
First Grain of Sand



Map of Soviet Union

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Planting the Seed of True Islam in the Soviet Union

(Aap Beeti, Mujaahid-e-Bukhara aur Rus)

Maulawi Zahoor Hussain

First Ahmadi Missionary to the Soviet Union

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Written by Maulawi Zahoor Hussain
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Maulawi Zahoor Hussain

First Ahmadi Missionary to the Soviet Union

About the Author

Maulawi Zahoor Hussain (1899–1982) was a pioneering missionary, educator, and devoted servant of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community. Born in Dharamkot Randhawa in India's Gurdaspur district, he was orphaned at a young age and moved to Qadian in 1910 to pursue religious education. There, under the direct mentorship of Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih I^{ra} and later Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih II^{ra}, he became part of the first generation of students at the newly established Madrasah Ahmadiyya—a seminary founded to produce missionaries of deep spiritual and high intellectual calibre.

In 1923, he was first appointed as a missionary to Jammu and Kashmir. He holds the historic distinction of being the first Ahmadi missionary of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community to enter the Soviet Union in 1924, during a time of deep religious suppression. His groundbreaking journey, which began with high hopes, took a harrowing turn as he was arrested by Soviet authorities, falsely accused of espionage, and imprisoned for two grueling years across multiple facilities—including in Artyk, Ashgabat, Tashkent, and Moscow. Despite suffering torture, isolation, and constant surveillance, Maulawi Zahoor Hussain fearlessly continued to preach Islam in prison. Remarkably, some forty individuals embraced the Ahmadiyya Jama'at during his captivity. His accounts of secretly delivering sermons, debating theology with

guards and inmates, and surviving repeated attempts on his life remain an inspiring testament to his spiritual conviction.

His return to India in 1926 was celebrated as a spiritual and moral victory. His story became widely known throughout the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community worldwide and was even published in the Community's flagship newspaper, *al-Fazl*. His survival and eventual release were the result of fervent prayers and a diplomatic campaign via the British government initiated by Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih II, who regarded Zahoor Hussain's perseverance as a model of steadfast faith.

Beyond this historic mission, Maulawi Zahoor Hussain played a crucial role in community building. He was one of ten individuals who gathered in 1938 to establish Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya, the Community's youth auxiliary. Listed as one of its original ten founding members, his name is permanently etched into its legacy. He also served in various scholarly capacities and was entrusted with theological responses on behalf of the Jama'at, reflecting the trust he earned among senior leadership.

His autobiography, written in Urdu and translated here into English, offers a rare, first-hand account of religious courage under tyranny. For young readers unfamiliar with his life, Maulawi Zahoor Hussain's story is a moving example of faith in action. His account is not one of past missionary heroism; rather, it is a mirror held up to us all as a call to live courageously, truthfully, and faithfully, knowing that the help of Allah never falters for the one who prays.

As he once reflected: 'Every time I had a need, God provided it to me out of His immense grace.'

Foreword

Just as Islam, in its earliest days, began to spread beyond the borders of Arabia through the transformative power of its message, so too—through its divinely guided revival in the form of Ahmadiyyat—did Islam once again extend its reach across the world. The early companions of the Holy Prophet, may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, journeyed into the heartlands of powerful empires, not to conquer land, but to win hearts with the light of faith. In our time, the revival of that same spirit inspired the missionaries of Ahmadiyyat to venture into unfamiliar and often hostile political territories, armed only with prayers, the word of God, and the banner of peace. Their only means of protection were the humble and heartfelt prayers uttered to their Lord by their Khalifah, their brethren in faith, and their own selves—and a mighty shield did they prove to be! Their brave ordeals are now sealed in history as the inspirational building blocks of the worldwide Ahmadiyya Muslim Community—a spiritual empire spread so vast that the sun can no longer set upon it.

First Grain of Sand is the story of one such valiant Ahmadi missionary, Maulawi Zahoor Hussain, written in Urdu as his own memoir of the ordeal he suffered through. With a meagre amount of means and no protection outside of his Lord, he was the first Ahmadi Muslim missionary to venture into the Soviet Union. As

harsh as the terrain and temperatures ran, so did the suspicions of espionage; for, the Russians and British harboured deep political differences with each other. Maulawi Zahoor Hussain, coming from British India, easily fell prey to such suspicions.

Seized and taken into the custody of the Russian prison system, he was constantly interrogated, tortured, and harassed. Nevertheless, his faith endured and remained as firm as ever. In fact, it helped him persevere all the more. His entire ordeal is an eye-opening account of the truth of the Promised Messiah, peace on him, and the miraculous power of prayer.

I would like to acknowledge the efforts of Harris Zafar, who is the grandson of Maulawi Zahoor Hussain, for translating the Urdu manuscript of *First Grain of Sand* into English. He received considerable help and support from his parents, Basharat Rahman Zafar and Tayaba Siddiq Zafar (the daughter of Maulawi Zahoor Hussain).

I would also like to acknowledge the efforts of Naser-ud-Din Shams, Amtul Razzaq Carmichael, Kashifa Wahab Mirza, and Mirza Abdul-Wahab for their valuable editing reviews and formatting. May Almighty Allah bless and reward each and every individual who worked to make this inspiring account accessible to the English-speaking audiences across the globe. *Aameen*.

al-Haaj Munir-ud-Din Shams
Additional Wakilut-Tasneef, London
July 2025

Introduction

My grandfather, Maulawi Zahoor Hussain, was a dedicated Missionary of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community where he became world renowned for his perilous journey and captivity as the first Ahmadi missionary sent to the Soviet Union.

While the 1917 Russian revolution formed the Soviet Republic as a state, it wasn't until December 1922 that the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) was formally established as a new super-nation. Wasting no time, the very next year in 1923, Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih II^{ra} announced his intention to send a missionary to the Soviet Union to preach the message of True Islam.

But this mission originated with the Community's Founder, the Promised Messiah^{as}, who received Divine revelations about Russia. In 1903, he saw in a vision that the Community's message would one day have great influence over Russia and be responsible for its reformation. In another vision, he saw the Community as a great population in Russia, saying: 'I see my Community in the area of Russia like the grains of sand in numbers.'

In early 1924, Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih II^{ra} took the first step towards fulfilling these prophecies by selecting Maulawi Zahoor Hussain for this honour to plant the seed of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Russia. At that time, the Community was meager in resources yet zealous in its mission to spread the teachings of True Islam worldwide.

Unique dangers in Russia made this mission extremely challenging. The World War already ravaged the nation, followed by millions of deaths during the Russian Civil War from combat,

starvation, famine, and disease. The economy was left in ruins, with factories and infrastructure destroyed and an estimated seven million orphaned street children.

Furthermore, Soviet President Vladimir Lenin cultivated rampant hostility towards religion. As author Glenn E Curtis said: 'In the first five years of the Soviet Union (1922–26), twenty-eight Russian Orthodox bishops and more than 1,200 priests were executed, and many others were persecuted. Most seminaries were closed, and publication of most religious material was prohibited...Antireligious campaigns were directed at all faiths.'

In the early 1960s, Maulawi Zahoor Hussain published memoirs in Urdu detailing his journey and two years of imprisonment and torture. Now, some sixty years later and nearly one hundred years after his incredible journey, the Fifth and current Khalifah of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad^{aba} instructed me, as a direct descendent, to translate my late grandfather's original book into English.

Going through each page with careful deliberation, I felt deeply immersed and instinctively present with my grandfather, shedding tears from the excruciating torture he endured. His level of strength, humility, courage, and faith is something I can only dream to attain.

His experience as the first grain of sand for this Community in Russia is testament to the truth that God does exist. At a time when humankind is losing faith in religion and God, his story reminds us there is a living God who hears prayers and, despite all odds, delivers His servants from the clutches of despair when all worldly hope has failed.

Harris Rahman Zafar, USA

First Grain of Sand

CHAPTER ONE

My Beginnings in Qadian

 I am incredibly grateful to God that He has conferred on me the blessings of finding the Ahmadiyya Movement and, by His grace alone, enabled me to travel from my original village of Dharamkot Randhawa [in India's Gurdaspur district] to Qadian in late 1910 to obtain my education. It began when my eldest brother, Hazrat Sheikh Muhammad Hussain—a Companion of the Promised Messiah^{as} who worked as the chief inspector of postal services in Jhelum—came from Jhelum to Amritsar at the demise of our father, Sheikh Hussain Bakhsh. He sent our middle brother, Sheikh Mazhar Hussain, to Qadian to complete his education and took me back to Jhelum with himself as I was only in the 4th grade at that time. After completing 4th grade in Jhelum, I had the honour of also moving to Qadian.

It was during the *Khilaafat* of Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih I^{ra} that I began my 5th grade education in Qadian, but only after a few days the principal suggested that I be admitted into the 4th grade instead. My middle brother, Sheikh Mazhar Hussain, told me to

hand deliver a letter he wrote addressed to Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih I^{ra} stating that I am an orphan and humbly requesting him to instruct the principal to allow me to remain in the 5th grade so as not to lose an entire year of my education. When I approached Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih I^{ra} with this letter in hand, Huzoor^{ra} read the letter, looked at me, and wrote the recommendation that I should be admitted into the Madrasah Ahmadiyyah [religious ministry school that would later be called Jamia that had recently been established]. (This was his way of advising me to devote my life to the acquisition of religious knowledge that this new class would be dedicated to.)

Because of my young age, I misunderstood that Huzoor^{ra} had recommended my admission to the 5th grade. Two days later, my brother clarified to me that Huzoor^{ra} had instructed me to be admitted into the school where Arabic is taught and that I would have to read large volumes of Arabic books, gesturing their size with his hand. Thus, he told me to return to Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih^{ra} and request again to be admitted into 5th grade in a normal school. Doing as I was told, I went back to Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih^{ra} and innocently told him that I do not know Arabic, neither did my father, nor even my grandfather. I said that I was not even fluent in the recitation of the Holy Quran and asked how I would be able to read such large Arabic books. To this, Huzoor^{ra} looked at me and enthusiastically said: ‘My dear, studying at Madrasah Ahmadiyyah is indeed much better and more useful for you.’

I swear by God Almighty [as my Witness] that these words by the Khalifah had such a profound impact on me that my strong preconceived desire for high school dissipated. In its

place was born a new vigour, passion, and fresh mindset to dedicate myself to the Madrasah Ahmadiyyah. I returned home and told my brother about this conversation with Huzoor^{ra} and told him that come whatever may, now I am committed to studying in Madrasah Ahmadiyyah. In those days, admission was allowed into Madrasah Ahmadiyyah after completing the fifth grade. Additionally, a special class was launched for weaker students that required one extra year of study. I told my brother that even if I must spend an additional year in the special class, I am committed to studying in the Madrasah Ahmadiyyah. Therefore, by the immense grace and blessings of God Almighty, this humble one was admitted into the first ever class of the Promised Messiah's sanctified institute for religious education.

Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih I^{ra} mentioned this incident twice during his daily lessons on the Holy Quran that I attended without mentioning my name. And once, while I walked next to Huzoor^{ra} after he ascended the stairs of the great Aqsa Mosque [in Qadian], Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih^{ra} put one hand on my shoulder and the other hand on his beard and said to me:

Do you think when you learn Arabic that God will deprive you of a good livelihood? I have studied Arabic, and look how God has blessed me with sustenance and livelihood my entire life.

I bear witness that since that day, God Almighty has indeed consistently been my Provider. Every time I had a need, God provided it to me out of His immense grace. Even years later in the Soviet prisons, when I feared the presence of pork in the meals

they served, I only ate bread with hot water twice a day, which made me very weak from lack of nutrition. But even in that state of peril, at just the right time, God Almighty would provide me with a nourishing meal such as rice or eggs within the jail. This happened in multiple Soviet prisons. All praise belongs to Allah. This generosity of Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih^{ra} left an indelible impression on me.

I was very fortunate that the administration of the Madrasah Ahmadiyyah school was vested in the hands of Hazrat Mirza Bashir-ud-Deen Mahmood Ahmad, the venerable son of the Promised Messiah^{as}, who later became the second Khalifah of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community [after the passing of Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih I^{ra} in 1914]. Hazrat Mahmood treated the students of Madrassa Ahmadiyyah so fairly and with such sincerity and exceptional passion, love, and sympathy as one would not even expect from their own parents. He was very regular in visiting classes and inspecting the instruction, while teaching one or two classes himself, and summoning absent students to his office to question them. Once a week, he would join our class and have the students practice delivering speeches. And he would generate a passion and spirit for preaching religion and the message of God in such a way that one could only learn by observing him. He also took particular interest in our extracurricular activities and visited our boarding house regularly to ensure the boarding arrangements and food were satisfactory. He even went so far as to ensure other requirements of the students, such as sports equipment, were being properly looked after. He was known to stay up late at night praying for the students and would explore creative ways of nurturing a passion for serving Islam in our hearts.

On one occasion during our weekly class, Hazrat Mirza Bashir-ud-Deen Mahmood Ahmad addressed the students and said that anyone who is studying here with the goal of obtaining a job should leave now and learn Arabic at another school in Amritsar or Lahore that have an Arabic Studies program. He said that the Madrasah Ahmadiyyah had been founded by the Promised Messiah^{as} himself with the purpose of producing more Islamic scholars like Hazrat Maulana Abdul Karim Sialkoti^{ra} and Hazrat Maulana Burhan-ud-Deen Jhelami^{ra}, two great scholars among the most prominent Companions who died during the lifetime of the Promised Messiah^{as}. And the first administrative responsibility was given to such a pious being whose beautiful goodness was a reflection of the Promised Messiah^{as}.

Ordinarily in those days, very few students would be able to cover their own expenses for their studies. Many would receive scholarships that enable poor students to continue their studies. For me, my expenses were covered by my eldest brother, Hazrat Sheikh Muhammad Husain^{ra}—an incredibly sincere Companion who during the life of the Promised Messiah^{as} was fortunate enough to teach at Qadian High School, even without pay for three months. I remember very well that I sat alone and thought to myself that I should either study for the same purpose as our leader had stated, or otherwise I should not study at Madrasah Ahmadiyyah at all. In the end, I made a commitment that it is best that I study to fulfil the purpose for which this school had been established.

During a *Jumu'ah* a few years later, at the time of the third year of his *Khilaafat*, Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih II asked young Ahmadi Muslims to come forward and make pledges to dedicate their

lives for the service of their faith. As a result, multiple students of Madrasah Ahmadiyyah and the nearby high school stepped forward to heed this call and submitted their requests to dedicate their lives for this cause. When my request to dedicate my life to this service was graciously accepted, I wrote to my mother about my new decision. My mother—who had not yet become an Ahmadi Muslim despite having great love and respect in her heart for this community—perhaps fearing that her son would live a poor life as a cleric, replied demanding I retract my dedication to service, otherwise she would never forgive me. I wrote back conveying my commitment that after gaining this education at such a pure school, there was absolutely no chance I would pursue some standard worldly profession. I said that if she only knew that the path she is calling me towards is like a fiery oven that no mother would knowingly put her child in, then she would never forbid me from pursuing this noble work. Reading this response, my mother reconciled herself with my decision and gave me her blessings.

CHAPTER TWO

Missionary Classes Begin in Qadian

*A*fter I earned my Maulawi Faazil¹ Degree from Madrasah Ahmadiyyah in 1920, Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih II soon announced the establishment of a new Missionaries Class. This class would be aimed at providing a final program to complete the training of missionaries for the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community. One of the most eminent scholars of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community was assigned as our professor—Hazrat Haafiz Roshan Ali^{ra}, a Companion of the Promised Messiah^{as}. This first Missionary Class consisted of the following students:

1. Hazrat Sahibzadah Mirza Sharif Ahmad^{ra}—youngest son of the Promised Messiah^{as}
2. Hazrat Maulana Jalal-ud-Din Shams

1. Maulawi Faazil is a university degree of Arabic and theology. [Publisher]

3. Maulana Ghulam Ahmad of Baddomalhi
4. Maulana Muhammad Shahzadah
5. Maulana Zain-ul-Abidin of Mauritius
6. Maulana Zill-ur-Rahman Bengalee
7. Myself

The manner in which Hazrat Haafiz Roshan Ali^{ra} dedicated nearly three years coaching and preparing us with great interest, love, and sincerity is a testament to his incredible legacy. He acted more like a loving father than a formal teacher and would take care of each student personally. Occasionally, he would invite us to his home for a formal dinner and sometimes would wash the hands of some students to give them an example to follow. Sometimes he took us with him on missionary errands and preaching expeditions and thus provided us with real-world training in this sphere.

After completing this Missionary Program, I was appointed in early 1923 as a full-fledged missionary and given a one-year assignment to the state of Jammu & Kashmir. At this time, the trains did not come to Qadian. Thus, when I left Qadian to travel to Jammu for my new assignment, I had to get to Batala first in order to take the train from that station.

As I waited at the Batala station for the train to arrive, I thought to myself that our Community would not be able to pay me a salary for my new assignment because we had limited means, and Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih had already instructed that those who devote their lives should not seek money from the Community. I accepted this idea and reflected how the great Companions of the Promised Messiah^{as} would survive by eating a few leaves from a tree. Gaining inspiration from that example, I satisfied myself

with the thought of doing the same, while perhaps occasionally being able to eat a few chickpeas and filling myself with water. However, within a month of arriving at Jammu, I received a letter from our headquarters informing me that in support of my mission, the Community will provide an allowance of 20 to 25 rupees [less than 2 British pounds sterling] per month plus additional as needed for travel expenses. I was overjoyed to read this, feeling as if I had become very rich for being given so much of a monthly allowance, and thanked God Almighty.

At that time, Maulana Jalal-ud-Din Shams was appointed to Agra, where the Aryah Samaj [an aggressive reformist movement within the Hindu community] had created a rebellious movement against Islam, and he appropriately and successfully challenged the Aryah movement in that city.

The Aryah Samaj had also become very aggressive in those days in Jammu where I was appointed. To address the civil unrest being created by the Aryah, young men from various Muslim communities had already established a young men's association and requested the leaders of different Muslim communities to provide a scholar who could debate the Aryah and counter their false and malicious propaganda against Islam. I was sent to Jammu in response to this request from the youth association and, by the grace of God, was given such success that Muslims in that area would recall it for years to come. In fact, the head of the Aryah Samaj in that area himself admitted that their preachers were helpless when debating with Ahmadi Muslim missionaries.

As a result of this success, two young recently trained Aryah preachers requested me to debate the question of reincarnation of the soul. While the debate took place in a private house, a large

number of Aryah, orthodox Hindus, and Muslims all gathered to watch. And those two young Aryah Hindu preachers suffered such a resounding defeat that in that same private gathering, other Aryah members responded saying that while these two preachers could not give the right answers, they would like to invite another Hindu scholar to debate me as well. At that time, another preacher stood up and began speaking further about reincarnation. After a back-and-forth exchange, he no longer could answer my points and suddenly ended, saying that until now he had believed reincarnation to be true.

Next, the controversial Aryah Samaj community organized their first ever Annual Gathering with a focus on converting the illiterate and poor Hindus—who were deemed ‘untouchable’ and the bottom rung of society according to the Hindu ritual social hierarchy. This stirred tensions between the orthodox Hindus and the divergent Aryah movement. By the grace of God Almighty, the Islamic perspective was presented so successfully during this event that the head of the Aryah Samaj for that area said he would next invite a prominent missionary, Ram Chandar, from Delhi to come and debate me. Thus, wherever I had an opportunity to go in Jammu, God Almighty granted victories to the message of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community.

CHAPTER THREE

Journey to the U.S.S.R.

After the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community's Annual Convention [Jalsa Salana] had completed at the end of December 1923, I requested a meeting with Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih at the very beginning of 1924 in order to seek his permission before returning to Jammu for my missionary assignment and to request his prayers for my return. Huzoor asked me whether the central administrative office of the Community had not already relieved me from my previous assignment in Jammu. When I said no they had not, Huzoor told me he would provide further instructions the next day. The next morning, I was informed by Hazrat Maulawi Abdur Raheem Dard^{ra}, who was serving as Huzoor's Private Secretary, that Huzoor had earmarked me for missionary work in Bukhara, U.S.S.R., and congratulated me for this distinction. Hearing this, I immediately began preparing for my journey [to the Soviet Union], with a heart full of gratitude to God Almighty.

A few months earlier, the *al-Fazl* newspaper had printed one

of Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih's Friday sermons in which Huzoor said he had selected a missionary to send to Bukhara but would not disclose that missionary's identity for the time being. I remember vividly that when I read this while in Jammu, a longing arose within my heart to offer myself for this assignment. However, I thought that perhaps presenting myself wouldn't be appropriate. Instead, if Huzoor were to elect me for this task, that would be a matter of incredible blessings for me, and indeed this is what happened.

Through God's unique wisdom and profound kindness, of all chapters in the Quran, I had a particular passion for memorizing *Sūrah al-Kahf* [Chapter 18, containing a descriptive reference to Gog (the Russians)] and *Sūrah Yūsuf* [Chapter 12, which narrates the story of the imprisonment of Prophet Joseph^{as} on false charges]. When I set out for my journey to Bukhara at the instruction of Huzoor, there was still a portion of *Sūrah Yūsuf* I hadn't committed to memory, and I spent the early part of my journey memorizing that final portion. By the time I reached the major Iranian city of Mashhad, I had learnt the entire *Sūrah Yūsuf* by heart.

During my time in captivity [later in the Soviet Union], I would recite these two chapters of the Holy Quran regularly. As this humble one was destined to have a special connection with these two chapters during the period of captivity, God Almighty prepared me by enabling me to learn these two chapters by heart. While completing the memorization of *Sūrah Yūsuf* early in my journey, I often wondered if perhaps I, too, would one day face imprisonment. All glory to God Almighty that I verily ended up being imprisoned for two years, and these two chapters of the

Quran constantly provided peace and solace to my heart during that time.

For this journey to the Soviet Union, it was decided that during my travels I would be accompanied by Maulawi Mohammad Amin Khan—another missionary of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community. Before leaving Qadian for Bukhara, he was requested by Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih to provide an estimate of the upcoming journey's travel expenses for both of us. While in the company of other people, including Hazrat Mirza Bashir Ahmad, when Huzoor reviewed the details of the expense estimate, he summoned Maulawi Mohammad Amin Khan and asked why the expense is so high. Huzoor expressed his desire to minimize the expenses so that the two of us could be an example for other missionaries to come.

Mohammad Amin Khan was told to convey the message to me as well, which terribly saddened my heart to think that Huzoor—who I so deeply love and admire—might be displeased. So, I wrote a short letter to Huzoor explaining that the expense details presented to him were prepared completely outside my knowledge and that even if Huzoor does not give a penny, I am happily willing to walk to Bukhara by foot. I conveyed how much I considered it an incredible favour of Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih that he selected me for the blessed honour of serving my faith. After reading my letter, Huzoor graciously approved a travel budget for the two of us that was 200 rupees [about 15 British pounds] higher than the original estimate.

On 14 July 1924, Maulawi Mohammad Amin Khan and I embarked on this fateful journey to Bukhara at the behest of Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih. We were joined by Hazrat Shahzadah

Abdul Majid [a Companion of the Promised Messiah] who needed to travel to the Iranian city of Tehran for a preaching expedition. The three of us reached the Iranian border town of Duzdab [now known as Zahedan] by train.

To reach our next destination of Mashhad, we needed to cross a 600-mile area of rough and barren land, which took us 45 days to complete. This long journey over rugged terrain required us to walk at times, while riding camels and donkeys, or the occasional caravan at other times. There was no train line that existed within these 600 miles of arid desert, which was extremely dry without any source of water for dozens upon dozens of miles at a time. And even at the points where there would be some water, it was often so filthy or even contaminated and, thus, undrinkable.

On this perilous trek through the desert, we passed many dead camels and donkeys on our path, which had succumbed to death from thirst. I particularly remember when traveling from one stop to another along this path, there was a span of 56 miles with literally no water in sight. We were riding donkeys through this trek and were carrying our own supply of water. We had planned to cover these 56 miles in two days but realized along the way that our water supply would be insufficient to get us to the next stop. Therefore, Mohammad Amin Khan rode one of the stronger donkeys more quickly ahead and was able to join a larger caravan.

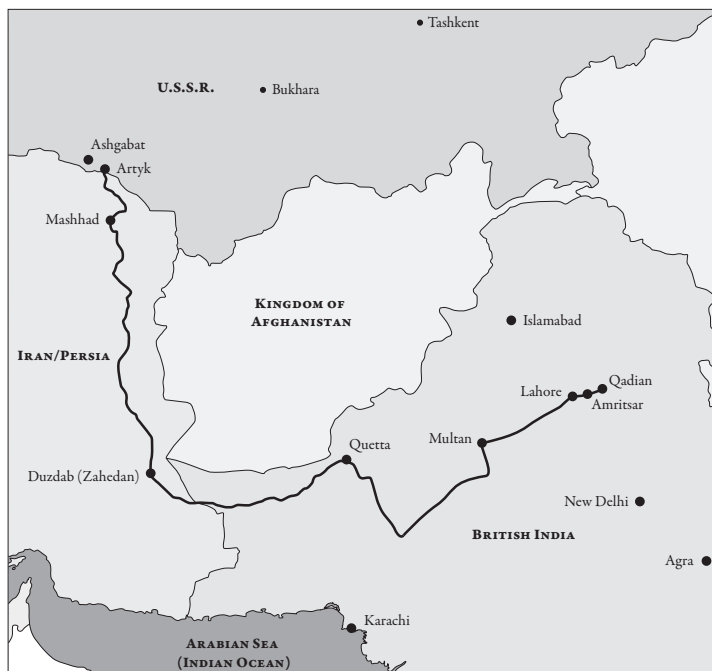
Shahzadah Abdul Majid^{ra} and I followed behind him, but ultimately the extreme levels of thirst forced us to dismount our donkeys and begin travelling on foot because our donkeys could not walk anymore without water. We walked for some distance until my travel companion, Shahzadah Abdul Majid^{ra}, who could no longer put up with the acute thirst, laid down on the

ground. While I did not lie down myself, the absence of water created anxiety within me about our current predicament, but I kept marching forward.

That is when I noticed someone up ahead who was quickly approaching on a camel, carrying a supply of water. When he neared, I asked him for water, which he provided me. I then pointed back at my companion, and he quickly went to Shahzadah Abdul Majid^{ra} and gave him water as well. He then placed us upon his camel and transported us to the watering station, where we were able to replenish our supply of clean water. And thus, by the grace of God Almighty, we were able to complete this arduous journey.

Therefore, the three of us reached Mashhad—a major city in Iran—on 16 October 1924. Upon arrival, I came down with typhoid fever and was admitted into a local British run hospital for treatment. After five days in this city, Shahzadah Abdul Majid^{ra} departed in order to make it to his final destination in the Iranian capital, Tehran, where he could begin his assignment. After 25 days, Maulawi Mohammad Amin Khan felt it appropriate to proceed alone towards our ultimate destination of Bukhara to discover the conditions of the Soviet city and keep me updated in Mashhad. For this reason, on 6 November 1924, he left Mashhad for Bukhara.

In Mashhad, I was under the medical care of a doctor named Dimry, who was a follower of the Zoroastrian religion and took care of me with great kindness. Those days, I would make my own meals as a normal practice, but under the doctor's instructions, for fifteen days I was restricted to only a glass of milk in the morning and evening, along with water as needed.



The most likely route taken by Maulawi Zahoor Hussain on his 1924 journey from Qadian, India, to the Soviet Union based on historical records of railway networks available in 1924

One month after his departure for Bukhara, I received a letter from Maulawi Mohammad Amin Khan stating that he had safely reached Bukhara and that it was not possible for him to come back to Mashhad, especially with the snow and cold temperatures. He wrote that if I had sufficiently recovered from my illness and was now able to undertake the remainder of the arduous journey to Bukhara, I should write him; he can then reply with a description of the route he took so that I can follow suit.

I received this letter in Mashhad on 2 December 1924, which

was sixteen days after he had posted it to me. I realized that writing a letter to him inquiring about the path I should take and then waiting for a response would cause me to lose yet another month before I could proceed to Bukhara. Plus, by then the snowfall would be so heavy that more routes would begin to close, which would likely leave me stranded in Mashhad for another four months. Additionally, from a budget viewpoint, with my illness and treatment in Mashhad, plus the money I gave to Maulawi Amin Khan before he left, I was running low on money. And of course, since my leader, Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih, had assigned me to Bukhara, I could not bear being delayed any further from that mission.

