

The Gulag Archipelago

— The Interrogation —

Chapter 3

If the intellectuals in the plays of Chekhov who spent all their time guessing what would happen in twenty, thirty, or forty years had been told that in forty years interrogation by torture would be practiced in Russia; that prisoners would have their skulls squeezed within iron rings, that a human being would be lowered into an acid bath; that they would be trussed up naked to be bitten by ants and bedbugs; that a ramrod heated over a primus stove would be thrust up their anal canal (the “secret brand”); that a man's genitals would be slowly crushed beneath the toe of a jackboot; and that, in the luckiest possible circumstances, prisoners would be tortured by being kept from sleeping for a week, by thirst, and by being beaten to a bloody pulp, not one of Chekhov's plays would have gotten to its end because all the heroes would have gone off to insane asylums.

Yes, not only Chekhov's heroes, but what normal Russian at the beginning of the century, including any member of the Russian Social Democratic Workers' Party, could have believed, would have tolerated, such a slander against the bright future? What had been acceptable under Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich in the seventeenth century, what had already been regarded as barbarism under Peter the Great, what might have been used against ten or twenty people in all during the time of Biron in the mid-eighteenth century, what had already become totally impossible under Catherine the Great,

was all being practiced during the flowering of the glorious twentieth century—in a society based on socialist principles, and at a time when airplanes were flying and the radio and talking films had already appeared—not by one scoundrel alone in one secret place only, but by tens of thousands of specially trained human beasts standing over millions of defenseless victims.

Was it only that explosion of atavism which is now evasively called “the cult of personality” that was so horrible? Or was it even more horrible that during those same years, in 1937 itself, we celebrated Pushkin's centennial? And that we shamelessly continued to stage those selfsame Chekhov plays, even though the answers to them had already come in? Is it not still more dreadful that we are now being told, thirty years later, “Don't talk about it!”? If we start to recall the sufferings of millions, we are told it will distort the historical perspective! If we doggedly seek out the essence of our morality, we are told it will darken our material progress! Let's think rather about the blast furnaces, the rolling mills that were built, the canals that were dug. . . no, better not talk about the canals. . . . Then maybe about the gold of the Kolyma? No, maybe we ought not to talk about that either. . . . Well, we can talk about anything, so long as we do it adroitly, so long as we glorify it. . . .

It is really hard to see why we condemn the Inquisition. Wasn't it true that

beside the autos-da-fe, magnificent services were offered the Almighty? It is hard to see why we are so down on serfdom. After all, no one forbade the peasants to work every day. And they could sing carols at Christmas too. And for Trinity Day the girls wove wreaths. . . .

In his Dictionary of Definitions Dal makes the following distinction: "An inquiry is distinguished from an investigation by the fact that it is carried out to determine whether there is a basis for proceeding to an investigation. "

On, sacred simplicity! The Organs have never heard of such a thing as an inquiry! Lists of names prepared up above, or an initial suspicion, or a denunciation by an informer, or any anonymous denunciation, were all that was needed to bring about the arrest of the suspect, followed by the inevitable formal charge. The time allotted for investigation was not used to unravel the crime but, in ninety-five cases out of a hundred, to exhaust, wear down, weaken, and render helpless the defendant, so that he would want it to end at any cost.

As long ago as 1919 the chief method used by the interrogator was a revolver on the desk. That was how they investigated not only political but also ordinary misdemeanors and violations. At the trial of the Main Fuels Committee (1921), the accused Makhrovskaya complained that at her interrogation she had been drugged with cocaine. The prosecutor replied: "If she had declared that she had been treated rudely, that they had threatened to shoot her, this might be just barely believable. " The frightening revolver lies there and sometimes it is aimed at you, and the interrogator doesn't tire himself out thinking up what you are guilty of, but shouts: "Come on, talk! You know what

about!" That was what the interrogator Khaikin demanded of Skripnikova in 1927. That was what they demanded of Vitkovsky in 1929. And twenty-five years later nothing had changed. In 1952 Anna Skripnikova was undergoing her fifth imprisonment, and Sivakov, Chief of the Investigative Department of the Ordzhonikidze State Security Administration, said to her: "The prison doctor reports you have a blood pressure of 240/120. That's too low, you bitch! We're going to drive it up to 340 so you'll kick the bucket, you viper, and with no black and blue marks; no beatings; no broken bones. We'll just not let you sleep." She was in her fifties at the time. And if, back in her cell, after a night spent in interrogation, she closed her eyes during the day, the jailer broke in and shouted: "Open your eyes or I'll haul you off that cot by the legs and tie you to the wall standing up."

As early as 1921 interrogations usually took place at night. At that time, too, they shone automobile lights in the prisoner's face. And at the Lubyanka in 1926 they made use of the hot-air heating system to fill the cell first with icy-cold and then with stinking hot air. And there was an airtight cork-lined cell in which there was no ventilation and they cooked the prisoners. A participant in the Yaroslavl uprising of 1918, Vasily Aleksandrovich Kasyanov, described how the heat in such a cell was turned up until your blood began to ooze through your pores. When they saw this happening through the peephole, they would put the prisoner on a stretcher and take him off to sign his confession. The "hot" and "salty" methods of the "gold" period are well known. And in Georgia in 1926 they used lighted cigarettes to burn the hands of prisoners under interrogation. In Metekhi Prison they pushed prisoners into a cesspool in the dark.

There is a very simple connection here. Once it was established that charges had to be brought at any cost and despite everything, threats, violence, tortures became inevitable. And the more fantastic the charges were, the more ferocious the interrogation had to be in order to force the required confession. Given the fact that the cases were always fabricated, violence and torture had to accompany them. This was not peculiar to 1937 alone. It was a chronic, general practice. And that is why it seems strange today to read in the recollections of former zeks that “torture was permitted from the spring of 1938 on.”

There were never any spiritual or moral barriers which could have held the Organs back from torture. In the early postwar years, in the Cheka Weekly, The Red Sword, and Red Terror, the admissibility of torture from a Marxist point of view was openly debated. Judging by the subsequent course of events, the answer deduced was positive, though not universally so.

It is more accurate to say that if before 1938 some kind of formal documentation was required as a preliminary to torture, as well as specific permission for each case under investigation (even though such permission was easy to obtain), then in the years 1937-1938, in view of the extraordinary situation prevailing (the specified millions of admissions to the Archipelago had to be ground through the apparatus of individual interrogation in specified, limited periods, something which had simply not happened in the mass waves of kulaks and nationalities), interrogators were allowed to use violence and torture on an unlimited basis, at their own discretion, and in accordance with the demands of their work quotas and the amount of time they were given. The types

of torture used were not regulated and every kind of ingenuity was permitted, no matter what.

