

and learning nothing from one another, we were completely in the hands of the newspapers and the official orators. Every day they pushed in our faces some new piece of incitement, like a photograph of a railroad wreck (sabotage) somewhere three thousand miles away. And what we really needed to learn about, which was what had happened on our apartment landing that day, we had no way of finding out.

How could you become a citizen, knowing nothing about life around you? Only when you yourself were caught in the trap would you find out—too late.

5. *Squealing* was developed to a mind-boggling extent. Hundreds of thousands of Security officers in their official offices, in the innocent rooms of official buildings, and in prearranged apartments, sparing neither paper nor their unoccupied time, tirelessly recruited and summoned stool pigeons to give reports, and this in such enormous numbers as they could never have found necessary for collecting information. They even recruited obviously useless and unsuitable people who would most certainly not agree to report to them—for example, a religious believer, the wife of the Baptist minister Nikitin, who had died in camp. Nonetheless, she was kept standing for several hours while being questioned, then was arrested, and then transferred to worse work at her factory. One of the purposes of such extensive recruitment was, evidently, to make each subject feel the breath of the stool pigeons on his own skin. So that in every group of people, in every office, in every apartment, either there would be an informer or else the people there would be afraid there was.

I will give my own superficial speculative estimate: Out of every four to five city dwellers there would most certainly be one who at least once in his life had received a proposal to become an informer. And it might even have been more widespread than that. Quite recently I carried out my own spot check, both among groups of ex-prisoners and among groups of those who have always been free. I asked which out of the group they had tried to recruit and when and how. And it turned out that out of several people at a table *all* had received such proposals at one time or another!

Nadezhda Mandelstam correctly concludes: Beyond the purpose of weakening ties between people, there was another pur-

"Any person who had let himself be recruited would,

out of fear of public exposure, be very much interested in the continuing stability of the regime.

Secretiveness spread its cold tentacles throughout the whole people. It crept between colleagues at work, between old friends, students, soldiers, neighbors, children growing up—and even into the reception room of the NKVD, among the prisoners' wives bringing food parcels.

6. *Betrayal as a Form of Existence.* Given this constant fear over a period of many years—for oneself and one's family—a human being became a vassal of fear, subjected to it. And it turned out that the least dangerous form of existence was constant betrayal.

The mildest and at the same time most widespread form of betrayal was not to do anything bad directly, but just not to notice the doomed person next to one, not to help him, to turn away one's face, to shrink back. They had arrested a neighbor, your comrade at work, or even your close friend. You kept silence. You acted as if you had not noticed. (For you could not afford to lose your current job!) And then it was announced at work, at the general meeting, that the person who had disappeared the day before was . . . an inveterate enemy of the people. And you, who had bent your back beside him for twenty years at the same desk, now by your noble silence (or even by your condemning speech!), had to show how hostile you were to his crimes. (You had to make this sacrifice for the sake of your own dear family, for your own dear ones! What right had you not to think *about them*?) But the person arrested had left behind him a wife, a mother, children, and perhaps they at least ought to be helped? No, no, that would be dangerous: after all, these were the wife of an *enemy* and the mother of an enemy, and they were the children of an enemy (and your own children had a long education ahead of them)!

When they arrested engineer Palchinsky, his wife, Nina, wrote to Kropotkin's widow: "I have been left without any funds, and no one has given me any help, all shun me and fear me. . . . And I have found out what friends are now. There are very few exceptions."<sup>2</sup>

And one who concealed an enemy was also an enemy! And

2. A letter of August 16, 1929, manuscript section of the Lenin Library, collection 410, card file 5, storage unit 24.

one who abetted an enemy was also an enemy! And one who continued his friendship with an enemy was also an enemy. And the telephone of the accursed family fell silent. And they stopped getting letters. And on the street people passed them without recognizing them, without offering them a hand to shake, without nodding to them. And even less were they invited out. And no one offered to lend them money. And in the hustle of a big city people felt as if they were in a desert.