For these reasons, I put my trust in God Almighty and decided to proceed to Bukhara immediately on my own. God Almighty knows well the indescribable embarrassment and guilt I felt at that time. I kept thinking that God's appointed Khalifah had set three men out on the road from Qadian, and while two of them had reached their destination, I was the unfortunate one who was still stuck en route. My master would be disappointed to learn this. So after performing the *Istikhaarah*¹ Prayer, I put my trust in God Almighty and then wrote a letter to Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih II explaining the situation, while also including Maulawi Amin Khan's letter so Huzoor could see it as well.

Sadly, I do not have a copy of that letter to reproduce now, but I will give the essence of the letter here. In my letter to Huzoor, I explained the dire circumstances I was facing—I had just

1. A special prayer made to seek guidance from Allah before making a decision. [Publisher]

recovered from typhoid fever, I was physically weak, the weather was extremely cold with snow season already underway, I did not know the Russian language nor was my Persian very good, I did not know the route to Bukhara, could not find my passport, and my budget had been nearly depleted. But despite all these circumstances and the natural heavy-hearted emotion it engenders, I cannot stop myself from proceeding to Bukhara because I know Huzoor's prayers will not allow me to fail. In fact, I knew that Huzoor's prayers would bring success to the true purpose of this mission. I concluded by saying that despite the helplessness I felt, I put trust in my belief in God and am leaving now for Bukhara and requested his prayers. After completing my letter to Huzoor, I penned letters to my brothers, Hazrat Sheikh Muhammad Hussain^{ra} and Sheikh Mazhar Hussain, and left them all with the post office.

On Monday, 8 December 1924, I left Mashhad heading towards Bukhara. After a couple days, I officially left Iran and entered Soviet territory in the late part of the night. I next arrived at a small train station in Artyk¹ with the assistance of my guide, a young Turkish man, who took me to the shop of one of his Turkish acquaintances where I stayed in one of the rooms and remained hidden. On the evening of 14 December, the train heading to Bukhara arrived, and my Turkish guide purchased a ticket from the station for me, then helped pack up my sleeping gear, clothes, and books, and walked me towards the train. As I was about to board the train, a Soviet officer from behind holding a dimly lit lantern yelled out 'Stop!' to my young Turkish guide.

1. A small town in present-day Turkmenistan [Publisher]

The officer drew his gun towards us and led both of us into an office building. Once inside his office, he closed the door and carried out a thorough search of my belongings, which included even tearing open a corner of my duvet and pillow to look inside to ensure there was no paper inside containing information from another government. It was the night of 14 December and was snowing heavily. The officer confiscated everything from me—all my clothes, my sleeping gear, books, train ticket, all remaining cash, and even the medication I was travelling with—and kept my belongings in the office, while handing me prison clothes to change into, and took me to the same cell as my Turkish guide where I was to be locked up.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Artyk Prison

*A*s I was approaching the prison cell, I was overcome with the realization that I had never valued freedom throughout my entire life. This now gave me an appreciation that freedom itself is a significant gift from God Almighty. As I neared the prison cell, I almost felt as if I was being put inside a deep well, which made me very afraid. However, when the door opened, I saw seven to eight other prisoners lying on the bare floor inside, which provided me some comfort that I would not be alone.

I learned from my fellow inmates that since this was a border town, it was a practice of Soviet officials to arrest five or six men daily from the border area and release the older prisoners. Seeing this routine, I asked one of the others confined with me—who spoke Russian, Urdu, and Persian—that when the guard comes around for his next check-in, to recommend that I be released like the other prisoners who were being released. He agreed to do so as soon as the officer who put me in the cell returned. That officer showed up two days later, and my cellmate petitioned him in Russian that I should be released just like the other inmates.

To that, the officer drastically shook his head saying, *Nyet. Nyet. Nyet.* ['No. No. No.'].

The Russian authorities were so suspicious of me that when I would wake up in the middle of the night for *Tahajjud* [the pre-dawn supererogatory Prayers], the patrolling officer would watch me through the window as if I was planning to escape. Since my place in the room was next to the window, he could observe each of my movements easily and report to his superior the next morning what he interpreted I was doing. I noticed that a couple of officers would focus a great deal of attention upon my window and door. One of my cellmates ultimately informed me that the officers were very suspicious of me getting up in the middle of the night to offer my prayers and feared I was preparing to escape the prison.

For fifteen days, I remained locked up at Artyk, where I was also given daily jobs and chores to complete such as fetching water, cleaning, digging in the earth, etc. The authorities would not give me any meals. If my cellmates had outside food delivered to them or bought with their own money, they would share some with me. Otherwise, I would endure the days and nights as is.

In this prison, other inmates lovingly advised me that the only way I can get released is to declare myself a citizen of Iran or Afghanistan [as the Russians were on very friendly terms with these two states]. They said that if I were to tell them I am a British subject [since India was under British rule at the time], the Russians would look at me with a great deal of suspicion and treat me with hostility. All inmates who would speak to me—whether they were Turkish or Iranian—gave me the same advice to deny

being a British subject because the Russian government had a very tense relationship with the British.

However, since my faith forbids me from lying, I did not accept or follow this advice. Though it is highly possible that speaking this lie could have led to my release, how can any Ahmadi Muslim even contemplate lying? As my fellow inmates would give me this advice, I simply remained silent, but before God Almighty I would fall in prostration, weeping to my Lord and supplicating Him to come to my aid.

After another seven or so days in captivity, a young Turkish inmate—who also spoke Russian and Persian well—had good relationships with the Russian officers and said to me with great love and concern that I should make a bid for escape to the nearby Iranian or Afghan border. He said he has specific knowledge about me and how the Russian officers perceive me with great suspicion. He said they will transfer me to Ashgabat, then to Tashkent, and then from there to Moscow. He finished by telling me that they will ultimately either kill me or leave me in a condition that is as good as dead. For this reason, he advised that at night I go with one of the patrolling officers to relieve myself [which is done outdoors] and then make a run for the Iranian border which is only one and a half miles away. This way, I would quickly escape from the reach of the Russians; otherwise, he warned that I would be compelled to face great difficulties and pain because the Russians particularly despise Indians.

He further explained that the reason Russians hated the Indians intensely was because in the closing stages of World War I, in this very area, the Indian army led by the British had inflicted heavy losses on the Red Army and occupied this land from the

Russians. And in this battle, a great number of Russian soldiers were killed, including high-ranking military leaders. For this reason, people in this area get deeply resentful at the sight of Indians. Further, the Russians and British have completely discontinued any travel, postal service, trading, and every kind of relationship between the two nations. Thus, given this atmosphere, if any Indian attempts to enter Russian territory, he is viewed with great suspicion of being a spy who merits very harsh treatment.

Yet, even in such circumstances, it was absolutely not an option for me to run away, and I would spend day and night supplicating to God for His Divine help. And in accordance with my habit, I would wake up in the dead of night to offer my *Tahajjud* Prayers for this purpose. In the morning, after my *Fajr* Prayers [obligatory Prayer at dawn], I would recite the Holy Quran, and after the sun had risen would offer another set of extra prayers. I would turn only to God Almighty to seek Divine protection and liberation.

CHAPTER FIVE

Transfer to Ashgabat

After fifteen days of detention at Artyk, I was transferred to Ashgabat. Before boarding the train at Artyk, all my religious books that had been confiscated earlier were returned to me, and I was told to carry the heavy load to the Ashgabat prison by myself. The train journey from Artyk to Ashgabat was approximately 2 hours, and it occurred to me that I should make the most of these books while I have this opportunity. So I began to read through and memorize some of the Urdu poems written by the Promised Messiah^{as}. Throughout my life's travels, my true possession and nourishment for my soul was the writings of the Promised Messiah^{as}, which always remained in my heart and mind, whether I was asleep, awake, standing, or sitting.

Upon arriving at the Ashgabat station, they took myself and two other prisoners from Samarkand [in present-day Uzbekistan] by foot to the prison. My luggage was too heavy and I was struggling. Eventually, the Russian soldier gave some of my luggage to another prisoner, and we then arrived at the Ashgabat prison. On our way to the prison, when we passed through a marketplace, I

saw fresh bread being made at a distant shop. Deep in my heart, I wondered when I would ever be able to have fresh bread like that. At that very moment, one of the other prisoners gave a soldier some money to fetch some of this fresh bread and shared some with me right away. I was amazed having witnessed this favour from God Almighty.

At the Ashgabat prison, I began receiving regular meals which consisted of eight ounces of bread and some vegetables daily. And twice a day, I received hot water that was provided in lieu of tea. The cell where I was locked up also housed one Russian, two Armenians, two Turks, and four Iranian prisoners.

On one occasion, while tying the cords of my trousers in the cell, instead of facing the wall to have privacy, I mistakenly was facing one of the Armenian inmates. He didn't like the fact that I was facing him, which I also understood was my mistake, and he complained to a Turkish inmate, who was an older gentleman around sixty years old. This put the Turkish gentleman in a fit of rage, who furiously began yelling at me, and I responded humbly and gently by admitting my mistake and asking for their forgiveness. My soft response seemed to put out the fire of his anger and, in fact, made him embarrassed about his rage. Thus, he came to me, shook my hand, embraced me, and not only apologized for his anger but also promised never to approach me disrespectfully again.

The turn of events on that occasion is due to the teachings of the Holy Founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, the Promised Messiah^{as}, who taught to respond to insults with prayers, respond to pain with comfort, and respond to arrogance with humility.

As time passed at Ashgabat, my cellmates would often speak to each other about why they were imprisoned and would comfort each other. However, whenever it came to me, they would remorsefully say that from here I would be transferred to Tashkent, then Moscow, and then maybe even to Siberia because the Russians were more suspicious of me. As is human nature, when I would feel depressed about this, I would do *wuzu* [ablution for Islamic Prayers], and remedy my pain by being in the presence of God Almighty. This was always my experience with God Almighty that whenever I suffered an overwhelming feeling of grief, God Almighty would comfort me at that time and console me through dreams. This happened many times.

On one occasion, when I had hardly gone back to sleep in the cell after my *Tahajjud* Prayers, I saw Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih II in a clear dream admonishing me for spending all my days and nights in prison without preaching to anybody. When I woke up, I felt greatly ashamed for my negligence in the propagation of Islam but wondered how I could do so if I could not speak Russian. At that moment, a wave of urgency ran over me that come what may, I must begin learning to speak the Russian language right away.

I began by asking an Iranian cellmate if he could speak with our fellow inmate—a Russian pilot named Orlov—and ask him to teach me the Russian language. The Iranian cellmate told me not to be foolish, as the Russians are already suspicious of me and learning the Russian language could cause even further suspicion. But I now had a stubborn desire within me to learn their language and told my cellmate that it doesn't matter to me. He conveyed my request, and Orlov agreed to teach me Russian.

Therefore, that same day, Orlov took a piece of paper and wrote

the letters of the Russian alphabet—along with sample words for each letter that are common both in text and in speech—and told me to memorize and practice writing them. In my room, there was a large open furnace [an iron container used as a heater as it burned coal/charcoal] with tar on its surface. When I would go outside for addressing the call of nature, I would bring back many small dried and hard pieces of clay and spend one to two hours a day using that clay to practice writing Russian words on the furnace. In four days, I had memorized and learned how to write his sample words, and I had also identified phrases that are commonly used in conversation and learned how to write those phrases as well.

Over three months, I asked more questions and learned more vocabulary such as common food items, clothing items, parts of the body, numbers, days of the week, etc. Every day, I would stand in front of Orlov and recite the latest lesson I had memorized, which left a good impression on him. He began to take great interest in giving me Russian lessons every morning. He soon started initiating me in reading elementary books.

Throughout this process, the prison inmates would warn me that I came from a foreign country and as soon as I was incarcerated, I started learning the Russian language, which would inevitably cause the Soviet government to see me with even greater suspicion and, thus, treat me even more harshly. I would reply to them saying there should be nothing suspicious about this. I said that if they question me, I can tell them that seeking knowledge is not a crime. I am a knowledge seeker, and instead of sitting here idly, it is better that I at least spend this time increasing my

knowledge by learning how to speak Russian. This way, whenever I am freed from this place, this new language can be of benefit to me.

Nevertheless, while they kept warning me, I remained focused on my work. At night, I would wait until the guard left and would then begin writing in Russian. Anything new I learned during the day, I would spend the night writing it down to memorize it so that the next day I could learn a new lesson from my instructor.

Ashgabat is a city with a high population of Bahais, who even had a place of worship in the city. There were even Bahai businessmen in Ashgabat. Bahai men would also come into my cell as captives, and seeing them inspired me to passionately pray that God Almighty erase disbelief from this part of the earth and spread the Ahmadiyya Movement in this land. I prayed for God to bring about the circumstances so that the Ahmadiyya Movement prevails here and to let these people be enlightened by the light of faith that has been revealed by God Himself during these dark times.

Since I had never been arrested nor even seen the inside of a prison before, staying at Artyk and now here at Ashgabat generated some fear inside of me that would fill my heart with grief. When other prisoners would adamantly assert again and again that I would be taken very far away and remain a captive long into the future, I would bow down in front of God Almighty and offer fervent prayers seeking His help.

I then saw in a clear dream that Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih II was delivering his Friday Sermon, and I was sitting at his right side. In front of Huzoor were rows of people, behind whom were crowds of people standing. And everyone was listening to

Huzoor's sermon so quietly and attentively that it seemed as if their souls had left their bodies, leaving them motionless. In his sermon, Huzoor was exhorting his followers that no matter what difficulty or pain you face, you must handle it with incredible courage and strength. He said that even if the skin is ripped off your body, you still must not let go of the mission for which you have been sent. Then I saw that Huzoor began to experience some discomfort and went over to get water from a canister to rinse his mouth. He appeared feverish, and so I gave him a cane he could lean on in order to continue delivering his sermon.

After that dream, a Russian military officer took me to a room and, through a translator who could speak both Russian and Persian, began to interrogate me. I was interrogated for three and a half months.

During this time, an Iranian cellmate saw a dream about me that scared him so much that it woke him up in a state of anguish. Startled, he told me he saw a dream about me that has caused him immense distress and grief. In his dream, he saw that I had been transferred to Tashkent and then from Tashkent to Moscow. Either in Tashkent or Moscow, I cannot remember this clearly right now, the Russian government decided to execute me and, in fact, put me in front of the firing squad. However, right at the moment when they were about to fire their guns, they heard a loud voice say, 'This is my servant, do not kill him.' Hearing this voice, the firing squad was shocked and began looking around to determine where this voice came from. Not finding anyone there, they again aimed their rifles at me for my execution, but again they heard the same voice call out, 'Do not kill him. This is my servant.' Again they could not find anyone around, and as they

began their third attempt at my execution, then with a loud thunder, the earth split open and swallowed up all of them. I was left standing outside with beddings in my hand, and the loud voice emerged again, saying, 'Leave the land of the wicked and go to Karbala [in present-day Iraq].' This dream turned out to be quite true and foretold a sequence of events which followed thereafter.

It is important to note here that in Artyk, Ashgabat, and anywhere else I was incarcerated, I met many Turks, who developed a bond of love and devotion with me when they saw me offer prayers in the prison, including *Tahajjud*, and recite the Holy Quran, and maintain my humble, modest, and loving attitude. I could genuinely see the love they held for me in their hearts and that they wanted what was best for me.

While incarcerated in Ashgabat, I once attempted to get rid of the lice that had infested the waistline of my *shalwaar* [loose-fitting trousers with a drawstring waist] because I had been wearing the same *shalwaar* for the last three months. They had seized the rest of my clothes and hadn't afforded me any opportunity to even bathe yet. My *shalwaar* was so infested with lice that I simply could not get rid of all of them despite trying my best to scrape off as much as I could with my hands. In the end, I had to just put my *shalwaar* back on.

CHAPTER SIX

Transfer to Tashkent

*A*fter three and a half months, it was April 1925 when I was transferred from Ashgabat to Tashkent [capital of present-day Uzbekistan]. I was so keen to learn the Russian language that during the two-day train journey to Tashkent, I continued learning from the commanding officer in charge of the officers escorting me. His name was Ванчугов [pronounced Vanchugov]. Any time he bought food for me during the train ride, I would ask him the name of that food item, and he would tell me the Russian word for that item, which I would then memorize. In the same manner, any animals, rivers, etc. we saw along the way, he would teach me its appropriate word in Russian. This way, I learned about 50 new words en route to Tashkent.

In return, he would often ask me about the condition of the British and what their government was like. I would tell him that I was a religious person and had no connections with politics. I said the British had a great quality of allowing freedom to preach religion. The impression I got from speaking with the Russian officer was that he really wanted the British people to leave India

and go back to their country so that the Russians could occupy India. But God Almighty does not allow a cruel people to inherit the land. God would only want a just and fair government to rule.

When I arrived at Tashkent on the third day of our journey, I felt peace and comfort for leaving behind the previous prisons where I was forced to endure hunger and so little to eat. And that reminded me of the verse of the Holy Quran in which God states to the believers:

لَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنَ الْخَوْفِ وَالْجُوعِ

We will try you with something of fear and hunger. (*Sūrah al-Baqarah*, 2:156)

Now arriving in Tashkent, I began to feel a sense of peace and relief within myself. This is where God Almighty showed signs that made my faith very strong. I swear by God, in Whose Hand is my life, that in Tashkent, I saw so many miracles, splendour, and manifestations of God Almighty's power that not only cemented my faith but also enormously revived my belief in the existence of God Almighty.

While en route from Ashgabat to the Tashkent prison, my escorts gave me back some of my clothing items that were initially taken away at the station in Artyk. The items that were returned to me were a shirt, trousers, a scarf, a towel, and two new Bukhari style robes. The clothes I had been wearing this entire time had become very old and infested with lice with an offensive odour. I felt they gave me these fresh clothes in order to make a good impression of themselves as they transported a prisoner to a bigger prison in another city.

As soon as I entered the Tashkent facility, I noticed twenty to twenty-five Russian female prisoners inside who seemed alarmed to see a prisoner of my appearance wearing such Bukhari style robes. After the staff performed a full search of myself and my belongings, they took me to my cell where there were already a Shiah and four Russian men inside. When the guard came back to our cell a little later, I saw him holding a French style baguette bread, tea, and a dessert. Behind him was a Russian woman, and the guard said that the woman had given him these things to deliver to me. In a prison system where it was impossible to get anything beyond simple bread and hot water a couple times a day, it was the sheer grace and blessings of God Almighty to be given such gourmet items. I took these items from the guard's hands, faced the Russian woman behind him and said in Russian: Сестра спасибо [pronounced *Sestra spa-si-ba*], which means 'Sister, thank you.'

This wasn't a one-time thing. For fifteen days, I remained in this first cell of this jailhouse, and during this time a woman would come into my cell every afternoon and give me this fresh bread, tea, and a sweet dessert item—each time, it was a different Russian woman. I had a habit that every time I would be given food from outside, I would first thank God Almighty and submit myself entirely to His Perfect and Holy Being. Sometimes reflecting upon my own helplessness and the rewards and blessings from God Almighty would cause tears to flow from my eyes.

By the wisdom of Allah, sometimes when the women would bring me this food and see that I was not there, they would stand there and wait for me to either finish performing my Prayers or perhaps return from the restroom. When I would return, they

would very kindly and happily give me the food. Many times, one of my cellmates would tell them to leave the food and he would ensure that I received it, but the women would refuse to give it to anyone other than me.

When I was first brought to this cell, I took one of the mats from my bed and gave it to a Muslim cellmate friend and gave a blanket to a Russian inmate because he did not have anything to lay on. This Russian man's name was Makap [pronounced Makar], and when I would wake up in the middle of the night for *Tahajjud* Prayers, I would place my comforter on top of him to prevent him from getting cold. I did this for my cellmates in any prison I was sent to, and I noticed how big of an impact it has on others. Likewise, when I received the daily special food that was being delivered to me, I would share about half of it with those cellmates who I could tell needed it the most, while keeping half for myself. Often if I felt that any of my cellmates really wanted the food or were very hungry, I would give it all to them.

As soon as I arrived at Tashkent, I began memorizing additional portions of the Holy Quran, while also secretly learning to speak more Russian. There were Muslim, Armenian, and Russian inmates in the cells surrounding my cell who took a keen interest in me having noticed my different attire, my efforts to memorize the Quran, my frequent and extensive observance of Prayers, and my general silence. My behaviour was so unlike any other prisoner that it sparked a curiosity in them to find out who this man is, where is he from, and why has he been brought to this prison.

There were two rows of cells in this prison, with a walkway in between. Every prisoner was given thirty minutes twice a day to go for a walk in this walkway. Every time I would go out for

my turn to walk, people's eyes would be fixated on me as they wondered who I was. The point that had such an impact on the Russian female prisoners, as well as the guards, was that while every prisoner taking a walk would invariably stare at the female prisoners, they noticed that I would never look their way. The women remarked at how my eyes would always be cast downward while walking. Since my master, may my parents be sacrificed for him, had taught that one should keep their eyes downward as if they may be closed, so I would always look down while walking, despite becoming the reason for everyone's curiosity.

When other prisoners would come out from their cells, they acted much differently. They would stand outside the window of fellow prisoners to talk. They would bother or irritate the guards. They would get into loud quarrels with each other. Often, prisoners would argue when the guards instructed them to return inside as their time outside the cell had ended or to wait to go to the restroom.

In contrast, when the guards would come to my cell, I would greet them respectfully with *Assalaamu alaikum*,¹ and I would only go to the restroom when they said it was my time. And generally, I would do as they said. Whenever something nice came for me from outside, I would get up from where I was sitting to respectfully and lovingly offer some to the guard delivering it to me. This left a lasting impression on them.

Once I was summoned to give a statement to the commanding officer in the evening, which took all night, and I finally was sent back to my cell at dawn. After the commanding officer

1. Traditional Islamic greeting, meaning, 'Peace be upon you.' [Publisher]

closed my cell, in the presence of the prison clerk he asked the Russian guard what kind of person I am. In response, the guard complimented me greatly. Hearing this glowing review, the prison clerk instructed the guard to bring a pot of tea for me. He happily brought it to me straight away and spoke in Russian with my cellmate to tell him this entire episode of what just happened. Hearing this, my Russian cellmate was quite happy and kept telling me that not only he himself has a positive opinion about me but even the guard himself has the same opinion as well. So I took the tea and respectfully thanked him.

Therefore, by the grace of Allah, not only my own cellmate but also some prison guards were kind and sympathetic towards me after noting the unique love, humility, and open-hearted manner in which I would live my days. Even the prisoners of surrounding cells expressed astonishment and began to develop a great deal of respect for me in their hearts. While I was in the same cell, they started to regard me as a pious and holy person.

The Islamic month of Ramadan was approaching, and I set my intention to keep extra fasts now before the month began. Since the prison would allow inmates to receive meals from family members every Monday and Friday, there was one prisoner who would frequently receive his meals from his relatives. Whenever he received this home-cooked meal, he would share some with me. I never asked for any, but when he insisted so strongly, I then took some food.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Building a Reputation in Prison

 here was a set schedule for cleaning each cell, and every cellmate would clean their cell on their appointed day. When it was my turn, I would be very particular in cleaning up the cell. When my Russian cellmates would observe how clean the cell became, I would explain in my broken Russian, with the Holy Quran in my hand that this is the teaching of the Holy Quran:

وَالرُّجْزَ فَاهْجُرْ ۝

And uncleanness do thou shun. (*Sūrah al-Muddaththir*,
74:6)

Likewise, when I would share my food with them, I would pick up the Holy Quran and tell them that I am doing this in accordance with the teachings of the Quran. Anytime I spoke with them, I would refer them to the Holy Quran. I noticed that of the four

Russian cellmates, two or three of them passionately expressed a strong desire to learn the Holy Quran from me. But it was a great regret of mine that my Russian fluency was not yet at a level where I could teach them, nor was I to remain in this cell with them very long.

When our cell had its turn for our daily strolls, other Russian and Turkish prisoners would ask my cellmates about me, and my cellmates would respond with a great deal of praise. In particular, I noticed one guard whose heart had softened so much towards me that when he arrived for his shift, he would find me and inquire about my condition. He would also watch me from afar frequently and even comment that I am a humble man from India. His surname was Ша́нко [pronounced *Shanko*].

While still in the first cell of Tashkent, the other Muslim cellmate would frequently beg Russian cellmates for the food they received from outside the prison, which would irritate the Russians. Once, I stopped him from begging and gestured to him in Russian that Islam prohibits us from begging. Of course, Islam also teaches us not to refuse if someone asks for anything. How lovely are these two commandments from the Quran. On the one hand, it teaches us to avoid asking for things to safeguard ourselves from humiliation and greed, while inculcating self-respect and a spirit of being content with what we have while putting our trust in the existence of God. And on the other hand, it teaches that when someone asks for something from you, give it to them so that you inculcate the spirit of charity and sympathy within yourself and prevent miserliness.

A few days later, a major event took place when the prisoners banded together to start a голодовка [pronounced *golodovka*].

Golodovka is a Russian word that refers to a large movement when prisoners had grown tired of the Soviet regime's cruel treatment and collectively felt that their complaints were falling on deaf ears while they remained in detention without reason. The prisoners gave the commanding officer a few days' notice that soon they would halt all eating, drinking, walking, and other activities all together, and they would, instead, start to just lie on their mats like dead bodies refusing to eat. These actions were meant to demonstrate to the government that the prisoners could not tolerate the Soviet cruelties any longer and had chosen death over enslavement. Typically, when such a movement would erupt and some prisoners were on the verge of death due to starvation after up to 15 days, the commanding officers would release those prisoners out of fear.

Thus, such a movement began during my time at the prison, in which the prisoners had created a long petition, and many people signed this. When they brought the petition to me for my signature, I gently and respectfully picked up the Holy Quran and said that the Quran does not allow me to do something like this. As a result, I am unable to sign this petition.

At the same time, I wrote a separate request in Persian to the senior leader of the prison in which I cited reasons for why I [as an Ahmadi Muslim] consider it religiously forbidden to participate in such a movement that creates disturbance, social unrest, and rebellion against an administration. Addressing my captors, I wrote that I understood the underlying intention of gaining freedom, but the method they adopt will end up killing themselves, which is not right. To achieve their goal, I wrote, they must adopt a dignified method, which is to respectfully make this case to the

authorities that they have not committed any crime and, as such, should be released. This would be superior to creating social unrest and rebellion. I impressed upon the prison officials that adopting a dignified method to achieve lawful goals is the mission of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, which is why we not only stop ourselves from actions that disturb the peace of a country but also stop others from doing the same. For this reason, I will not adopt this method now. The Russian government itself considers those who do this and their supporters to be rebels. Thus they dislike this act.

The next time I faced a prison official during an interrogation after this episode, he asked me if I had also signed the starvation petition with the other prisoners. When I said no, he asked me why I did not join the movement. In response, I told him that was a rebellious method, and based on the teachings of the Quran, our Community does not consider such a method appropriate. I said that the underlying intention is to gain freedom, but the starvation method is contradictory to freedom because starvation leads to death. The commanding officer was so drawn to my reasoning that he recommended to the prison's senior leader that my remaining clothing items in their possession should be returned to me. Even a box of Lipton tea that I had brought was also returned to me.

When the Soviet government received the large petition from the prisoners, the prison's senior leader gave the order for an immediate transfer of the prisoners' barracks in order to break the unity of the inmates towards a collective movement. Therefore, all prisoners were moved to different wards of the prison. I, too, was moved to the cell in front of my previous cell that was

inhabited by eight to ten inmates who were all Muslim—some from Afghanistan, some from Bukhara, and some from the local Tashkent area.

The Muslims in this room would perform the daily Islamic Prayers in congregation. After watching me from their cell across the hall for fifteen days, they knew about me very well. Although they never had a chance to speak with me previously, they had observed my recitations of the Holy Quran, my Quranic memorization routines, my quiet demeanour, and all my daily activities. As a result, they had considered me a scholar and holy man and warmly welcomed me to their room when I was transferred. They treated me so well as to give me the preferred location within the cell and requested me to become the Imam of their group.

Due to their request, I did lead them in a few Prayers. However, I felt difficulty not only because I used to shorten the prayers due to being a traveller and would pray very slowly, but also because I was an Ahmadi Muslim and hadn't yet informed them about the message of the Promised Messiah^{as}. So I told them that I shorten my prayers and recite very slowly, which some prisoners found boring, and so it is appropriate that I should perform my prayers alone separately, which they accepted.