In 1939 such indiscriminate authorization was withdrawn, and once again written permission was required for torture, and perhaps it may not have been so easily granted. (Of course, simple threats, blackmail, deception, exhaustion through enforced sleeplessness, and punishment cells were never prohibited.) Then, from the end of the war and throughout the postwar years, certain categories of prisoners were established by decree for whom a broad range of torture was automatically permitted. Among these were nationalists, particularly the Ukrainians and the Lithuanians, especially in those cases where an underground organization existed (or was suspected) that had to be completely uncovered, which meant obtaining the names of everyone involved from those already arrested.

It would also be incorrect to ascribe to 1937 the “discovery” that the personal confession of an accused person was more important than any other kind of proof or facts. This concept had already been formulated in the twenties. And 1937 was just the year when the brilliant teaching of Vyshinsky came into its own. Incidentally, even at that time, his teaching was transmitted only to interrogators and prosecutors — for the sake of their morale and steadfastness. The rest of us only learned about it twenty years later when it had already come into disfavor through subordinate clauses and minor paragraphs of news paper articles, which treated the subject as if it had long been widely known to all.

It turns out that in that terrible year Andrei Yanuaryevich (one longs to blurt

out, “Jaguaryevich”) Vyshinsky, availing himself of the most flexible dialectics (of a sort nowadays not permitted either Soviet citizens or electronic calculators, since to them yes is yes and no is no), pointed out in a report which became famous in certain circles that it is never possible for mortal men to establish absolute truth, but relative truth only. He then proceeded to a further step, which jurists of the last two thousand years had not been willing to take: that the truth established by interrogation and trial could not be absolute, but only, so to speak, relative. Therefore, when we sign a sentence ordering someone to be shot we can never be absolutely certain, but only approximately, in view of certain hypotheses, and in a certain sense, that we are punishing a guilty person. Thence arose the most practical conclusion: that it was useless to seek absolute evidence — for evidence is always relative — or unchallengeable witnesses-for they can say different things at different times. The proofs of guilt were relative, approximate, and the interrogator could find them, even when there was no evidence and no witness, without leaving his office, “basing his conclusions not only on his own intellect but also on his Party sensitivity, his moral forces” (in other words, the superiority of someone who has slept well, has been well fed, and has not been beaten up) “and on his character” (i.e., his willingness to apply cruelty!).

In only one respect did Vyshinsky fail to be consistent and retreat from dialectical logic: for some reason, the executioner's bullet which he allowed was not relative but absolute. . . .

Thus it was that the conclusions of advanced Soviet jurisprudence, proceeding in a spiral, returned to barbaric or medieval standards. Like medieval tortur-

ers, our interrogators, prosecutors, and judges agreed to accept the confession of the accused as the chief proof of guilt.

However, the simple-minded Middle Ages used dramatic and picturesque methods to squeeze out the desired confessions: the rack, the wheel, the bed of nails, impalement, hot coals, etc. In the twentieth century, taking advantage of our more highly developed medical knowledge and extensive prison experience (and someone seriously defended a doctoral dissertation on this theme), people came to realize that the accumulation of such impressive apparatus was superfluous and that, on a mass scale, it was also cumbersome. And in addition. . .

In addition, there was evidently one other circumstance. As always, Stalin did not pronounce that final word, and his subordinates had to guess what he wanted. Thus, like a jackal, he left himself an escape hole, so that he could, if he wanted, beat a retreat and write about “dizziness from success.” After all, for the first time in human history the calculated torture of millions was being undertaken, and, even with all his strength and power, Stalin could not be absolutely sure of success. In dealing with such an enormous mass of material, the effects of the experiment might differ from those obtained from a smaller sample. An unforeseen explosion might take place, a slippage in a geological fault, or even world-wide disclosure. In any case, Stalin had to remain innocent, his sacred vestments angelically pure.

We are therefore forced to conclude that no list of tortures and torments existed in printed form for the guidance of interrogators! Instead, all that was required was for every Interrogation Department to supply the tribunal within a specified period with a stipulated num-

ber of rabbits who had confessed everything. And it was simply stated, orally but often, that any measures and means employed were good, since they were being used for a lofty purpose; that no interrogator would be made to answer for the death of an accused; and that the prison doctor should interfere as little as possible with the course of the investigation. In all probability, they exchanged experiences in comradely fashion; "they learned from the most successful workers." Then, too, "material rewards" were offered—higher pay for night work, bonus pay for fast work—and there were also definite warnings that interrogators who could not cope with their tasks. . . . Even the chief of some provincial NKVD administration, if some sort of mess developed, could show Stalin his hands were clean: he had issued no direct instructions to use torture! But at the same time he had ensured that torture would be used!

Let us try to list some of the simplest methods which break the will and the character of the prisoner without leaving marks on his body.

Let us begin with psychological methods. These methods have enormous and even annihilating impact on rabbits who have never been prepared for prison suffering. And it isn't easy even for a person who holds strong convictions.

1. First of all: night. Why is it that all the main work of breaking down human souls went on at night? Why, from their very earliest years, did the Organs select the night? Because at night, the prisoner torn from sleep, even though he has not yet been tortured by sleeplessness, lacks his normal daytime equanimity and common sense. He is more vulnerable.

2. Persuasion in a sincere tone is the very

simplest method. Why play at cat and mouse, so to speak? After all, having spent some time among others undergoing interrogation, the prisoner has come to see what the situation is. And so the interrogator says to him in a lazily friendly way: "Look, you're going to get a prison term whatever happens. But if you resist, you'll croak right here in prison, you'll lose your health. But if you go to camp, you'll have fresh air and sunlight. . . . So why not sign right now?" Very logical. And those who agree and sign are smart, if . . . if the matter concerns only themselves! But that's rarely so. A struggle is inevitable.

Another variant of persuasion is particularly appropriate to the Party member. "If there are shortages and even famine in the country, then you as a Bolshevik have to make up your mind: can you admit that the whole Party is to blame? Or the whole Soviet government?" "No, of course not!" the director of the flax depot hastened to reply. "Then be brave, and shoulder the blame yourself!" And he did!

3. Foul language is not a clever method, but it can have a powerful impact on people who are well brought up, refined, delicate. I know of two cases involving priests, who capitulated to foul language alone. One of them, in the Butyrki in 1944, was being interrogated by a woman. At first when he'd come back to our cell he couldn't say often enough how polite she was. But once he came back very despondent, and for a long time he refused to tell us how, with her legs crossed high, she had begun to curse. (I regret that I cannot cite one of her little phrases here.)

4. Psychological contrast was sometimes effective: sudden reversals of tone, for example. For a whole or part of the inter-

rogation period, the interrogator would be extremely friendly, addressing the prisoner formally by first name and patronymic, and promising everything. Suddenly he would brandish a paperweight and shout: "Foo, you rat! I'll put nine grams of lead in your skull!" And he would advance on the accused, clutching hands outstretched as if to grab him by the hair, fingernails like needles. (This worked very, very well with women prisoners.)

