. Along the third side was a street and only on the short fourth side did the houses of the town adjoin. From one of these houses an ingenious tunnel was dug. One night thirty-two men escaped through it to freedom.

Kamo at this time also took active part in preparing for the Stockholm Congress of the Party.

After that he went to St. Petersburg and stayed there several months. Kamo longed to devote himself to the study of the theory of revolution as he felt himself not sufficiently grounded in this.

But the time for study had not yet come. The struggle raged all around him. A fierce battle with autocracy was in progress. There was a shortage of Party workers. Some wanted to detail Kamo to militant revolutionary work in the central industrial region, but the conference of the Caucasian party organisations sent him abroad, in spite of the Mensheviks' protests, to buy arms for Trans-Caucasia.

At the head of this business was the special agent of the Central Committee under whose control the group of Caucasian comrades worked. Several thousand rifles and a large amount of ammunition were bought. There were also several dozen machine-guns.

Kamo, in the role of a “good customer,” commanded the respect of the dealers, who were amazed at his knowledge of arms.

The Party for the first time made large purchases of arms. It was intended to load them on a steamship and despatch them to the Turko-Caucasian shores. Here the steamship was to be met by Caucasian comrades in small sailing boats. The arms would then be transhipped on the high sea. The agent of the Central Committee toured nearly all the ports of Holland, Belgium, France, Italy and Austro-Hungary, but failed to charter a ship whose captain would take the risk of freighting a cargo of contraband arms.

There was also the difficulty of avoiding the vigilance of the customs authorities who kept careful check on the ports of call of every steamer.

By way of exception, it was decided to choose Bulgaria. But here again a difficulty arose.

It was only possible to transport arms from Bulgaria to Russia direct; in this way, the conspiracy was certain to be discovered. A way out was sought. The representatives of the Macedonian revolutionary committee* undertook to negotiate with the Bulgarian government for the shipment of arms to Varna. It would be explained that these arms were to

* A petty-bourgeois revolutionary organisation.

be used by the Armenians who planned to rise against Turkey—the common enemy at that time of all the Balkan states. The permit was obtained, but at Varna it was again impossible to charter a steamer.

They then bought a small yacht which had crossed from America to Europe, for a comparatively low figure—thirty thousand francs. The yacht was repaired and reconditioned for carrying freight. A crew was to come from Russia.

By the end of the summer (1906) all was ready for setting sail, but financial difficulties arose.

Work on the purchase of the arms was begun at the orders of the Bolshevik Central Committee, which regularly financed it. But after the Stockholm congress, the majority in the Central Committee passed into the hands of the Mensheviks, and although the new Central Committee confirmed the old mandate, the despatch of money was seriously affected.

Letters and telegrams to the Central Committee went unanswered. Requests for money remained like a voice calling in the wilderness. The agent of the Central Committee pointed out that the success of the entire cause depended upon the shipment of arms during the proper season, in good weather, before the beginning of the autumn storms in the Black Sea, etc. The money did not come, nor did the promised crew. It was clear that the whole affair was threatened with failure. The agent of the Central Committee was compelled to start for St. Petersburg, where, not without considerable trouble, he finally received the rest of the Trans-Caucasian money from the Central Committee. This

remainder had been considerably diminished. Meanwhile the favourable weather had passed and the ship was loaded in late autumn. Although the crew sent from Odessa did not inspire great confidence, there could be no question of substitution. Moreover, the arms were to be accompanied by trustworthy Party comrades, with such an experienced revolutionist as Kamo among them.

It may have been due to a storm or to the incompetence of the captain, but the steamer went aground not far from the Rumanian coast. The crew deserted and the arms were stolen by Rumanian fishermen. It was not possible to rescue the arms, for as soon as the incident became known to the Russian embassy it immediately took drastic measures.

After that failure, Kamo made his way across the Rumanian frontier. Crossing the frontier was not without adventure. The travellers lost their way and just missed falling into the hands of the tsarist gendarmes. At the end of 1906, Kamo returned to the Caucasus.

In the summer of 1906, military uprisings broke out in Sveaborg and Kronstadt. Peasant unrest grew in intensity and in some places developed into armed uprisings. Throughout the whole country there were armed conflicts and skirmishes between the Black Hundreds of the government and the people. The military courts intensified their activity. Economic and political crises became intensified and in some places the class struggle developed into open civil war, taking the form of partisan warfare against the government.

In October, 1906, Lenin wrote: “Partisan struggle is an inevitable form of struggle during that period when the mass movement has already reached the point of armed risings and when intervals become more or less great between the ‘big battles’ in the civil war.”*

In the same work, he went on to explain what role partisan struggle should occupy in the “arsenal” of the proletarian resources, and under what conditions the proletariat could use this weapon in its own interests.

“The party of the proletariat can never look on partisan war as the only or even the principal method of struggle. This method should be subordinate to others, it must be used proportionately with the other principal methods of struggle, and enriched by the educational and organisational influence of socialism. For without this latter condition, *all*, absolutely all, the methods of struggle in bourgeois society only bring the proletariat near to the various non-proletarian sections of society above and below it, and if they are allowed to go along in their own way they become all worn out, distorted and prostituted.