And that was precisely what Stalin needed! And he laughed in his mustaches, the shoeshine boy!

Academician Sergei Vavilov, after the repression of his great brother, became a lackey president of the Academy of Sciences. (That mustached prankster thought it all up too, to make a fool of him, and as a test for the human heart.) A. N. Tolstoi, a Soviet count, avoided not only visiting but even giving money to the family of his arrested brother. Leonid Leonov forbade his own wife, whose maiden name was Sabashnikova, to visit the family of her arrested brother, S. M. Sabashnikov.

And the legendary Georgi Dimitrov, that roaring lion of the Leipzig trial, retreated and declined to save and even betrayed his friends Popov and Tanev when they, who had been acquitted by a Fascist court, got sentenced to fifteen years each on Soviet soil "for the attempted assassination of Comrade Dimitrov." (And they served time in Kraslag.)

It is well known what the situation of an arrested man's family was like. V. Y. Kaveshan from Kaluga recalls it: "After the arrest of our father everyone avoided and shunned us, as if we were lepers, and I had to leave school because the *children tormented me*. [More betrayers were growing up! More executioners growing up!] And my mother was fired from her work. And we had to resort to begging."

One family of a Muscovite arrested in 1937—a mother and little children—was being taken to the railroad station by the police to be sent into exile. And all of a sudden, when they went through the station, the small boy, aged eight, disappeared. The policemen wore themselves out looking for him but couldn't find him. So they exiled the family without the boy. And what had happened was that he dived under the red cloth wound around the high pedestal beneath the bust of Stalin, and he sat there until the danger passed. And then he returned home—

where the apartment was sealed shut. He went to the neighbors, and to acquaintances, and to friends of his papa and mama—and not only did no one take that small boy into their family, but they refused even to let him spend the night! And so he went and turned himself in at an orphanage. . . . Contemporaries! Fellow citizens! Do you recognize here your own swinish faces?

But all that was only the minimal degree of betrayal—to turn one's back. But how many other alluring degrees there were—and what a multitude of people descended them! Those who fired Kaveshan's mother from work—did they not also turn their backs and make their own contribution? Those who harkened to the ring of the Security men and sent Nikitin's wife to manual labor, so that she would give in and become a stoolie all the sooner? Yes, and those editors who rushed to cross off the name of the writer who had been arrested the day before.

Marshal Blücher—he is a symbol of that epoch: he sat like an owl in the presidium of the court and judged Tukhachevsky. (And Tukhachevsky would have done the same to him.) They shot Tukhachevsky—and then they cut off Blücher's head too. Or what about the famous medical professors Vinogradov and Shereshevsky? Today we recall that they themselves were victims of the malevolent slander of 1952—but they themselves signed the no less malevolent slander against their colleagues Pletnev and Levin in 1936. (And the Great Laureate kept himself in training, both in theme and in individual souls. . . .)

People lived in the *field* of betrayal—and their best powers of reasoning were used in justification of it. In 1937 a husband and wife were awaiting arrest—because the wife had come from Poland. And here is what they agreed on: Before the actual arrest the husband denounced the wife to the police! She was arrested, and by the same token he was "purified" in the eyes of the NKVD and stayed free. And in that same glorious year, the prerevolutionary political prisoner Adolf Mezhev, going off to prison, proclaimed to his one and only beloved daughter, Izabella: "We have devoted our lives to Soviet power, and therefore let no one make use of your injury. Enter the Komsomol!" Under the terms of his sentence, Mezhev was not forbidden correspondence, but the Komsomol forbade his daughter to engage in any correspondence. And in the spirit of her father's testament the daughter renounced her father.

How many of those *renunciations* there were at that time! Some of them made in public, some of them in the press: "I, the undersigned, from such and such a date renounce my father and my mother as enemies of the Soviet people." And thus they purchased their lives.