Or as a variation on this: two interrogators would take turns. One would shout and bully. The other would be friendly, almost gentle. Each time the accused entered the office he would tremble — which would it be? He wanted to do everything to please the gentle one because of his different manner, even to the point of signing and confessing to things that had never happened.

5. Preliminary humiliation was another approach. In the famous cellars of the Rostov-on-the-Don GPU (House 33), which were lit by lenslike insets of thick glass in the sidewalk above the former storage basement, prisoners awaiting interrogation were made to lie face down for several hours in the main corridor and forbidden to raise their heads or make a sound. They lay this way, like Moslems at prayer, until the guard touched a shoulder and took them off to interrogation. Another case: At the Lubyanka, Aleksandra O—va refused to give the testimony demanded of her. She was transferred to Lefortovo. In the admitting office, a woman jailer ordered her to undress, allegedly for a medical examination, took away her clothes, and locked her in a "box" naked. At that point the men jailers began to peer through the peephole and to appraise her female attributes with loud laughs. If one were systematically to question former prison-

ers, many more such examples would certainly emerge. They all had but a single purpose: to dishearten and humiliate.

6. Any method of inducing extreme confusion in the accused might be employed. Here is how F.I. V. from Krasnogorsk, Moscow Province, was interrogated. (This was reported by I. A. P—ev.) During the interrogation, the interrogator, a woman, undressed in front of him by stages (a striptease!), all the time continuing the interrogation as if nothing were going on. She walked about the room and came close to him and tried to get him to give in. Perhaps this satisfied some personal quirk in her, but it may also have been cold-blooded calculation, an attempt to get the accused so muddled that he would sign. And she was in no danger. She had her pistol, and she had her alarm bell.

7. Intimidation was very widely used and very varied. It was often accompanied by enticement and by promises which were, of course, false. In 1924: "If you don't confess, you'll go to the Solovetsky Islands. Anybody who confesses is turned loose." In 1944: "Which camp you'll be sent to depends on us. Camps are different. We've got hard-labor camps now. If you confess, you'll go to an easy camp. If you're stubborn, you'll get twenty-five years in handcuffs in the mines!" Another form of intimidation was threatening a prisoner with a prison worse than the one he was in. "If you keep on being stubborn, we'll send you to Lefortovo" (if you are in the Lubyanka), "to Sukhanovka" (if you are at Lefortovo). "They'll find another way to talk to you there." You have already gotten used to things where you are; the regimen seems to be not so bad; and what kind of torments await you elsewhere? Yes, and you also have to be transported there. . . . Should you give in?

Intimidation worked beautifully on those who had not yet been arrested but had simply received an official summons to the Bolshoi Dom — the Big House. He (or she) still had a lot to lose. He (or she) was frightened of everything-that they wouldn't let him (or her) out today, that they would confiscate his (or her) belongings or apartment. He would be ready to give all kinds of testimony and make all kinds of concessions in order to avoid these dangers. She, of course, would be ignorant of the Criminal Code, and, at the very least, at the start of the questioning they would push a sheet of paper in front of her with a fake citation from the Code: "I have been warned that for giving false testimony. . . five years of imprisonment." (In actual fact, under Article 95, it is two years.) "For refusal to give testimony-five years. . ." (In actual fact, under Article 92, it is up to three months.) Here, then, one more of the interrogator's basic methods has entered the picture and will continue to re-enter it.

8. The lie. We lambs were forbidden to lie, but the interrogator could tell all the lies he felt like. Those articles of the law did not apply to him. We had even lost the yardstick with which to gauge: what does he get for lying? He could confront us with as many documents as he chose, bearing the forged signatures of our kinfolk and friends-and it would be just a skillful interrogation technique.

Intimidation through enticement and lies was the fundamental method for bringing pressure on the relatives of the arrested person when they were called in to give testimony. "If you don't tell us such and such" (whatever was being asked), "it's going to be the worse for him. . . . You'll be destroying him completely." (How hard for a mother to hear that!) "Signing this paper" (pushed in front of

the relatives) "is the only way you can save him" (destroy him).

Under the "harsh laws" of the Tsarist Empire, close relatives could refuse to testify. And even if they gave testimony at a preliminary investigation, they could choose to repudiate it and refuse to permit it to be used in court. And, curiously enough, kinship or acquaintance with a criminal was never in itself considered evidence.

9. Playing on one's affection for those one loved was a game that worked beautifully on the accused as well. It was the most effective of all methods of intimidation. One could break even a totally fearless person through his concern for those he loved. (Oh, how foresighted was the saying: "A man's family are his enemies.") Remember the Tatar who bore his sufferings-his own and those of his wife-but could not endure his daughter's! In 1930, Rimalis, a woman interrogator, used to threaten: "We'll arrest your daughter and lock her in a cell with syphilitics!" And that was a woman!

They would threaten to arrest everyone you loved. Sometimes this would be done with sound effects: Your wife has already been arrested, but her further fate depends on you. They are questioning her in the next room — just listen! And through the wall you can actually hear a woman weeping and screaming. (After all, they all sound alike; you're hearing it through a wall; and you're under terrific strain and not in a state to play the expert on voice identification. Sometimes they simply play a recording of the voice of a "typical wife" — soprano or contralto — a labor-saving device suggested by some inventive genius.) And then, without fakery, they actually show her to you through a glass door, as she walks along in silence,

her head bent in grief. Yes! Your own wife in the corridors of State Security! You have destroyed her by your stubbornness! She has already been arrested! (In actual fact, she has simply been summoned in connection with some insignificant procedural question and sent into the corridor at just the right moment, after being told: "Don't raise your head, or you'll be kept here!") Or they give you a letter to read, and the handwriting is exactly like hers: "I renounce you! After the filth they have told me about you, I don't need you any more!" (And since such wives do exist in our country, and such letters as well, you are left to ponder in your heart: Is that the kind of wife she really is?)

Just as there is no classification in nature with rigid boundaries, it is impossible rigidly to separate psychological methods from physical ones. Where, for example, should we classify the following amusement?

10. Sound effects: The accused is made to stand twenty to twentyfive feet away and is then forced to speak more and more loudly and to repeat everything. This is not easy for someone already weakened to the point of exhaustion. Or two megaphones are constructed of rolledup cardboard, and two interrogators, coming close to the prisoner, bellow in both ears: "Confess, you rat!" The prisoner is deafened; sometimes he actually loses his sense of hearing. But this method is uneconomical. The fact is that the interrogators like some diversion in their monotonous work, and so they vie in thinking up new ideas.

11. Tickling: This is also a diversion. The prisoner's arms and legs are bound or held down, and then the inside of his nose is tickled with a feather. The prisoner writhes; it feels as though someone were drilling into his brain.