The month of Ramadan soon began. There were about ten prisoners who were originally locals of Tashkent and allowed to receive meals from their homes twice a week on Mondays and Fridays. On the remaining days, they were given raw meat and vegetables that they would cook themselves inside the prison, with the permission of the guards. Fortunately, I got hold of the Holy Quran, and so I focused my time on the memorization of more sections of the Holy Quran. It would take me about five days

to memorize one new part [out of the full thirty] of the Quran, and then I would spend two days practicing to learn it by heart. Through this method, I was able to memorize five parts of the Quran during the month. In addition, I would also spend more time this month reflecting on the meaning of the Quranic verses, as well as in the remembrance of God Almighty and reflecting on His attributes. The extra *Tahajjud* Prayers in the middle of the night continued to be a regular practice. After *Maghrib* [the obligatory Prayer after sunset], I would eat dinner and then get up from the area that was given to me in the cell, which was a big table on which I would lay my bed. The rest of my cellmates slept on a long wooden board that was spread across the room, while four or five people slept on the ground. I would get up from my area and go to each cellmate to ask them how they are doing in either Persian or Russian.

I don't have words to express the passion and desire I felt there realising that I was on the land of Turkistan [Russia] where my Holy Master had sent me to give the people of this country the good news of the Promised Messiah^{as}. The love and empathy that developed in my heart for these people grew so strong that it created a constant worry and anxiety about them day and night. At all times, I was preoccupied with the thought of them joining the community of the Promised Messiah^{as} so they could experience the true joy and satisfaction of Islam and the Quran. They, too, would feel the love and empathy I held for them and, at times, they were amazed that I worried more about their well-being than I did my own self.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The First Converts of the Ahmadiyya Movement in the U.S.S.R.

 It was my routine to sit with each of them individually to ask how they were doing and, based on the circumstances and the timing, I would advise them according to the teachings of the Holy Quran and the words of the Prophet Muhammad^{sas}. At times, I would provide them with a Persian translation and explanation of certain verses of the Quran. One man who knew Persian would then translate what I was saying into Turkish for the benefit of the Turkish inmates, but I oftentimes observed those Turkish inmates getting emotionally affected and beginning to sob as they listened to me even before he translated [my statements] into Turkish.

The elderly prisoner who would translate my Persian explanations into Turkish was named Abdullah Khan, and while he was originally from Kabul [Afghanistan], he had spent the

last eighteen years in Tashkent and would often lead the other inmates in Prayer. He owned two large orchards, had two wives, and a son. Even though he was much senior to me at sixty years of age, he held a great deal of respect for me. He was a rather pious and intelligent person and held quite a bit of influence within the Tashkent prison. If he ever did a shorter translation of the lessons, other Turks would get upset that why he was not translating it properly.

Because Abdullah was an Imam and more scholarly, I would show even greater respect and honour to him. However, even though he was a pious, respectable, and influential imam and scholar, he began to feel hurt by how much respect and honour the others were giving me. Hence, I would especially make it a point to delicately take him aside and preach to him privately, which he seemed to appreciate very much. Since he was the wisest and most influential man in the cell, it took me longer to open him up towards me and convince him to join the Ahmadiyya Movement compared to the others.

One time, Abdullah wanted to debate me in order to give a bad impression about me in front of the other inmates. He asked me whether it is permissible to wipe water over socks [during *wuzu*, the ablution for Islamic Prayers]. Based on the way he spoke as he approached me, I understood this was not a genuine question to seek enlightenment on the topic; rather, he was seeking to create discord and pull our fellow inmates away from me and towards himself. So, I responded very gently and lovingly, saying:

My friend, I don't know, but I swear by God [as my Witness] that the love and pain that I have in my heart for you is beyond my ability to capture in words.

I felt that debating Abdullah could become an argument, and if doing so created any grudge in his heart, it may push him away and leave him bereft of the magnificent guidance I wanted to give him. I ensured that I did not let any discord or conflict develop between us.

As it was the month of Ramadan, some Turkish Muslims in surrounding cells would send some very nice food to me in my cell. Any time I received food from outside, I would distribute it among 4 to 5 of my cellmates who were very poor. In fact, one time a Turkish Muslim kindly paid to have a sweet dish and some fresh bread delivered to the prison and gave it to me. I gave it entirely to Abdullah Khan, who was the Imam there, and said to distribute this among everyone in the room. After distributing the food to some [but not all] of our cellmates, he tried to return the rest to me, but I refused and said he should ensure everyone received a share. Every time I received food from outside my cell, I would distribute it among everyone in my cell, and I myself would eat the food given by the prison authorities. The inmates in my cell became my acquaintances and would take turns giving me just enough food as I needed to eat.

Since there were 4 or 5 cellmates who would sleep on the bare floor, I continued to informally go sit with them on the floor, where I would ask them about themselves and give advice based on the teachings of the Quran and the words of the Prophet

Muhammad^{sas}. In the morning, I would always recite verses from the Holy Quran, and then during the days I would teach my cell-mates more of the lessons from the Quran with love and passion.

One of those was Muhammad Hussain, who had been captured from Bukhara some time ago and was in my cell. Whenever I taught him about the Quran, I would accompany that lesson with advice for him. I also made it a point to give him food that was brought for me. All of this had such an impact upon his heart that late at night—after everyone had fallen asleep and even the guards had departed from the view of our cell—when I delivered the message of the Ahmadiyya Movement to him, he readily accepted it, thereby becoming the first convert to the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community in the USSR.

The second person to join the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community was a young wealthy Turkish man named Muhammad Yaar, who owned a few orchards in Tashkent. When I would preach to him, he would be so moved by the message that tears would roll down his eyes. I also taught him how to read the Quran in Arabic. He was an incredibly sincere person and absorbed the Ahmadiyya Movement's teachings into every fibre of his being. After working with him for some time, when I saw that he had become so inclined towards me, I was convinced that as soon as he would hear the invitation to the Ahmadiyya Movement, he would accept and become an Ahmadi Muslim.

Therefore, I made the intention that in the last part of the night, I would sit with him and convey the message of the Ahmadiyya Movement through Muhammad Hussain. When everyone had gone to sleep and even the guards left our cell, I called

him and Muhammad Hussain to me and employed Muhammad Hussain as the translator to first instruct him to go perform the *wuzu* and then to listen to this message carefully. I would speak to Muhammad Hussain in Persian, and he would translate it into Turkish for Muhammad Yaar. I vividly remember the moment when I conveyed the arrival of the Promised Messiah^{as}, he began to weep inconsolably. Everything I said, he accepted.

During the course of the conversation, we spoke about Prayer. When I told him that we should not pray behind others who have not yet accepted the Messenger sent from God, he then asked why it would be any harm to pray behind other Muslims if the mode and number of Prayers is the same. To this, I replied that according to God Almighty, their Prayers remain empty of true worship. Those Muslims perform Prayers as a ritual, as they have become deaf to its true sincerity. It is as if the actual fruit slipped away and all that is left in their hand is its outer peel. Their Prayers are like a body from which the soul has departed, and what benefit can you derive from praying behind a dead body? If God Almighty had seen their Prayers as valuable and sincere, He would not have needed to send a Messiah and Mahdi for their reformation. He sent the Messiah to teach Muslims how to benefit from real Prayer and worship. Hearing this, Muhammad Yaar agreed with my response and accepted the invitation to join the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community.

After a while, the Soviet administration became extremely suspicious of me, and I was left with no means to continue preaching. In order to continue to educate my newly converted brothers, I would secretly and privately say with my limited Russian

fluency about Hazrat Mirza Bashir-ud-Deen Mahmood Ahmad: Он очень Много [pronounced *On ochen Mnoga*]—a shorthand way for me to say, ‘He is a very big [important, holy] person.’ And referring to myself, I would say: я ничего нет [pronounced *Ya nichego nyet*]—which means, ‘I am nothing’, in order to convey that Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih was a true noble and significant leader, whereas I myself am nothing in comparison.

I would say this because Muhammad Yaar considered me a scholar of the highest order, and I made it a point to use different approaches to develop a love and awe in his heart for the Promised Messiah^{as}. And I would tell him that the Promised Messiah’s first successor was Hazrat Maulana Noor-ud-Deen^{ra}—a unique and one-of-a-kind scholar—and his second and current successor is his eldest son, Hazrat Mirza Bashir-ud-Deen Mahmood Ahmad. Muhammad Yaar used to read the Quran sometimes during the day, but after this discussion, he increased his frequency and often would recite the Quran in the prison for most of the night and then sleep during the day.

The third person to join the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community was Abdullah Khan, the same Imam who would lead Prayers in my cell and who would translate my Persian explanations into Turkish. Whenever the inmates asked religious questions, my method of answering was to first quote the relevant verses from the Quran and then follow with an explanation that contained the answer to their question. I would do the same with the Hadith [sayings of the Prophet Muhammad]. This was highly effective on everyone, especially on him.

One day after the *Maghrib* Prayer, the inmates once again gathered and asked me where I had received this knowledge of religion from. Until now, I had not yet informed them about the

coming of the Promised Messiah^{as}. However, on this day, I determined it had become necessary to tell them; otherwise, it would be a betrayal of their trust if I did not tell them now.

I responded:

Brother, I am the recipient of spiritual nourishment from a person who did not learn religious knowledge by going to school, nor to Iran, nor anywhere in Turkistan, nor to British countries.

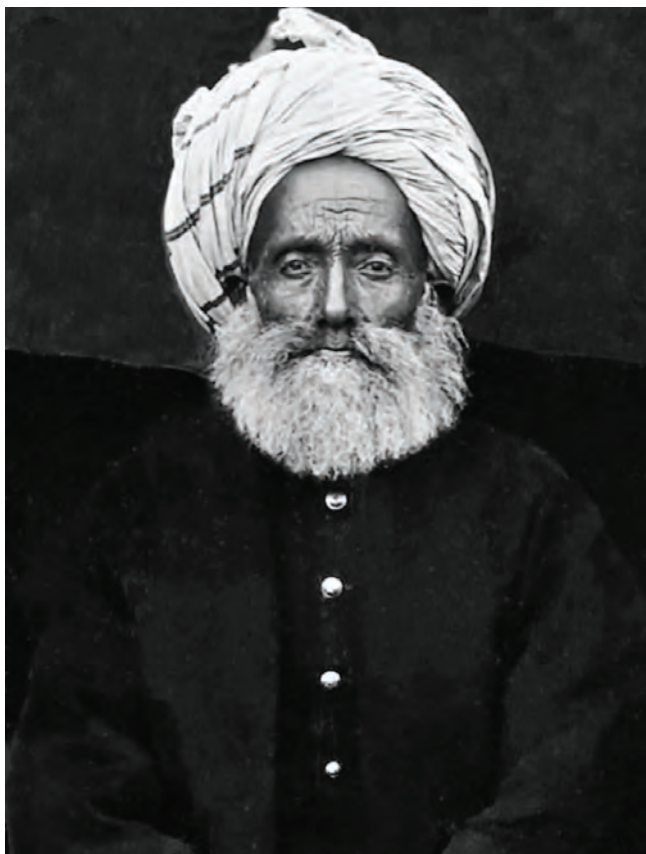
I then quoted from the poem the Promised Messiah^{as} had written in Persian:

دگر استاد را نامے ندانم کہ خواندم در دبستانِ محمدؐ

I know not the name of any other teacher;

I have studied at the school of Muḥammad^{sas}.

Abdullah Khan was a native of Kabul and was very well acquainted with Persian. Hearing this couplet of the Promised Messiah^{as} touched him so much that he began to cry profusely and bowed his head in humility. Seeing his condition, I told him that he should stay awake that night until 1 a.m., at which time I would have something to say to him. At that late hour, the Russian soldier outside was also asleep, and nobody knew what was happening. Abdullah Khan stayed awake until then and came to me between midnight and 1 a.m. First, we did a silent prayer together, and then I gave him the news of the coming of the Promised Messiah in the person of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as}, along with a brief overview of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community.



Hazrat Sahibzada Abdul Latif^{ra}
An early Arghan convert to the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community
who was stoned to death for his faith.

Upon hearing this information, Abdullah Khan suddenly brought up Hazrat Sahibzadah Abdul Latif^{ra}—a very highly esteemed Afghan scholar who was stoned to death by the royal Ameer of Afghanistan in 1903 after accepting the long-awaited Promised

Messiah^{as} and joining the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community. Abdullah recounted how Hazrat Sahibzadah Abdul Latif^{ra} had been martyred in Kabul, Afghanistan, and that he himself was present at that gathering when he was stoned. Abdullah proceeded to say that he believes perhaps Hazrat Sahibzadah Abdul Latif^{ra} was a disciple of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as}. I told him indeed that is the case. Abdullah then said that it had been known that the Imam Mahdi^{as} had come to Punjab, but he did not learn or understand the details until now after having spoken with me. Therefore, by the grace of God Almighty, Abdullah Khan then joined the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community.

In this way, the inmates of my cell gradually accepted the Promised Messiah^{as}. My method of preaching was that when I saw someone becoming particularly moved by my frequent lessons, I would determine that there would be nothing stopping him from accepting the Promised Messiah^{as} who is the source of everything I taught. And so I would particularly preach to that person.

When Abdullah Khan became an Ahmadi Muslim, some men from the Soviet government started to suspect that he had joined me in my mission. So they sent two Muslim clerics from outside to come visit me in my cell. Nobody had said anything to them about the coming of the Mahdi and Messiah in India, nor that I am one of his missionaries, but still as soon as these two clerics entered our cell, they tried to convince Abdullah Khan to stay away from the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community. They told Abdullah he should not accept our beliefs, saying that all the scholars of their country had issued a fatwa [religious proclamation] declaring members of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community to be disbelievers, who are now widely stoned to death. To their chagrin, since the teachings of the Ahmadiyya Movement had so

thoroughly penetrated Abdullah's heart, their empty words could not take him away from his newfound faith.

When I would meet individually with Abdullah Khan, he would tell me to just wait until he gets released from prison—I would then see how far and wide he would preach the Ahmadiyya Movement's message. The reason for Abdullah's imprisonment in Tashkent was that he had a great deal of influence on Muslims, and the Bolsheviks would commonly imprison such people so that any group of Muslims gaining strength could not rise up against the Soviet regime or otherwise create any kind of social unrest.

CHAPTER NINE

A KGB Spy Enters our Midst

*J*ust a few days later, a local Tashkent man named Abdul Qadir was placed in my cell who was clearly quite wealthy and intelligent, but also turned out to be a high-ranking officer of the government. He was a contemporary man who we came to know was a respected spy for the Soviet KGB secret service, and he was secretly brought into the prison exclusively to discover more about me and my background. As soon as he came in, he began asking me many different questions.

By that time, most of the men in my cell had accepted the Ahmadiyya Movement, although nobody else had knowledge of this—so much so, that even some Ahmadi Muslim converts in the prison had no idea who the other Ahmadi converts were within the prison. I did this due to how fragile the situation had become at that time. If the Ahmadiyya Movement's message was proclaimed and preached loudly in these circumstances—and the Russian rulers saw a group of inmates congregating around one

belief system—it would have created a great deal of trouble. The Soviets would interpret the spread of a unified belief system as a conspiracy.

When Abdul Qadir first entered our cell, Abdullah Khan lovingly took me aside and advised me in confidence to be careful of this person and not to preach too much to him. But since I was especially zealous at that time to convey the message of the Promised Messiah^{as} and dispel the myths and misconceptions of the people, I did not want to be segregated from this newcomer. Instead, I continually answered his questions and objections. Little did I know that this person would later deliver a shocking and painful grief to me.

Once, as soon as Abdul Qadir entered the room, he started speaking to Abdullah Khan, asking him when I would be released from prison. He asked this question because on the first day when he arrived into our cell, all the inmates in the cell introduced him to me in a very favourable manner. As soon as he asked this question, I asked my brother Abdullah to explain to him that God Almighty tells the Prophet Muhammad^{sas} in the Holy Quran to say the following:

لَوْ كُنْتُ أَعْلَمُ الْغَيْبَ لَا سَأَلْتُكَ مِنْ الْخَبْرِ

[Say,] ‘If I had knowledge of the unseen, I should have secured abundance of good.’ (*Sūrah al-A‘rāf*, 7:189)

If the Prophet of God^{sas} did not have knowledge of the unseen, who am I to know when in the future I will be released?

The next day, he asked me a religious question through Abdullah Khan, saying to inform me that since he does not speak

Persian, he is asking Abdullah Khan to translate. His question was about Maulana Rumi's book *Masnawi*, which had been translated and interpreted in Turkish as well and contains a statement in its preface from Bayazid Bastami [a 9th century Persian Sufi] who says, 'Glory be to Me! How great is My majesty!' But on the other hand, the Prophet Muhammad^{sas} said to God Almighty: 'Glory be to Thee. We haven't even recognized You the way we should have.' So comparing these two statements, Abdul Qadir said that the rank of Bayazid Bastami seems to be greater than that of Prophet Muhammad^{sas} and he wanted to know my opinion of it. Abdul Qadir was explaining this question to Abdullah Khan at great length, but once I heard him say the two Arabic quotes—the one attributed to Bayazid Bastami and the other attributed to the Prophet Muhammad^{sas}—I immediately understood his question.

I told Abdullah Khan to calm him down and tell him I have understood his question, to which Abdul Qadir fell silent. I first repeated his question in two to three sentences in Persian—that since Bastami's statement apparently demonstrates his glory, whereas the Prophet Muhammad^{sas} maintained all glory only belongs to God Almighty, does this mean that, God forbid, the status of Bastami is greater than the Prophet Muhammad^{sas}? I was repeating this question in Persian, and immediately Abdul Qadir nodded in agreement at my understanding of his question. I immediately realized that he had previously said he did not know any Persian, but somehow he completely understood my Persian summary of this question. He cleverly picked up on my realization and told Abdullah Khan to tell me that if someone speaks in Persian, he can understand, but he cannot speak it.

For any matter, I explained to him that comparing Bayazid

Bastami's statement to Prophet Muhammad's statement itself exposes who is greater. Bayazid Bastami can be seen as just a novice student who reads some rudimentary aspects of a topic yet proudly considers himself to be a scholar. On the other hand, the Prophet Muhammad's^{sas} statement proves he is a great scholar, for every step that a true scholar takes towards knowledge, he realizes that he has yet so much to learn, whereas everything he has learned thus far is trivial. I said that Prophet Muhammad^{sas}—who was a perfect Prophet far surpassing all others in spirituality and wisdom—dove [deep] into the sea of Divine wisdom and instinctively uttered these words in recognition of the perfect manifestation of God's wisdom. In the same way, the Prophet Muhammad^{sas}, who was the perfect prophet and far ahead of all prophets in spirituality and mysticism, dove into the ocean of God's knowledge and realized the perfect manifestation of God, Who possesses the highest level of knowledge. That is why he uttered the words, 'Glory be to Thee. We haven't even recognized You the way we should have.' Abdul Qadir liked the answer I gave to Brother Abdullah Khan so much that he said this is precisely the very reply furnished in the commentary of the *Masnawi*. He concluded that either I wrote this answer in that book myself or otherwise memorized this answer from the book. I responded saying that this is just the first answer, and I would also give him the second answer. However, since Abdullah Khan knew that this man was sent as a spy from the government and having already become an Ahmadi Muslim had feared I might get caught in his words, he scolded me like a father would scold his son, saying 'Don't bother me, and don't talk too much.' That ended the conversation.

Since Abdul Qadir was sent to my cell as a spy from the Soviet

government in the guise of a prisoner, every day after *Asr* [late afternoon] Prayers he would be called by the government officers to report to them what he had learned about me. The very next day he told them that I am a great scholar and to provide me with two books of the *Masnawi* right away. Therefore, I began studying the *Masnawi* in prison.

In Tashkent, it was very common to have regular lessons about the *Masnawi*, and anyone who could give a good lesson on this book was considered a major scholar. With my new book, I memorized a few of his [Rumi's] poems while in prison, but when my cellmates asked me some questions, I would oftentimes recite the Persian couplets of the Promised Messiah^{as}, and they would rejoice. Certainly, the poetic expressions of Rumi in *Masnawi* are rather splendid, but the Persian poems of the Promised Messiah^{as} in comparison are a much loftier manifestation of the love for God Almighty. The Promised Messiah^{as} has so beautifully said about the Prophet Muhammad^{sas}, 'Those who have deep knowledge of God are they who recognize the pure face of the Prophet Muhammad^{sas}, and those who are the true and sincere servants of God are they who possess firm love for the Prophet Muhammad^{sas}.'

After that, Abdul Qadir began to approach those inmates who were political prisoners (including those prisoners who were wealthy businessmen) and tell them that I am a great scholar. In reality, this so-called compliment in fact made me a greater suspect in the eyes of the Russian leadership because it led them to think that such a great religious scholar could not have chosen to enter this country for no reason. They assumed the reason I came was to implement some sort of British mission to stir up agitation and animosity among the Muslims of Bukhara against the

Soviet regime while simultaneously gathering intelligence about this country.

Since these people were largely atheist, they simply could not comprehend or appreciate that religion is so important that religious missionaries are willing to make every sacrifice for its cause. And the passion for spreading Divine religion is a fire that cannot be extinguished by anyone's efforts. We are happily ready to sacrifice all our worldly possessions and suffer all kinds of trials and tribulations for the sake of our love for God. And at every opportunity, keep the pleasure of God Almighty above all else. I find this writing of the Promised Messiah^{as} so amazing when he says:

مجھ کو دے اک فوق عادت اے خدا جوش و تپش جس سے ہو جاؤں میں غم میں دین کے اک دیوانہ وار

Oh Lord, give me a supernatural fervour,

by which I become zealous in the love of my religion.

وہ لگا دے آگ میرے دل میں ملت کے لیے شعلے پہنچیں جس کے ہر دم آسمان تک بے شمار

Let him light the fire in my heart for this Community,

the flames of which reach the sky in abundance.

I still remember the day after the first time I met Abdul Qadir, I had a dream in which I saw that I am leading the others in one of the daily Prayers in our cell. Then one of the people praying behind me reaches around and rubs dirt into my eyes, which causes a great deal of pain in one of my eyes. Since this person was very important, he was the only one who would have food and new clothes delivered from his home every day, whereas everyone else was allowed to have food and clothes from the outside twice

a week. It is clear this dream foretold the behaviours of Abdul Qadir.

Now, the question arises as to why the government sent Abdul Qadir to investigate me in the first place. The answer is that in this country, the irreligious and atheist ideology is much larger in comparison to other countries, which is why the government thinks ill of religious people and views them with suspicion. In the first World War of 1914, the Russian Czar, Nikolai II Alexandrovich Romanov, was murdered, and the first person to become head of the government was Vladimir Lenin. As soon as Lenin became president, he said, 'Богa нет. Все мы товарищи' [pronounced *Boga nyet. Vse my tova-rishchi.*], meaning, 'There is no God. We are all comrades.'

Since these words came from the most powerful man in the nation, it influenced the public all over the country, and people were in awe of the new powerful rule. Any open acceptance of the existence of God was seen as inflicting pain and suffering on oneself. Consequently, many Christian pastors and other scholars were killed at that time, and many were expelled from the country out of the suspicion that they would destroy the country by creating social unrest under the guise of religion. Thus, in the eyes of the government, religious leaders incite rebellions and are the enemy of the state. The Russian government would, thus, put any religious teachers or preachers through all sorts of misery and suffering.

If the government would persecute religious figures of their own country, just imagine how they would see someone like me who is a religious missionary from another country! Since they were totally alienated from religion, they were incapable of

understanding that someone could leave behind their country, loved ones, friends, all comforts, and put themselves through so much trouble merely to spread and preach the message of their faith. That's why they suspected that I must have had some ulterior motive that I was pursuing under the guise of religion. In their mind, I was either a spy or, alternatively, came from a type of group whose goal is to rule the country. Due to this suspicion they had of me, they would interrogate me in different ways and had launched a deep investigation about me.

Before I explain just how Abdul Qadir turned the government and authorities against me, I think it is important to first describe the interrogations they kept putting me through. Ten days after arriving at Tashkent, a soldier came to take me to my first interrogation. They didn't handcuff their prisoners; instead, they have an armed guard on each side of the prisoner.

I had a habit that whenever I had to go for interrogation, I would do *wuzu* [ablution for Prayer] and then do a silent prayer in which I would pray:

O God! I bear a responsibility that has been entrusted to me by your appointed Khalifah for which I have been sent here. So give me the strength to give a true and correct statement, and don't let anything I say or do have a negative effect on the message I have brought that would turn people away from the Faith.

I always kept the couplet from the poem of Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih II in my mind:

عمر ہو پسر ہو بیتی ہو کہ آسائش ہو کچھ بھی ہو بند مگر دعوت اسلام نہ ہو

*Be you in poverty or prosperity, straitened as it may be—
Whatever it be—never cease the message of Islam!*

The officer presiding over my first interrogation seemed to be a Christian who appeared very kind and just. He respectfully gave me a chair, and when I sat down, he offered me some fruit, along with the translator, and ate some himself as well. He then began to ask his questions through the translator—a Turkish man who spoke both Persian and Russian well.

During the interrogation, he asked me about the views of the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement and what teachings he imparted on his followers. I gave him a short summary that the Promised Messiah^{as} was commissioned by God Almighty to be sent for the betterment of people, in the same way as previous Messengers had also been sent by God for the same purpose. I said that he did not bring any new law; rather, he came to present the true form of the same Islam and Holy Quran that Muslims believe in, which was necessary because—despite already having the Quran—Muslims these days have become deprived of its true teachings.

I had with me the small Urdu booklet entitled *Differences between an Ahmadi and a Non-Ahmadi* written by the Promised Messiah^{as} himself [which has now been translated into English under the title ‘The Advent of the Promised Messiah’]. I took that in hand and explained that in this book, the Promised Messiah^{as} had delineated the differences between Ahmadi Muslims and other Muslims. I enlightened him about the ten conditions of *Bai‘at*

[the Pledge of Allegiance] framed by the Promised Messiah^{as} that people must accept in order to join the Community. Thereafter, per his order, I translated the 10 conditions into Persian, and the presiding officer made a note of them.

Since these were the teachings of a holy and pious man, I saw that it had a very positive impact on not only the translator but also the Christian presiding officer, who wrote down the 10 conditions as they were translated from Persian into Russian. They also translated the entire booklet in Russian soon after so that they can become familiar with the teachings and principles of the Promised Messiah^{as}. This, thereby, became the first book written by the Promised Messiah^{as} to be translated from Urdu into Russian by an actual Russian, and the Soviet government's people read it.

The next day, the same officer brought the same Turk translator to the prison and began asking me questions again. Some questions were political and others were religious in nature. One question he asked was:

What is your opinion of Gandhi and Muhammad Ali Shaukat's protest movement in Punjab [India] against the British government?

I told him we follow one Imam, and we stay away from any movement that is detrimental to the peace and harmony of the country or contains any hint of rebellion. Wherever we are, we help the ruler of that nation to maintain peace and harmony.

He continued to ask me many other questions like this, and at the end he told me that all of my answers and statements will

be sent to Moscow, from where they will get approval on whether or not I can be released back to India. After taking a second statement, this officer was transferred, and my case was handed over to another officer.

The new officer was a young man originally from Tatar, who was a great scholar and a former Muslim who became an atheist after the Bolshevik revolution and rose through the ranks of the government. He began questioning me on different matters from different angles. Sometimes he would question me as if I were a Turkish spy. At other times, he would question me as if I were a member of the Bahai religion. I would tell him that I am a preacher from the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, and then he began asking for our methods of publication, administration, and general management. He asked what the rights are of the Khalifah. Assuming I was a cunning political operator, he would ask me strange questions. In short, he would make assumptions about me and then seek statements from me.

Some interrogations would begin in the early evening and last the entire night until the morning. He thoroughly went through all the questions about the Ahmadiyya Movement, including the names of its preachers, the names of its administrative leaders, details regarding the locations of our foreign missions along with the name of the missionary assigned to each, the size of our Community, list of our periodicals, circulation of our newspapers, a summary of those who hadn't yet converted, why they hadn't converted yet, etc. In short, he interrogated me very systematically, asking for every imaginable detail.