Those who were not alive during that time, or who do not live today in China, will find it nearly impossible to comprehend and forgive this. In ordinary human societies the human being lives out his sixty years without ever getting caught in the pincers of that kind of choice, and he himself is quite convinced of his decency, as are those who pronounce speeches over his grave. A human being departs from life without ever having learned into what kind of deep well of evil one can fall.

And the mass mangle of souls does not spread through society instantly. During all the twenties and the beginning of the thirties many in our country still preserved their souls and the concepts of the former society: to help in misfortune, to defend those in difficulties. And even as late as 1933 Nikolai Vavilov and Meister openly petitioned on behalf of all the arrested staff members of the All-Union Scientific Research Institute of Plant Breeding. There is a certain minimal necessary period of corruption prior to which the great Apparatus cannot cope with the people. This period is also determined by the age of those stubborn people who have not yet grown old. For Russia it took twenty years. When the Baltic States suffered mass arrests in 1949, their corruption had only had five or six years to establish itself, and that proved too little, and families that suffered from the government met with support on all sides. (Yes, and there was a supplementary cause there, strengthening the resistance of the Baltic peoples: social oppression there appeared simply as national oppression, and in this case people always fight back more firmly.)

In evaluating 1937 for the Archipelago, we refused it the title of the crowning glory. But here, in talking about *freedom*, we have to grant it this corroded crown of betrayal; one has to admit that this was the particular year that broke the soul of our *freedom* and opened it wide to corruption on a mass scale.

Yet even this was not yet the end of our society! (As we see today, the end never did come—the living thread of Russia survived, hung on until better times came in 1956, and it is now

less than ever likely to die.) The resistance was not overt. It did not beautify the epoch of the universal fall, but with its invisible warm veins its heart kept on beating, beating, beating, beating.

And in that awful time, when in apprehensive loneliness precious photographs, precious letters and diaries, were burned, when every yellowed piece of paper in the family cupboard all of a sudden gleamed out like a fiery fern of death and could not jump into the stove fast enough, in that awful time, what great heroism was required *not* to burn things up night after night for thousands and thousands of nights and to preserve the archives of those who had been sentenced (like Florensky) or of those who were well known to be in disgrace (like the philosopher Fyodorov)! And what a blazing, underground, anti-Soviet act of rebellion the story of Lidiya Chukovskaya, *Sofya Petrovna*,\* must have seemed! It was preserved by Isidor Glikin. In blockaded Leningrad, feeling the approach of death, he made his way through the entire city to carry it to his sister and thus to save it.

Every act of resistance to the government required heroism quite out of proportion to the magnitude of the act. It was safer to keep dynamite during the rule of Alexander II than it was to shelter the orphan of an enemy of the people under Stalin. Nonetheless, how many such children were taken in and saved . . . Let the children themselves tell their stories. And secret assistance to families . . . did occur. And there was someone who took the place of an arrested person's wife who had been in a hopeless line for three days, so that she could go in to get warm and get some sleep. And there was also someone who went off with pounding heart to warn someone else that an ambush was waiting for him at his apartment and that he must not return there. And there was someone who gave a fugitive shelter, even though he himself did not sleep that night.

We have already mentioned those so bold as not to vote in favor of the Promparty executions. And there was also someone who went to the Archipelago for defending his unobtrusive, unknown colleagues at work. And sons followed in the footsteps of their fathers: the son of that Rozhansky,\* Ivan, himself suffered in defense of his colleague Kopelev. At a Party meeting of the Leningrad Children's Publishing House, M. M. Maisner stood up and began to defend "wreckers in children's literature"—and right then and there he was expelled from the Party and

arrested. And, after all, he knew what he was doing.<sup>3</sup> And in the wartime censorship office—in Ryazan in 1941—a girl censor tore up the criminal letter of a front-line soldier whom she did not know. But she was observed tearing it up and putting it into a wastebasket, and they pieced the letter back together—and *arrested* her. She sacrificed herself for a distant stranger! (And the only reason I heard about this was that it took place in Ryazan. And how many such cases were there unknown? . . .)