12. A cigarette is put out on the accused's skin (already mentioned above).

13. Light effects involve the use of an extremely bright electric light in the small, white-walled cell or "box" in which the accused is being held — a light which is never extinguished. (The electricity saved by the economies of schoolchildren and housewives!) Your eyelids become inflamed, which is very painful. And then in the interrogation room searchlights are again directed into your eyes.

14. Here is another imaginative trick: On the eve of May 1, 1933, in the Khabarovsk GPU, for twelve hours — all night—Chebotaryev was not interrogated, no, but was simply kept in a continual state of being led to interrogation. "Hey, you — hands behind your back!" They led him out of the cell, up the stairs quickly, into the interrogator's office. The guard left. But the interrogator, without asking one single question, and sometimes without even allowing Chebotaryev to sit down, would pick up the telephone: "Take away the prisoner from 107!" And so they came to get him and took him back to his cell. No sooner had he lain down on his board bunk than the lock rattled: "Chebotaryev! To interrogation. Hands behind your back!" And when he got there: "Take away the prisoner from 107!"

For that matter, the methods of bringing pressure to bear can begin a long time before the interrogator's office.

15. Prison begins with the box, in other words, what amounts to a closet or packing case. The human being who has just been taken from freedom, still in a state of inner turmoil, ready to explain, to argue, to struggle, is, when he first sets foot in prison, clapped into a "box," which sometimes has a lamp and a place where he

can sit down, but which sometimes is dark and constructed in such a way that he can only stand up and even then is squeezed against the door. And he is held there for several hours, or for half a day, or a day. During those hours he knows absolutely nothing! Will he perhaps be confined there all his life? He has never in his life encountered anything like this, and he cannot guess at the outcome. Those first hours are passing when every thing inside him is still ablaze from the unstilled storm in his heart. Some become despondent-and that's the time to subject them to their first interrogation. Others become angry-and that, too, is all to the good, for they may insult the interrogator right at the start or make a slip, and it will be all the easier to cook up their case.

16. When boxes were in short supply, they used to have another method. In the Novocherkassk NKVD, Yelena Strutinskaya was forced to remain seated on a stool in the corridor for six days in such a way that she did not lean against anything, did not sleep, did not fall off, and did not get up from it. Six days! Just try to sit that way for six hours!

Then again, as a variation, the prisoner can be forced to sit on a tall chair, of the kind used in laboratories, so that his feet do not reach the floor. They become very numb in this position. He is left sitting that way from eight to ten hours.

Or else, during the interrogation itself, when the prisoner is out in plain view, he can be forced to sit in this way: as far forward as possible on the front edge ("Move further forward! Further still!") of the chair so that he is under painful pressure during the entire interrogation. He is not allowed to stir for several hours. Is that all? Yes, that's all. Just try it yourself!

17. Depending on local conditions, a divisional pit can be substituted for the box, as was done in the Gorokhovets army camps during World War II. The prisoner was pushed into such a pit, ten feet in depth, six and a half feet in diameter; and beneath the open sky, rain or shine, this pit was for several days both his cell and his latrine. And ten and a half ounces of bread, and water, were lowered to him on a cord. Imagine yourself in this situation just after you've been arrested, when you're all in a boil.

Either identical orders to all Special Branches of the Red Army or else the similarities of their situations in the field led to broad use of this method. Thus, in the 36th Motorized Infantry Division, a unit which took part in the battle of Khalkhin-Gol, and which was encamped in the Mongolian desert in 1941, a newly arrested prisoner was, without explanation, given a spade by Chief of the Special Branch Samulyev and ordered to dig a pit the exact dimensions of a grave. (Here is a hybridization of physical and psychological methods.) When the prisoner had dug deeper than his own waist, they ordered him to stop and sit down on the bottom: his head was no longer visible. One guard kept watch over several such pits and it was as though he were surrounded by empty space. They kept the accused in this desert with no protection from 'the Mongolian sun and with no warm clothing against the cold of the night, but no tortures — why waste effort on tortures? The ration they gave was three and a half ounces of bread per day and one glass of water. Lieutenant Chulpenyev, a giant, a boxer, twenty-one years old, spent a month imprisoned this way. Within ten days he was swarming with lice. After fifteen days he was summoned to interrogation for the first time.

18. The accused could be compelled to stand on his knees — not in some figurative sense, but literally on his knees, without sitting back on his heels, and with his back upright. People could be compelled to kneel in the interrogator's office or the corridor for twelve, or even twenty-four or forty-eight hours. (The interrogator himself could go home, sleep, amuse himself in one way or another — this was an organized system; watch was kept over the kneeling prisoner, and the guards worked in shifts.) What kind of prisoner was most vulnerable to such treatment? One already broken, already inclined to surrender. It was also a good method to use with women. Ivanov-Razumnik reports a variation of it: Having set young Lordkipanidze on his knees, the interrogator urinated in his face! And what happened? Unbroken by anything else, Lordkipanidze was broken by this. Which shows that the method also worked well on proud people. . . .

19. Then there is the method of simply compelling a prisoner to stand there. This can be arranged so that the accused stands only while being interrogated — because that, too, exhausts and breaks a person down. It can be set up in another way — so that the prisoner sits down during interrogation but is forced to stand up between interrogations.

(A watch is set over him, and the guards see to it that he doesn't lean against the wall, and if he goes to sleep and falls over he is given a kick and straightened up.) Sometimes even one day of standing is enough to deprive a person of all his strength and to force him to testify to anything at all.

20. During all these tortures which involved standing for three, four, and five days, they ordinarily deprived a person of water.

The most natural thing of all is to combine the psychological and physical methods. It is also natural to combine all the preceding methods with:

21. Sleeplessness, which they quite failed to appreciate in medieval times. They did not understand how narrow are the limits within which a human being can preserve his personality intact. Sleeplessness (yes, combined with standing, thirst, bright light, terror, and the unknown — what other tortures are needed!?) befogs the reason, undermines the will, and the human being ceases to be himself, to be his own “I.” (As in Chekhov's “I Want to Sleep,” but there it was much easier, for there the girl could lie down and slip into lapses of consciousness, which even in just a minute would revive and refresh the brain.) A person deprived of sleep acts half-unconsciously or altogether unconsciously, so that his testimony cannot be held against him.

They used to say: “You are not truthful in your testimony, and therefore you will not be allowed to sleep!” Sometimes, as a refinement, instead of making the prisoner stand up, they made him sit down on a soft sofa, which made him want to sleep all the more. (The jailer on duty sat next to him on the same sofa and kicked him every time his eyes began to shut.) Here is how one victim — who had just sat out days in a box infested with bedbugs — describes his feelings after this torture: “Chill from great loss of blood. Irises of the eyes dried out as if someone were holding a red-hot iron in front of them. Tongue swollen from thirst and prickling as from a hedgehog at the slightest movement. Throat racked by spasms of swallowing.”