Yet through this all, God Almighty's infinite wisdom shone through. The first officer who presided over my initial two

interrogations—after having observed not just my interrogations but also my humility and love, and also owing to the fact that he was a Christian—had a very positive opinion of me. Even more amazingly, the translator for my interrogations [the young Turkish man who spoke both Persian and Russian] himself joined the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community as a new convert to the Faith after just the second interrogation. He came to me and privately told me himself in Persian that he had become an Ahmadi Muslim. During this period when I was held under intense suspicion, he supported me, constantly comforted me, and helped me in every way he could. Often when the interrogating officer asked a complex question, he would not only translate it but would tell me in Persian how I should best answer the question.

CHAPTER TEN

Soviet Pressure Intensifies

At this time, Abdul Qadir, the local Tashkent man who was sent as a spy to investigate me while disguised as an inmate, was now revealed to be very duplicitous. This is the same man who, after spending considerable time inquisitively asking all variety of questions on topics that were relevant to Islamic clergy at that time, praised me openly as being a great scholar and ordered for not only Rumi's book, *Masnawi*, to be provided to me but also that food from outside the prison facility to be offered to me. He is the same man who called me a great scholar whose knowledge of the Quran and Hadith was so high that it far surpassed Tashkent's most renowned scholar, named Mullah Shami.

The more he praised me, the more the government began to grow in their suspicion of me. They began to wonder that if I am such a great scholar and wise man, why did I attempt to enter their country without a passport and that I must be hiding my true intent. Despite this, the head officer of the prison asked other guards about me and summoned other prisoners one at a time to

ask what type of things I talked about. So he explored multiple ways to inquire about me. As high ranking of an officer he was, I can say that Allah gave him a great level of understanding as well. His name was Бельский [pronounced *Belsky*].

Abdul Qadir remained in my cell for at least a month, and he would feverishly ask various questions every single day. His biggest curiosity was on the topic of why the condition of Muslims in those days was so poor and what could be done to improve their condition. He asked me if Muslims would one day rule again. He asked when the *Dajjaal* [Antichrist] would appear, when Muslims would finally be able to rule, when would disbelief be eradicated from this world, when would Muslims finally gain freedom from the cruel Soviet government, etc. While asking me such suspicious questions, he would also offer me exquisite food—which I would often refuse because of my nature. Of course, I would not refuse food offered with love and sincerity.

By the wisdom of God, on the day he was put into my prison cell, about fifteen influential businessmen of the Muslim city of Tashkent were also brought in who were victims of Abdul Qadir and imprisoned due to him. It was God's will that they should partake in the blessings that God Almighty had sent in this age.

Thus, everything he asked me, those around me would share with others, and they would compliment me a lot. Sometimes I would give some of the food I received to other Russian prisoners in adjacent prison cells. I had taken a Lipton tea box with me, which was given to me during the month of Ramadan while at Tashkent. I put half of that tea in paper and distributed it among the prisoners in my cell, as well as those in adjacent cells, including some Muslim inmates and some Russian inmates who

I had become familiar with. In similar fashion, whenever I had a chance, I would treat them this way. As a result, within a few days the inmates of my cell began to respect me so much that they would themselves bring to me the food that the government would provide for me from outside the prison. They would bring tea to me, make my bed, and bring me water when I needed it for *wuzu* [ablution for Islamic Prayers] or even help me perform the *wuzu* itself.

Every 15 days, prisoners were taken to the separate bathing facilities, where all prisoners—Russian, Armenian, even some Muslim—would bathe naked in the same place. However, some Turkish Muslims used to pay extra money and bathe in a separate area with separate curtains [for privacy]. They would take me along so I could bathe there as well and would pay the necessary money on my behalf. I learned through my experience in prison that if a person genuinely keeps love in their heart for humankind and engages in selfless acts for them, it has an unparalleled effect on other people's hearts.

There were several Russian inmates who came in contact with me and expressed great friendship and care for me. Some had even given me their home address, saying that when I am free I should come visit them and stay with them.

Now, almost one month later, this same Abdul Qadir reported back to the Soviet regime leadership that based on his investigations, he concluded that I am a spy who is an expert on political issues.

This was the moment that sparked intensified suspicion from Soviet leadership with increased activity around me as a result. Two men were placed in my cell to find out more about me. Two

more people were appointed outside the window of my cell, who would take turns observing my activities from that vantage. They even placed two additional spies in the cell next to mine, which contained mostly Russian prisoners who had permission to visit my cell. Those two spies would come by every now and then and observe what I am doing. When it was my turn for a morning stroll, I would see two additional guards who scrutinized how I looked and walked. At all times, there were people near me on all sides in order to listen in on all my conversations and understand what I spend my time talking about.

These activities were so clear and intense that I noticed a change in the behaviour of the inmates around me. The same inmates who would regularly offer me food, would sit by me and offer me tea, and would take my advice and ask questions, now suddenly stopped interacting with me. They distanced themselves from me—no longer offering me food or tea, no longer sitting with me to ask for advice. They no longer would even listen to what I said. This was because it was clear that the government was trying to determine which other inmates had accepted my thoughts and messages, for which reason the inmates were scared to even look in my direction out of the fear that it would incriminate them as well.

The man who reported me to be a spy, Abdul Qadir, was not only a Muslim but also a trusted employee of the government who had previously praised me for many days. The officer himself doubted that such a great scholar and wise man could leave his relatives and country without reason and, thus, held the view that there must be a reason that I am not sharing. Due to all these circumstances, many government officials turned staunchly against

me and changed their plans for me. It was, thus, decided that I should be executed because the punishment for spying—even for their own citizens—is death by firing squad. In fact, around the same time, a Russian inmate had been taken out of our cell and was executed for this same accusation.

By the grace and help of God Almighty, there were still guards and even some officers who were inclined towards me and would never be able to bear seeing my murder. Of the people who had sympathies towards me included the Christian officer who had presided over my first two interrogations, the translator who had become an Ahmadi Muslim, as well as a cleaning person who I first met during my imprisonment at Ashgabat. When I was transferred to Tashkent, he had also been reassigned to the same Tashkent prison. He was very kind to me and would help me.

When the government decided to target me and planned my murder, they resolved to gather more incriminating evidence through interrogations or other means, even if their own agent accused me of being a spy. This was to ensure the highest officer had no doubt about my guilt. With this intention, they had placed many additional spies around me to find ways to make me look guilty. When I observed this behaviour and the additional suspicion with which I was being treated with all eyes on me, and that nearly everyone around me stopped providing me assistance and support, I began to lose hope for my life being spared. I became convinced that the seed of the Ahmadiyya Movement would be sown in this country with the blood of a martyr.

It was with this realization that a longing emerged in my heart to see Darul-Aman [the Abode of Peace], Qadian, one more time, and to meet Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih one more time. But as time

went on, I abandoned even this wish and turned my full attention towards God Almighty and prayed:

O God! I truthfully and wholeheartedly hand my life over to You. I relinquish all my own desires and turn to You. O God! Please spread the Ahmadiyya Movement throughout this land, and shine Your light upon their faces and hearts. And please do with me whatever You know is best.

I then spoke with Muhammad Hussain—the first Ahmadi convert in prison who was originally from Bukhara—and said to him:

My brother, I ask you in the name of God to do something for me. No matter how much you may need to walk on foot, how hungry you may need to be, or even how long it may take you, find a way to reach Qadian and deliver a message to my beloved leader, Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih. Please tell him that the man who loves him dearly, who he has a close relationship with and who he sent to Bukhara with Mohammad Amin Khan, has been executed in the land where he was sent after being held captive in a Russian jail. And tell him that I did not feel any panic or cowardice in the face of my death; rather, how I remained a courageous believer and follower of the courageous Messiah^{as}. And tell him that until my last breath, I held firm that God exists, the perfect manifestation of Whom was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad^{sas} 1,300 years ago and has reappeared in the person of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as}. And tell him that I always held firm to the desire in my heart for

the spread and success of the Ahmadiyya Movement, for which I happily and proudly gave my life.

On the same day, a man was arrested and brought into the adjoining cell, which was mostly occupied by Russian prisoners. This man was originally from Bhera [in present-day Pakistan] but had been running a café in Bukhara for many years. By being in the adjacent cell, he was able to come into my cell, where he would speak with me and inform the government about me. One day, seeing a Quran in my hand, he came to my cell and asked me what book I was holding. At that time, I had a strong passion for preaching the message of the Ahmadiyya Movement. So I responded saying that this is that book in which every single page, every single line, and every single word one can find the essence of my life. I said this is the source of my peace and comfort, for which I can sacrifice every limb of my body millions of times over. I said I am in love with this book.

Then I turned to Abdullah Khan and told him that as a man of God, I would proudly accept any death that comes to me on God's path. I told him not to fear anything that may come upon him. Instead, I said, he should be brave and not be afraid at all about that which I brought to him, as this is what the Promised Messiah and Mahdi^{as} has given us. I emphatically said to him that if I am killed, then on the Day of Judgment when he is in front of God, I want him to give honest testimony that I lived for the sole purpose of elevating God and His love while on this earth.

I became so worked up and said this so loudly that a prison officer came inside and began walking in front of my cell. As soon as this loud voice emanated from within me and I completed what

I wanted to say, Abdullah Khan spontaneously spoke up saying that he, too, is not afraid of anyone and is ready to sacrifice his life in the cause of this faith should he be required to do so.

The new man who had posed the initial question about the Quran quietly returned back to his cell without saying a word, and he did not try to continue a relationship with me from that point forward.

On so many occasions, the government's spy, Abdul Qadir, attempted to discover which inmates inside the prison had embraced my ideas. He would often try to spark a debate between myself and two Muslim clerics appointed by the Soviet regime in an effort to create distance between Abdullah Khan and myself and to also turn the rest of the inmates against me. He constantly bothered me so he could discover who supported me.

However, having identified what Abdul Qadir was trying to do, I would do my best to bear through it silently with patience. This resulted in moments when some of my cellmates would impulsively speak up, scolding him and stopping him from arguing with me.

Whenever the intensity of suspicion against me would become excessive and many individuals coming to my cell would quiz me, I would remain as quiet as possible and not say a word so that they wouldn't have the ability to twist my words when reporting back to the government. Instead, I remained busy with my work, while remembering the wisdom that the safety of humankind lies in the protection of the tongue [i.e. watching what we say].

During these days, I spent time reading Maulana Rumi's book, *Masnawi*, and a couple other books that were given to me. After Abdul Qadir's claim that I am a spy, the State Prosecutor who

would interrogate me attempted to twist my statements in order to find anything to incriminate me as a political spy. One day, during the interrogation he asked me whether my religion required me to obey the legally established ruling authority wherever I lived. I replied in the affirmative that indeed this is required.

I knew the purpose of his question was to allege that if such obedience is necessary, then I must admit this is the reason I came to spy on the Soviets at the command of the British government. He would not reveal the real purpose of his question and would, instead, hide it. Therefore, he instructed me to put that same affirmative answer in writing. He wrote the question on a piece of paper and passed it to me to write my response and apply my signature.

In my response, I wrote that according to my religion, obedience is indeed required; however, if the ruling authority orders me to do something that is forbidden in the religion itself, I am exempt from obeying that order. So I am only obligated to obey orders that do not violate my religion's commandments. For example, if the ruler orders to stop praying, stop fasting, to drink alcohol, or to spy on anyone, I would not do that since these orders violate the Quran's teachings. The Quran has ordered to say Prayers and to fast, while also explicitly forbidding not only alcohol but also spying when it is written: لَا تَجَسَّسُوا [Spy not] (*Sūrah al-Ḥujurāt*, 49:13).

I wrote that no matter how forcefully the ruler or government commands, I would not follow such orders. When the prosecutor heard my written response from the interpreter, he became furious and yelled angrily, questioning how I could disobey the ruler's orders to spy on another nation if God grants rulers their power

and commands obedience to them. He alleged this would be tantamount to disobeying God Himself!

I responded that the same God who commanded obedience to the ruler of the land also has given us His own guidance on many matters, and He told us that in these matters we must obey God's commandments. To this, the prosecutor asked what I would do if the ruler compelled me, punished me, or even ordered my death for disobeying his command. I replied that if I were absolutely certain I would be killed for disobeying, then, perhaps fearing for my life, I might tell the ruler that I would go to another country to spy, as preserving life is important to everyone. This question made me very nervous that day as to what deeper intentions the prosecutor had by asking this of me, but the translator comforted me, saying in Persian [so that nobody else could understand] not to worry and that I answered the question well.

The State Prosecutor continued to ask questions along these lines. I clarified that first and foremost, we have no connection with politics and, rather, our foremost responsibility is to preach religion. But as a citizen of a nation, if our country is under attack from an enemy and our government calls upon us to fight to protect the country, that is unrelated to religion and is, instead, a war for the country. Consequently, if necessary, we would take part in that war to save not only ourselves but also our country. At that time, it would not matter if the opposing army includes Ahmadi Muslims because this would be a battle for the sake of our country and our priority should be the interests and security of our country. He continued asking me many more questions like this to which I answered according to my understanding.

During my interrogation sessions, many officers would try to

sneak glances at me without my noticing and then would leave. Once an officer entered while I was making a statement and then himself spoke to the State Prosecutor in Russian. I asked the translator what they had said to one another, and the translator told me the officer said that I seemed young and appeared to only be in my teens. In response, the prosecutor warned not to be fooled by my young age because I was very clever as well as a scholar.

It is noteworthy to realize the full method that was being used to create a narrative about me. On the one hand, the State Prosecutor would take me from my cell to the interrogation centre for these regular sessions so I can directly answer his questions, but it would not end there. When I would be sent back to my cell, the government's spy, Abdul Qadir, would try to show kindness and ask about my interrogation experience that day. Then Abdul Qadir would be called the next morning to report what he learned from me based on what I would say to him. They would then mix his provocative words with my words to advance their narrative.

One time, Abdul Qadir asked me if I was aware who this State Prosecutor was. He claimed that the prosecutor was one of the great young Muslim scholars among the Tatars [a term used to describe all Turkic peoples who lived within the Soviet empire] who had joined the Communist government as their State Prosecutor. He told me that of all the prosecutors, this man is the most skilled at debating and discovering hidden matters. And apparently, before interrogating me with his questions, he would solicit advice and questions from a jury of Russian officials. When he did not know how to follow up my answers, he would seek counsel from these Russian officials regarding what he should ask next.

On a few occasions, he was dumbfounded by my answer and did not know what to do next. That is when he would abruptly go to these officials to discover what their next move should be. Since the translator was supportive of me, he would comfort me at these moments not to worry as my answer was just fine.

Whenever they would seat me for the interrogation, I made it a habit to ask the officers how they are doing and inquire about their well-being. They, in return, would also ask of me if I am doing well, to which I would reply, 'All praise belongs to Allah [*Alhamdulillah*], I am well.' However, after Abdul Qadir made the false accusation about me, I noted a very clear change in the prosecutor and officers presiding over the interrogation who became visibly angry. Their frowning faces clearly showed their ill intentions towards me. Yet still, I inquired of them how they were doing. In response, they said that while the British government is certainly doing well, soon the Russian government will also be doing well. Thus, even the simple act of inquiring about their well-being became seen as a suspicious inquiry about the Soviet government.

To this, I responded saying I have nothing to do with the Russian or British governments and that I was just inquiring about them as I usually do, but now they were not satisfied by that. From that point they began taking my statements in such a way as to somehow prove that I am guilty. Thus, once he told me to say something short that would get me released immediately. I responded that he should tell me what to say so that I can say it, but I knew he meant that if I openly confess to spying, they would then release me. Since I was a religious missionary, the prosecutor became intent to determine whether or not I had knowledge of

secular matters as well such as math, geometry, and other English sciences. This would somehow prove to him that I am not a mere religious missionary but, instead, a political character. I became very cautious of his approach and answered each of his questions by saying, 'I am a religious teacher. What concern do I have with these worldly sciences?'

Thus, one day they informed me that the questions for that day would all be general knowledge in nature. He said we would have a friendly discussion on different topics of knowledge. Each time, I would turn his mind and attention to the fact that since I am a missionary, he should ask me about issues of prayer, fasting, the translation of the Holy Quran, etc., and that I can comfortably answer any question regarding Arabic knowledge according to my abilities.

One day they brought me in, and I saw there was a second presiding officer in the room for the first time, who was busy writing things down. They asked me if I knew how to speak English, to which I replied in the negative. To that, the new second officer spoke up with a loud and enthusiastic voice, asking in English, 'Don't you know English?' Perhaps he was hoping I would instinctively answer yes or no, thereby indicating that I understood the English question he just asked. I responded by addressing the translator very respectfully, saying 'Brother, tell them that I don't speak Russian.' While I spoke, the State Prosecutor looked very carefully at my face. The translator told him in Russian that I said I do not speak Russian, which was true. The State Prosecutor asked the second officer in the room his opinion, and the second officer conceded that he did not think I understood English.

Then they once called me and asked if I was familiar with

geometry, to which I said that I am a religious person, which means they should inquire about issues like prayer and fasting. Instead, he asked me for the sum of $45 + 45$. In answer, I told them I would have to count to determine the answer. After trying to do the math through finger counting, I asked the translator if the answer is 80. When he said no, I picked my hands up and once again started counting on my fingers. Losing patience, the State Prosecutor interjected that the answer is 90.

On a subsequent interrogation, when my tormentors had beaten me so severely that I was left with critical wounds, I needed to be taken to the prison hospital, where I remained for two months. Before my release, the Civil Surgeon needed to ask me some final questions to confirm my mental and physical condition and did this final assessment in the hospital in the presence of the same State Prosecutor and translator who normally presided over my interrogations. Since it was now a medical matter, the case was out of the State Prosecutor's power and the most important opinion that mattered at that time was that of the Civil Surgeon, who would need to write his final report and assessment of me.

After the Civil Surgeon asked all his questions and completed his assessment of my condition, the State Prosecutor interjected, asking if he could also ask a couple questions in the surgeon's presence, for which the surgeon granted permission. This prosecutor, who was considered an accomplished scholar in Tatar and the most gifted litigator in Tashkent, proceeded to ask me the sum of $17 + 17$. I immediately responded saying 34. He then asked the sum of $19 + 19$, to which I responded 38. He quickly asked the sum of $18 + 18$, to which I responded 36. He then fell silent, and the

Civil Surgeon proceeded to document a favourable report about me and my condition and delivered it to the prison head officer.

Once back in prison, the State Prosecutor later called me and asked me what I liked the most. I said that from the bottom of my heart I wish I could have hours of solitude for the worship of God Almighty. I explained this is because this teaching of my master [the Promised Messiah] has had such an impact on me that I had no care nor regard for any country or king; rather, I only cared about making God Almighty happy. It was the Promised Messiah^{as} himself who wrote in his poetry:

مجھ کو کیا ملکوں سے میرا ملک ہے سب سے جدا مجھ کو کیا تاجوں سے میرا تاج ہے رضوان یار

*What have I to do with countries when my Kingdom enjoys
distinction above all?*

*What have I to do with crowns when my crown is the pleasure
of the Beloved?*

That fortunate one who gleans spiritual guidance from the Promised Messiah^{as} abandons any attachment to the adornments of this world. Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih II taught us that an Ahmadi Muslim looks past the creation and focuses, instead, on the Creator and captured this sentiment so beautifully in his poetry when he wrote:

ہیں رنگ لیاں منارہے لوگ ساغرے چھلک رہے ہیں وہ لطف انکو کہاں میسر ملا جو مجھ کو تیری لگن میں

People are celebrating, overjoyed in drinking wine,

*But they can never experience the real joy I have found by lov-
ing my Lord.*

So the eyes of an Ahmadi Muslim go beyond the creation and go directly to the Creator.

The suspicion my interrogators held about me continued to grow. Throughout their series of questions, however, God Almighty guided me on the true motive behind each question and, thus, how to reply.

In the next interrogation, they inquired what route I travelled from Qadian to Bukhara and where I stopped along the way. I explained that from Qadian I first went through the Indian cities of Batala, Amritsar, Lahore, and Quetta, then crossed into Iran to Duzdab [now known as present-day Zahedan], then 600 miles to Mashhad. At this point, they cut me off and quizzed me, asking which locations appear en route from Duzdab to Mashhad. I said that had I known I would be held captive and asked these questions, I would have written down all village names on a piece of paper along my way. Hearing this, the State Prosecutor and translator then took me to a different room where there were maps hanging on the wall. He pointed at different areas between Duzdab and Mashhad, asking me if I had stopped there. At that moment, God Almighty guided me in my heart to simply say “نمی دانم” [*nami daanam*—Persian for ‘I don’t know’] to all places except for those that I was completely sure about.

He used a stick to point at different cities and asked me if I had come across that city. When he said the name Sharifabad, which I was confident had passed along the way from Duzdab to Mashhad, I said “شریف آباد آمده بود” [*Sharīf Ābād āmadah būd*—Persian for ‘I had come to Sharifabad’]. Pointing the stick further away, he asked if I had also been to this other city. Since I did not have full confidence, I once again said in Persian *I don’t know* but

again said *I had come to Sharifabad*. Every time he pointed to a city I did not recognize, I repeated I did not know but reiterated that I passed through Sharifabad. After some more time going through this exercise, he took me back to the normal room for me to sign my statement and then sent me back to my cell.

During my next interrogation, my interrogators showed me a document they had prepared. Having been in possession of all my belongings since my initial arrest, they had the instructions that Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih II gave me upon my departure from Qadian to Bukhara. The Soviet regime had studied the entire set of directions, translated it into Russian, and typed it up into a formal document they had kept in their possession for some time. They presented it to me, saying they wanted to ask me about some of these instructions from my Imam. I immediately understood which of the instructions from Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih II they would criticize.

The prosecutor asked me to explain the instruction in which Huzoor said that after arriving in Bukhara and beginning my preaching mission, as people begin to convert to the Ahmadiyya Movement, I should not share the names of those converts with anybody. So much so, that I was not even to tell one Ahmadi convert about another convert and, instead, should keep that knowledge hidden to myself. Huzoor instructed that when I then leave Bukhara for the next city, at that time I should select the sincerest of these converts and share the knowledge of other converts with him so he can keep meeting with them individually while protecting their identity from others and even from one another. The prosecutor asked me the reason for such a secretive directive. I explained to him that my Imam had sent me to such a land where

there are a great number of Muslims and scholars, and other scholars look at our Community with a great deal of hatred. Due to this hatred, I was instructed to keep the identity of our new converts a secret so that these scholars could not harm them.

A few days prior to this interrogation, news had finally reached the Turkish and Russian newspapers in Tashkent about the martyrdom of Maulana Naimatullah Khan, a sincere Ahmadiyya Muslim missionary who had been stoned to death in Kabul, Afghanistan. I had already read that news myself in my cell in the Tashkent prison. The State Prosecutor had also once shown the newspaper clipping of this story to me, saying that the Soviet government would not do the same to me as the Afghan government had done to him.

I brought that incident up at this moment, saying they already knew that one of my Community's capable missionaries had recently been stoned to death in Kabul. I explained that this happened because the Muslim clergy in Kabul had given the wrong and cruel ruling to Afghanistan's Emir, who stoned Maulana Naimatullah Khan without thinking or realizing that killing someone due to differences of religious belief is cruelty. I explained that since Bukhara was a centre for Muslim clergy education, many clerics resided in the area. To avoid persecution by these clerics, my Imam instructed us to keep a low profile and maintain the Community's growth in secrecy. That seemed to satisfy the curiosity of the prosecutor, who dropped this question at that point.

Sometimes the officers would keep me in solitary confinement, where I was locked in a completely dark room alone. After keeping me in there for some time, they would take me out and

take me to a room with excessively bright lighting. Once I could not sleep in my solitary room because it was excessively bright. As a punishment, the soldier put me in a completely dark room and locked the door. But I was able to fall asleep in this dark room. When he later returned to take me back to my original bright room, I asked him if he could kindly let me stay in the dark room a while longer. So he locked the door and left. Once I had fulfilled my sleep, he opened the door and moved me back to my original bright room. Thus in this way, by the grace of God Almighty, even their harsh punishments became helpful for me.

Producing Fraudulent Evidence

By this time, the leaders of the government who were my fiercest opponents had resolved to convict me of espionage and push for the death penalty, as they could not entrap or pressure me, and I did not share any secrets with other inmates. Hence, they decided to produce fraudulent evidence against me by writing a false document of confession in Persian and hiding it in my cell unbeknown to me. Then they planned to discover this confession when searching my cell later. The method employed here was that when a person would not get under their control during the interrogations, they would employ such tactics to prove him guilty. So they wrote in Persian instructions purportedly from the British government to travel to the Soviet Union and spy on the government, and they were planning to throw this into my cell without anyone noticing.

However, while my cellmates did not get along with me outwardly, which was correct to do according to the circumstances at

that time, they continued to help me as far as they could. When the Soviet government's plot was put together, they notified me of what was about to come.

By coincidence, at that very time, all the prisoners in this facility were going to be transferred to another higher-security building. The government workers understood this to be an ideal opportunity to put their plot into action by waiting until everyone had fallen asleep and to come wake me up and take me alone to the new prison first before anyone else. The plan was for Abdul Qadir to get up when I left the cell and loudly call the guards' attention, falsely claiming he found the fraudulent paper on my bed. To support his claim, the two clerics who had been brought in to oppose me would also then testify that indeed the paper came from my belongings.

Through the immense grace and power of God Almighty, I came to know of their plan by their very actions and movements around me. So I called one of the soldiers and individually put all my belongings in front of him so he can witness that I do not have a piece of paper, but the soldier replied by saying that he cannot observe this right now and that a search would be conducted when they come to move me out of this room. He then walked away and locked the door behind him. When the time came for them to transfer me to the other prison, they did exactly as planned.

In the middle of the night, two soldiers quietly came into my cell, woke me up and gestured for me to pack up my things and come with them. They instructed that I was not to speak a word to anyone nor wake anyone else up and then walked out of the room to wait for me. As planned, Abdul Qadir got up at that time and went to use the toilet located next to the door of our

cell. I found all this frightening that they were taking me somewhere in the middle of the night. Plus, I wanted to bid farewell to my cellmates. Fortunately, just then a young Turkish inmate named Ghulam Rasool woke up who had always been kind and sympathetic towards me. I discreetly gestured for him to wake up Abdullah Khan and the other Ahmadi Muslims in the cell. While he did that, I asked the soldier to allow me to use the restroom. By the time I had completed using the restroom and performing *wuzu* [ablution for Prayer] and returned to the cell, the others were awake. Abdullah Khan asked me where they are taking me this late at night. I told him I do not know where they are taking me but that they had ordered me to pack up my belongings and leave the cell. Ghulam Rasool went to my bed, organized all my belongings, packed everything up for me, and delivered it to the soldiers outside the cell on my behalf.

All of this happened only by the grace of God Almighty. My enemies had eagerly awaited this moment for so many days to have the opportunity to plant fake evidence on me. When leaving the room, I specifically addressed Abdul Qadir by saying, 'My brother, I especially request you that for the sake of God Almighty, forgive me for any of my mistakes.'

Already worried about so many people being awake when he expected them to be asleep, my statement seemed to embarrass him quite a bit. I'm sure he was disappointed that he was not able to carry out his deceptive mission. I noticed that Abdullah Khan began weeping heavily after hearing me say these words to Abdul Qadir. Since my Quran was in another cell as I had allowed another inmate to borrow it, I asked the soldier to bring it back to me, which he then did.

With the Quran now in my hands, I addressed all my cellmates saying that God Almighty sometimes puts a servant of His through difficulty to remove their sins. And He allows others to witness such a person's steadfastness and patience to teach and inspire them on how to be willing to sacrifice one's life for the Quran. I love this Quran so much that I consider it a source of pride and blessings to lose my life for its cause. My cellmates already believed that I was a great scholar of the Quran and Hadith. When it was time for me to leave, I met with each of them individually and personally asked them to forgive me if I made any mistakes.

I was then transported by horse carriage at 1 a.m. to the new prison building, where they put me in a small cell alone. Eventually, all the other prisoners were also brought to the new building after me, but they were lodged in a separate area while I remained isolated in this small room. The prison cells for inmates were all underground, whereas the government rooms and offices were upstairs above ground. I was no longer allowed my daily walk around the prison grounds. Prisoners were permitted to leave their cells to use the lavatory twice a day. Meals were prepared inside the prison, and each prisoner had to leave their cell to collect their food and fill their water cup every morning and evening.