Nowadays it is quite convenient to declare that *arrest* was a lottery (Ehrenburg). Yes, it was a lottery all right, but some of the numbers were “fixed.” They threw out a general dragnet and arrested in accordance with assigned quota figures, yes, but every person who *objected publicly* they grabbed that very minute! And it turned into a *selection on the basis of soul*, not a lottery! Those who were bold fell beneath the ax, were sent off to the Archipelago—and the picture of the monotonously obedient *freedom* remained unruffled. All those who were purer and better could not stay in that society; and without them it kept getting more and more trashy. You would not notice these quiet departures at all. But they were, in fact, the dying of the soul of the people.

7. *Corruption*. In a situation of fear and betrayal over many years people survive unharmed only in a superficial, bodily sense. And inside . . . they become corrupt.

So many millions of people agreed to become stool pigeons. And, after all, if some forty to fifty million people served long sentences in the Archipelago during the course of the thirty-five years up to 1953, including those who died—and this is a modest estimate, being only three or four times the population of Gulag at any one time, and, after all, during the war the death rate there was running *one percent per day*—then we can assume that at least every third or at least every fifth case was the consequence of somebody’s denunciation and that somebody was willing to provide evidence as a witness! All of them, all those

3. There is evidence in our possession of a heroic case of mass steadfastness, but I require a second independent confirmation of it: in 1930 several hundred cadets of a certain Ukrainian military school arrived on Solovki in their own formation (refusing convoy)—because they had refused to suppress peasant disturbances.

murderers with ink, are still among us today. Some of them brought about the arrest of their neighbors out of fear—and this was only the first step. Others did it for material gain. And still others, the youngest at the time, who are now on the threshold of a pension, betrayed with inspiration, out of ideological considerations, and sometimes even openly; after all, it was considered a service to one’s class to expose the enemy! And all these people are among us. And most often they are prospering. And we still rejoice that they are “our ordinary Soviet people.”

Cancer of the soul develops secretly too and strikes at that particular part of it where one expects to find gratitude. Fyodor Peregud gave Misha Ivanov food and drink; Ivanov was out of work, and so Peregud got him a job at the Tambov railroad-car repair factory and taught him the trade. He had no place to live, so he let him move in with him, like a relative. And then Mikhail Dmitriyevich Ivanov sent a denunciation to the NKVD accusing Fyodor Peregud of praising German equipment at dinner at home. (You have to know Fyodor Peregud. He was a mechanic, a motor mechanic, a radio operator and repairman, an electrician, a watchmaker, an optician, a foundryman, a model-maker, a cabinetmaker, master of up to twenty different skills. In camp he opened up a shop for precision mechanics. When he lost his leg, he made himself an artificial limb.) And so the police came to take Peregud and took his fourteen-year-old daughter to prison too. And M. D. Ivanov was responsible for all that! He came to the trial looking black. And what that meant was that a rotting soul sometimes emerges in the face. But soon after, he left the factory and began to work for State Security in the open. And subsequently, because of his lack of ability, he was made a fireman.

In a corrupt society ingratitude was an everyday, run-of-the-mill emotion, and there was almost nothing surprising in it. After the arrest of the plant breeder V. S. Markin, the agronomist A. A. Solovyov quite safely stole the variety of wheat which Markin had developed, “Taiga 49.”<sup>4</sup> When the Institute of Buddhist Culture was destroyed (all its leading personnel were arrested) and its head, Academician Shcherbatsky, died, his

4. And when Markin was rehabilitated twenty years later, Solovyov was unwilling to yield him even *half* the payment he had received for it. *Izvestiya*, November 15, 1963.

student Kalyanov came to his widow and persuaded her to give him the books and papers of the deceased: "Otherwise things will go badly, because the Institute of Buddhist Culture turned out to be a spy center." Having taken possession of these works, he published part of them (as well as the work of Vostrikov) under his own name and thus acquired a reputation.