Sleeplessness was a great form of torture: it left no visible marks and could not provide grounds for complaint even if an

inspection something unheard of anyway—were to strike on the morrow.

“They didn't let you sleep? Well, after all, this is not supposed to be a vacation resort. The Security officials were awake too!” (They would catch up on their sleep during the day.) One can say that sleeplessness became the universal method in the Organs. From being one among many tortures, it became an integral part of the system of State Security; it was the cheapest possible method and did not require the posting of sentries. In all the interrogation prisons the prisoners were forbidden to sleep even one minute from reveille till taps. (In Sukhanovka and several other prisons used specifically for interrogation, the cot was folded into the wall during the day; in others, the prisoners were simply forbidden to lie down, and even to close their eyes while seated.) Since the major interrogations were all conducted at night, it was automatic: whoever was undergoing interrogation got no sleep for at least five days and nights. (Saturday and Sunday nights, the interrogators themselves tried to get some rest.)

22. The above method was further implemented by an assembly line of interrogators. Not only were you not allowed to sleep, but for three or four days shifts of interrogators kept up a continuous interrogation.

23. The bedbug-infested box has already been mentioned. In the dark closet made of wooden planks, there were hundreds, maybe even thousands, of bedbugs, which had been allowed to multiply. The guards removed the prisoner's jacket or field shirt, and immediately the hungry bedbugs assaulted him, crawling onto him from the walls or falling off the ceiling. At first he waged war with them strenuously, crushing them on his body and on the

walls, suffocated by their stink. But after several hours he weakened and let them drink his blood without a murmur.

24. Punishment cells. No matter how hard it was in the ordinary cell, the punishment cells were always worse. And on return from there the ordinary cell always seemed like paradise. In the punishment cell a human being was systematically worn down by starvation and also, usually, by cold. (In Sukhanovka Prison there were also hot punishment cells.) For example, the Lefortovo punishment cells were entirely unheated. There were radiators in the corridor only, and in this “heated” corridor the guards on duty walked in felt boots and padded jackets. The prisoner was forced to undress down to his underwear, and sometimes to his undershorts, and he was forced to spend from three to five days in the punishment cell without moving (since it was so confining). He received hot gruel on the third day only. For the first few minutes you were convinced you'd not be able to last an hour. But, by some miracle, a human being would indeed sit out his five days, perhaps acquiring in the course of it an illness that would last him the rest of his life.

There were various aspects to punishment cells — as, for instance, dampness and water. In the Chernovtsy Prison after the war, Masha G. was kept barefooted for two hours and up to her ankles in icy water — confess! (She was eighteen years old, and how she feared for her feet! She was going to have to live with them a long time.)

25. Should one consider it a variation of the punishment cell when a prisoner was locked in an alcove? As long ago as 1933 this was one of the ways they tortured S. A. Chebotaryev in the Khabarovsk GPU.

They locked him naked in a concrete alcove in such a way that he could neither bend his knees, nor straighten up and change the position of his arms, nor turn his head. And that was not all! They began to drip cold water onto his scalp — a classic torture — which then ran down his body in rivulets. They did not inform him, of course, that this would go on for only twenty-four hours. It was awful enough at any rate for him to lose consciousness, and he was discovered the next day apparently dead. He came to on a hospital cot. They had brought him out of his faint with spirits of ammonia, caffeine, and body massage. At first he had no recollection of where he had been, or what had happened. For a whole month he was useless even for interrogation.

26. Starvation has already been mentioned in combination with other methods. Nor was it an unusual method: to starve the prisoner into confession. Actually, the starvation technique, like interrogation at night, was an integral element in the entire system of coercion. The miserly prison bread ration, amounting to ten and a half ounces in the peacetime year of 1933, and to one pound in 1945 in the Lubyanka, and permitting or prohibiting food parcels from one's family and access to the commissary, were universally applied to everyone. But there was also the technique of intensified hunger: for example, Chulpenyev was kept for a month on three and a half ounces of bread, after which—when he had just been brought in from the pit — the interrogator Sokol placed in front of him a pot of thick borscht, and half a loaf of white bread sliced diagonally. (What does it matter, one might ask, how it was sliced? But Chulpenyev even today will insist that it was really sliced very attractively.) However, he was not given a thing to eat. How ancient it all is, how medieval,

how primitive! The only thing new about it was that it was applied in a socialist society! Others, too, tell about such tricks. They were often tried. But we are going to cite another case involving Chebotaryev because it combined so many methods. They put him in the interrogator's office for seventy-two hours, and the only thing he was allowed was to be taken to the toilet. For the rest, they allowed him neither food nor drink even though there was water in a carafe right next to him. Nor was he permitted to sleep. Throughout there were three interrogators in the office, working in shifts. One kept writing something—silently, without disturbing the prisoner. The second slept on the sofa, and the third walked around the room, and as soon as Chebotaryev fell asleep, beat him instantly. Then they switched roles. (Maybe they themselves were being punished for failure to deliver.) And then, all of a sudden, they brought Chebotaryev a meal: fat Ukrainian borscht, a chop, fried potatoes, and red wine in a crystal carafe. But because Chebotaryev had had an aversion to alcohol all his life, he refused to drink the wine, and the interrogator couldn't go too far in forcing him to, because that would have spoiled the whole game. After he had eaten, they said to him: "Now here's what you have testified to in the presence of two witnesses. Sign here." In other words, he was to sign what had been silently composed by one interrogator in the presence of another, who had been asleep, and a third, who had been actively working. On the very first page Chebotaryev learned he had been on intimate terms with all the leading Japanese generals and that he had received espionage assignments from all of them. He began to cross out whole pages. They beat him up and threw him out. Blagin, another Chinese Eastern Railroad man, arrested with him, was put through the same thing; but he drank the

wine and, in a state of pleasant intoxication, signed the confession — and was shot. (Even one tiny glass can have an enormous effect on a famished man — and that was a whole carafe.)

27. Beatings-of a kind that leave no marks. They use rubber truncheons, and they use wooden mallets and small sandbags. It is very, very painful when they hit a bone — for example, an interrogator's jackboot on the shin, where the bone lies just beneath the skin. They beat Brigade Commander Karpunich-Braven for twenty-one days in a row. And today he says: "Even after thirty years all my bones ache and my head too." In recollecting his own experience and the stories of others, he counts up to fifty-two methods of torture. Here is one: They grip the hand in a special vise so that the prisoner's palm lies flat on the desk-and then they hit the joints with the thin edge of a ruler. And one screams! Should we single out particularly the technique by which teeth are knocked out? They knocked out eight of Karpunich's.

As everyone knows, a blow of the fist in the solar plexus, catching the victim in the middle of a breath, leaves no mark whatever. The Lefortovo Colonel Sidorov, in the postwar period, used to take a "penalty kick" with his overshoes at the dangling genitals of male prisoners. Soccer players who at one time or another have been hit in the groin by a ball know what that kind of blow is like. There is no pain comparable to it, and ordinarily the recipient loses consciousness.