I was not, however, allowed to leave my cell. For me, the soldiers brought the food and water to my cell. They also told me to relieve myself inside my own cell instead of being allowed to use a lavatory. I was surprised by their strictness and wondered what they planned to do to me. There were two small swivel windows located high on the wall in my room for ventilation, each with

a soldier stationed by it. There were also two soldiers stationed outside the door to my room. They watched me very closely as their plan seemed to be that when I was sleeping, the soldier stationed at the high swivel window would drop the false confession paper into my room. The soldier outside my cell would then come straight in and “discover” the confession to prove me guilty.

I was already convinced that if they succeeded with their plot, this paper would become my death sentence. For this reason, I was unable to sleep day or night. Any time I saw the soldiers increasing their activity outside the swivel ventilation window of my room late at night, I knew they were preparing to throw the paper inside. So I would immediately shout out that what they were doing was wrong and they should not be standing there so late at night, and he would then leave. However, the other soldier standing guard outside my door would then charge into my room angry about my screaming and would beat me severely before leaving my room. Then, after some time I would see the soldier preparing to throw the paper at me again and coming after me in the same way that a hunter pursues his prey.

For two or three days, I noticed their growing determination to throw the paper inside my cell. When I could not take it anymore, I would shout in Russian from my cell, trying to get the attention of the head officer. I would tell him that his soldiers were continually standing outside my ventilation window, trying to throw a piece of paper into my cell and another soldier stood suspiciously outside my door ready to storm in as soon as the paper was tossed inside. I pleaded with him to stop them. In desperation, I would sometimes directly tell the soldier to leave and not stand there any longer. He would move back and forth between the two windows

and occasionally speak with the soldier stationed at my door. In response, however, the soldiers at the door would run into my room and beat me ruthlessly for the noise.

Sometimes, out of frustration, they would take me to a cramped and dark room, throw me inside, and lock the door. And sometimes they would throw me into an ice-cold room and leave me there all night. They would even tie me up with rope and elicit fear within me. Whenever my relentless efforts to yell at the head officer finally succeeded and a presiding officer entered my room, I would tell him to search through all my belongings on my bed to take full stock and determine whether there is any piece of paper in my possession. Each time, he would respond by saying he was unable to look that day but could do so in a couple of days. I would question why he could not conduct the search immediately, and out of frustration, I would lay out my quilt, bedsheet, blanket, pillow and any clothes so that he could see them in plain view. However, despite displaying everything, he would always repeat that he would not conduct the search that day and would do so in a couple of days before leaving the room.

A few days later, when they realised that my persistent yelling was making all the prisoners, whether Turkish, Russian or Armenian, aware that the authorities were attempting to trap me by dropping a false confession through the ventilation window, they changed their tactics. They started ploughing the fields late at night outside the window facing the courtyard. This was meant to give the impression to other prisoners that the soldiers were simply working at night and to make me think that the soldiers stationed near the ventilation window had nothing to do with me—they were just carrying out their own tasks. However I noticed

after they used the plough for an hour or so, they would then look through the ventilation window as if to check if I was still awake. And if I was still awake, they would resume operating the loud plough. To warn the prisoners and to stop the soldiers, I would loudly yell in Russian that I am not sleeping but am watching them. I also would shout out that I know why they have started to plough the fields and understand their intentions. I did notice there were some soldiers and officers who witnessed my plight and subsequently did not support these plots against me, but they could not support me publicly because they were greatly outnumbered, and it would put them in danger as well.

When some of the commanding sergeants and their senior officials would come to my cell or pass by, I could see from their furious expressions that they were eager for my death. At times I would mention the names of certain soldiers and officers whom I considered my adversaries, noting how harshly they treated me. Since all the government offices were located above the prison cells, everyone was aware of my situation.

When they saw that I slept very little and was awake a lot, they started adding cocaine in my bread and water, which I felt. Also, certain soldiers gestured to me not to eat this bread. Sometimes I also heard some soldiers outside my room, saying to another, 'Не дай ему хорошую воду' [pronounced *Ne day yemu khoroshuyu vada*], meaning, 'Don't give him good water.' From this I realized that they intended to lace my water and bread with cocaine before giving it to me. As a result, I refrained from eating or drinking water for a long time, as I knew it would be too dangerous.

Eventually, when the thirst became unbearable, I would yell

out to the ranking officer to allow me to get water from the tap like the other prisoners are allowed to do. I would implore him that I haven't been able to drink water for a long time and to allow me to drink clean water so that I can quench my severe thirst. Sometimes the officer would respond to my repeated appeals by opening my door and allowing me to get water from the tap before returning me to my room.

I remained in this predicament for quite some time whereby I was not able to sleep day or night, nor was I able to eat or drink from morning to evening. When the hunger became intolerable, I would take a couple very little bites to get some relief. For two months, they would continuously serve pork in their meals, with no distinction between Russian and Muslim prisoners. So instead of eating any meat, I would eat bread soaked in hot water. Due to the lack of sleep, lack of food, lack of hydration, and an overabundance of grief, I found myself in an extraordinarily thin and physically weakened condition.

CHAPTER TWELVE

The Torture Begins

 It is natural that when a person is deeply distressed and consumed by grief and worry, their senses become unusually sharp, often heightened by a lack of food, allowing them to quickly grasp tasks with heightened sensitivity. In order to protect myself, I once jammed the ventilation windows from opening by blocking it on the inside with my coat or any other clothes so that the guards would be unable to throw in any piece of paper. When I did that, however, a guard or higher-ranking sergeant would come into my room and remove those clothes from the window and order me not to do this again.

Soon a night came when a Russian officer opened my door at 8 p.m., seized hold of me, and yelled in Russian, 'Quickly throw in the paper' to the guard standing outside my window. When I saw the guard come towards the window, I screamed as loudly as I could for the highest-ranking officer. In this commotion, five more guards came into my room and together they dragged me to the dark confinement room.

In the dark room, the guards held me down in order to tie my

hands behind my back with a thick rope. I quickly grabbed the rope with both hands to avoid being tied up because the way they use the rope to tie hands would cause excruciating pain. To force me to let go of the rope, they brutally beat me by stomping on me with their boots and beating me with their hands and batons. When that failed to loosen my grip over the rope, they covered my mouth and nose with a cloth so I could not breathe, until I finally let go.

They then laid me on the bare floor, pinned my hands behind my back, and tied an intensely tight knot. They jammed my legs together and clenched an equally tight knot around my feet, legs, and back. They then brought a large flat wooden board, laid me on top of it, and used the thick rope to tie me so tightly that it made me scream with pain. I implored the soldiers to loosen the knot around my hands as I was unable to bear the excruciating pain. But they were in a blood-thirsty rage and ignored my pleas.

After strapping me tightly to the board, they left me alone in the dark room for the night. I screamed in agony and couldn't sleep at all, the pain in my arms tied behind my back was unbearable. The intensity of that night's pain far surpassed all the suffering I had ever experienced in my life.

Despite the fact that I suffered this night in unimaginable anguish and torture, I kept praying to God Almighty through my tear-filled supplications. I prayed:

My Lord, I know it is inevitable that Your holy name be taught and exalted in this country, and the light of Your servant [the Promised Messiah^{as}] be spread throughout this land, but deprive me not of this blessing. Grant me the opportunity and strength to convey Your dear one's

message to the people of this nation to turn them into those who love You and Your servant.

That night, as I was tied to the wood plank and was unable to move, I ended up having to urinate where I was and had to lie on the soiled plank through the night. The soiled plank and the heat of the urine numbed, bruised and left sores on my skin. Even today, I have thick, prominent scars where the sores healed.

In this perilously excruciating state, I prayed to God Almighty to inform Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih that I am being held captive and suffering a great deal. God Almighty in His infinite grace and mercy, heard my prayer in accordance with the Quranic verse:

أَمَّنْ يُجِيبُ الْمُضْطَرَّ إِذَا دَعَاهُ

...Who answers the distressed person when he calls upon Him. (*Sūrah an-Naml*, 27:63)

God Almighty heard my prayer and alerted Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih about my condition in a dream. In fact, two or three days later, I was shown in a dream that Huzoor was trying to secure my release, and I immediately recognized it as a true dream. Much later when I was given my freedom and returned to Qadian, my old teacher Hazrat Haafiz Roshan Ali^{ra} told me Huzoor was informed through a dream about my imprisonment and torture.

He told me that after his dream, Huzoor asked Hazrat Mufti Muhammad Sadiq—who was serving as the Head of External Affairs for the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community—to immediately write to the British Ambassador in Moscow and inform him that we sent our missionary one year ago towards Bukhara and suspect

he may be imprisoned in a Russian jail because we are unable to find any information about his health and whereabouts. Huzoor instructed for Hazrat Mufti Muhammad Sadiq^{ra} to request that the ambassador inquire about our missionary's whereabouts through senior officials in the Soviet government and make every attempt to secure his release.

Apparently, when the British Ambassador received this letter about me, he sent it on to the top official for Soviet prisons, based in Moscow, with the instruction that if such a person is being held captive, he should be released immediately.¹ After this instruction was received, the highest government authority responsible for the Tashkent prison—who had been giving me much trouble—was transferred from Moscow, and the new official replacing him received this letter.

When that night of my prayer to God Almighty—in the face of excruciating pain—ended and it became the next morning, I heard the footsteps of a guard out in the hallway and called out to him. Hearing my voice, he opened the door to my dark room. I humbly beseeched him to untie my arms, saying in Russian, *меня рука очень болит* [pronounced *Menya ruka ochen bolit*] which means, 'My hand really hurts.' I asked him to untie my arms because the pain was so severe. He went to his superior to gain permission and then returned and began to unfasten the rope. As soon as he returned to my room, I immediately requested to open my arms and hands first.

1. Original letters between the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community and different representatives of the British government about the release of Maulawi Zahoor Hussain are included in the Appendix of this book. [Publisher]

When he removed the ropes, I did not have enough strength to even get up. My body was covered in open wounds, and my clothes were blanketed with my blood from the injuries I sustained on my entire body. My arms were dreadfully swollen and were in such throbbing pain that I was unable to move them at all, let alone use them. I was particularly wounded around my joints, which produced such deep and forceful pain that I could not stand up on my own. Two soldiers had to lift me up and very slowly take me from this dark room back to my normal room. My face and head were masked in both dirt and bloody wounds.

On the way to my room, I saw Ghulam Rasool—the young Turkish inmate who had already become an Ahmadi Muslim—who was at the faucet getting water for himself. I gestured to him requesting to give me water. He quickly brought his glass up to my lips and helped me drink water. While doing so, he observed the wounds stretching from my head and face down over my body and was visibly shocked to see me in this condition. After I was able to drink this water, the soldiers took me to my room where they laid me down, closed the door, and left.

Two days later, they took me to visit the highest-ranking officer's second-in-command in order for him to pass a judgement about me that can inform his superior's final decision about me. When he looked at me, he asked what happened to my body. Speaking through the Ahmadi translator, I told him with a heavy heart that the night before, his soldiers severely beat me, bound my wounded body to a wooden board with thick ropes, and threw me in a dark room all night. While showing him all the wounds on my body and arms, I told him I have committed no crime because

I am a religious missionary who came to this country solely to glorify God's name.

After looking at my wounds, he asked me directly what it is that I want. I said I have only one wish, and that is that he first come to my room with me and do a full search through my belongings, clothes, and bedding to validate that I do not have any piece of paper in my possession. And upon validating that I do not have any paper on me—plus having read through all my statements and interrogation reports—to release me from captivity since I am not a criminal so that I can continue with the work for which I was sent here.

However, the atheist State Prosecutor from Tatar gestured to the officer to require me to put this request for a search of my room in writing. The translator then gestured to me to refuse to do that. So, when the officer took the State Prosecutor's advice and told me to put my request in writing, I responded that each day at their prison is like a year for me, and who knows how long it would take for him to acknowledge such a written request and then act on it. I implored that since I am in so much pain, I need him to come search my belongings immediately. To my deep disappointment, the officer stood up and left the room without giving any response.

Then I was taken to a hospital outside the city on a bus in order to treat my wounds. As I was leaving, a soldier who was very kind to me with the surname Шанко [pronounced *Shanko*] filled a cup with clean water and gave it to me. At the same time, he discreetly gestured to me to not take any of the medication they may provide me. At that moment, I did not quite yet understand what he meant by this but took note of it. When I reached the hospital, they dressed me in the same clothes as sick patients, put me in a

room with eight to ten other sick people, and laid me down on an iron bed that had a mattress on top.

This is when I understood the soldier's gesture because as soon as I arrived, they tried to force some medicine into my mouth, which I suspected might be poison. After all, when I was being taken to the hospital, the doctor was told to give me poison. Thus, looking at their behaviour—and reflecting on the fact that my injuries were external not internal, yet instead of any ointment on my wounds, they were attempting for me to ingest something—I refused the medicine. In response, three hospital staff members physically held me down by my arms and legs and forcibly began to put this medicine into my mouth with a spoon. Alarmed at their actions, I clenched my teeth tightly, turned my face towards the mattress and bit down on the bedsheet. I did this so that if any of the medicine entered my mouth, it would get caught in the sheet rather than be swallowed. Finally, after a long struggle, they let me go for the time being. I noticed that some crushed traces of the medicine were left behind not only on the bedsheet but also a little in my mouth, which had some effect on me. I began to experience extreme dizziness and felt as if I was about to lose consciousness.

The next day, they once again tried to force this medicine into my mouth, but again they were unsuccessful. After this, the staff took a hospital gown that had a long rope in it and used it to tie my arms very tightly behind my back and tie my legs together and strike me. This went on for three days before the doctors ultimately developed some sympathy for me, and at the behest of some officers who were favourable towards me, the hospital staff stopped torturing me and finally began treating my wounds.

After every week, the doctor would conduct an examination of my overall health and take a statement from me in the presence of

the State Prosecutor and translator in order to give his assessment on whether I am mentally fit or crazy. Since the prison authorities were clearly hostile towards me, they desired the doctor to say I am mentally unfit and should be kept in the prison for a longer period of time. The doctor, however, was compelled to give the correct opinion about me, and near the end of my stay produced a written report stating that he has assessed and spoken with me many times and has concluded that I do not have any mental problems. He did highlight, however, that there were many wounds on my body that have now begun to heal after one and a half months of treatment. He concluded that I am now completely okay.

Initially, a few days after arriving at the hospital, the same Turk interpreter mentioned earlier, who was also an Ahmadi, translated my words for the doctor's wife who had inquired what I wanted to eat. He then said to me in Persian that I should ask for apples and soft-boiled eggs but to avoid their milk as it wouldn't be good for me. However, they began to serve me milk and eggs every morning. To adhere to the advice of my translator friend, I ate the eggs every morning but would give the milk to the other patients in front of the hospital staff.

After one and a half months, my wounds had completely healed, and my weakness had subsided. While the pain in my arm was still severe and lasted for three months, I was discharged at this time to be sent back to the prison. Before departing the hospital, the Russian civil surgeon conducted a final assessment and took my last statement because his opinion and approval was necessary before I could be discharged. This assessment was very important for me and was attended not only by the civil surgeon but also his wife, a lady doctor and other doctors from the hospital.

Among his many questions during the assessment, the civil surgeon asked whether I prefer the prison or the hospital. I said prison is hell for me, whereas the hospital is a mercy. He then asked if I prefer the hospital or freedom. I said compared to freedom, the hospital is a place of trouble and suffering for me, to which the surgeon immediately retorted that I had just called the hospital a mercy. I answered that the hospital is a mercy when compared to the prison and also because I was injured, but now that I am healthy, the hospital is a source of pain and suffering for me when compared to freedom.

As the assessment, which was conducted in the presence of the State Prosecutor and translator, came to a close, the surgeon asked me why I had to face so many pains and troubles in the prison. I told him there were two reasons.

Firstly, there was a scholar placed in my prison cell with me, and all other inmates would ask religious questions to both him and myself. Since he did not possess much knowledge, the other prisoners found more satisfaction in my answers and began to develop more kinship with me as a result. For this reason, that scholar grew in opposition that became a source of pain for me. Hearing this, the surgeon asked me what I would have done if matters were reversed and I had been the one with less knowledge in comparison to another scholar with much greater knowledge and wisdom. I said in that situation, I would immediately defer to the other scholar and speak to him with great respect and seek the treasure of knowledge from him.

Secondly, a very respected man of great wealth named Abdul Qadir was put into my cell as a spy of the Russian government. Ever since he came to spy on me and deliver false information

about me to the government, my sufferings had increased significantly. Otherwise, before his arrival I was in peace and treated like any other prisoner. The civil surgeon immediately asked me how I know he is a spy. I immediately and passionately replied that my God informed me of this through a dream after Abdul Qadir first appeared. As I had already written, after he appeared Allah the Almighty informed me in a dream. The civil surgeon became completely silent in amazement upon hearing my answer and was impressed. He took his paper and wrote his final opinion about me.

Since the translator was already an Ahmadi and, thus, kind and like-minded with me, he took the paper from the doctor and read it himself. Upon my inquiring, he comforted me by saying in Persian that it is very well written. After this, the State Prosecutor and translator began a separate conversation among themselves about moving me back to the prison from the hospital. Taking advantage of their distraction, I approached the civil surgeon and his group of doctors, who all stood up as they saw me approach. I thanked them in Russian for their favourable and fair treatment of me during the nearly two months I spent at the hospital. Continuing in Russian, I then reiterated that the prison is a hell for me. It was my hope that perhaps they would have mercy on me and, as a respected civil surgeon, he may be moved to speak to the head officer of the prison to recommend my release.

The nurse then took me to the dining room where I ate a meal and performed my *wuzu*, after which I joined the State Prosecutor and translator in a horse carriage to be transported from the hospital to the prison. Since it was afternoon, I performed both *Zuhr* [midday] and *Asr* [late afternoon] Prayers during the carriage ride to the prison. When we arrived at the prison, I noticed that the

people who were the most strongly against me had been transferred and had been replaced by those who were more sympathetic towards me. Upon my return, I resumed my usual habit of eating bread soaked in hot water and salt in fear that they would once again covertly serve me pork like before.

When I returned from the hospital, I was no longer isolated in a room alone. I was placed in a cell with other prisoners and noticed that some new inmates had been brought into the prison who were deemed religious scholars. They were placed in the cells near and around my own, as well as one who was placed in the same cell as me. Despite being a prisoner, any time I would speak with this new scholar in my cell, a report of that conversation would be delivered to the Russian spy agency officers.

There was a man in the prison who was my enemy and was always waiting to harm me day and night. He would watch me at night to see when I fell asleep, but whenever he harboured evil intentions, his attempts would fail. Many times he would manufacture trivial excuses even with other prisoners so he could beat me. For example, on one occasion, somebody stole a nice quality shawl from me. I asked my cellmates to check their belongings in case the shawl had accidentally been mixed in with their things. In response, that man came over and struck me with his hands and kicked me with his boots. At times, two or three of them would join together to upset and beat me. One or two Muslim inmates found this distressing and asked them why they inflict such cruelty on me, but to no avail.

Then again an enthusiasm of opposing me arose, and they decided that once and for all they would shoot me with a gun or throw me out without the prison head officer's knowledge and

then later tell him that I had been killed. At the time of *Maghrib* [Prayer after sunset], those who were particularly hostile to me would plot against me with an officer named КАНДАН [pronounced *Kandan*]. I was surprised to see them talking to him but was unable to understand what they were talking about.

Then one night at 2 a.m., as I was standing next to my area of the cell as I usually did, my heart began racing. So I glanced up at the ventilation window of the cell and witnessed that a soldier was preparing to attack me. I immediately pinned myself against the wall. He then began adjusting his position to get me in his line of sight. I quickly hid under a wooden table. As he moved closer to the doorway and took aim, I immediately ducked behind a large water bucket for cover. A couple of Russian inmates in my cell, pretending to sleep, tried to wrestle the bucket away from me. In the midst of the struggle, another Russian inmate named АНТОН [pronounced *Antan*], who sympathised with me, opened the door and ordered the others to let go. He then took the bucket, placed it where I needed it, and left the room. His action right at that moment of need convinced me he was a good friend.

Hence, my situation became quite dangerous. My interrogation was now taken over by the head officer himself, who was responsible for overseeing the investigation and making a final decision, instead of the State Prosecutor. Arrangements were made for me to be escorted upstairs to the head officer's office by a Muslim officer and a Russian officer.

When the Bukhari scholar in my cell would see my condition, he looked amazed and deeply moved. When he watched me perform my daily Prayers, when he heard me reading Maulana Rumi's poetry from *Masnawi*, and when he heard the Persian poetry of

the Promised Messiah, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as}, he would become very impressed. He repeatedly requested me to pray for him. Not only he, but also the other scholars from Bukhara, who numbered no less than twenty to twenty-five in this prison, would stare at me very carefully any time they saw me go for a walk or when they passed by my cell on the way to get their meals. They considered me a great elder and respected Sheikh. Any time the opportunity arose to speak with me, they requested my prayers with great respect.

A few days after my return from the hospital, by the grace of God Almighty, the head officer who had taken over my interrogation to make a final decision—who was known in Russian by the title Полковник [pronounced *Pol-kov-nik*, which means ‘Colonel’]—was transferred and replaced by a new head officer from Moscow who was Christian. I am convinced that God Almighty brought this man as the new head officer specifically for me. The previous head officer was an atheist and was strongly opposed to me. That was the reason why he worked with junior officers to bring me a great deal of pain and suffering. The day the new Colonel arrived in Tashkent, the prison rooms were all thoroughly cleaned and organized for his first inspection. This was either June or July in the year 1925.

During this time, at the behest of Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih, efforts were underway through the British government to find me. Accordingly, this new Colonel who came from Moscow first came to the other prison cells to inspect the prisoners. Before he came to my cell, a soldier came in telling me to fix up our beds before the officer arrives to inspect our room. As soon as he said this, God Almighty put a strong feeling in my heart that this Colonel’s arrival at this prison would be a source of mercy and

blessings for me. The Colonel finally came to my room, did an inspection, and left.

While he was inspecting my room, I did find one matter rather strange, however. The very first prosecutor who interrogated me in Tashkent—who was a noble man—was the one who was introducing each inmate to the new Colonel and spent some time during each prisoner's introduction. However, when he came to me, he told the Colonel my name and said, 'He is Indian.' As soon as he heard that, the Colonel turned his head away and didn't ask any questions about me. At that time, I was surprised, but later I found out that he wanted to speak with me directly to hear about my situation—something the previous Colonel never did, as he had relied purely on my statements that the State Prosecutor would provide to him. As this new Colonel was leaving my room, a soldier who sympathised with me put his finger on his lips to gesture for me to remain quiet for now.

That night, the new Colonel summoned me for the first time to question me, and just like before, the same Turkish [Ahmadi] man was there to be my translator. I wore my Bukhari robe at that time. I had been awake for several nights, surviving only on hot water and bread. I had been beaten by several inmates who were in fact officials working as spies, which left me exhausted and worn out.

The Colonel began by pointing to the telephone on his desk and asking me what that is. I responded telling him it is a wire. He said if God exists and speaks to His people, and if I am a Godly person, then I should produce a sign as proof. He said that the Khalifah named Mahmood who sent me here should be informed of my imprisonment and contact the Soviets by phone, and that God Almighty should make me aware when that call is made.

Since I had already been receiving a series of peculiar dreams bearing good news, I was completely convinced that my master had not only already learned about my imprisonment but had also begun efforts to secure my freedom through the British government. So I told the Colonel that certainly God Almighty exists, and this God has informed my Khalifah about my condition. I then told him that he has already received a phone call with my Khalifah's inquiry about me. The Colonel refused to agree with me two or three times, but when I insisted, he smiled and admitted that indeed they had been informed him about me.

The Colonel then continued to his next question, asking me my impressions of the first officer who interrogated me twice when I first arrived in Tashkent. I told him that the first officer was very fair and compassionate. However, I said, his successor was much different because after some initial attention to my statements, he turned against me once the government themselves had placed their undercover agent, Abdul Qadir, in my cell for a month, who then reported back that I am a spy.

He then changed topics and asked me whether my Khalifah was a greater scholar or myself. I educated him that the Khalifah is an incredibly significant scholar and a respected pious elder. I am a leaf on a tree, whereas he is a garden full of trees. I am a drop, whereas he is a vast ocean. In fact, the real truth is that I am no kind of competition to him whatsoever.

نمی‌گردد بیان آن وصف از تقریر کوتاهم

It is not possible for me to properly express his qualities in mere words.

For his next question, he asked me what work I do. I told him I am a religious man educated about God by the man who I have accepted as my master. At his hands have I drunken the elixir of God's love, which has filled my heart with the love of God. Thus, I can never abandon God's name and the preaching of His religion, no matter what happens. This, I said, is my work.

The Colonel then asked me what I think the implications are for me now that he is the head officer of the prison. I answered that two days ago when the soldier informed me that the Colonel was about to enter my room as part of the prison inspection, the same God Whose name I have come to exalt put the realization in my heart at that exact moment that the new Colonel's arrival is a mercy for me. I told the Colonel that I am a humble follower of a pure and holy person who had prophesied many years ago about the Soviet rulers. I then recited the prophetic couplets from the poetry of the Promised Messiah^{as}:

اِک نشان ہے آنے والا آج سے کچھ دن کے بعد جس سے گردش کھائیں گے دیہات و شہر اور مرغزار
*A Sign will appear some days hence,
 Which shall overwhelm the countryside, the cities, and the
 meadows.*

آئے گا قہر خدا سے خلق پر اِک انقلاب اِک برہنہ سے نہ یہ ہوگا کہ تا باندھے ازار
*People will be seized with a revolution by the Divine wrath
 So suddenly that a naked one will have no time to secure his
 clothing.*

I continued by reciting another sign from the Promised Messiah's poetry, when he wrote:

مضمحل ہو جائیں گے اس خوف سے سب جنّ و انس زار بھی ہو گا تو ہو گا اُس گھڑی باحال زار
*Men, high and low, will be consumed with fear;
 And the Czar himself will, at that hour, be in a pitiable state.*

I explained that [according to this prophecy] the Czar, who was the emperor of Russia and sat on the throne with great splendour and majesty, would fall into disgrace and humiliation due to his atrocities in this war. And the hands that will rise up against him will do so according to God's will.

When I said these words in Persian, the Ahmadi translator jumped up from his chair with great enthusiasm, handed me a paper and pen, and asked me to write down this prediction from the Promised Messiah^{as}. Seeing the translator's behaviour, the Colonel asked him what I had said. The translator replied asking him to please be patient and that he will tell him once he himself hears the entire answer. I finally recited one more couplet from the Promised Messiah's poetry along with the Persian translation and then waited quietly:

وحی حق کی بات ہے ہو کر رہے گی بے خطا کچھ دنوں کر صبر ہو کر متقی اور بُردبار
*This is a prophecy based on revelation of God and will surely
 be fulfilled—
 Wait, then, a while in righteousness and steadfastness.*



The Czar, Nikolai II Alexandrovich Romanov
The last Emperor of Russia

Since the Turk translator was a very noble young man who had already become an Ahmadi Muslim, he did a great job accurately translating everything I said into Russian for the Colonel. The Colonel lowered his head in thought for a moment and then lifted his head and told the translator to ask me what proof I have that the Promised Messiah^{as} wrote all this before the Czar was murdered. I told him the book that contains this revelation is in his possession. I said that of the books that have been seized from me,

this revelation can be found in the Promised Messiah's book entitled *Barāhin-e-Aḥmadiyya*, Part 5, which he began writing in 1905 and completed in 1907 before his death in 1908. I reminded him that the World War began in 1914, and between 1917 and 1918 the prophecy about the Czar was fulfilled by their hands—at least nine years after the Promised Messiah^{as} had passed away.

The Colonel was visibly amazed by this, and after my statement, reassured me through the translator that I can now go and begin to sleep peacefully. He said that if a prison officer says something against me, he will reject whatever they say. He sent me back to my room, escorted by a Russian officer and the Turkish translator, as I reflected on the glory of God Almighty.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

A Period of Improvement

I had seen such extraordinary displays of God's power at the Tashkent prison. As I entered my prison cell, I prostrated on the floor in gratitude to God Almighty for bringing the soft-hearted Colonel to this prison to make things easy for me. As I was about to go into prostration, a fellow inmate clasped his hands together and requested me to pray for him as well, to which I agreed.