“In order to avoid such a danger in partisan struggle, when the proletariat nears the declassé elements, the vagabonds, etc.—the vanguard of the class-conscious proletariat—the Party—must create an organisation, capable of directing the masses not only in big battles but also in these smaller skirmishes. . . . The Party must educate and prepare its organisations to the point where they can really act as a *fighting*

* V. I. Lenin, *Partisan War*, Vol. X.

side, without letting a single opportunity pass of inflicting some defeat upon the forces of pass the enemy.”*

Thus the Bolsheviks considered that partisan skirmishes, in order to be permissible and opportune in the given period of struggle with the government, had to be carried out under the control of the Party and with the closest observance of definite ideological and organisational conditions.

Partisan struggle aimed at the destruction of the government thugs and the active Black Hundreds—the expropriation of government property for revolutionary needs, and most important of all, it served as the basis for armed uprisings.

On his return to Tiflis, Kamo began work in the underground technical group, whose function it was to increase the material resources of the Party, organise escapes, obtain and secrete arms, etc. The first act of the group was the organisation of the Kutais expropriation of 1907, which brought fifteen thousand gold rubles into the funds of the Party.

The police, made frantic by the expropriation, would have jumped out of their skins to capture Kamo, but the “Caucasian bandit,” as he was called jokingly by Lenin, was not to be caught. Recalling this period of his life, all his comrades who knew him in those days, were astonished at his scrupulousness with regard to Party money. In spite of the fact that large sums passed through his hands from time to time, he never permitted himself to spend more than fifty kopeks a day for his own needs.

* Ibid.

For extending the operations of the group, Kamo did not possess the necessary number of arms and explosives. In order to obtain all that was necessary, Kamo decided to go to Finland. He needed a reliable passport for this trip. This he received from the passport bureau that was organised by the Kutais committee of the Party. This bureau supplied all the trans-Caucasian organisations, and sometimes even the Russian ones, with passports. Thus practically all the members of the Social-Democratic faction of the State Duma had Kutais passports which they could use “in case of emergency.” This passport bureau remained in existence for four years.

For the journey to Finland, Kamo received the passport of a wealthy landowner and provincial nobleman, one Prince K. Dadiani. Kamo travelled first class, dressed in the uniform of a Cossack officer. In Finland he went to see Lenin and safely returned to Tiflis with the arms and explosives.

Before leaving for Petersburg, Kamo, impersonating Prince Dadiani, visited the apartment that the militant group had lately rented. The landlady greeted the well-known Prince Dadiani with the greatest respect for she had heard of him as the representative of one of the best families in Georgia. This visit raised the prestige of the new occupants of the flat and served as a sort of guarantee against the possible suspicion that might otherwise be raised as to their political unreliability.

How should they organise a big expropriation? This question was long discussed in the group. If there was a large sum of money kept in any particular government office,

it was certain to be well guarded. The expropriation must take place during the transfer of the money from one place to another. This was agreed upon by the entire group.

The question then to be decided was when and where. Thanks to Kamo's ingenuity, the group began to receive systematic information about the shipments of money and the number of guards detailed.

Soon the three main channels through which large sums of money flowed to Djulfa were ascertained.

Each of these was tried. The first failed on account of Kamo's being wounded by an exploding bomb. His group managed to keep this accident concealed from the police, and a sympathetic doctor succeeded in placing Kamo in a private hospital under an alias. Kamo nearly died from ensuing complications. His left eye was so seriously injured by splinters that for some time the right one was endangered. However, his splendid health carried him through. In a few weeks he was on his feet again. The right eye did not suffer, but his left retained only one-tenth of its power of sight. Hardly had he recovered, than he began to work again.

The second attempt had an auspicious beginning. The expropriation group travelled on the very train which carried the money. But at the last moment, certain unexpected happenings forced them to abandon the project. The guides who were to have led our comrades through the hills by secret paths known only to them, took fright and deserted. The comrades returned to Tiflis very downhearted. All the explosives and money had been spent on this second

attempt. On the evening of their return, news reached the group that the post was delivering some 250,000 rubles to the State Bank on the morrow. The decision was quick and this time the undertaking succeeded. On the next day (June 23, 1907, at about 10 a.m.), Kurdumov, the Cashier of the State Bank, in company with the accountant, Golovia, received 250,000 rubles from the post office. Accompanied by two policemen and five cossacks in two carriages they set out for the Bank.

The first bomb failed to damage the carriage with the money, and the frightened horses bolted away towards Soldatski market. At the end of Erivan Square another bomb was thrown. The carriage was held up. Datiko snatched the bag containing the money and dashed for Velyaminovski Street. Where was Kamo at this time?

Dressed in an officer's uniform, still pale, and just recovering from his many wounds, he had made a round of the square that morning and by many artful ruses removed the pedestrians from the danger zone so as to avoid unnecessary bloodshed. Kamo was in a carriage when the first bomb exploded. He was supposed to receive the money from the comrades and convey it to a safe place. When he, according to plan, emerged from Galanovsky Street on to the Square, it seemed to him that the plan had again failed.

But this was no time for misgivings. The other comrades must be helped to escape before the troops came. Standing up on the seat of his carriage he began firing his revolver, cursing all the while like a real army officer. He urged his horse to Velyaminovsky Street. Here he accidentally ran across

Datiko carrying the bag of money. Kamo took the money to the flat of Miha Bacharidze. From that flat it was later removed to a safe place the study of the manager of the observatory, and hidden in an upholstered couch.