28. In the Novorossisk NKVD they invented a machine for squeezing fingernails. As a result it could be observed later at transit prisons that many of those from Novorossisk had lost their fingernails.

29. And what about the strait jacket?

30. And breaking the prisoner's back? (As in that same Khabarovsk GPU in 1933.)

31. Or bridling (also known as "the swan dive")? This was a Sukhanovka method-also used in Archangel, where the interrogator Ivkov applied it in 1940. A long piece of rough toweling was inserted between the prisoner's jaws like a bridle; the ends were then pulled back over his shoulders and tied to his heels. Just try lying on your stomach like a wheel, with your spine breaking — and without water and food for two days!

Is it necessary to go on with the list? Is there much left to enumerate? What won't idle, well-fed, unfeeling people invent?

Brother mine! Do not condemn those who, finding themselves in such a situation, turned out to be weak and confessed to more than they should have. . . . Do not be the first to cast a stone at them.

From childhood on we are educated and trained-for our own profession; for our civil duties; for military service; to take care of our bodily needs; to behave well; even to appreciate beauty (well, this last not really all that much!). But neither our education, nor our upbringing, nor our experience prepares us in the slightest for the greatest trial of our lives: being arrested for nothing and interrogated about nothing. Novels, plays, films (their authors should themselves be forced to drink the cup of Gulag to the bottom!) depict the types one meets in the offices of interrogators as chivalrous guardians of truth and humanitarianism, as our loving fathers. We are exposed to lectures on everything under the sun — and are even herded in to listen to them. But no one is going to lecture to us about the true and

extended significance of the Criminal Code; and the codes themselves are not on open shelves in our libraries, nor sold at newsstands; nor do they fall into the hands of the heedless young.

It seems a virtual fairy tale that somewhere, at the ends of the earth, an accused person can avail himself of a lawyer's help. This means having beside you in the most difficult moment of your life a clear-minded ally who knows the law.

The principle of our interrogation consists further in depriving the accused of even a knowledge of the law.

An indictment is presented. And here, incidentally, is how it's presented: "Sign it." "It's not true." "Sign." "But I'm not guilty of anything!" It turns out that you are being indicted under the provisions of Articles 58-10, Part 2, and 58-11 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Republic. "Sign!" "But what do these sections say? Let me read the Code!" "I don't have it. " "Well, get it from your department head!" "He doesn't have it either. Sign!" "But I want to see it. " "You are not supposed to see it. It isn't written for you but for us. You don't need it. I'll tell you what it says: these sections spell out exactly what you are guilty of. And anyway, at this point your signature doesn't mean that you agree with the indictment but that you've read it, that it's been presented to you."

All of a sudden, a new combination of letters, UPK, flashes by on one of the pieces of paper. Your sense of caution is aroused. What's the difference between the UPK and the UK — the Criminal Code? If you've been lucky enough to catch the interrogator when he is in a good mood, he will explain it to you: the UPK is the Code of Criminal Procedure. What?

This means that there are two distinct codes, not just one, of whose contents you are completely ignorant even as you are being trampled under their provisions.

Since that time ten years have passed; then fifteen. The grass has grown thick over the grave of my youth. I served out my term and even "eternal exile" as well. And nowhere—neither in the "cultural education" sections of the camps, nor in district libraries, nor even in medium-sized cities, have I seen with my own eyes, held in my own hands, been able to buy, obtain, or even ask for the Code of Soviet law!

And of the hundreds of prisoners I knew who had gone through interrogation and trial, and more than once too, who had served sentences in camp and in exile, none had ever seen the Code or held it in his hand!

It was only when both codes were thirty-five years old and on the point of being replaced by new ones that I saw them, two little paperback brothers, the UK or Criminal Code, and the UPK or Code of Criminal Procedure, on a newsstand in the Moscow subway (because they were outdated, it had been decided to release them for general circulation).

I read them today touched with emotion. For example, the UPK — the Code of Criminal Procedure:

"Article 136: The interrogator does not have the right to extract testimony or a confession from an accused by means of compulsion and threats." (It was as though they had foreseen it!)

"Article 111: The interrogator is obliged to establish clearly all the relevant facts, both those tending toward

acquittal and any which might lessen the accused's measure of guilt.”

But it was I who helped establish Soviet power in October! It was I who shot Kolchak! I took part in the dispossession of the kulaks! I saved the state ten million rubles in lowered production costs! I was wounded twice in the war! I have three orders and decorations.

“You're not being tried for that!” History. . . the bared teeth of the interrogator: “Whatever good you may have done has nothing to do with the case.”

“Article 139: The accused has the right to set forth his testimony in his own hand, and to demand the right to make corrections in the deposition written by the interrogator.”

Oh, if we had only known that in time! But what I should say is: If that were only the way it really was! We were always vainly imploring the interrogator not to write “my repulsive, slanderous fabrications” instead of “my mistaken statements,” or not to write “our underground weapons arsenal” instead of “my rusty Finnish knife.”

If only the defendants had first been taught some prison science! If only interrogation had been run through first in rehearsal, and only afterward for real. . . . They didn't, after all, play that interrogation game with the second-termers of 1948: it would have gotten them nowhere. But newcomers had no experience, no knowledge! And there was no one from whom to seek advice.

The loneliness of the accused! That was one more factor in the success of unjust interrogation! The entire apparatus threw its full weight on one lonely and

inhibited will. From the moment of his arrest and throughout the entire shock period of the interrogation the prisoner was, ideally, to be kept entirely alone. In his cell, in the corridor, on the stairs, in the offices, he was not supposed to encounter others like himself, in order to avoid the risk of his gleaning a bit of sympathy, advice, support from someone's smile or glance. The Organs did everything to blot out for him his future and distort his present: to lead him to believe that his friends and family had all been arrested and that material proof of his guilt had been found. It was their habit to exaggerate their power to destroy him and those he loved as well as their authority to pardon (which the Organs didn't even have). They pretended that there was some connection between the sincerity of a prisoner's “repentance” and a reduction in his sentence or an easing of the camp regimen. (No such connection ever existed.) While the prisoner was still in a state of shock and torment and totally beside himself, they tried to get from him very quickly as many irreparably damaging items of evidence as possible and to implicate with him as many totally innocent persons as possible. Some defendants became so depressed in these circumstances that they even asked not to have the depositions read to them. They could not stand hearing them. They asked merely to be allowed to sign them, just to sign and get it over with. Only after all this was over would the prisoner be released from solitary into a large cell, where, in belated desperation, he would discover and count over his mistakes one by one.

How was it possible not to make mistakes in such a duel? Who could have failed to make a mistake?