In my prison cell, there were some political prisoners, and a spy was also brought into my cell disguised as a prisoner. As soon as he first entered the cell, I was convinced that he was a spy sent for me. Whenever a new prisoner first arrived at the prison, they were visibly saddened and in grief, but this man walked in very happy with a top hat under his arm. Upon entering, he repeatedly looked my way, seemed like a good person and greeted me nicely. In this cell, there was also another inmate who was short and stocky who understood Persian. The Russian spy used to ask this person various things about me in Persian.

The short and stocky person would upset me, make fun of me

and cause trouble, which I bore with silence. Those days, I continued to restrict my diet to bread with hot water for both meals of the day out of the fear that pork may be getting mixed into the food. I would receive two slices of bread in the morning and two slices again in the evening. This made me quite weak and malnourished. The hair on my chest was so fragile that they would fall out even if I just touched them.

Hence, when the stocky prisoner began to bother me too much, I once passionately and angrily said: تو کرم هستی، من شیر هستی [‘You are a worm; I am a lion’]—meaning, how can he compete with me when he is a lowly worm and I am a lion. Whenever I would say anything, the spy in the room would quickly ask this stocky prisoner what I said. When the spy asked this time, the prisoner told him that I called him a worm and called myself a lion. The spy immediately reported this up to the administration what I had said today.

A day or two later, that spy asked me if it is written in a hadith that when someone dies and is buried, that their grave contains a window that leads to Heaven if their soul was good and leads to Hell if their soul was bad. He said that the many times when they dig up these graves, they have never seen a window that leads to either Heaven or Hell. So, he said, if this hadith is true, then I should explain its meaning to him.

I told him the hadith is absolutely true but the grave the hadith refers to is not the physical grave where a dead body is interred. Rather, it is referring to that place where souls are kept after death, where death means the moment when the souls are separated from the body. Once reaching the Hereafter—where God Almighty keeps souls after death—a virtuous soul, who had

done good in this world, is wrapped in the cloak of contentment and favour of God Almighty, which becomes a source of its purity and continued development. On the other hand, an evil soul, who had done bad in this world, would earn the opposite. To provide a reference, I cited the 30th part of the Holy Quran, from *Sūrah 'Abasa*, when God Almighty says:

ثُمَّ أَمَاتَهُ فَأَقْبَرَهُ ۝

Then He causes him to die and assigns a grave to him.

(*Sūrah 'Abasa*, 80:22)

So after causing a person to die, God creates a grave for them. I explained that it is obvious that this grave that is dug in the earth is created by humans, whereas the grave mentioned in the Quran that God creates is such a place where souls are placed.

A hadith also guides us towards this understanding, when the Prophet Muhammad^{sas} said:

الْقَبْرِ رَوْضَةٌ مِنْ رِيَاضِ الْجَنَّةِ أَوْ حُفْرَةٌ مِنْ حُفَرِ النَّيِّرِ [‘The grave is either a garden from among the gardens of Paradise, or it is a pit from among the pits of the Fire.’]

This also points to the understanding that it is referring to the location where souls live in the Hereafter.

Upon hearing my answer, the spy seemed very pleased and satisfied as it was clear that he had never heard this explanation before for that hadith. He then took a piece of paper and wrote a report about me for that day, stating that I am a scholar of religion. A couple of days later, he himself told me that he came to this prison

to keep an eye on me. I responded by telling him that the very day he entered the prison cell, my God informed me that he had come for me. He then proceeded to advise me that I should submit a written request to meet with the prison's new Colonel and tell him everything about me. The spy had now become positive and kind towards me.

As he suggested, I immediately submitted the request, and the Colonel called me to visit him that night. It was a small room, inside of which were the translator who was my friend and supporter, as well as two officers, including the new Colonel who had spoken to me kindly the last time I was summoned to answer questions. As soon as I sat down on the chair, the Colonel took out a cigarette and offered it to me. I said I don't smoke but followed that with *Спасибо!* [pronounced *Spa-see-ba*], meaning 'Thanks.' When I met him this time, since I held the belief that the new Colonel believes that I am not a spy, I told him right away that I wish he would take me to his lodging for me to stay there. To this he said in a positive manner that I am still in prison, which means he cannot do that according to their law.

I then told them that my master, the Imam of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, has sent young missionaries to many different countries these days. As a result, we now have our Movement established in countries such as Germany, the United States, England, Iran, and others, and our missionaries are able to freely preach the message of Islam and remain loyal to the country in which they currently reside. I told him that, likewise, my master sent me to this country having good faith in the government that, like the other countries, it would not restrict us from preaching God Almighty's religion and would treat our missionaries well.

This is why he had sent me to this country, but I said that the way his government had treated me is apparent to him.

To this, the new Colonel said that all is fine, but since this is the first time I have come to their country, they have imprisoned me out of precaution until they are completely convinced that I am a missionary. He said as soon as they have complete assurance, they will release me from prison. But he said when it comes to religious preaching, they cannot go against their law.

After some time, when the discussion came to an end and everyone got up from their chairs to leave the room, the Colonel offered me to go first. I hesitated and suggested that the Colonel had the right of way. At this he replied through the translating, telling me that I am the brave one and a scholar and, therefore, should have the first right of way. I swear by God Almighty that knowing full well my own helplessness, when I heard this and saw the honour and kindness of these words, I knew this was due to the blessings of receiving the prayers of the Imam of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community. So I thanked God Almighty and said in my heart, 'Oh God, how amazing that the prison soldiers persist in treating me harshly, but You have softened the highest officer's heart towards me.' I exited the room, and the Colonel ordered the translator to escort me back to my cell, and so he did.

With the arrival of this new Colonel, the hardships that had been meted out to me stopped, and for a few days I was able to stay comfortably at Tashkent. Before this, the previous prison officers had been adamantly opposed to me and had provoked several Russian inmates into harassing me and would constantly seek an opportunity to plant a fake confession letter on me. Under the assumption that I could not understand any Russian, they often

spoke against me in their language, but I would inevitably understand something from what they were saying. This is how I occasionally came to learn of their plans and mischief.

But I was not the only one to become aware of the malice of the Russian inmates. The soldiers and sergeants who were in my favour learned about these wicked ones as well and reported their depraved menacing behaviour to the ranking officer. In response, those planted inmates were either released from the prison, changed to a different room, or transferred to a different prison. This is how I repeatedly remained protected from such wicked people. This happened not just once but several times. I noticed that whenever these wicked people verbally or physically abused me, they were soon released, moved to a different room, or transferred to another facility within just a couple of days.

One time, a soldier came in my room unprovoked and began to give me a hard time and physically harass me, but this came to the notice of another soldier who was sympathetic towards me. Later I learned that the soldier who had been harassing me had been replaced by a new soldier. On numerous occasions, when I went out for a walk in their courtyard, the sympathetic soldier would alert the officers in the higher rooms to observe my behaviour so that they could also gain a better impression of me.

I vividly remember one occasion in particular when I was walking slowly in the courtyard with a long shawl draped around me. The officers in the upper level of the prison were watching me from their windows, while from the downstairs prison cells I was being monitored very closely by the Turkish prisoners from Tashkent and other prisoners from Bukhara who were considered religious scholars. While walking, I was engaged in quietly

remembering Allah and praying to Allah to significantly spread the Ahmadiyya Movement in this area so that His promises can come true. Everyone watching me seemed to be in quite a strange state—upstairs, the ruling officers were quietly speaking to one another about me, while the scholarly inmates and Turkish inmates kept repeating, *Subhaanallaah, Subhaanallaah; Allahu Akbar, Allahu Akbar* [‘Holy is Allah, Holy is Allah; God is the Greatest, God is the Greatest’] while they watched me.

I tell you truly that those inmates became so inclined towards me as if they were people parched with thirst seeking to run towards a fountain. And they were so sincere that they began calling me ‘Sheikh’—a term used in this country for a religious leader at whose hands people convert to the Faith. Despite the fact that they could see members of the government opposing me and were aware of the conspiracies that were being hatched against me, their sincerity towards me did not diminish. Whenever they met me, they showed me politeness and respect, giving no care at all to the fact that government officials would also harass them for expressing love and sincerity towards me.

It was a miracle of God’s power that He created receptivity and respect for me in the hearts of these people. It was through His grace and benevolence that God Almighty brought people of great influence, knowledge, and wealth into the prison so that they might also learn the [blessed] name and claim of the Promised Messiah^{as}, to the extent that even the scholar from Bukhara who lived in my prison cell accepted and converted to the Ahmadiyya Movement!

What an incredible spectacle to reflect upon! One beholds the immense glory of God: my opponents feared my message and

spent day and night trying to prevent my ideology from spreading, and yet despite throwing immense opposition and thorns on my path, that message spread and gained acceptance with great intensity. It is very likely that had I preached outside the prison, I may not have enjoyed as much success, but it was the sheer grace and favour of God Almighty that He enlisted me to disseminate the [magnificent] light of the Ahmadiyya Movement in the narrow and dark confines of a prison cell and enlightened all those who came forth. All praise belongs to Allah, Lord of all the Worlds!

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Transfer to Moscow

*A*fter spending about nine months in Artyk, Ashgabat, and Tashkent, I was transferred to Moscow. When I was about to leave my prison cell in Tashkent for the transfer to Moscow, one of my cellmate brothers who held a great deal of love and compassion for me gave me a little money and some bread that he said I would need on my journey. I respectfully refused at first, but upon the insistence of the other inmates in the cell, I took the bread and money.

I was taken to Moscow by train. When we arrived at the station, the train was full, no more tickets were being issued and I was taken back to the Tashkent prison, at which point I remembered the dream I had that had just become fulfilled that day. In that dream, I was about to be taken to Moscow but for some reason I returned to the Tashkent prison. Then one or two days later, they took me once again to transfer me to Moscow.

Two days later, we returned to the station and as I was about to board the train, I was overcome with a thought and said to God Almighty:

O Lord! People spend thousands of rupees to take trips abroad, whereas I have not spent so much as a penny upon myself, which is such an incredible favour from You.

Two officers were assigned to take me, and we boarded the business class portion of the train. After coming on board, another thought arose in my heart that my God Almighty had especially appointed these two officers for my protection. I reflect back when I came to Qadian for my education, I was an orphan, and now due to the blessings of the Ahmadiyya Movement and the special attention of Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih II, I was travelling internationally in business class—something my father could not even experience during his life. At this time, my heart was full of contentment and gratitude. In Russia, I was never handcuffed as this was not their practice.

As I boarded the train, I saw a rich young Turkish man in front of me who remained on the platform and kept looking at me. When the train started moving, then he finally left. Indeed, during my imprisonment in Tashkent, the translator who was appointed to take my statement during all interrogations was a very kind-hearted Turkish young man who was familiar with Persian, Turkish, and Russian. After just the third or fourth interrogation, he had already accepted my views, and he would secretly take my preaching from inside the prison and relay the messages to his friends outside the prison as well. I think the young man looking at me from the platform was his friend, who he must have told that I was being taken to Moscow today and, thus, this would be his opportunity to see me in person.

After boarding the train for Moscow, the Russian officers

escorting me offered me many apples to eat and said in Russian ‘яблоко съестъ’ [pronounced *yabloko s’yest*], which means ‘eat an apple.’ Apple is an excellent fruit, and when I took it my heart felt overwhelmed. Tears came to my eyes as I prayed to God Almighty for how kind He is to continually confer upon me so many favours without me even asking for a thing.

When the train left the Tashkent station, I saw the houses in the nearby areas of the city. In every house, I noticed plants and fruit trees, which appeared very beautiful to me. At that moment, I was reminded of the pure village of Qadian, thinking that even there, the devotees must have planted some trees in their homes. As the train moved forward, the three of us—two officers and myself—rode in that coach, and I quietly recited this couplet from a poem of the Promised Messiah^{as} over and over, as a strange and wonderful state of love for God overtook me:

اِس جہاں میں خواہش آزادی بے سود ہے اِک تری قیدِ محبت ہے جو کر دے رنگار

The pursuit of freedom in this temporary world is futile.

*If there is anything, it is the sweet shackles of your love that
might set me free.*

Meaning: O God, this world is a house of trials and tribulations, and salvation is impossible here. Yet if, out of Your grace and mercy, You fasten the shackles of Your love and affection on my hands and feet, that will be a true life and even heaven. I kept humming and reading the poetry of the Promised Messiah^{as}, when one of the Russian officers asked me in Russian what I was reading, and I told him it was poetry.

When it was time to eat, the two officers took me to the train's dining cabin. It was a very decorated room, and the officers sat me down with them to eat. I told the Turkish Muslim man who was serving the food to not bring any pork for me. This was because in Tashkent, they sometimes secretly gave pork to the Muslim prisoners without telling them to make them their companions in sharing the same food and drink. The first time this meat was given for lunch, I had wisely kept a voluntary fast that day, and this was the first fast that God Almighty had me observe in prison, on that very day they were serving pork. So I was saved by the blessing of fasting that day. After that, for many weeks, if not months, I ate bread with hot water and salt in the Tashkent prison instead of curry. As a result, I became so weak that sometimes when I touched my chest, the hair would fall out. In short, as a precaution, this is why I told the Turkish man serving the food not to bring me any pork, even though since he was Muslim it was unlikely he would do such a thing.

In front of me in this cabin, a young Russian lady was eating her meal with a knife and fork. Our food hadn't arrived yet, and so I had the idea that I should observe how exactly she eats with a knife and fork. At the time I was wearing a jubbah, which is a traditional Bukharan outfit. The woman would eat and then smile at me whenever she looked at me, perhaps because she was wondering how I would be able to eat with a knife and fork. I saw that she took a piece of meat from the plate using her fork, placed it on her empty plate, cut it with the knife, placed the knife down, took a bite of bread, and then filled a spoon with soup from the bowl and took a sip. After that, she ate a piece of the meat with the fork. After seeing this, I lowered my glance down.

In the meantime, our food was also served in front of us, and it was to be eaten with a knife and fork. This was the first time in my life that I had the opportunity to eat with a knife and fork. Very simply, I joined the two officers in starting the meal. Calmly, I took the fork, pierced the piece of meat, lifted it onto my empty plate, and cut it with the knife. Just as I had observed earlier, I began eating the bread with the soup. I was still eating when the Russian officer said to his colleague 'он кушать понимаю' [pronounced on kushat ponimayu], meaning 'He understands how to eat.' I had learned enough Russian during my time in Tashkent to understand what he was saying.

After finishing the meal, both of them drank what seemed to be wine made from grapes, and they placed a glass and bottle in front of me as well, inviting me to drink. At first, thinking it was soda, I reached for the glass to drink. As I brought the glass close to my mouth, the thought suddenly struck me that it might be alcohol. As soon as that thought crossed my mind, I put the glass back on the table without drinking. Then I thought, 'No, it's just a soda bottle; I should drink it.' But when I tried to drink again, the same thought came to mind, 'What if it's alcohol?' I put the glass back just as it was without drinking from it. Then I thought that no matter how pure any alcohol may be, it always has a distinct smell. So, the third time I picked up the glass and smelled it, and I was certain it was alcohol. Both soldiers were watching my actions. When they saw that I wasn't drinking, they each insisted to drink it as it's a good thing. I said in Russian that I would absolutely not drink it and that they shouldn't either because it is very harmful for the heart and mind. They then ordered a bottle of soda, which I drank.

In short, seeing the excellent meals they provided during the journey, the comfortable transport, and their kind treatment, I gave thanks to God Almighty and reflected on my previous condition and how Great was God's favour upon me that even in prison He extended so many favours on a lowly person like myself and granted me endless compassion. I always remained focused on God Almighty, as the Promised Messiah^{as} expressed in his poem:

کس طرح تیرا کروں اے ذوالمنن شکر و سپاس وہ زباں لاؤں کہاں سے جس سے ہو یہ کاروبار
*How should I—O Beneficent Lord!—express my gratitude to
 You?*

*From where might I acquire the tongue through which this
 [monumental] feat be accomplished?*

During this long journey from Tashkent to Moscow, I spent my time remaining occupied in the remembrance of God Almighty. At each station, I observed some shops where milk was sold in bottles, and people stood in orderly lines, one behind the other, to buy the milk. Similarly, I also noticed other items being sold. When the train arrived in Moscow, the two officers took me inside a room at the station, where I was required to remain for quite some time. They ordered a car, which the three of us then used to be transferred from the station to the Moscow prison—I sat in the middle, with one guard sitting to each side. On the way, I was able to see the streets of Moscow, including some very beautiful parks. Occasionally, I saw on both sides of the road many high rise buildings. The roads were incredibly clean and so open that one part was reserved for cars, another part for a tram, a third part for horse carriages, and a fourth part for pedestrians to walk.

I realized whenever the tram passed by that its passengers would look into our car and notice that someone is being escorted by two police officers. The officers noticed this as well and had me then sit on the floor.

When I arrived at the Moscow prison, the two officers who had been escorting me handed me over to the prison officers and left. The first question I was asked by one of the Moscow officers was: 'Is there a God?'

I very boldly answered him: 'Yes, there is a God.'

Annoyed by my reply, he blurted some foolish nonsense and left. After a while, while still waiting in the office to be taken to a cell, someone gave me bread that was so unappealing and sour that I began to wonder if this is the type of food I would be served here. This bread appeared even worse than the bread in Tashkent.

A few days later, while I was still in a solitary room on the fifth floor, I was so famished that I would even look for a piece of that type of bread so that I could eat anything. After registering my name in the office in Moscow, they put me in a room on the first floor that contained seven or eight other prisoners. I remember very clearly that whenever it would be time for dinner and the door to the room opened, all the inmates would approach the guard at the door, who was often a Muslim, to get some food. However, I remained standing where I was quietly. After everyone had taken their portions, I would then come forward and take my ration of food.

In the middle of the night, guards had the ability to look through a viewing flap on each room's door to see the prisoners inside. When I would rise in the middle of the night for *Tabajjud* Prayers, a guard opened this viewing flap and glanced inside, and

he saw me offering my Prayers. In the morning, he then asked me ‘Богъ молитва?’ [pronounced *bogu molitva*], meaning, ‘Are you praying to God?’ I told him yes, I was offering my Prayers. As he himself was a Tatar Muslim, he would be quite happy about my praying efforts and, in fact, sometimes requested the food servers to give me good food.

All prisoners sharing a room had the same time appointed during the day when they were to be taken to relieve themselves outdoors, and they would all openly take off their pants together without hesitation in order to relieve themselves. I, however, covered myself carefully with a sheet before sitting to relieve myself. Observing my actions, the others collectively mocked me as being a fool since I cover myself while using the toilet in front of others. When done, they cleaned themselves with scraps of newspapers, whereas I used water from a kettle, which became another reason for them to mock me.

For a few days in the Moscow prison, I was placed in the same room as a few political prisoners. After these few days, I was taken into solitary confinement on the fourth or fifth floor of the prison. Then, for a few days, they put me—as usual—in a room with a Russian spy posing as a prisoner. Then he also left, and for over another month, I was kept alone in a cell.

Finally, I was summoned for the first time to give a statement in front of the Moscow prison’s Colonel. In that interrogation, he said to me he suspects that I am a spy for the British government despite my declarations that I am a religious missionary sent by the Ahmadiyya Movement without a passport to spread the message of Islam. He said in their law, entering their country without

a passport is punished with a six-month imprisonment and a financial fine, whereas the punishment for being a spy is death.

He said he would give me three days to think about this and suggested that it would be better for me to tell the truth; otherwise, I would have to suffer a lot of pain. I signed a document to confirm I understood my options and was sent back to my solitary room. When I heard this order from the Colonel and went back to my room, I turned to Allah Almighty and prayed to Him in great anguish, saying:

O my Lord, should I be killed in Your service not just once but millions of times and come back to life, then in accordance with the poetic words of my dear Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih II, I promise that I would still declare:

پھیلائیں گے صداقتِ اسلام کچھ بھی ہو جائیں گے ہم جہاں بھی کہ جانا پڑے ہمیں
We will spread the truth of Islam, no matter what happens.

We will go wheresoever we be compelled.

I mentioned this because I was also told that it was possible I might be taken to Siberia, which is similar to “black water” [a term used to indicate exile]—like how the British government in India would send prisoners into exile. Three days later, when I was presented in front of the same Colonel, since the fact of the matter was that I was not a spy, I confidently testified so in a clear statement. The Colonel then asked what the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community’s policy would be if a war were to erupt between the British, which rules over our Community’s headquarters in India, and another country where Ahmadi Muslims also lived. He asked

if the Ahmadi Muslims of the other country would fight in a war against the British government knowing that the Community's headquarters were situated in British territory.

I said Ahmadis would absolutely fight in such a war because that would be a war of one country against another, not a war of Ahmadi Muslims against Ahmadi Muslims. I told him in this scenario, Ahmadi Muslims of other countries would have to fight with the British in accordance with the orders of the ruler of their country to protect the lives, property, and honour of their countrymen. I said that if the ruler of their nation tells an Ahmadi Muslim to join them in a war and he does not agree, then he would be a traitor to his country. Similarly, Ahmadi Muslims living in British territory would be required to fight another country for the protection of their own country. After asking me a few more questions, the Colonel ordered to send me back to my cell.

While staying in this cell, sometimes I would be ordered to clean the prison toilets. There were other prisoners who were also given this order, but I often felt that since I was a foreigner, the soldier gave me this order more than others. I remember vividly that whenever they told me to clean the toilets and I did so with the cleaning instruments, I would instinctively begin to repeat: 'Mahmood, I give my whole life to you.'

What I meant by this was that it was the grace of Allah Almighty that I came here to spread the religion of Almighty Allah, and in this path if I am compelled to [the point of] even cleaning toilets, this is a source of pride for me, not difficulty. This is a great favour from my master that he sent me for preaching, where I had the ability to do this work for the sake of Allah Almighty.

One evening, I was taken out of this cell to be transferred to

a different prison facility. Before being given clearance to leave my cell, I was ordered [in accordance with their customs] to be stripped of all my clothes, including pants, and searched. Once the search was complete, I then got dressed and was cleared to leave. I really disliked this and told them not to expose my body, but they adhered to their conventions and made me disrobe. Once dressed, I was put in a bus and taken away with a few other prisoners to be transferred to another prison facility.

When we arrived at the next prison, we exited the bus and had to wait outside for some time before being allowed to enter the facility. I was taken to a room that housed some wealthy prisoners who would receive food from their own homes, as well as undercover government informants of the like who would be sent to my cell in Tashkent as spies to assess me that I would then learn about.

When it was time for breakfast the next morning, people began to eat breakfast at a long table that had been laid out with food brought from their homes and ordered from stores near the prison. They also invited me to eat with them. At first, I declined but then agreed to take a small portion after they continued to insist that I join them. They began to eat their breakfast while standing at the long table. So I ate a little too, while putting the rest on the table like everyone else. After a while, one of them came up to me at the insistence of the others to ask me if he can have some of my food. I gladly gave him the entirety of the breakfast items I had remaining, which had a positive effect on him. In the latter part of the night, I woke up for *Tahajjud* as usual and prayed to God Almighty in great agony. These cellmates raised their heads from their beds as well and were able to observe me in this state of Prayer.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Moscow Conditions Worsen

While still staying in this room, I was once called to be questioned and to give a statement. After this, I was transferred to a separate, very small room where I remained in isolation for about four months and received different treatment from the rest. For example, the standard experience for all prisoners was that they would come to the meal room at a designated time to take their food, then they would be allowed to use the toilet at a designated time, and then they would be allowed out for a daily walk. For myself, however, despite staying in this cramped room, I was deprived of all these opportunities to leave my room.

They put a round container in my room, along with some water, for me to use to relieve myself instead of being allowed to the toilet facilities of the prison. At my meal time, a small quantity of food was given to me in my room. My daily walks were put to an end. Many times I asked to at least allow me to go out and empty the container they put in my room, so that I can have some

fresh air, but they would not even allow this. However, once in a while they would take me to another room so I could take a bath.

On three or four different occasions while in this isolated room, they brought an iron cot for me to sleep on, similar to the type given to hospital patients. They would make me wear a long but thin coat that had ropes attached at the end of the sleeves and the bottom half, which were used to tie my hands and feet to the iron cot that they then laid me on top of. Then using a long and strong rope, they would tie my legs and body to the cot and leave me there for 3 to 4 hours before returning to untie me. Sometimes when they squeezed the ropes onto me, I involuntarily said a verse from the Promised Messiah's poetry:

صبر کی طاقت جو تھی مجھ میں وہ پیارے اب نہیں

The strength of patience that once was, that—O my Beloved!—no longer resides in me.

This is because the constant torture in Ashgabat and especially Tashkent had greatly weakened me, and every time I was tortured, my life was in danger. Also I remember well one time that two very strong guards came into my room, one of whom was holding a knife. He came up to me, pointed at my genitals and threatened to cut them. I was very scared and very humbly told him not to do so. After some time, they left.

One night, while I was still in this cramped room, they removed me from this room and took me to the prison basement, which was frigidly cold. They took off my warm coat, and I was forced to spend the entire night in this dark and cold basement. The guard on duty was wearing a warm coat. I humbly said to him,

‘My friend, please give me my coat. I am very cold.’ However, he did not listen to anything I said. After spending the entire night in the basement, I was taken back to that cramped isolation room in the morning. At that moment, I thanked God Almighty for this tiny and lonely room because at least it was better than the basement.

The city of Moscow was mostly foggy and cloudy, and there was no sunshine for months. So much so, that when there was sunshine, it felt very strange.

I remember it well that an entire year had passed without being allowed to get a haircut. The hair on my head and the nails on my hands and feet had grown so long that I began to feel disgusted by myself. After being left in isolation in this tiny room for four months, I was moved to another room where other Russian inmates were also held. Entering this room, I couldn’t hold back my emotions and sobbed uncontrollably. Seeing my condition, my fellow prisoners felt sorry for me and called for a barber to come visit our room. After an entire year, I was able to get a haircut as well as a trim of my nails.

While staying in this room, an opportunity was given for a daily walk to all inmates from my room as well as three to four other rooms. So, all twenty to twenty-five of us were taken out to go on a stroll. That day, I was wearing a long Bukhari-style robe made in Qadian that I had brought with me. I tore a part of a white sheet and made two or three small handkerchiefs, one of which I wore around my neck, and the other I put in the cuff of my sleeve.

While walking slowly, it occurred to me to say the following words in Russian as I reach the end of the walkway:

Один Бог есть, об я знаю и очень понимаю. [Pronounced
Odin bog yest, ob ya znayu I ochen poni-mayu.]

Which meant that there is undoubtedly one God, that I know this and truly understand very well that there is one God. After making this statement out loud, I would then become silent and continue walking with the rest of the prisoners. When I reached the other side of the walkway with them and we were about to turn back around, I would say this statement once again that there is undoubtedly one God and that I know this and understand this fact very much. Once I said it, I would become silent once again. As a result, after our stroll ended, all the rooms in the prison where people came for a walk began having conversations on the topic of *Tauheed* [Oneness of God]. In fact, later someone in the prison told me that it had been published in a Russian newspaper that a crazy man has come from India who is going around saying there is only one God.

The more they punished me, the greater the zeal for preaching and the passion for the message of monotheism grew within me. I was fully convinced that the prayers of my dear master, Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih II, were with me, and his spiritual focus and prayers fostered a deep passion within me towards preaching.

I remember very well that in the Moscow prison when I was once in an isolated room, it occurred to me that today I am in prison but after a while, the prophecy of the Promised Messiah^{as}

is going to be fulfilled, in which he described a Divine dream he saw:

روس کا عصا میرے ہاتھ میں ہے

The sceptre [of the Czar] of Russia is in my hand.

And the Promised Messiah^{as} continues that the bow and arrow of Bukhara (where I was sent in particular) was also given to him.¹

This means that one day, here in this country, there will be an Ahmadi government. But it dawned on me that still how blessed this time was when the Promised Messiah's promised Khalifah, the rest of his blessed children, and his companions were living. These blessings will not exist then [when the Ahmadiyya Movement will be supreme in this land]. And how fortunate I am to be the first preacher to come to Moscow to preach Islam in this country. This reminded me of the verse from Promised Messiah's poetry, for which I thanked God Almighty endless times:

یہ سراسر فضل و احساں ہے کہ میں آیا پسند
ورنہ درگاہ میں تیری کچھ کم نہ تھے خدمت گزار

It is sheer grace and favour that You chose me,

Whereas there was no shortage of servants in Your court.