There are many scientific reputations in Moscow and in Leningrad that were also built on blood and bones. *The ingratitude of students*, cutting in a skewbald swath through our science and technology of the thirties and forties, had a quite understandable explanation: science passed out of the hands of the real scientists and engineers into the hands of the callow greedy *climbers*.

By now it is quite impossible to trace and enumerate all these appropriated works and stolen inventions. And what about the apartments taken over from those arrested? And what about their stolen possessions? And during the war did not this savage trait manifest itself as nearly universal: if there was someone bereaved, bombed out, their home burned down or being evacuated, the neighbors who had survived the disaster, plain Soviet people, tried in those very moments to profit from those who were stricken.

The aspects of corruption are varied, and it is not for us to cover them all in this chapter. The overall life of society came down to the fact that traitors were advanced and mediocrities triumphed, while everything that was best and most honest was trampled underfoot. Who can show me *one case* in the whole country from the thirties to the fifties of a noble person casting down, destroying, driving out a base troublemaker? I affirm that such a case would have been impossible, just as it is impossible for any waterfall to fall upward as an exception. After all, no noble person would turn to State Security, but for any villain it was always right there at hand. And State Security would not stop at anything, once it didn't stop at what it did to Nikolai Vavilov. So why should the waterfall fall upward?

This easy triumph of mean people over the noble boiled in a black stinking cloud in the crowded capital. But it stank, too, even way up north, beneath the honest Arctic storms, at the polar stations so beloved in the legends of the thirties, where the clear-eyed giants of Jack London should have been smoking

pipes of peace. At the Arctic station on Domashni Island, off Severnaya Zemlya, there were just three people: the non-Party chief of the station, Aleksandr Pavlovich Babich, a much-honored old Arctic explorer; the manual laborer Yeryomin, who was the only Party member and who was also the Party organizer (!) of the station; and the Komsomol member (the Komsomol organizer!), the meteorologist Goryachenko, who was ambitiously trying to shove the chief aside and take his job. Goryachenko dug around among the chief's personal possessions, stole documents, and made threats. The Jack London solution would have been for the other two men simply to shove this scoundrel down through the ice. But no! Instead, a telegram was sent to Papanin in the Northern Sea Route headquarters about the necessity of replacing this employee. The Party organizer Yeryomin signed the telegram, but then he confessed to the Komsomol member, and together they sent Papanin a Party-Komsomol telegram just the opposite in content. Papanin's decision was: The collective has disintegrated; remove them to the mainland. They sent the icebreaker *Sadko* to get them. On board the *Sadko* the Komsomol man lost no time at all and provided the ship's political commissar with *materials*. Babich was arrested on the spot. (The principal accusation was that he intended to turn the icebreaker *Sadko* over to the Germans—that same icebreaker on which they were all now sailing! . . .) Once ashore, Babich was immediately put into a Preliminary Detention Cell. (Let us imagine for one moment that the ship's commissar was an honest and reasonable person and that he had summoned Babich and heard the other side of the question. But this would have meant disclosing a secret denunciation to a possible enemy! And in that case Goryachenko, through Papanin, would have also procured the arrest of the ship's commissar. The system worked faultlessly!)

Of course, among individuals who had not been brought up from childhood in the Pioneer detachments and the Komsomol cells, there were souls that retained their integrity. At a Siberian station a husky soldier, seeing a trainload of prisoners, suddenly rushed off to buy several packs of cigarettes and persuaded the convoy guards to pass them on to the prisoners. (And in other places in this book we describe similar cases.) But this soldier was probably not on duty, and was probably on leave, and he

did not have the Komsomol organizer of his unit near him. If he had been on duty in his own unit, he would not have made up his mind to do it because he would have caught hell for it. Yes, and it was possible that even in the other situation the military police may have called him to account for it.