We said that “ideally he was to be kept alone.” However, in the overcrowded pris-

ons of 1937, and, for that matter, of 1945 as well, this ideal of solitary confinement for a newly arrested defendant could not be attained. Almost from his first hours, the prisoner was in fact in a terribly overcrowded common cell.

But there were virtues to this arrangement, too, which more than made up for its flaws. The overcrowding of the cells not only took the place of the tightly confined solitary “box” but also assumed the character of a first-class torture in itself — one that was particularly useful because it continued for whole days and weeks — with no effort on the part of the interrogators. The prisoners tortured the prisoners! The jailers pushed so many prisoners into the cell that not everyone had even a piece of floor; some were sitting on others' feet, and people walked on people and couldn't even move about at all. Thus, in the Kishinev KPZ's Cells for Preliminary Detention — in 1945, they pushed eighteen prisoners into a cell designed for the solitary confinement of one person; in Lugansk in 1937 it was fifteen. And in 1938 Ivanov-Razumnik found one hundred forty prisoners in a standard Butyrki cell intended for twenty-five-with toilets so overburdened that prisoners were taken to the toilet only once a day, sometimes at night; and the same thing was true of their outdoor walk as well.

That same year in the Butyrki, those newly arrested, who had already been processed through the bath and the boxes, sat on the stairs for several days at a stretch, waiting for departing prisoner transports to leave and release space in the cells. T——v had been imprisoned in the Butyrki seven years earlier, in 1931, and says that it was overcrowded under the bunks and that prisoners lay on the asphalt floor. I myself was imprisoned seven years later, in 1945, and it was just

the same. But recently I received from M. K. B——ch valuable personal testimony about overcrowding in the Butyrki in 1918. In October of that year — during the second month of the Red Terror — it was so full that they even set up a cell for seventy women in the laundry. When, then, was the Butyrki not crowded?

It was Ivanov-Razumnik who in the Lubyanka reception “kennel” calculated that for weeks at a time there were three persons for each square yard of floor space (just as an experiment, try to fit three people into that space!).

But this, too, is no miracle: in the Vladimir Internal Prison in 1948, thirty people had to stand in a cell ten feet by ten feet in size! (S. Potapov.)

In this “kennel” there was neither ventilation nor a window, and the prisoners' body heat and breathing raised the temperature to 40 or 45 degrees Centigrade-104 to 113 degrees Fahrenheit — and everyone sat there in undershorts with their winter clothing piled beneath them. Their naked bodies were pressed against one another, and they got eczema from one another's sweat. They sat like that for weeks at a time, and were given neither fresh air nor water — except for gruel and tea in the morning.

And if at the same time the latrine bucket replaced all other types of toilet (or if, on the other hand, there was no latrine bucket for use between trips to an outside toilet, as was the case in several Siberian prisons); and if four people ate from one bowl, sitting on each other's knees; and if someone was hauled out for interrogation, and then someone else was pushed in beaten up, sleepless, and broken; and if the appearance of such broken men was more persuasive than any threats on the

part of the interrogators; and if, by then, death and any camp whatever seemed easier to a prisoner who had been left unsummoned for months than his tormented current situation — perhaps this really did replace the theoretically ideal isolation in solitary. And you could not always decide in such a porridge of people with whom to be forthright; and you could not always find someone from whom to seek advice. And you would believe in the tortures and beatings not when the interrogator threatened you with them but when you saw their results on other prisoners.

You could learn from those who had suffered that they could give you a salt-water douche in the throat and then leave you in a box for a day tormented by thirst (Karpunich). Or that they might scrape the skin off a man's back with a grater till it bled and then oil it with turpentine. (Brigade Commander Rudolf Pintsov underwent both treatments. In addition, they pushed needles under his nails, and poured water into him to the bursting point — demanding that he confess to having wanted to turn his brigade of tanks against the government during the November parade.) And from Aleksandrov, the former head of the Arts Section of the All-Union Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, who has a broken spinal column which tilts to one side, and who cannot control his tear ducts and thus cannot stop crying, one can learn how Abakumov himself could beat -in 1948.

Yes, yes, Minister of State Security Abakumov himself did not by any means spurn such menial labor. He was not averse to taking a rubber truncheon in his hands every once in a while. And his deputy Ryumin was even more willing. He did this at Sukhanovka in the "Generals' "

interrogation office. The office had imitation-walnut paneling on the walls, silk portieres at the windows and doors, and a great Persian carpet on the floor. In order not to spoil all this beauty, a dirty runner bespattered with blood was rolled out on top of the carpet when a prisoner was being beaten. When Ryumin was doing the beating, he was assisted not by some ordinary guard but by a colonel. "And so," said Ryumin politely, stroking his rubber truncheon, which was four centimeters — an inch and a half-thick, "you have survived trial by sleeplessness with honor." (Alexander Dolgun had cleverly managed to last a month "without sleep" by sleeping while he was standing up.) "So now we will try the club. Prisoners can't take more than two or three sessions of this. Let down your trousers and lie down on the runner." The colonel sat down on the prisoner's back. Alexander Dolgun was going to count the blows. He didn't yet know about a blow from a rubber truncheon on the sciatic nerve when the buttocks have disappeared as a consequence of prolonged starvation. The effect is not felt in the place where the blow is delivered — it explodes inside the head. After the first blow the victim was mad with pain and broke his nails on the carpet. Ryumin beat away, trying to hit accurately. The colonel pressed down on Alexander Dolgun's torso-this was just the right sort of work for three big shoulder-board stars, assisting the all-powerful Ryumin! (After the beating the prisoner could not walk and, of course, was not carried. They just dragged him along the floor. What was left of his buttocks was soon so swollen that he could not button his trousers, and yet there were practically no scars. He was hit by a violent case of diarrhea, and, sitting there on the latrine bucket in solitary, Alexander Dolgun guffawed. He went through a second and a third session, and his skin cracked, and Ryumin went wild,

and started to beat him on the stomach, breaking through the intestinal wall and creating an enormous hernia through which Alexander Dolgun's intestines protruded. The prisoner was taken off to the Butyrki hospital with a case of peritonitis, and for the time being their attempts to compel him to commit a foul deed were suspended.)

That is how they can torture you too! After that it could seem a simple fatherly caress when the Kishinev interrogator Danilov beat Father Viktor Shipovalnikov across the back of the head with a poker and pulled him by his long hair. (It is very convenient to drag a priest around in that fashion; ordinary laymen can be dragged by the beard from one corner of the office to the other. And Richard Ohola—a Finnish Red Guard, and a participant in the capture of British agent Sidney Reilly, and commander of a company during the suppression of the Kronstadt revolt — was lifted up with pliers first by one end of his great mustaches and then by the other, and held for ten minutes with his feet off the floor.)