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1. The Promised Messiah^{as} had written in *al-Hakam* (January 31, 1903, page 15):

پھر دیکھا کہ خوارزم بادشاہ، جو بوعلی سینا کے وقت میں تھا، اس کی تیر کمان میرے ہاتھ میں ہے
[‘Then I saw in my hand is the bow and arrow of the King of Khwarezm (former ruler over Bukhara), who was from the time of Abu Ali Sina (Avicenna, Persian philosopher and scientist born near Bukhara).’]

I was again summoned to testify to officers. In that interrogation, they told me that they were going to show me a photo of my Khalifah to see if I can recognize him or not. But they brought out the photo of Hazrat Mufti Muhammad Sadiq instead. I looked and said:

Absolutely not! This is not a photo of our beloved master, rather this is a photo of his very worthy and capable student as well as my respected teacher, Hazrat Mufti Muhammad Sadiq.

After this, he made an incredibly annoying and painful comment. He said, 'Your Imam is living a happy and comfortable life while sending you to be imprisoned.' His taunting statement was too much and upset me greatly to hear it, and I immediately said:

I may be in your captivity, and you may have authority over me, but what right do you have to wound my emotional state with such harsh words? I am so indebted to my Khalifah for his kind favours to me that I cannot repay him my entire life. I am a small and incompetent servant of his. People with much higher qualifications than me desired to be sent on this journey, but may God Almighty shower the Khalifah with countless blessings that despite the fact that I didn't ask and was weak and prone to mistakes, he still granted a great favour to a lowly person like myself and sent me to preach in this country. Obedience to him is a blessing for me, and even a gesture of his is a command for me. It is a fact that there were much wiser

and more capable, worthy, and intelligent scholars than me, but Huzoor was so kind to me that he chose me for this service. And you say that he is living comfort? What do you know about the incredible sacrifices he is making for the whole world? We cannot even imagine the suffering that Huzoor is enduring.

After this, the officer said if I answered one more question, then he won't ask me any more questions. I told him to ask. He asked when we meet Huzoor, how do we greet him. I told him that we shake his hands with great love, sincerity, and enthusiasm, and he gives us the honour of shaking our hands. I explained that we try to gain blessings from his presence by being in close contact and sometimes even embracing him.

For some time, I remained in this room with the same prisoners. Once the guards summoned the prisoners to go take a bath, including political prisoners who were accustomed to nice clothes, food, and conversations. When they were taken for the bath, they got naked all together—not a single one of them covered themselves. In this big hall, each prisoner was just a short distance from one another at their place where they each had hot and cold bathing faucets and a bucket.

I was shocked to see their naked condition in such openness. Although I had noticed this same scene in the Tashkent prison, I was still surprised that these people, who were from a richer class with good food and clothes, were bathing together naked. When I covered myself with a sheet and entered the hall to take a bath, everyone looked at me and in unison began saying 'Hindu, Hindu.' I quietly started taking a bath while keeping myself covered and facing the wall. Once I was bathed, I got dressed.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Strengthening My Resolve

Once while in Moscow, I was reciting an Arabic poem of the Promised Messiah^{as} that I had memorized. The first verse of this poem is:

يا قلبي أذكر أحمداء عين الهدى مفني العدا برًا كريمًا محسنًا بحر العطايا والجداء

O my heart! Remember Ahmad [Prophet Muhammad^{sas}],

the fountainhead of guidance and annihilator of enemies—

The doer of good, the generous, the benefactor, the ocean of bounties and generosity.

And one of the final lines of the poem is:

اليوم تكفّرني وتحسبني شقيًّا ملجدا وترى بوقتٍ بعده في زي أحمد أحمدًا

Today you call me a disbeliever and consider me a wretched atheist,

But a time will come after this when you will see Ahmad robed in the mantle of Ahmad [Prophet Muhammad^{sas}].

I became convinced that just as the Promised Messiah^{as} is the perfect manifestation of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{sas}, in the same way Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih II is the perfect manifestation of the Promised Messiah^{as}. This is why before Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih II's birth, God Almighty had revealed to the Promised Messiah^{as} that the coming reformer would follow his example in beauty and kindness.

Often, when I would have dreams of meeting respected elders, I would see [a close Companion of the Promised Messiah] Hazrat Dr. Mir Muhammad Ismail^{ra} in a very positive light. Seeing him frequently in my dreams convinced me that God Almighty had heard my prayers, and *insha'Allah* [God willing] I would definitely be released from this prison and return to Qadian. Often I dreamt about my imprisonment by seeing that I am swimming in a river and while doing so have crossed to the other side of the river. I read in a book of dream interpretations that if someone is in captivity and sees in a dream that they are in a river and have crossed to the other side, this means that they will be released from captivity. I saw this dream of swimming in and crossing a river many times.

During my time in the Moscow prison, I regularly recited the poems of Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih II that I had memorized and firmly believed that God Almighty had given Huzoor this poem for me. After all, it was the USSR whose President, Lenin, made the decisive proclamation as soon as he came into power after the fall of the Czar that there is no God and that all people are comrades to one another. In Russian, it is said as:

Богa нет. Все мы товарищи.' [pronounced: *Boga nyet. Vse mi tova-rishi*. — 'There is no God. We are all comrades.]

During my time in the Tashkent prison, I was told that when the Lenin government came to power, he executed many religious clergy while many other clergy fled the country. This is because Lenin believed the unrest in the country during the Czar's regime was masterminded by priests who were destroying the peace of the country under the guise of religion. Thus, after the Czar, a law was passed in the Soviet Union forbidding the open preaching of any religion.

For this reason, in the Tashkent prison, some political prisoners kindly advised me not to mention God so much. They would tell me that this government not only denies religion but also completely dislikes religious publicity and people. However, every time I was punished in any way, it only emboldened me and cultivated bravery and courage within me. These poems of Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih II, became the power of inspiration for me and strengthened my passion for believing in the One God.

One of those poems always stuck with me in my heart. During the early 1920s, Gandhi's movement established a superficial unity between Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs. At that time, the Aryah Samaj leader, Shraddhanand—who was an enemy of Islam and the Prophet Muhammad^{sas}—had begun the Shuddhi movement [a socio-political movement with the aim of conversions to Hinduism] in Agra against Muslims. Yet, despite his antagonism against Muslims, it was the Muslims themselves who invited him to deliver a speech in the pulpit of the Jāmia Masjid in Delhi. Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih II was greatly pained from this move by

Muslims and wrote a painful poem, which began with the very first verse:

منبر پہ چڑھ کے غیر کہے اپنا مدعا سینہ میں اپنے جوش دبا نا پڑے ہمیں۔
Ascending the pulpit, a rival proclaims his demand,
While our passion suppressed in chest we be compelled.

In this very same poem, Huzoor also stated:

اس زندگی سے موت ہی بہتر ہے، اے خدا جس میں کہ تیرا نام چھپانا پڑے ہمیں۔
Death itself is better than this life—O Lord!—
in which concealing Your name we be compelled.

پر دا نہیں جو ہاتھ سے اپنے ہی اپنا آپ حرفِ غلط کی طرح مٹانا پڑے ہمیں۔
It matters not that our own selves by our own very hands—
as if words misspelled—be erased should we be compelled.

محمود کر کے چھوڑیں گے ہم حق کو آشکار روئے زمین کو خواہ ہلانا پڑے ہمیں۔
O Mahmood, we will leave the Truth openly proclaimed,
the entire earth be shaken should we be compelled.

I frequently recited this poem in the Moscow prison, which would overwhelm me with passion and love for the remembrance of God.

When the winter season arrived during my time in the Moscow prison, Allah Almighty sent me to the hospital through His grace. The snowfall is so heavy in Moscow that it completely covers the land. The roofs, trees, houses—all become blanketed

with snow. Considering me very weak and sick, the prison officials sent me to the prison hospital.

In the hospital, every prisoner would be removed of their clothes and given a hospital garment to wear instead, and they were given a new garment to change into twice a week, which was made of a simple fabric but was clean. There was an arrangement to bathe twice a week in a tub as well. Each patient remained separately in individual small rooms that were kept heated. This is where I spent these cold and heavily snowy winter days and felt very relieved.

Many times throughout the day, Russian doctors and nurses visited the patients and shook their hands. But when the nurses extended their hands to shake my hand, I abstained. They took patients to the bathroom where the patient would strip naked and bathe individually while in the presence of nurses. They also instructed me to go for such baths and once even forcefully demanded that I strip naked in order to take a bath, but since they would pass by while bathing, I flatly refused. One time I even returned back to my room without taking a bath. When the nurse in charge of bathing saw how insistent I was to keep myself covered while bathing, she gave me permission to bathe while cover myself with a cloth.

One day, the hospital especially gave me nice white bread, butter, sweets, and some other nice items to eat. At that time, I had two rooms on my right and three rooms on my left that were each occupied by a single Russian patient. I kept some of this food for myself, then divided the rest into five parts and tried to give it to each of these neighbouring patients. At first they refused, but when they saw my insistence at this humble request, they took the

food. As for the food I kept for myself, I offered it to the hospital supervisor. He was taken aback and said I should eat it myself and then closed the door to my room. I first prostrated in Prayer to express my gratitude to God Almighty, and then I ate the food.

Just like the food at the prison, the food I received at the hospital would typically be scarce in quantity, discoloured and sour, with just a small amount of curry. But after this incident, God Almighty so graciously made it happen that the next morning at breakfast time, from my room window I saw a Russian woman bringing a tray full of beautiful looking bread. When she arrived at my room, she said in Russian that she had brought the bread for me and asked that I take some. Since I had already eaten breakfast, I thanked her and said in Russian: Я не хочу [pronounced *Ya ne khochu*], meaning that I did not want any since I did not have any need for bread. So she took it back. Every day, I was served the best quality for breakfast and other meals like those given to the rich. This was also the grace and favour of God Almighty.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Confronting Soviet Leadership

While I remained at the Moscow hospital for a long time, there was a bathroom next door that contained a toilet and a sink for performing *wuzu* [ablution for Prayer]. I just performed my *wuzu* and was walking back to my room when Allah Almighty put the idea in my heart that if the Soviet government were to summon me and ask about God Almighty, I should not respond to such a question through an interpreter. This is because the effect of direct communication is greater than whatever the interpreter says. At that time, I could speak basic Russian. So I began thinking about how to properly articulate my belief in one God in Russian.

God so made it happen that just two days later a soldier came to my room and told me to come with him because there is a group of officers on the third or fourth floor who are summoning me. He took me to a very big hall. When I reached the

final step of the stairs and saw the officers from afar, I immediately stood up straight, took off my hat, bowed in their direction, and greeted them. I slowly approached them, then again took off my hat, bowed, and said to them in Russian, *Здрaстe* [pronounced *Zdraste*], meaning, 'Hello.' In response, one of the officers pointed to an empty chair to gesture me to sit down, and so I sat down.

There were close to twenty officers in this room. Never before had I been called to be interrogated or give a statement in front of so many officers. Instead, in each prison, there was one officer asking the questions and one interpreter. It was a hard reality that in my case, the government had a strong suspicion that I was a spy. Even if that were not the case, due to the fact that they were hostile towards religion, they also hated me from a religious point of view. So in the end, they thought it appropriate that they should come together and ask me religious questions collectively and finally see for themselves whether I am really a missionary or a spy.

For this reason, the very first question they asked was, *Бог Есть?* [pronounced *Bog yest*], meaning, 'Does God exist?' In that hall where I was being questioned, there were six or seven officers seated on both my right and left, and another six or seven officers sitting in front of me. There was a table in the middle and a very large wall in the front featuring a large photo of Vladimir Lenin—the one who declared, 'There is no God, and we are all comrades' as soon as he took over the Soviet presidency from the Czar. In response to their question, I remained seated and told them that indeed God exists.



Vladimir Lenin - Founder of the Russian Communist Party
and first head of the Soviet Union

Not being able to hear my voice clearly, one officer on my right stood up from his chair to walk closer and stood next to me, leaning in so his ear was closer to my mouth to hear me well. So I said to him, 'You can sit down. You will now be able to hear my voice.' He then went back to his chair and sat down. I stood up and said twice, *Один Бог есть, об я знаю и очень понимаю* [pronounced *Odin bog yest, ob ya znayu I ochen poni-mayu*], meaning, 'There is One God, I know and understand this very much.' Then when I

was about to say it again, my hat fell down behind me. The soldier standing behind me put the hat back on my head. I then made the statement with much more enthusiasm two or three more times to emphasize that I know very well that indeed One God exists.

All the officers were looking at me very carefully. While I was repeating this statement, Allah Almighty put it in my heart that Lenin is their president who uttered the blasphemy that there is no God, and so I should say something about him. So I passionately pointed my finger at his large portrait and said loudly, 'He made a very bad mistake by saying there is no God.' Despite the fact that I was very thin and frail at that time, my heart was very strong. They were all visibly amazed that I was shaking my arm with great force and zeal while pointing at him saying that he had done something very bad.

One officer spoke up and said, 'Do you even know who this person is?' I replied, 'He is your worst enemy.' I continued, saying, 'While I am in his country, he is also an important political person for me.' I pointed at him again and said, 'But to say there is no God is an incredibly appalling and erroneous statement that he has uttered.'

At that moment, I noticed that they were all looking at me with great attention. I then said, 'He said there is no God, but we are all friends. If there is no God, then I ask you: Who has united us all in the thread of friendship?'

I then addressed them specifically and said:

My friend, do you know what book the Quran is? This is a really good book sent down to us by One God, and it

teaches me that there is One God not just for me but for all people. That God is like a father, and we are all like His children. That is why we are all brothers as we are the same creation of God who is like a Father to us.

After completing my thought, one officer sitting in front of me asked me where I learned to speak the Russian language. I said I learned in the Ashgabat and Tashkent prisons. I addressed them in Russian, saying Я не понимаю почему я здесь [pronounced *ya ne ponimayu pochemu ya zdes*, meaning 'I don't understand why I'm here']. With that, I meant to convey that I didn't know why they kept me in prison and in the hospital. Since my knowledge of Russian was limited, I then turned their attention to the matter of my freedom.

When the conversation ended and I got up to go back to my room, all the officers stood up as well. Some of them even went so far as to shake my hands. One lady officer also extended her arm to shake my hand, but I withdrew my hand. She asked me the reason for not shaking her hand, and I said Потом плохо работает [pronounced *potom plokho rabotayet*, meaning 'later it doesn't work well'] to convey that it does not end well [when men and women shake hands].

After this, the soldier took me back to my room, which was on the first floor of the hospital. If they wanted, they could have shot me dead for my rudeness to their beloved leader who had founded the Bolshevik party and for whom they had a great deal of respect in their heart. But my Lord, Who is the Ruler of rulers and in Whose possession is the entire universe, put it in their heart that

such a person cannot be a spy who boldly shakes his angry finger against their beloved leader right in front of them.

I remember very clearly that when I said those words while pointing to the large portrait of Lenin, there was absolutely no fear in any corner of my heart. Rather, the following words of my dear and beloved master remained etched in every corner of my heart:

اس زندگی سے موت ہی بہتر ہے، اے خدا جس میں کہ تیرا نام چھپانا پڑے ہمیں
Death itself is better than this life—O Lord!—
in which concealing Your name we be compelled.

پھیلائیں گے صداقتِ اسلام کچھ بھی ہو جائیں گے ہم جہاں بھی کے جانا پڑے ہمیں
We will spread the truth of Islam, no matter what happens.
We will go wheresoever we be compelled.

پر وہاں نہیں جو ہاتھ سے اپنے ہی اپنا آپ حرفِ غلط کی طرح مٹانا پڑے ہمیں
It matters not that our own selves by our own very hands—
as if words misspelled—be erased should we be compelled.

محمود کر کے چھوڑیں گے ہم حق کو آشکار روئے زمین کو خواہ ہلانا پڑے ہمیں
O Mahmood, we will leave the Truth openly proclaimed,
the entire earth be shaken should we be compelled.

I know myself well and appreciate that I am a weak and worthless individual. So how did I have the courage and bravery to handle such a dangerous situation? The answer is that this is purely the blessing of God. This is the result of the moral training and

attention provided by Hazrat Musleh Mau'ud. I considered myself the perfect application of the famous Persian poem:

جمالِ هم‌نشین بر من اثر کرد و گرنه من هُمانِ خاکم که هستم
*I have absorbed beauty from the one I have remained with;
 Otherwise, I am still the same dust that I was before.*

I swear by God Almighty that during my captivity I saw such incredible miracles from the prayers of my beloved and benevolent master that I became convinced that in some difficult times even my own close family are unaware of me, whereas the attention of my benevolent and beloved master's prayers are still with me. In fact, when I was imprisoned in Tashkent, a thought once forcefully came to my mind that whoever Huzoor sends out for preaching is never alone. They may not have a guardian or family member with them, but, like me, they have the great prayers and attention of Huzoor and the heartfelt prayers of the Ahmadiyya Community working with them.

This reminds me of the time when I was once in the middle of my daily walk in prison, and suddenly my heart received a glimpse from Allah Almighty of the high stature and dignity of Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih II. I was amazed and thought to myself that I remained in the presence of Huzoor for such a long time in Qadian yet still could not recognize his status completely.

Returning to that day, I came down to my room after making my statements to the committee of officers. One time, six or seven Russian women came to my hospital room and observed me intently. One spoke up in Russian asking me what complaints I have. I responded telling her I did not want this room. Another

woman spoke up asking if there is anything else. I put my hand on my shirt and said I did not really like the way I was dressed. When a third woman asked what else I want, I said I have a sister and other relatives who I would like to see. Everyone asked a question and, while leaving, told me not to worry and that a decision about me would be made soon. Similarly, on another occasion, a few Russian women, who were either doctors or nurses at the hospital, came and kept asking me questions.

When the bitter cold in Moscow subsided a bit, I was transferred from the hospital back to prison. I was given a cell upstairs and lived there alone. I would look out of the window and see the roads were still covered with snow, and there were men using tools to sweep the snow into piles on both sides of the road so that people could still pass by on the road. Back in prison, I once again began to receive bad food like before.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Free At Last

By now, it had been two years since my imprisonment began, and I had become very weak and thin. Often I prayed to Almighty Allah to grant me a time where there would no longer be a roof between me and the sky, and I can have the blessing of freedom. I spent my time occupying myself with a variety of prayers. Then finally one morning a soldier came near my door with a piece of paper in his hand and called out my name with a Russian accent: 'Zahoor Hussain.' As soon as I heard this, I knocked on the inside of my door and said that is my name.

He opened the door to my room and read out the order, which stated that I am to be sent back to my country British India soon and gave a check for 50 Rubles so that until I leave, I can meet my needs with this money. He told me to sign the order, which I did, and then he took the paper back and gave me the check. At that time, I was able to read and write a little Russian. As I heard this order, I immediately bowed to thank Allah Almighty, Who had heard my prayers, and now I would be released from prison soon.

So the next day, I gave this check to the guard and wrote down

food items I wanted him to order, the same way that other prisoners would commonly give money to order things for themselves. In a short time, he brought back small quantities of good quality bread, some butter, eggs, grapes, etc., and he returned the check to me. At that moment, seeing these items before me and remembering the food I had to eat during my captivity, I sincerely thanked God Almighty while tears rolled down my face as I reflected on how my Lord had completely changed my circumstances. The next day, I ordered a shirt, a pair of shoes, and other essential items that I needed.

I remained in this cell for twenty additional days, after which soldiers came to my room instructing me to get ready as I would be taken via train to Baku [a coastal city in present-day Azerbaijan], and from there I would be taken by ship [across the Caspian Sea] to the Iranian port city called Anzali [also known as Bandar-e Anzali], where I would be free to go. Many more prisoners were to be released with me at the same time.

I was taken out from the prison cell and taken downstairs to a large hall. As we left the hall and headed towards the train station, I looked closely at the walls and ceiling of the room, sighed, and these words came from my heart: 'I am now leaving this country to go back home. Only God knows whether it will ever be possible for me to come back here again.'

Many times during my captivity in Moscow I would remember the prophecy of the Promised Messiah^{as} when he said:

روس کا عصا میرے ہاتھ میں ہے

The sceptre [of the Czar] of Russia is in my hand.

And I was fully convinced that the day was not far when God Almighty would fulfil this prophecy, and the flag of the Ahmadiyya Movement would be hoisted all over the country. At times, without even thinking I would instinctively say in Russian, ‘We are the kings of Russia, and Russia is our country.’

During the one year I spent in Moscow, I was able to see the nature of the Russians and observe their habits, and it brought me to the conclusion that, generally speaking, these people have good hearts and possess an innate capacity to follow guidance and reform themselves. They just need time. When freedom of religious preaching comes to their land, then sincere Ahmadi Muslims of our Community will arrive here to convey the message of the One God. When that happens, Russians will convert to Islam not just one by one but, rather, wave upon wave—all with a staunch dedication to the message of One God.

Although today satanic thoughts affect their minds and hearts, undoubtedly this autumn season will be followed by the spring. Pious souls will awaken from their deep slumber and will bow their heads upon the Threshold of their beloved Creator. Then, in this new age will the bond of love and sincerity be reborn between the Creator and His creation. And this prayer of the Promised Messiah^{as} to God will be fulfilled in the land of Russia:

پھیر دے میری طرف اے سارباں جگ کی مہار

Do turn the tide in my favour, O Driving Force of the universe!

The Promised Messiah^{as} so passionately expressed the following words with absolute conviction in his Arabic poem:

وَاللَّهُ يَأْتِي وَقْتُ فَتْحِي وَنُصْرَتِي وَاللَّهُ إِنَّي فَأَعْرِزُ وَمُعَزَّرُ

God is my Witness, the time of my victory is near.

O people, listen, God is my Witness that I will be successful.

وَاللَّهُ يُنْشَى فِي الْبِلَادِ إِمَامَنَا إِمَامُ الْأَنَامِ الْمُصْطَفَى الْمُتَخَيَّرُ

God is my Witness, songs of praise for Prophet Muhammad^{sas}

will be sung all over the world.

*That perfect Imam, who is the leader and chosen Messenger
for the entire world.*

I remember very clearly that the Russian people would listen very well whenever they heard preaching in the prison. If anyone would unjustifiably respond to me with opposition or hatred, then at the same time other pious souls would consider my words carefully and behave well. People in Moscow often asked me about India and took great interest in what I shared. They also asked many things about the British government. Based on these conversations, I inferred that whatever Russians learned from their government about the British government was grossly exaggerated propaganda—in the same way that the British government exaggerated its propaganda against the Soviet government. But it is a fact that the individual freedoms one gets in the Soviet Union [such as religious freedom] are almost nothing compared to the freedoms vouchsafed by the British government for its citizens.

In fact, once during an interrogation, a Soviet officer asked me what I saw as the difference between the British government and the Soviet government. I told him that although I am not a political man who pays attention to these things because I am a

religious man instead, one big difference I have noticed between the two governments is that under British rule, religious freedom is fully respected by everyone. People express their religious views openly, give speeches, publish books, publish magazines, conduct debates on large scales, and the government helps them instead of hindering them, which is instrumental in maintaining peace. Hearing my full answer, the officer commented that when they confirm that I am a religious man, they will also give me freedom. But this was clearly a lie, as their government had publicly stated many times that no religious person is permitted to spread or publish their religious views.

The religion of the Soviet government is atheism. Certainly there is a population of its people that adheres to religion, but the government itself is organized and very active in spreading Communism and atheism. Additionally, roles within the government are given to those who share the same views. During my time in various prisons, I observed that they tried in various ways to weaken Muslims religiously by trying to spread atheism and disbelief among them.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

The Journey to Home

*W*e took the train from Moscow through many different cities until we arrived in Baku, where I stayed for a few days in their prison. I knew I wouldn't be here long and very soon would be taken by ship to Iran, where they would then hand me over to the Iranian government. So I requested to meet with the Baku prison's head officer, who then summoned me to meet him.

I told him I have spent two years in different prisons around his country. I told him that he and his government suspected that I was a spy of the British government. But after a thorough investigation, since they have realized this is not the case and, instead, I am a religious missionary of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, I requested that he allow me to stay here for a short while so that I can preach openly as my master had commanded me. I was very aware that due to my dangerous situation, captivity, poor health and exhaustion, I had sadly not been able to preach in this country openly, which pained me deeply. I told him we have a golden rule that whatever country we enter to preach, we cooperate fully with the government of that country, because unless there is peace in

the country, it is difficult to succeed in preaching. So I requested him to permit me to stay here in Baku for a while and he would see that I would fully follow his authority.

However, the head officer said that since I entered their country without a passport, if I first go back and obtain the proper documentation, I would then be able to return and stay here. However, as no religious missionary would be allowed to preach in this country, I knew that this statement was not true.

Ultimately, I spent a few days in Baku's underground prison. As I reflected, I realized just how much time I had been kept in underground rooms. For example, in the Tashkent prison, I was kept in underground rooms for many months. In Moscow, on many occasions I was kept in underground cells. And now here in the Baku prison, I was once again forced to stay in a cell underground.

After a few days in Baku, I was taken on a ship to the Iranian port city, Anzali. The journey on the ship lasted 24 hours, or perhaps slightly more. While I was aboard the ship, it occurred to me there is a possibility that, just like the Soviet government, the Iranian government may also accuse me of being a spy, and who knows how long I would then spend inside an Iranian prison. Consequently, when I saw the port of Anzali from a great distance while sitting on the ship deck, I raised both hands and began praying in great distress: 'O God, protect me now from prison and its hardships.' I still had my hands up in prayer when several Iranian children and some Russians mistook me for being a beggar and began to put money, bread, and some other items in front of me. Certainly, how could they ever realize the state of my heart at that

time? When I finished praying, I immediately got up from that place and sat on the other side of the ship.

I thought that as soon as I get off the ship, the Soviet officer would part ways from me and I would be handed over to an Iranian officer, and there would be no telling what they would do to me. Alas, when the ship arrived at the port and everyone began to disembark, I also exited the ship. The Russian officer gave me a visa, which displayed two photos of me—taken while in Moscow—along with a statement that I am an Arabic Studies graduate and missionary of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community headquartered in Qadian, in India's Gurdaspur district in Punjab, where I should be transported after entering Iran. While at that time I did not read that statement, I took the visa and spoke in Russian to thank the Russian officer.

An Iranian officer checked every passenger's passport and visa papers before they were allowed into the city. He looked at my visa and also ushered me on. I set off to the city like others but was petrified of being arrested. After every few steps towards the city, I looked back to check if someone was coming to arrest me as the guard may have let me out by mistake.

I was in a strange situation at that time. I had in my possession just a small sleeping bag, a couple of pots, and I was ten or fifteen miles from the residency of the British Ambassador and did not even have the fare to get there. But a noble Iranian man I met on the ship kindly arranged for me to get there by talking to the bus driver. Once there, I stayed in a small hotel room. The next morning, I left my belongings with the hotel and told them I would return later that day and promised that when I check out I would settle the bill for the accommodations and food.

I reached the British Ambassador's residence, with my visa paperwork in hand. I met him, and he told me his senior officer is the Senior Ambassador who is in Tehran. He told me to wait a day or two while he sends that Senior Ambassador a telegram requesting guidance and then will do as he instructs. I said two years ago I went to Russia through Mashhad, where I left some valuables before proceeding to Russia. I asked if I can be sent through Mashhad on the way back home, but he said that route is different from how I would be taken back to India. He said the route I must take will be through Tehran to Baghdad, then Basra, and then Karachi [in present-day Pakistan].



The most likely route taken by Maulawi Zahoor Hussain on his 1926 journey back from Moscow to Qadian, India, based on historical records of shipping routes and railway networks available in 1926

He wrote down the name and address of the hotel where I was staying and said he would notify me in two or three days. I told him I had nothing to eat and requested some allowance to cover such expenses over the next few days. He gave me two Tomans [20 Iranian Rials]. Then he called me back two days later and told me that the Senior Ambassador has ordered that I come to Tehran to meet him and arranged for me to get a ride in a car heading to Tehran. Upon my request, he gave me a small allowance for meals and told me whatever expense is spent on me will be taken back from the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community.

I took the car ride to Tehran, which was quite far away, and arrived the next day. Tehran is the Capital of Iran. When I had originally departed from Qadian, Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih II had sent three of us on our way. The third respected individual was Hazrat Shahzadah Abdul Majid who was from Ludhiana and originally from the royal family of Kabul. He was a Companion of the Promised Messiah^{as} who was a very pious Godly person. He was fluent in Persian and at Huzoor's instruction, travelled to Tehran at his own expense. He was a fine man and was getting of age now.