When the troops surrounded the square, they found nobody. All the participants of the expropriation succeeded in avoiding arrest. Only some indirect assistants, engaged in changing the money abroad, were discovered with small sums on their person. The foreign governments, however, refused to hand them over to the Russian police.

IV

ARREST

(HE SIMULATES INSANITY)

IN August, 1907, Kamo arrived in Berlin with the passport of an agent of an insurance company, under the alias of Mirsky. In November of that year, he was arrested by the German police! In his possession a false-bottomed suit-case was found which contained materials for preparing bombs of considerable force. When his room was searched, the police found a box with arms and detonators used for generating explosions from a distance.

Kamo was sure that an agent provocateur was responsible for his arrest, but perhaps it may have been due to carelessness on the part of another comrade who was arrested, and on whom the police found Kamo's address.

Kamo was sent to the Alt Moabit Prison for Criminals.

He did not understand German and pretended that he barely understood Russian which impeded the work of the cross-examination. A lawyer, Oscar Kohn, was allowed to visit him. It was remarkable that after the first interview, both men, although unable to converse, made an excellent impression on each other. Kamo felt complete confidence in Kohn. And Kohn felt that before him was a man much superior to the average. By means of gestures and mimic they understood each other so well that it was practically unnecessary to have an interpreter. This pleased both of them who did not want a third person present at their meetings.

Kamo was accused and indicted as a terrorist-anarchist. On his record there were two escapes and in addition there were certain crimes for which the penalty was death. The impending trial in Berlin threatened him with extradition to Russia.

Kamo, on the advice of L. B. Krassin, who sent him a note through the agency of Kohn, began to simulate violent insanity.

The simulation of insanity is the most difficult of all simulations. There are endless varieties of psychic derangement and each of these has its own well-known symptoms and combinations of symptoms. The majority of those who have to simulate madness usually feign violent insanity, although this requires a tremendous amount of strength. In consequence of this, they soon become completely worn out and are unable to continue their pose. In the history of medicine there were cases when men with expert medical

training attempted to feign madness, and yet were unable to carry it through. This is explained by the fact that the environment of the institutions for the insane reacts very depressingly on the nervous system. A constant strain is necessary, and soon one's self-control is utterly exhausted. It usually ends with the simulant either actually going mad or voluntarily giving up the farce. The most dogged and tenacious types rarely succeed in deceiving the doctors. After six weeks—at the most after two months—the simulation is almost always exposed.

But Kamo performed a miracle. He successfully feigned madness for four years. This was only possible because of the unusual qualities that Kamo possessed. He had a colossal reserve of physical strength—his nervous system was very strong and enduring—and, most important of all, he possessed an iron strength of will and was charged with an undying, burning hatred for his class enemies, a hatred that inspired him with heroic fortitude in the face of inhuman torture.

On the very first day of his supposed insanity when he began to rave, shout, tear his clothes, throw dishes on the ground and beat the warders, he was put in solitary confinement in a basement cell where the temperature was under zero. Here he was kept stark naked for nine days. In order not to catch a deathly chill, he was forced to keep on his feet every moment. After nine days he was taken back to his former cell and soon was given permission to see Kohn. Kamo, by signs, conveyed to Kohn that he was far from mad.

Kamo, now bearing the classification of a raving maniac, was placed in the ward for mental defectives, for observation. Kohn petitioned to be appointed guardian and this was agreed upon.

Here observation lasted six months. For four months Kamo never lay down. He rested only by standing with his face to the corner and raising each foot alternately. He refused all food. They began to feed him with a feeding-tube. In the ensuing struggles, they broke several of his teeth. Kamo subsequently asserted that this forcible milk diet (they fed him on milk) did him a lot of good.

There was no end to the dodges and tricks that he played with himself. For instance, he plucked one side of his head clean of hair and arranged them in clusters on his bed. When the visiting doctor and the warder saw this, they threw their hands up and cried in chorus—"Shreklich" (Awful). Once he hung himself, being beforehand convinced of the vigilance of the warders. He was cut down in the nick of time. Upon finding a small bone in his soup, he sharpened it at night and cut the blood vessels of his left hand. By the time first aid was applied, he was nearly dead from loss of blood. Later it was found that not only was his bed blood-soaked, but that even the room under his cell was bespattered with blood.

It is probable that the doctors at first believed that they were dealing with a simulant when they fixed the period of observation at six months. But in view of the number of tortures that the subject inflicted upon himself, the experts were forced to conclude: "that the characterising signs of his (Kamo's) conduct cannot be simulated during such a lengthy

period. It is only a real maniac who could behave in this manner. . . . We have in this case a real example of mental derangement which should be classed as hyper-hysteria.”

In June, 1908, Kamo was transferred to the Buch Home for mental defectives, near Berlin. He remained there until March, 1909. Kamo retained some very grim recollections of his stay in this home, but his sense of humour and cheerful disposition never deserted him.

On his arrival at Buch, he was housed in a ward with ten violent maniacs. They were left to each other's pleasant company with very little supervision. As a result, they choked, beat, scratched and bit each other undisturbedly. In such pleasant, but by no means safe company, Kamo spent some time before he was removed to a more habitable section.