8. *The Lie as a Form of Existence.* Whether giving in to fear, or influenced by material self-interest or envy, people can't nonetheless become stupid so swiftly. Their souls may be thoroughly muddled, but they still have a sufficiently clear mind. They cannot believe that all the genius of the world has suddenly concentrated itself in one head with a flattened, low-hanging forehead. They simply cannot believe the stupid and silly images of themselves which they hear over the radio, see in films, and read in the newspapers. Nothing forces them to speak the truth in reply, but no one allows them to keep silent! They have to *talk!* And what else but a lie? They have to applaud madly, and no one requires honesty of them.

And if in *Pravda* on May 20, 1938, we read the appeal of workers in higher education to Comrade Stalin:

Heightening our revolutionary vigilance, we will help our glorious intelligence service, headed by the true Leninist, the Stalinist People's Commissar Nikolai Ivanovich Yezhov, to purge our higher educational institutions as well as all our country of the remnants of the Trotskyite-Bukharinite and other counterrevolutionary trash . . .

we certainly do not conclude that the entire meeting of a thousand persons consisted solely of idiots—but merely of degenerate liars acceding to their own arrest on the morrow.

The permanent lie becomes the only safe form of existence, in the same way as betrayal. Every wag of the tongue can be overheard by someone, every facial expression observed by someone. Therefore every word, if it does not have to be a direct lie, is nonetheless obliged not to contradict the general, common lie. There exists a collection of ready-made phrases, of labels, a selection of ready-made lies. And not one single speech nor one single essay or article nor one single book—be it scientific, journalistic, critical, or “literary,” so-called—can exist without the use of these primary clichés. In the most scientific of texts it is required that someone's false authority or false priority be

upheld somewhere, and that someone be cursed for telling the truth; without this lie even an academic work cannot see the light of day. And what can be said about those shrill meetings and trashy lunch-break gatherings where you are compelled to vote against your own opinion, to pretend to be glad over what distresses you (be it a new state loan, the lowering of piece rates, contributions to some tank column, Sunday work duties, or sending your children to help on the collective farms) and to express the deepest anger in areas about which you couldn't care less—some kind of intangible, invisible violence in the West Indies or Paraguay?

In prison Tenno recalled with shame how two weeks before his own arrest he had lectured the sailors on “The Stalinist Constitution—The Most Democratic in the World.” And of course not one word of it was sincere.

There is no man who has typed even one page . . . without lying. There is no man who has spoken from a rostrum . . . without lying. There is no man who has spoken into a microphone . . . without lying.

But if only it had all ended there! After all, it went further than that: every conversation with the management, every conversation in the Personnel Section, every conversation of any kind with any other Soviet person called for lies—sometimes head on, sometimes looking over your shoulder, sometimes indulgently affirmative. And if your idiot interlocutor said to you face to face that we were retreating to the Volga in order to decoy Hitler farther, or that the Colorado beetles had been dropped on us by the Americans—it was necessary to agree! It was obligatory to agree! (And a shake of the head instead of a nod might well cost you resettlement in the Archipelago. Remember the arrest of Chulpenyov, in Part I, Chapter 7.)

But that was not all: Your children were growing up! If they weren't yet old enough, you and your wife had to avoid saying openly in front of them what you really thought; after all, they were being brought up to be Pavlik Morozovs, to betray their own parents, and they wouldn't hesitate to repeat his achievement. And if the children were still little, then you had to decide what was the best way to bring them up; whether to start them off on lies instead of the truth (so that it would be *easier* for them to live) and then to lie forevermore in front of them too; or to tell

them the truth, with the risk that they might make a slip, that they might let it out, which meant that you had to instill into them from the start that the truth was murderous, that beyond the threshold of the house you had to lie, only lie, just like papa and mama.

The choice was really such that you would rather not have any children.