When in Tehran, I set out to search for Shahzadah Abdul Majid and with the grace of God, found him quite quickly. I was surprised to see his condition. With extreme sincerity, he traveled to Iran at his own expense and soon ran out of money. He had no property as a source of income and was destitute, to the point where he had to sell his clothes to get by. When I met him, he had a tiny bed to sleep on and a traditional rug. He was so hard up that he had no money to even wash his clothes or take a shower. However, he had so much trust in God that he would not write to

Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih II about his extreme destitution. Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih II would write him letters with his own hand.

When I met him, he was very happy to see me and said that God Almighty brought me this route [through Tehran] for his sake, so that I could see his state of destitution and inform our headquarters. He told me that he would often hear the Promised Messiah^{as} say in Persian:

خدا داری چه غم داری

If you have God with you, what are you sad about?

He was extremely impressed to hear what I had experienced over the past two years, but I explained to him that being in prison, I had no choice but to endure the harsh treatment they inflicted on me. On the other hand, he had willingly endured this struggle and such hardships for the sake of Allah alone, which will assuredly be very well accepted by Allah Almighty and earn His pleasure.

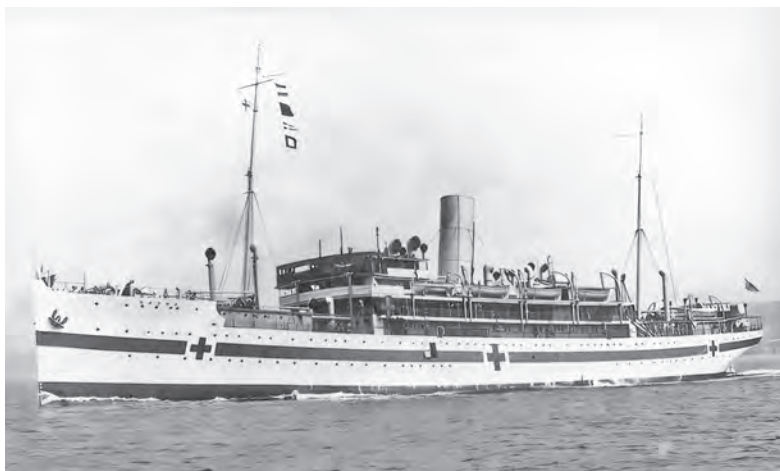
The next day, I went with Shahzadah Abdul Majid to the embassy and met with the Senior Ambassador, at which time I showed him the visa document I had received from the Russian government. Since the Ambassador already knew that Shahzadah Abdul Majid was a preacher of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community living here, he spoke with him privately to ask whether he can confirm if I was indeed also a preacher of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community who had gone to the USSR. He was concerned if the Soviet government had sent me as a spy into Iran. Shahzadah Abdul Majid put it in writing that I indeed went to the Soviet Union as a preacher on behalf of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, whose headquarters is in Qadian, District

Gurdaspur, Punjab. He informed the Ambassador that the two of us had left Qadian together, and while he came to Tehran, I went through Mashhad to the USSR and am now returning two years later.

After staying in Tehran three or four days, the British Ambassador in Tehran ordered for me to travel by a car to Baghdad and gave me some money for my trip as well. He also notified the Ambassador in Baghdad that when I arrive, I should be sent to Basra, and then from Basra to Karachi by ship.

I, thus, reached Baghdad, where, by the grace of God Almighty, there was an established chapter of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community. I met with them, and they then sent a telegram to Huzoor to notify him that I had arrived in Baghdad and would be going to Karachi via Basra. After staying in Baghdad for a few days, I then arrived in Basra. I met with some Ahmadi Muslims here as well, who showed me great love and sincerity. After staying in Basra for a couple of days, I left on board a ship heading to Karachi.

The Karachi chapter of our Community had been informed about the ship I would be arriving on. Therefore, when I arrived at the shores of Karachi, I was received by Police Inspector Sheikh Nayaaz Muhammad, who was also an Ahmadi Muslim. He took me to his residence where I stayed for two or three days. During that time, I was able to meet with the members of the Karachi chapter of our Community, which was small in number in those days. The Community also sent word to our headquarters in Qadian that I had reached Karachi and what day I would continue on my way back to Qadian.



1917 Photo of the S.S. Vasna ship that Maulawi Zahoor Hussain
took for his journey from Basra to Karachi in 1926
Credit: *The Royal Navy Research Archive*, UK

In Karachi, I wrote my first letter to Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih II in which I very briefly recounted my circumstances in Artyk, Ashgabat, Tashkent, and Moscow. When Huzoor received this letter, he sent it for publication to the *al-Fazl* newspaper [which was later published on November 16, 1926].¹ Two or three days later, the local Community set me off from Karachi to Qadian, and many members came to the station and bade me farewell.

There were announcements in Qadian that I would be arriving at Asr [late afternoon] time, but I reached the Qadian bus stop

1. The original letter and its translation is included in the Appendix Section. [Publisher]

in the morning, where I was stopped while notice was sent to our centre about my early arrival. The news of my arrival was sent to Qadian, and many people from the village arrived at the bus stop with great love and enthusiasm to receive me. Among them was Hazrat Maulawi Sher Ali^{ra}.

By the immense grace of Allah Almighty and the prayers of Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih II and the entire Community, on that fateful morning on October 25, 1926, I stepped foot back onto Qadian soil. Otherwise, the conditions I was in during my imprisonment were such that it was almost impossible for me to return. Many times in prison, I had become convinced that I was from that point merely a guest in this world for perhaps a few more hours.

On the day I arrived, all institutions—the high school, Jamia Ahmadiyya, the girls' school, all offices of the Community—were given a holiday to celebrate my return. At that time, I was so weak that I could only muster enough strength to eat two meals a day and would often be unable to sleep until very late into the night. After Zuhr Prayers that day, I was able to meet Huzoor, and several offices and departments of our Community made arrangements for different dinner functions in my honour. Huzoor himself kindly and lovingly hosted a dinner function in *Qasr-e-Khilaafat* [his residence] in honour of this humble one and invited many people to attend as well.

CHAPTER TWENTY

Reflections And Prayers

*A*lhamdulillah [All praise be to Allah]! It is purely the grace of Allah Almighty and the kindness of Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih^{ra} that enabled me to go to Russia and return safely. I humbly request everyone to pray that Allah Almighty gives not only me but all of us a good end to our lives, and that He makes my children righteous and virtuous and through His grace and mercy, enable them to serve Islam. May God Almighty make the flag of the Ahmadiyya Movement, which will be planted in all corners of the earth, a great blessing for my descendants. *Aameen.*

I pray that God Almighty makes this small and humble book an instrument to inspire within the hearts of its readers a burgeoning passion to serve Islam and the Ahmadiyya Movement. May He enable them to serve Islam and proclaim the Unity of Allah. May He create true devotion and true love in their hearts for God, the Prophet Muhammad^{sas}, the Promised Messiah^{as}, the Khalifah of the time, and the family of the Promised Messiah^{as}.

Oh God, let the Ahmadiyya Movement be firmly established

in the hearts of my children, and my children's children, and in all my descendants. Through Your grace, show us the blessed days of the progress and success of the Ahmadiyya Movement.

O God, grant good health to our beloved master, Hazrat Musleh Mau'ud, and help us all to achieve the goals with which he was sent.

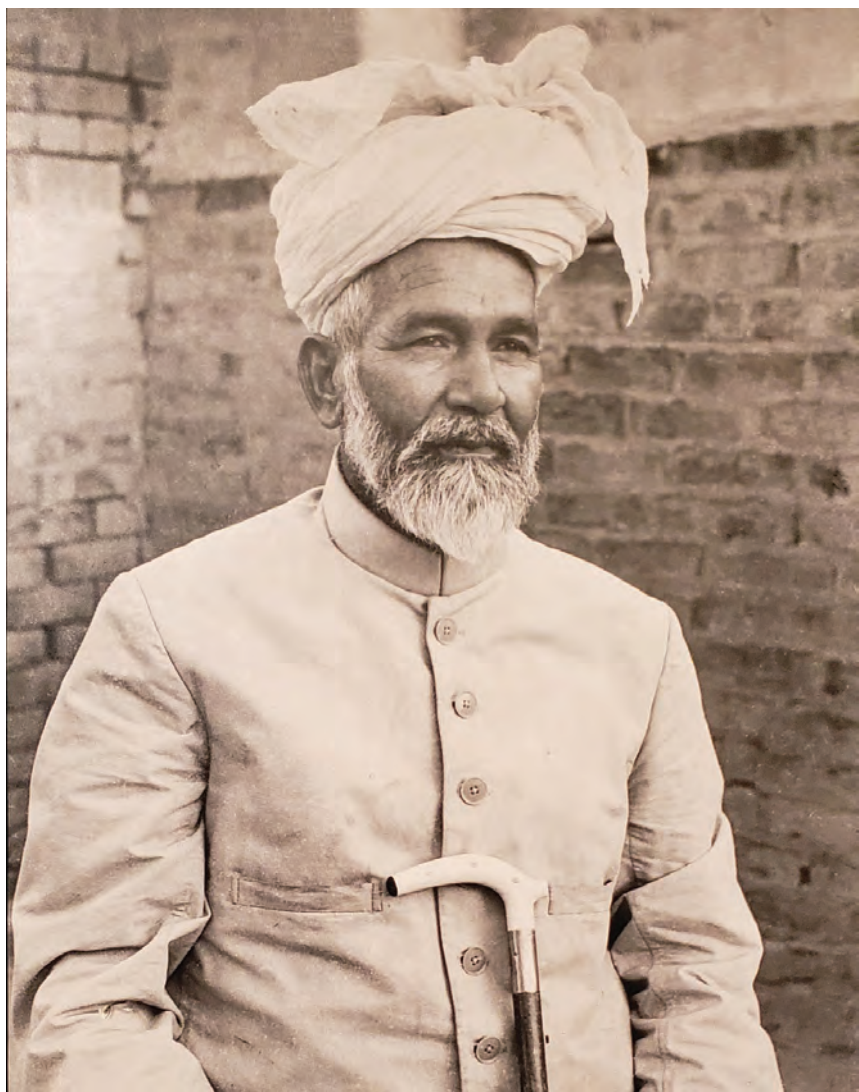
May Allah Almighty create in us complete devotion to *Khilaafat* [Institution of Successorship] and complete obedience and love for the Khalifah of the time within us, our children, and our future generations. And please hasten the time about which the Promised Messiah^{as} has said:

وہ گھڑی آتی ہے جب عیسیٰ پکاریں گے مجھے۔ اب تو تھوڑے رہ گئے دجال کہلانے کے دن۔

The Hour approaches when they will proclaim me Jesus;

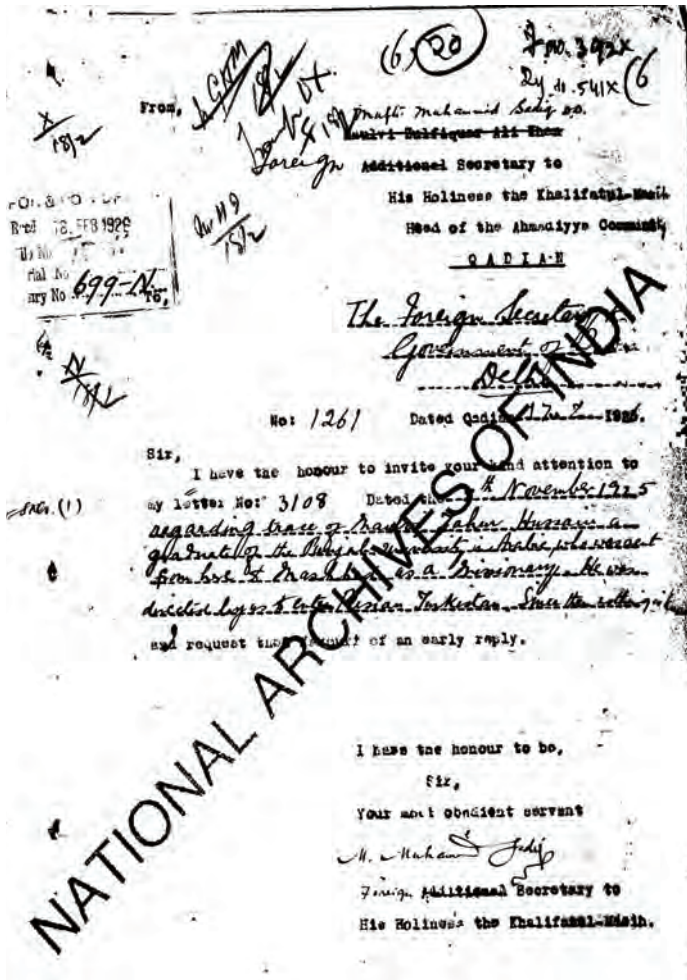
Only but little now remain the days of calling me Dajjaal.

Maulawi Zahoor Hussain,
Rabwah



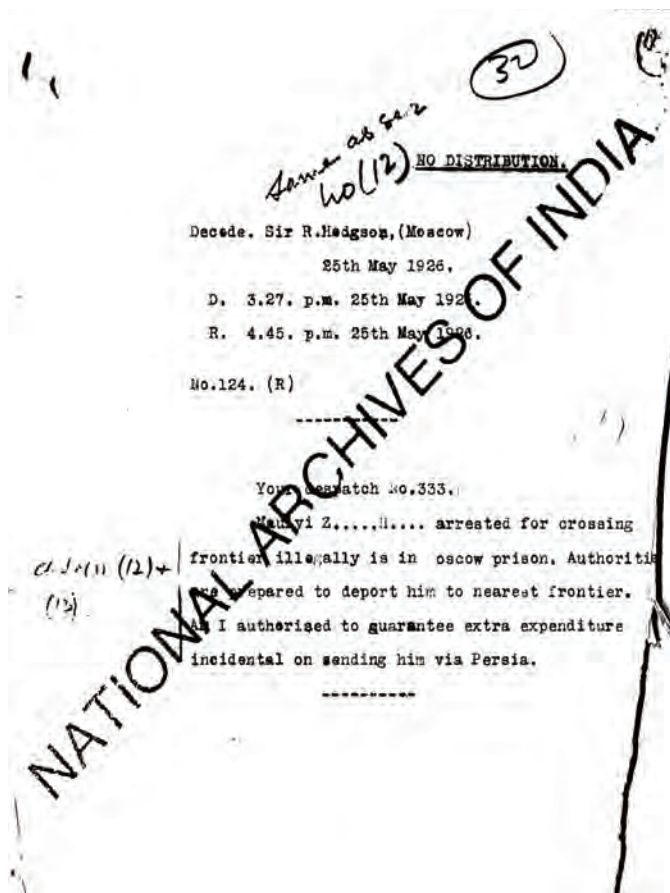
Maulawi Zahoor Hussain in his elder years.

Appendix



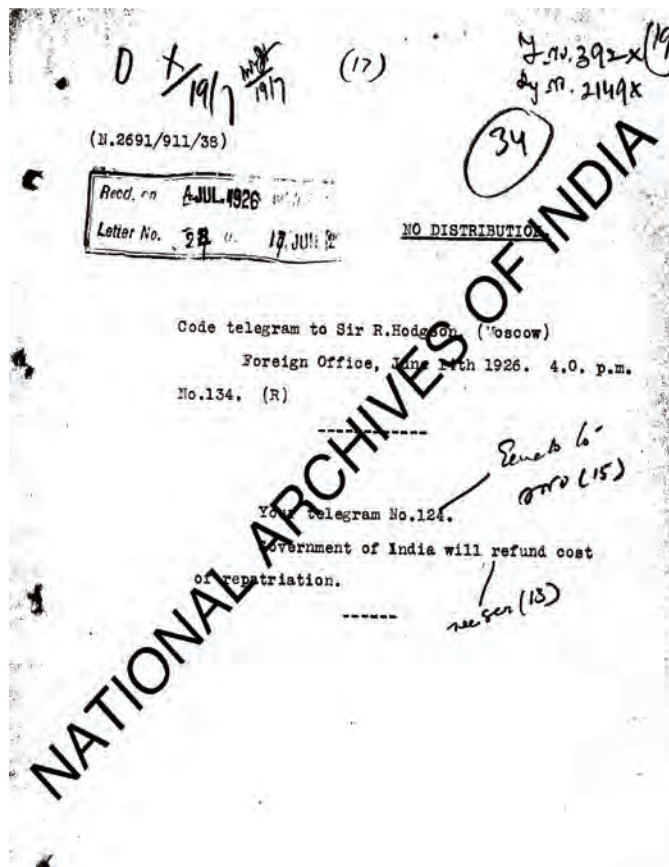
Follow up letter from Mufti Muhammad Sadiq on behalf of
 Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih II^{ra} on 17 February 1926 to the Foreign Secretary
 of the Government of India regarding the whereabouts of
 Maulawi Zahoor Hussain.

Credit: The National Archives of India



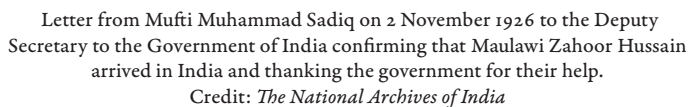
Letter from the British diplomat in Moscow, Sir Robert Macleod Hodgson, on 25 May 1926 confirming that Maulawi Zahoor Hussain has been found arrested in the Soviet Union and requesting permission for the expenditure to repatriate him back to India via Persia.

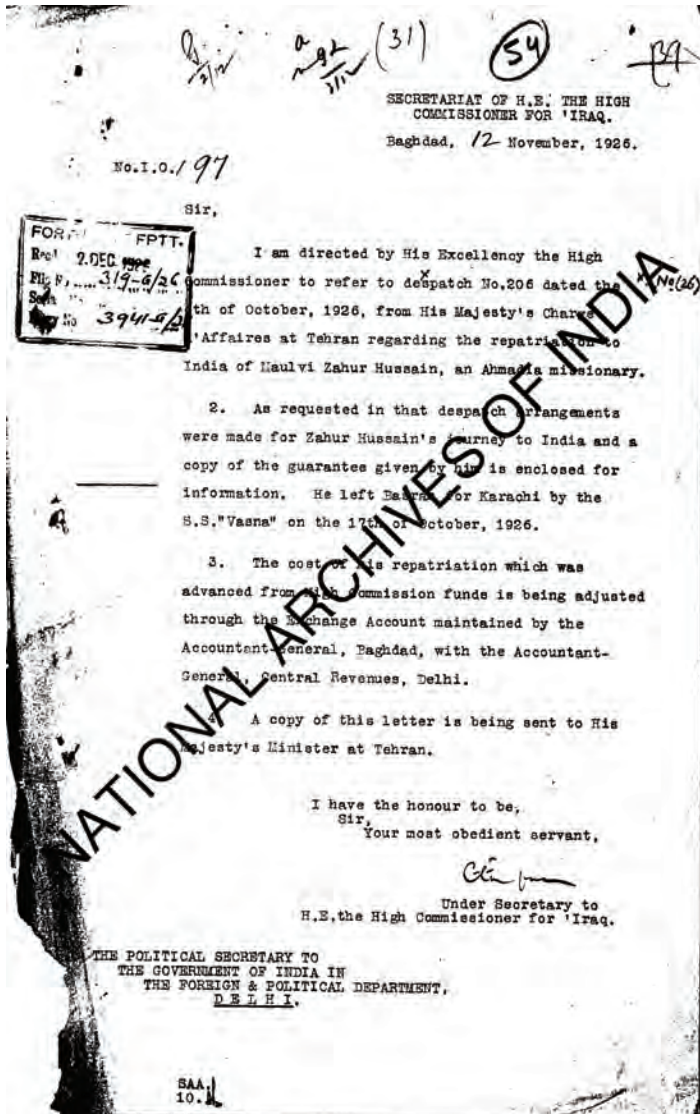
Credit: *The National Archives of India*



Response from the Foreign Office on 14 June 1926 to Sir Robert Macleod Hodgson confirming that the government of India will reimburse him for the cost of repatriating Maulawi Zahoor Hussain back to India.

Credit: *The National Archives of India*





Letter from the High Commissioner for Iraq on 12 November 1926 to the Government of India confirming the repatriation arrangements that were made for Maulawi Zahoor Hussain's journey to India. He also confirms the specific ship he sailed from Basrah to Karachi (the 'S.S. Vasna').

Credit: *The National Archives of India*

Translation of
the Letter to Hazrat Khalifatul Masih II

Karachi—21 October 1926

My Master, Hazrat Khalifatul-Masih^{aba},
Asalaamo Alaikum wa Rahmatullahi wa Barakatohu

My beloved Huzoor, my life is dedicated to you. Today on Thursday, 21 October, 1926, after spending one year and 10 months as a prisoner on the soil of Russia and the Turkic region of the Soviet Union, Huzoor's humble servant finally reached Karachi due to the grace of God Almighty and the prayers of Huzoor and indeed the attention of Huzoor. My dear master already knows the state of illness and helplessness I was in when I left Mashhad for Bukhara alone without a passport during the month of December when the roads had turned white from snowfall.

I departed Mashhad on 4 December 1924 and arrived in a place called Artyk, near Ashgabat, in the middle of the night on 13 December, after leaving Iran's territory. Then around Maghrib time on 14 December 1924, I purchased a ticket for Bukhara and was boarding the train when a Russian officer came, took me to his office

where he searched me, and then sent me to prison. From there, I was taken to Ashgabat, and then from Ashgabat to Tashkent, and then finally from Tashkent to Moscow. And on 16 September 1926 I was released from prison and sent to Anzali on Iran's side of the border.

My master! During this period of nearly 22 months, this insignificant one has spent many troubling and sorrowful days in a state of starvation and thirst, including two and a half continual months in a completely dark room of the prison often remaining awake throughout the night. Such a painful experience can even soften the heart of one who is hard-hearted. People who have seen me in this condition in prison will certainly never be able to forget.

My master! Those impure souls who were thirsty for my blood and worried day and night about murdering me played a big role within the Russian government, whose cruelty even targeted Maulawi Nehmatullah Khan inside Afghanistan. Because of them, I was severely chastised, beaten mercilessly, wounded from head to toe, bound up tightly, and thrown into completely dark rooms. They put poison in my food, and for so many other days pork was brought for me to eat. I was tied up with thick ropes. I was interrogated night after night. Many times, I learned about secret plans to murder me inside my prison cell.

My dear master! In these hard times when despair overwhelmed me, I became convinced that the blood of this humble servant of *Khilafaat* will be sown into Russian soil for the seed of Ahmadiyyat to grow and no longer had

any hope of surviving. So I gave a message to a Pathan [refers to an ethnic group primarily found in Afghanistan and northwestern India at that time] who had already converted to the Ahmadiyya Movement in prison and asked him to deliver it to you under the trust of God Almighty. I told him to go to Qadian and tell my master that one of his loving souls, who was saturated with love for the Ahmadiyya Movement in every part of his body, was martyred in the Soviet Turkic region, and at the time of his murder his last words were that the mirror of God is the perfect man who appeared in the valley of Arabia and whose spiritual reflection appeared in this age in the town of Qadian by the name of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as}. And there was absolutely no doubt in his heart when he was killed because he was the spiritual son of the Champion of Allah^{as}.

Huzoor, remembering you would reinvigorate enthusiasm in my heart, and this enthusiasm produced a magnificent movement of Ahmadiyyat within the government. And while a large number of people had made a firm determination to kill me, most certainly as God as my Witness a section within the government began to accept the Ahmadiyya Movement. As such, whoever especially came to visit me in my cell within the Tashkent prison did not leave until he had accepted the Ahmadiyya Movement. There were about 40 such people [who joined the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community], some of whom were very sincere and dignified. There was a Turkish man who served as the translator between the interrogating

office and myself, who would translate between Persian and Russian. After taking my statement during just two interrogations, he accepted the Ahmadiyya Movement. He translated one or two books of the Promised Messiah^{as} into Russian so the common people can learn about the morals and teachings of the Promised Messiah^{as}, and he also translated Huzoor's instructions into Russian. In this way, the teachings of the Promised Messiah^{as} began to spread among the Russians.

Oh my dear master! In the absolute darkest times that descended upon me—especially in Tashkent, where many spies were brought into my room and all rooms around me to watch over me, which caused those in my room who once treated me with sincerity and love to become so frightened that they thought speaking or sitting next to me would be fatal for them—at such times, it was Huzoor's prayers, attention and effort that gave me strength and contentment.

Wassalam,
Huzoor's Humble Servant,
Zahoor Hussain, Preacher
Karachi, 21 October 1926

Publisher's Note

Please note that, in the translation that follows, words given in parentheses () are the words of the author. If any explanatory words or phrases are added by the translators for the purpose of clarification, they are put in square brackets []. Footnotes given by the publisher are marked '[Publisher]'.

References to the Holy Quran contain the name of the *sūrah* [i.e. chapter] followed by a chapter:verse citation, e.g. *Sūrah al-Jumu'ah*, 62:4, and count *Bismillahir-Rahmaanir-Raheem* ['In the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful'] as the first verse in every chapter that begins with it.

The following abbreviations have been used:

ṣas *sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam*, meaning 'peace and blessings of Allah be upon him', is written after the name of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{ṣas}.

as *'alaihis-salaam*, meaning 'peace be on him', is written after the names of Prophets other than the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{ṣas}.

ra *raziyallaahu ‘anhu/‘anhaa/‘anhum*, meaning ‘may Allah be pleased with him/her/them’, is written after the names of the Companions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{sas} or of the Promised Messiah^{as}.

Readers are urged to recite the full salutations when reading the book.

Glossary

Aameen A term which literally means, ‘may it be so’ and is used at the end of a supplication to pray that God may accept it. It is similar in meaning to ‘amen’.

Ahmadiyya Muslim Community The Community of Muslims who have accepted the claims of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as} of Qadian as the Promised Messiah and Mahdi. The Community was established by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad as in 1889, and is now under the leadership of his fifth khalifah—Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad (may Allah be his help). The Community is also known as **Jama’at-e-Ahmadiyya**. A member of the Community is called an Ahmadi Muslim or simply an Ahmadi.

Aryah Samaj A Hindu sect founded by Pundit Swami Dayanand Saraswati in 1875. Their first and foremost belief is that Parmeshwar [God] is not the Creator of matter

and souls. Rather, all of these things are eternal and self-subsisting like Parmeshwar.

Asr Late afternoon. One of the five times of the daily obligatory Prayers [i.e. *Salaat*] in Islam.

Bai’at Oath of allegiance to a religious leader; initiation at the hands of a Prophet or his Khalifah.

Baraahin Convincing and conclusive arguments, evidence, and proof; the singular is burhan. Short name for *Barāhīn-e-Aḥmadiyya*, the five-part magnum opus of the Promised Messiah^{as}.

Dajjaal A term in Arabic that literally means, ‘the great deceiver’. In Islamic terminology ‘*Dajjaal*’ refers to those satanic forces that would be unleashed in the Latter Days to oppose the Promised Messiah^{as} and al-Imam al-Mahdi. A similar prophecy in the Christian faith about the appearance of the

Antichrist refers to the same approach phenomenon, and we have therefore used the terms '*Dajjal*' and 'Antichrist' and synonyms.

Fajr Refers to the obligatory Prayer performed at dawn (one of the five daily Prayers in Islam).

Hazrat A term of respect used to show honour and reverence for a person of established righteousness and piety. The literal meaning is: His/Her Holiness, Worship, Eminence, etc. It is also used for God in the superlative sense.

Holy Prophet^{sas} A title used exclusively for the Founder of Islam, Hazrat Muhammad, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him.

Holy Quran The final and perfect Scripture revealed by Allah for the guidance of mankind for all times to come. It was revealed word by word to the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{sas} over a period of twenty-three years.

Khalifah Caliph/Successor. In Islamic terminology, the word righteous *Khalifah* is applied to one of the four *Khulafaa*' who continued the mission of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{sas}.

Khalifatul-Masih Ahmadi Muslims refer to a successor of the Promised Messiah^{as} as Khalifatul-Masih. *Khulafaa*' is the plural of Khalifah.

Maghrib Refers to the evening Prayer, immediately after sunset (one of the five daily Prayers in Islam).

Masnawi The six-volume magnumopus of Jalal-ud-Din Muhammad Rumi (1207–1273 CE) written in poetic form.

Sūrah A chapter of the Holy Quran.

Zuhr Lit. midday, noon. Refers to the noon Prayer (one of the five daily Prayers in Islam).