During the whole of his confinement at Buch, Kamo studied and observed all the cases round him. Among them was a doctor, a dope fiend. He had been placed in this asylum by his parents because he spent not only all of his own money for morphia but also any other money that he could lay his hands on. This doctor frequently talked with the other patients in his lucid moments, analysing the different forms of mental diseases, their characteristic symptoms and peculiarities. Kamo tried to remember all this.

In March, 1909, the administration of Buch declared that the state of the mentally deficient, terrorist-anarchist Petrosyan was quite satisfactory, that he was very quiet and rational and was even able to perform handicraft and garden work. Kamo was promptly returned to the Alt Moabit prison.

Here he was again taken sick—this time in accordance with all the rules of science. On the 16th of April he was sent back to Buch. He assumed the chronic mental derangement which created insensibility to epidermal pain.

Kamo, remembering the talks of the doctor, mimicked the expressions of the face, the gait, the movements, in fact all the peculiarities of behaviour attached to anesthesia. The doctors were intensely interested, and in order to test the veracity of this symptom, they made some of the most barbarous experiments upon him. For instance, they stuck pins under his nails, burnt his body with red-hot irons, etc. Long years after, Kamo still bore the scars of the deep wounds made by their tortures. All these repeated experiments, Kamo bore with fortitude, without a motion of his eyelids—“It was terrible, the way the scorched flesh smoked and smelled”—he would often repeat in later years. As the doctors and professors had never come across in either practice or in scientific literature a case where a man with natural sensitiveness was able to undergo such torture, they were obliged, in spite of the treacherous reaction of the pupils, to conclude that the patient was really suffering from the disease he was simulating. (In man and the higher animals the sensation of pain is connected with the expansion of the pupils and their involuntary reaction cannot be overcome by will power.)

There are a number of documents and records of the asylums where Kamo was kept under observation. Looking at various extracts from these records, we can picture for

ourselves a fragment of the maddening conditions under which Kamo fought for life.

February 7, 1908	Raved—Stood in corner made no resp
February 10	Undressed—No response. Refuses food
February 12	Sighs and moans—Refuses food.
June 4	Walks about singing songs.
June 19	Complains of dizziness—Mutters to h
June 23	Tore off part of his mustache—want souvenir to his comrades—often cries Berlin police in Russian and in Ger Spanish inquisi-tors are torturing him
June 29	Removed to Buch.

The director of Buch made the following case notes.

Question: What is your name?

Answer: Semyon Arshakovich Ter-Petrosov.

Question: What is your religious belief?

Answer: I am an Armenian. Our religion does not differ much from the Orthodox Greek Church.

Question: Did any of your family suffer from any mental disease?

Answer: When I was a child I was a rabid patriot. One of my aunts on my mother's side was very nervous.

Question: What illnesses did you suffer from as a child?

Answer: As a child I liked to drink vinegar and had fits of coughing.

Question: Name one of the Siberian rivers, flowing to the north.

Answer: Amur, Tobolsk—I have forgotten all. Formerly I could have shown you every river on the map with closed eyes.

Question: How many provinces are there in Russia?

No answer.

Question: Name a town on the Volga?

Answer: Astrakhan.

Question: How many inhabitants are there in Russia?

Answer: Two million (he laughs). I lie, two hundred millions.

Question: What do you know of Catherine?

Answer: Of that monster I do not want to speak.

Question: What do you know of Peter the Great?

Answer: He was a Russian.

Question: Did you go to church formerly?

Answer: No. I have my own god, I do not recognise the god of the police. My religion is the Socialist State. I believe in Karl Marx and Engels.

At this time the "Armendirektion" (the organisation that controlled all the clinics and hospitals of the district) under the pressure of the German police, began to insist on the

extradition of Kamo to Russia. They insisted that the support of this foreign invalid could not be paid for by the German people. In spite of all the measures taken by Oscar Kohn and other people to influence the authorities, Kamo was given over to the Russian gendarmes at the station of Vreshen-Strelkovo. He was taken to Tiflis where he was to be tried by a military court. He was immediately imprisoned in Metekhsky fortress.

In order to protect Kamo from the swift and severe penalty the Russian Government intended for him, Kohn wrote an article in the *Vorwärts*. This article was immediately reprinted in all the German liberal papers. In his turn, Hervé of the *Humanité* penned a phillipic against the German government accusing them of handing over a sick man to reactionary Russia, to be dealt with as a political criminal.

There was much talk about it in face of which the Russian Government, though desirous of hanging this “dangerous fellow,” had to desist.

So it came about that the case attracted the attention of the highest officials not so much out of sympathy for the mentally damaged criminal, but in order to avoid a first-rate political scandal in the west. A letter from the Minister of the Interior, P. Stolypin, to the tsar’s representative in the Caucasus, Count Vorontsov-Dashka, reveals these apprehensions, as follows:

COUNT ILIATON ILARIONOVICH

DEAR SIR:

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs in a recent letter (dated April 27th of the current year) informed me

that for the last days the German democratic press had been discussing with particular heatedness the fate of the Russian subject, Arshakov (alias, Mirsky and Ter-Petrosov), brought to justice in Tiflis in connection with the bandit raid on the Government money transport in 1907.