The lie as the continuing basis of life: A young, intelligent woman, A.K., who understood everything, came from the capital to teach literature in a higher-education institute in the provinces. Her security questionnaire had no black marks on it, and she had a brand-new candidate's degree. In her principal course she saw she had only one Party member and decided that this girl was the one who was bound to be the stool pigeon. (There had to be a *stool pigeon* in every course—of that A.K. was convinced.) And so she decided to become all buddy-buddy with this Party member and pretend friendship with her. (Incidentally, according to the tactics of the Archipelago this was a complete miscalculation. What she should have done, on the contrary, was to paste a couple of failing grades on her at the start and then any denunciations would have looked like sour grapes.) And so these two used to meet outside the institute and exchanged photographs. (The girl student carried A.K.'s photograph around in her Party card case.) During holiday time they corresponded tenderly. And in every lecture A.K. tried to play up to the possible evaluations of her Party student. Four years of this humiliating pretense went by, the student completed her course, and by this time her conduct was a matter of indifference to A.K., so when she made her first return visit to the school, A.K. received her with deliberate coldness. The offended student demanded her photograph and letters back and exclaimed (the most dolefully amusing thing about it was that she probably wasn't a stool pigeon): "If I finish my degree, I will never cling to this pitiful institute the way you do! And what lectures you gave—as dull as dishwater!"

Yes, by impoverishing everything, bleaching it out, and clipping it to suit the perceptions of a stool pigeon, A.K. ruined her lectures, when she was capable of delivering them brilliantly.

As a certain poet said: It wasn't a cult of personality we had, but a cult of hypocrisy.

Here, too, of course, one has to distinguish between degrees:

between the forced, defensive lie and the oblivious, passionate lie of the sort our writers distinguished themselves at most of all, the sort of lie in the midst of whose tender emotion Marietta Shaginyan could write in 1937 (!) that the epoch of socialism had transformed even criminal interrogation: the stories of interrogators showed that nowadays the persons being interrogated *willingly cooperated with them*, telling everything that was required about themselves and others.

And the lie has, in fact, led us so far away from a normal society that you cannot even orient yourself any longer; in its dense, gray fog not even one pillar can be seen. All of a sudden, thanks to footnotes, you figure out that Yakubovich's book *In the World of the Outcasts* was published, although under a pseudonym, *at the very same time* the author was completing his Tsarist hard-labor sentence and being sent off into exile.<sup>5</sup> Well, now, just add that up, just add that up and compare it with us! Compare that with the way my belated and shy novella managed to get out in the open by a miracle, and then they firmly lowered the barriers, bolted things up tightly, and locked the locks. And now it is forbidden to write not merely about something taking place in the present but even about things that took place thirty and fifty years ago. And will we ever read about them during our lifetime? We are destined to go to our graves still immersed in lies and falsehoods.

Moreover, even if they offered us the chance to learn the truth, would our *free people* even want to know it? Y. G. Oksman returned from the camps in 1948, and was not rearrested, but lived in Moscow. His friends and acquaintances did not abandon him, but helped him. But they did not want to hear his recollections of camp! Because if they knew about *that*—how could they go on living?

After the war a certain song became very popular: "The Noise of the City Cannot Be Heard." No singer, even the most mediocre, could perform it without receiving enthusiastic applause. The Chief Administration of Thoughts and Feelings did not at first grasp what was going on, and they allowed it to be performed on the radio and on the stage. After all, it was Russian and had a folk motif. And then suddenly they discovered what it was all

5. At the very time when that hard labor actually existed! It was about convict hard labor which was *contemporary with it*, and not allegedly in the irrevocable past.



about—and they immediately crossed it off the permitted list. The words of the song were about a doomed prisoner, about lovers torn apart. The need to repent existed still and it stirred, and people who were steeped in lies could at least applaud that old song with all their hearts.

9. *Cruelty*. And where among all the preceding qualities was there any place left for kindheartedness? How could one possibly preserve one's kindness while pushing away the hands of those who were drowning? Once you have been steeped in blood, you can only become more cruel. And, anyway, cruelty ("class cruelty") was praised and instilled, and you would soon lose track, probably, of just where between bad and good that trait lay. And when you add that kindness was ridiculed, that pity was ridiculed, that mercy was ridiculed—you'd never be able to chain all those who were drunk on blood!