But the most awful thing they can do with you is this: undress you from the waist down, place you on your back on the floor, pull your legs apart, seat assistants on them (from the glorious corps of sergeants!) who also hold down your arms; and then the interrogator (and women interrogators have not shrunk from this) stands between your legs and with the toe of his boot (or of her shoe) gradually, steadily, and with ever greater pressure crushes against the floor those organs which once made you a man. He looks into your eyes and repeats and repeats his questions or the betrayal he is urging on you. If he does not press down too quickly or just a shade too powerfully, you still have fifteen seconds left in which to

scream that you will confess to everything, that you are ready to see arrested all twenty of those people he's been demanding of you, or that you will slander in the newspapers everything you hold holy. . . .

And may you be judged by God, but not by people. . . . “There is no way out! You have to confess to everything!” whisper the stoolies who have been planted in the cell.

“It's a simple question: hang onto your health!” say people with common sense.

“You can't get new teeth,” those who have already lost them nod at you.

“They are going to convict you in any case, whether you confess or whether you don't,” conclude those who have got to the bottom of things.

“Those who don't sign get shot!” prophesies someone else in the corner. “Out of vengeance! So as not to risk any leaks about how they conduct interrogations.”

“And if you die in the interrogator's office, they'll tell your relatives you've been sentenced to camp without the right of correspondence. And then just let them look for you.”

If you are an orthodox Communist, then another orthodox Communist will sidle up to you, peering about with hostile suspicion, and he'll begin to whisper in your ear so that the uninitiated cannot overhear: . .

“It's our duty to support Soviet interrogation. It's a combat situation. We ourselves are to blame. We were too soft-hearted; and now look at all the rot that has multiplied in the country. There is a

vicious secret war going on. Even here we are surrounded by enemies. Just listen to what they are saying! The Party is not obliged to account for what it does to every single one of us — to explain the whys and wherefores. If they ask us to, that means we should sign.”

And another orthodox Communist sidles up:

“I signed denunciations against thirty-five people, against all my acquaintances. And I advise you too: Drag along as many names as you can in your wake, as many as you can. That way it will become obvious that the whole thing is an absurdity and they'll let everyone out!”

But that is precisely what the Organs need. The conscientiousness of the orthodox Communist and the purpose of the NKVD naturally coincide. Indeed, the NKVD needs just that arched fan of names, that fat multiplication of them. That is the mark of quality of their work, and these are also new patches of woods in which to set out snares. “Your accomplices, accomplices! Others who share your views!” That is what they keep pressing to shake out of everyone. They say that R. Ralov named Cardinal Richelieu as one of his accomplices and that the Cardinal was in fact so listed in his depositions-and no one was astonished by this until Ralov was questioned about it at his rehabilitation proceedings in 1956.

Apropos of the orthodox Communists, Stalin was necessary, for such a purge as that, yes, but a Party like that was necessary too: the majority of those in power, up to the very moment of their own arrest, were pitiless in arresting others, obediently destroyed their peers in accordance with those same instructions and handed over to retribution any friend or comrade-

in-arms of yesterday. And all the big Bolsheviks, who now wear martyrs' halos, managed to be the executioners of other Bolsheviks (not even taking into account how all of them in the first place had been the executioners of non-Communists). Perhaps 1937 was needed in order to show how little their whole ideology was worth -that ideology of which they boasted so enthusiastically, turning Russia upside down, destroying its foundations, trampling everything it held sacred underfoot, that Russia where they themselves had never been threatened by such retribution. The victims of the Bolsheviks from 1918 to 1946 never conducted themselves so despicably as the leading Bolsheviks when the lightning struck them. If you study in detail the whole history of the arrests and trials of 1936 to 1938, the principal revulsion you feel is not against Stalin and his accomplices, but against the humiliatingly repulsive defendants — nausea at their spiritual baseness after their former pride and implacability.

So what is the answer? How can you stand your ground when you are weak and sensitive to pain, when people you love are still alive, when you are unprepared?

What do you need to make you stronger than the interrogator and the whole trap?

From the moment you go to prison you must put your cozy past firmly behind you. At the very threshold, you must say to yourself: “My life is over, a little early to be sure, but there's nothing to be done about it. I shall never return to freedom. I am condemned to die — now or a little later. But later on, in truth, it will be even harder, and so the sooner the better. I no longer have any property whatsoever. For me those I love have died, and for them I

have died. From today on, my body is useless and alien to me. Only my spirit and my conscience remain precious and important to me.”

Confronted by such a prisoner, the interrogator will tremble. Only the man who has renounced everything can win that victory. But how can one turn one's body to stone?

Well, they managed to turn some individuals from the Berdyayev circle into puppets for a trial, but they didn't succeed with Berdyayev. They wanted to drag him into an open trial; they arrested him twice; and (in 1922) he was subjected to a night interrogation by Dzerzhinsky himself. Kamenev was there too (which means that he, too, was not averse to using the Cheka in an ideological conflict). But Berdyayev did not humiliate himself. He did not beg or plead. He set forth firmly those religious and moral principles which had led him to refuse to accept the political authority established in Russia. And not only did they come to the conclusion that he would be useless for a trial, but they liberated him. .

A human being has a point of view!

N. Stolyarova recalls an old woman who was her neighbor on the Butyrki bunks in 1937. They kept on interrogating her every night. Two years earlier, a former Metropolitan of the Orthodox Church, who had escaped from exile, had spent a night at her home on his way through Moscow. “But he wasn't the former Metropolitan, he was the Metropolitan! Truly, I was worthy of receiving him.” “All right then. To whom did he go when he left Moscow?” “I know, but I won't tell you!” (The Metropolitan had escaped to Finland via an underground railroad of believers.) At first the interrogators took

turns, and then they went after her in groups. They shook their fists in the little old woman's face, and she replied: “There is nothing you can do with me even if you cut me into pieces. After all, you are afraid of your bosses, and you are afraid of each other, and you are even afraid of killing me.” (They would lose contact with the underground railroad.) “But I am not afraid of anything. I would be glad to be judged by God right this minute.”

There were such people in 1937 too, people who did not return to their cell for their bundles or belongings, who chose death, who signed nothing denouncing anyone.

One can't say that the history of the Russian revolutionaries has given us any better examples of steadfastness. But there is no comparison anyway, because none of our revolutionaries ever knew what a really good interrogation could be, with fifty-two different methods to choose from. Just as oxcart drivers of Gogol's time could not have imagined the speed of a jet plane, those who have never gone through the receiving-line meat grinder of Gulag cannot grasp the true possibilities of interrogation.

We read in *Izvestiya* for May 24, 1959, that Yuliya Rummyantseva was confined in the internal prison of a Nazi camp while they tried to find out from her the whereabouts of her husband, who had escaped from that same camp. She knew, but she refused to tell! For a reader who is not in the know this is a model of heroism. For a reader with a bitter Gulag past it's a model of inefficient interrogation: Yuliya did not die under torture, and she was not driven insane. A month later she was simply released — still very much alive and kicking.