The radical organs, *Vorwärts* and the *Frankfurter Zeitung* are attacking the German police in this connection for having allowed the extradition of Mirsky-Arshakov to Russia immediately upon his release from a Berlin city asylum for mental defectives. The attacks of the press will surely increase in the event of Mirsky's being condemned to death. The Ministry of the Interior has apprehensions lest this may not have an undesirable effect on future Russian interests over the question of the extradition of anarchists.

Taking this opportunity of expressing to your highness my greatest respect and sincere devotion,

P. STOLYPIN.

May 7, 1910. No. 91104.

V

ESCAPE FROM THE LUNATIC ASYLUM

EVIDENCE of Kamo's chronic mental illness was sent to Tiflis, signed by the Berlin experts. The medical experts of the military court were obliged to take them into consideration.

On the day of the trial, the room of the court house and the corridors leading to it were crowded with people. Tiflis was roused. Everyone wanted to see the famous people's hero, the fighter for the working class. But, alas, the spectacle they beheld was a pitiable one. They saw a ragged individual, in torn hospital clothes, with vacant, roving, large eyes, that failed to recognise anyone, staring out of a livid face, Kamo excited infinite pity. Many wept. They led him into court and placed him in front of the important-looking judges. Not taking notice of anyone, Kamo took Petka, a goldfinch he had tamed in prison, out of his bosom and let it walk about the table. He fed his bird with bread crumbs, then raising his head with an idiotic grin, he offered a crumb to one of the judges. This scene made a very deep impression on the onlookers. His aunt Liza and sisters, who were in the court-room, were convinced that the reason of their beloved Kamo was really impaired.

The accused was led away. The military court was compelled to assent to his further probation in the psychiatric section of the prison hospital at Metekhsy fortress. Here Kamo was under observation for a period of a year and four months.

The records of this period give the following interesting picture:

On December 21, 1910, the patient was brought under at guard to the Metekhsy fortress hospital. On his hand sat a goldfinch that he called Petka and from which he refused to be parted. The patient is a man of middle height, fairly well built. There is a foolish expression on his face. He is apathetic—replies disjointedly to all questions. He has no sense of direction, nor any idea of the object of his visit. He was placed in isolation. The goldfinch was taken away.

December 22—The patient is sombre, silent, apathetic. . . . Increased anesthesia of the skin. In some places there is complete absence of sensation. . . .

December 24—Patient walks about his cell all day, sings and whistles. Absolutely nothing interests him; he did ask the guard for a book dealing with war—he was given the book but did not read it. He says that he has four million rubles hidden in the vicinity of Tiflis, somewhere in the mountains. He refuses to say where he has hidden the money. In the evening he is unable to sleep for a long time—tosses and turns from one side to the other. He declares among other things that he is very unhappy at being deprived of Petka the goldfinch, and asks for his return so that he may have a chat with him on an important matter.

January 5—The patient, during the morning visit of the doctor, declared that some young people, both men and women, came and looked into his cell, alarming him and disturbing his night's rest. He asked the doctor to take measures to put a stop to this annoyance, otherwise he would have to take matters into his own hands. In the daytime he wanders about his cell—whistles and smokes incessantly. He is absolutely indifferent to the fact that he is in the section for lunatics and that he is chained. He plays with the links of the chains and accompanies his songs. Took food. Did not sleep the whole night.

January 9—The patient is excited, walks, sings, whistles. He says that he is calling to his birds who understand him perfectly. Falls into brooding silence. Did not sleep all night, as, according to his words, he was busy planning a battle for his army which he had hidden in the woods in the vicinity of Tiflis. No interest in papers, books or pictures.

January 13—Very depressed, cries, moans—is very abject. Often talks about death—“My detachments are destroyed by those swine who are holding me here. It is not worth while living any more. I should have lived a hundred years, but I am willing to die now.”

January 21—His mood inconsistent. Melancholy and elated by turns—spends the day in his cell,

sings, whistles and talks to himself. Makes animals out of soft bread.

March 2—The patient is quiet, talkative, tells the doctor that he intends to go to America via Siberia in a ten horse-power motor car. He would cross the frozen Bering Straits. He expressed wonder at the manner in which his name was known. “I heard a woman’s voice call my name distinctly.”

After the end of the probation period, Kamo was transferred to the Mikhailovsky asylum. The Tiflis doctors also pronounced him incurable. It was here that Kamo thought out and put his plan of escape into execution. In order to establish contact with the outside world, Kamo made use of a young orderly at the asylum, one Ivan Bragin, who was impressed by Kamo’s engaging personality no less than by the romantic story that Ivan was attached to his name.

Ivan Bragin for a long time played the role of postman between Kamo and Kote Tsintsadze, who was directing the organisation of the escape. He was assisted by Kamo’s beloved sister, Givaira.

Gradually, Bragin became a close friend of the family and they enlisted his aid in the planning of the escape. Kamo himself, with his natural straightforwardness, warned Bragin at the outset of the risk he assumed by becoming an accomplice. Bragin was sure to be accused, no matter what the outcome. It was hardly probable that the money (a few hundred rubles) played any decisive role, because, by

betraying Kamo, Bragin could have made a fine career for himself.

