

Christmas in Siberia

by Liddy —, from a labor camp in Siberia, 1930



Tonight on Christmas Eve

All my thoughts rush into the distance

Searching for the loved ones

who will gather around.

But I am alone as twilight falls;

A black line of evergreens on white snow

Crawls into the night.

I whisper a Christmas carol,
But there are no church bells ringing,
No Christmas trees and no candles glowing.

But look! Before my eyes, as if in a dream,
Christmastime past surrounds me.

People, precious and familiar, peek out from behind
the tree with laughter and merry Christmas greetings.

I greet you in return; for a moment I am free and joyful.
I greet you too, my beloved homeland,
and remain faithful to your memory!

(The author of the poem was from Riga, Latvia. During the Russian Civil War when the Reds came into Riga, Latvia they took the wives of some of the town's prominent citizens and held them as hostages to insure the good behavior of the town. Later, the town fell under the control of the Whites, but the Bolsheviks held on to their hostages just the same. Above is a sketch by Edvard Soloft showing the hostages entering a prison in Moscow in June, 1919.)