The psychiatric section of the Mikhailovsky hospital stood on the bank of the river Kura, not far from Berisky bridge. The window of the upper floor lavatory looked out upon the river. This window like all the other windows of the hospital was iron-grilled. It was necessary to saw through the bars of the window. Kamo began his work. The length of time and the frequency with which Kamo went to the lavatory did not cause any of the staff to wonder. Who of those looking after chronic cases of insanity did not know their patients' habits of remaining there for hours engaged in some revolting practice? Kamo, having studied the habits of his companions, so arranged matters that he was never caught unawares. Thus he utilised every free moment to saw through the bars of the window with a thin, sharp hack-saw, that had been brought secretly by Bragin. This work took him three months.

On the day fixed for the escape (in August, 1911), Kote Tsintsadze sent Kamo a pie in which there was a sleeping-powder for drugging the guards. Wearied by the heat, the hospital staff indulged in an after-dinner siesta. Kamo unfastened his shackles which had already been sawn through, dressed himself in civil clothes brought to him by Bragin, and upon the signal given by Kote from the opposite bank, began to let himself down by a rope. But the rope broke in one place and Kamo fell from a height of about three metres on to a pile of stones. He jumped up and quickly dodged round the arm of the river towards the

shallows, then across the shallows under the bridge and on to the opposite bank. Here he was met by Kote and taken to a flat that had been prepared for him.

Several days later, Kamo was taken to another more secluded hiding-place, a small cottage standing on the hills and surrounded by vineyards. The owner of the place, a somewhat eccentric fellow, an elderly official, was absolutely reliable. Apart from himself and his guest there was nobody at the place. There Kamo lived for a month without going out. Before leaving that place, not wishing to compromise his hospitable host, Kamo carefully removed even the slightest traces of his residence there. Happily his whereabouts were well concealed and the host was not troubled.

The military prosecutor was beside himself with rage when he heard of Kamo's escape and severely reprimanded the senior doctor of the hospital. The latter in his own defence pointed to the extraordinary art of the simulator, who successfully deceived even the Berlin professors. All means possible were put into operation to effect his recapture. The city was completely encircled. Exit from its limits or leaving it by train was placed under very strict and complicated control. However, there is no control that cannot be effectively dodged.

Soon the road leading to the Mtshket highway became a favourite hang-out for a small group of high school bicycle enthusiasts. The soldiers at their post would enjoy looking at the exercises of the youngsters. Sometimes one of the cyclists, absorbed in his exercises, would cross the city border till he was stopped by the warning, "Go back—it is

forbidden to go outside the city limit.” The cyclist procession, repeated daily, grew monotonous. The soldiers no longer paid any attention to the cyclists and once when one of the five who crossed the border disappeared round the bend of the road, no one noticed his absence.

Disguised as a high school student, Kamo proceeded on the cycle to Mtskheta where he was again met by Kote. On that day there was a wedding in town and the tipsy guests were dancing and singing their folk songs in the streets. According to the hospitable customs of the Caucasus, each of the guests is permitted to bring a friend to the celebrations. So changing his student’s uniform for a national costume, Kamo mingled with the drinkers. In the evening the guests left the town and a crowd made their way to the railway station. Kamo safely seated himself in the train and travelled to Batumi. There it was necessary to overcome the last obstacle—to board a steamer secretly and get to a foreign port. A group of Batumi comrades with the help of some sailors hid Kamo in the hold of a ship in between some bales and boxes.

Kamo made his way to Paris, in order to get in touch with Lenin, and to regain his grasp of the revolutionary situation which had become more complicated during the years that he was in prison.

N. K. Krupskaya, recalling the visit of Kamo, writes:

“Kamo asked me to buy him almonds. He would sit in our living-room eating almonds as he had done at home and would tell us about his arrest in Berlin, about the way he had simulated insanity, about the sparrow he tamed in prison,

etc. Ilyich would listen and feel extremely sorry for this exceedingly brave, childishly naive, warm-hearted man who was capable of performing feats of heroism, but who now did not know what work to take up. The proposals he made were fantastic. Ilyich did not contradict him, but carefully brought him back to earth, talked to him about the necessity of organising the transport of literature, etc. Finally it was decided that Kamo should go to Belgium to have an operation performed on his eyes (he was cross-eyed and this enabled spies to identify him very easily), and then make his way to the south of Russia and from there to the Caucasus. Examining Kamo's coat, Ilyich said: 'Have you got a warm coat? You will be cold on deck in this one.' Whenever Ilyich travelled on a steamer he would incessantly walk up and down the deck. When it turned out that Kamo had no other coat, Ilyich took his soft grey cloak, which his mother had given him as a present while in Stockholm and of which he was very fond, and gave it to Kamo. The talk with Ilyich and Ilyich's kindness soothed Kamo."*

VI

ARREST IN TIFLIS AND PENAL SERVITUDE

KAMO was not able to thrive very long in the conditions of the "peaceful" west. The atmosphere of emigrant life was decidedly enervating to him. Work beckoned! He burned for the struggle—he did not consider himself beaten and wanted

* Krupskaya, *Reminiscences*. Part II.

to continue the struggle with the same weapons. Within a very few months, as soon as his health was better.

Kamo was on his way back to the Caucasus. He found the revolutionary movement in a new stage. The reaction was not yet completely broken but already a new revolutionary swing upwards was felt. The working class was re-awakening. General political strikes sent their lightning flashes throughout the land.

The shooting of the workers at the Lena gold fields (April, 1912) roused anger in the hearts of the millions of toilers and set in motion the new mass workers' movement, enriched with the experience of the successes and failures of the past.

The Bolsheviks had by that time strengthened their ranks through an energetic struggle against all shades of conciliators. At the Prague conference (January, 1912), they broke organisationally with the opportunists and became an independent party.

At that time the Party mustered the majority of the working class under its guidance by following the tactics of combining illegal forms of struggle with the use of all legal means, such as the use of the Duma tribune—the winning over of the trade unions and all the other legal forms of workers' organisations, and finally the establishment of a legal Bolshevik newspaper.

The new forms of struggle brought new fighters from the masses. Yet, although the working classes provided new cadres for the Bolshevik Party it was very difficult to find people for actual militant work. The mass movement had not

as yet crystallized itself to the point of armed uprisings and civil war. Therefore Kamo had to search for assistants, in the first place from among his old companions. But very few of them remained—some had left revolutionary work, many had died, many were in exile or in prison.

Kamo drew upon some younger comrades who had not yet passed through the practical school of partisan warfare. With them he organised (September, 1912) an attack on a money transport on the Kojorsky Highway. It failed.

Kamo was once more imprisoned in Metekhsky fortress and at the trial which took place a short time after, four sentences of death were passed upon him. The first was for participation in the armed uprising of 1905. The second was for the expropriation on Erivan Square. The third death sentence was for the escape from Mikhailovsky hospital, and the last—for the latest attempt at expropriation on the Kojorsky Highway. Usually the sentence was carried out a month after being passed. Never before had Kamo been so calm, jolly and careless as during these weeks.

Comrade Tsintsadze, who was also imprisoned with Kamo in Metekhsky fortress, managed to send him a note in a lamp. Kamo replied: "I guessed, and found your letter. I have made my peace with death. I am quite calm. There should have been grass five metres high over my grave by now. It is impossible to avoid death all the time. One must die sometimes. But I am willing to tempt luck again; anyway I am with you in any attempt. Perhaps it will be possible to have the laugh on our enemies once more. I am in chains. Do whatever you wish. I agree to any plan."

The plans for escape were unavailing. But salvation came, and of all places, from a quarter least expected.

The celebration of the three hundred years' reign of the Romanov dynasty was drawing near and Kamo's sentence was commuted to twenty years penal servitude.

In 1915 he was transferred to the penal prison at Kharkov. He was placed with criminals. Conditions were terrible. Many hours a day the prisoners sat at forced labour: sewing dresses, underclothes and boots, or making baskets. Kamo spent most of his time in the company of typical representatives of the underworld. In the workshop and in the courtyard terrible scenes frequently occurred—evidences of the hardening influences of criminal prisons. Soon the prisoners began to appreciate Kamo in their own way and nicknamed him "Big Ivan." This "title" to a certain degree placed him in a better position.

In order to avoid coming into conflict with the warders for not taking off his cap in their presence and thus lowering his self-respect, Kamo always went without a cap even in the coldest of frosts. On the rare meetings he had with his relatives, in spite of the jolly and hearty appearance which he assumed, his eyes betrayed his anguished spirit. One felt that penal servitude was killing him. It seemed that even his inherent mental clearness and his immense common sense were deserting him. He began to concoct the most fantastic plans for escape. It is unknown where this tormenting existence would have led him, if the advancing revolution had not finally liberated him.

VII

LAST YEARS

THE February revolution brought Kamo not only his long-expected freedom but also many uniquely trying experiences. Coming to Moscow and Petrograd, which were seething with the stormy energies of the awakened masses, Kamo first realised how much strength and health prison and penal servitude had taken from him. He felt himself a sick and broken man. It was only the insistence of Lenin that his first care should be the recuperation of his health that finally prevailed upon him to go and get cured.

His stay at one of the mountain resorts of the Caucasus had a salutary effect upon him. His magnificent organism revived under the warmth of the southern sun.

However, the many years of intense underground work on responsible battle sections of the Party front had not permitted Kamo to acquire great stores of theoretical knowledge or to complete his meagre general education. Prison, which served for many of the underground workers as a sort of university, brought him nothing except maddening experiences. But his true revolutionary class instinct and his vigorous mind enabled Kamo to follow the current trend of political events.

Kamo was offered many responsible and high posts but he always refused, partly from extraordinary modesty and partly from an intuitive awareness of his own lack of fitness

in the directing of the complicated affairs arising from the development of the proletarian revolution in our country.

Kamo, who had always carried out the Party instructions to the letter with buoyant nonchalance and heroic bravery, seemed to have lost confidence in himself. He found it hard to adapt himself to the new conditions of work and the new methods of fighting.

Even at the front during the civil war, he was unable to find suitable work for himself—work at which he could feel himself in his element—feel himself necessary and indispensable as in former times. He longed for the old forms of militant work. He wanted to adapt the old familiar methods of struggle to the new conditions.

In 1919, during Denikin's offensive on Moscow, Kamo received permission from the Central Committee of the Party to form a militant group working in the whiteguards' rear. Kamo chose his group of assistants for this dangerous work with extreme care. He got to know each comrade intimately and trained each one in all the fine points of conspiracy of which he was such a supreme master. Finally he took his group with all the necessary accessories, make-up, costumes, etc., and set out for Baku via Astrakhan.

In Astrakhan the group rigged up a sturdy fishing-boat, loaded it with rifles, machine-guns and ammunition and set sail for the open sea. They ran the risk of meeting Denikin's warships.

The voyage to Baku was accomplished safely. Once there, the comrades were hidden in apartments in the workers'

districts, changing their flats from time to time because of the spies roaming about.

Kamo strictly forbade any sort of agitational and propaganda work. He even forbade them to appear in the streets during the day. These precautionary measures were necessary because the majority of them lacked knowledge of local conditions and habits and in that way could endanger the entire venture by a single blunder.

The Red Army had already occupied Rostov and was closing in upon Arnavir. The main task of the group was to disorganise Denikin's rear. The White's retreat to Novorossisk made this unnecessary.

But Kamo did not want to give up his set purpose. He took a small unit of four fellows with him and decided to break through to Novorossisk via Georgia and the Black Sea.

Kamo went by the name of Prince Tsulukidze. He attired himself in a resplendent Circassian coat, soft Caucasian top boots, a dark brown krimmer cap (a *kubanka*).

He wore an imposing false beard that gave severity and impressiveness to his face.

At the last minute, the gendarmes delayed the train and detained all the dark-haired men who resembled Kamo. Prince Tsulukidze, however, remained free from suspicion. The commander of the gendarmes even apologised to him for delaying the train.

But the Menshevik government in Georgia had been informed of his coming. Kamo and his comrades were arrested upon their arrival at the Batum station and imprisoned in the Metekhsky fortress. Kamo knew this prison

only too well by now. Here Kamo contracted sciatica because of the dampness of his cell.

After two months they were finally freed upon condition that they quit Georgia within twenty-four hours.

The journey to Novorossisk failed and Kamo returned to Baku. By this time the continued victories of the Red Army raised the hopes of the workers. The Regional Party committee decided to use Kamo's group for preparing an armed uprising and a Bolshevik *coup d'état*. Kamo was entrusted to organise large battle groups in the workers' districts. Kamo appointed his personally trained men as leaders of these groups. Kamo was in his old element. He was every where teaching the workers the art of armed uprising. The training went well but arms were not sufficient. They soon surmounted this difficulty by the arrival of several boatloads of ammunition and arms from Astrakhan.

When the Mussavatist* government issued the manifesto calling upon the "citizens and workers" to defend Baku against the Red Army, the workers began arming themselves. The large battle groups organised by Kamo were the first to arm themselves and the factory workers were not far behind.

On the night of the 28th of April, 1920, the members of the Mussavatist government fled to Georgia. At dawn, parliament was taken without a shot and several detach-

* A counter revolutionary government formed by the pro-Turkish, bourgeois Federalist Party. It was this Party which invited the English imperialists to Baku. Later, this government rejected the proposal of the Soviet Government to declare itself against Denikin. The retreating Whites fled from the Red Army across the Azerbaijan frontier.

ments of hostile troops were disarmed. The red flag was hoisted on the gunboats “Kars” and “Ardogan” (the most powerful ships on the Caspian Sea). The next day armoured trains arrived, and two days later Budenny’s cavalry came riding in.

After the “coup” the Central Committee of the Azerbaijan Communist Party dissolved Kamo’s militant group.

Kamo returned to Moscow and decided to realise his long cherished dream of educating himself. On Lenin’s advice he began to prepare himself in the Academy of the General Staff. But this plan was never realised. Kamo died quite suddenly.

Comrade Baron in his reminiscences writes:

“On the fatal day, Comrade Kamo sat in my study for a long time. We talked over old times. Work on the economic front did not satisfy him. He was made for revolutionary storms. He wanted to participate in preparing revolution in some country in the West or East. ‘It is for such a job that I am taking care of myself,’ he said, ‘and in justice I should live another hundred years and fight. You see I look after myself. I don’t drink, nor do I spend sleepless nights. I am preserving my strength and health to the full. Why shouldn’t I live many years more.’

“Who could have thought that this man, so great a hero of the revolution, who endured unbelievable trials and preserved his strength and health through the most trying times would be dead in a few hours from a fatal accident.”

On the 14th of July (1922) at eleven o’clock in the evening, Kamo was riding his bicycle down the steep Verasky

slope. He heard the hoot of an automobile horn. Kamo saw very badly from one eye, and making a sharp turn he fell from his cycle. In falling he struck his head on a small sharp stone. Two hours later, Kamo died from hæmorrhage of the brain. He died without ever regaining consciousness.

The proletariat of Tiflis gave their heroic fighter, so immensely popular and beloved by the entire working class, a magnificent funeral significant because of its genuine mass character.

Much has been written and will be written about Comrade Kamo. He represented a magnificent type of fighting Party man who possessed unusual degrees of courage and resourcefulness. He was one of the outstanding representatives of the partisan movement of the period of the first revolution.

He enjoyed the greatest influence over the men who worked with him and his detachment was always an exceptionally strong weapon in the hands of the Party.

In Kamo one finds reckless daring, high revolutionary purpose, iron will, striking moral qualities and the remarkable discipline of a well tried member of the Party—all combined to create an unusual fighter and a truly great man.