My nameless woman correspondent, from Arbat No. 15, asks me "about the roots of the cruelty" characteristic of "certain Soviet people." Why is it that the cruelty they manifest is proportionate to the defenselessness of the person in their power? And she cites an example—which is not at all what one might regard as the main one, but which I am going to cite here anyway.

This took place in the winter of 1943–1944 at the Chelyabinsk railroad station, under a canopy near the baggage checkroom. It was minus 13 degrees. Beneath the shed roof was a cement floor, on which was trampled sticky snow from outside. Inside the window of the baggage checkroom stood a woman in a padded jacket, and on the nearer side was a well-fed policeman in a tanned sheepskin coat. They were absorbed in a kittenish, flirtatious conversation. Several men lay on the floor in earth-colored cotton duds and rags. Even to call them threadbare would be rank flattery. These were young fellows—emaciated, swollen, with sores on their lips. One of them, evidently in a fever, lay with bare chest on the snow, groaning. The woman telling the story approached him to ask who they were, and it turned out that one of them had served out his term in camp, another had been released for illness, but that their documents had been made out incorrectly when they were released, and as a result they could not get tickets to go home on the train. And they had no strength left to return to camp either—they were totally fagged

with diarrhea. So then the woman telling the story began to

break off pieces of bread for them. And at this point the policeman broke off his jolly conversation and said to her threateningly: "What's going on, auntie, have you recognized your relatives? You better get out of here. They will die without your help!" And so she thought to herself: After all, they'll up and haul me in just like that and put me in prison!—(And that was quite right, what was to stop them?) And . . . she went away.

How typical all this is of our society—what she thought to herself, and how she went away, and that pitiless policeman, and that pitiless woman in the padded jacket, and that cashier at the ticket window who refused them tickets, and that nurse who refused to take them into the city hospital, and that idiotic free employee at the camp who had made out their documents.

It was a fierce and a vicious life, and by this time, you would not, as in Dostoyevsky and Chekhov, call a prisoner "an unfortunate," but, if you please, only "rot." In 1938 Magadan school pupils threw stones at a column of women prisoners (as Surpova recalls).

Had our country ever known before, or does any other country know today, so many repulsive and divisive apartment and family quarrels? Every reader will be able to speak of many, and we will mention just one or two.

In a communal apartment on Dolomanovskaya Street in Rostov lived Vera Krasutskaya, whose husband was arrested and perished in 1938. Her neighbor, Anna Stolberg, knew about this, and for eighteen years—from 1938 to 1956—reveled in her power and tormented Krasutskaya with threats; catching her in the kitchen or in the corridor, she would hiss at Krasutskaya: "If I say so, you can go on living, but I only have to say the word and the *Black Maria* will come for you." And it was only in 1956 that Krasutskaya decided to write a complaint to the prosecutor. And Stolberg then shut up. But they continued to live together in the same apartment.

After the arrest of Nikolai Yakovlevich Semyonov in 1950 in the city of Lyubim, his wife, that very winter, kicked out his mother, Mariya Ilinichna Semyonova, who had been living with them: "Get out of here, you old witch! Your son is an enemy of the people!" (Six years later, when her husband returned from camp, she and her grown-up daughter, Nadya, drove him out into the street at night in his underpants. Nadya was so eager to do this because she needed the space for *her own* husband. And



when she threw his trousers in her father's face, she shouted at him: "Get out of here, you old rat!")<sup>6</sup> When Semyonov's mother was kicked out of that apartment, she went to her childless daughter Anna in Yaroslavl. Soon the mother got on her daughter's and her son-in-law's nerves. And her son-in-law, Vasily Fyodorovich Metyolkin, a fireman, on his off-duty days, used to take his mother-in-law's face in the palms of his hands, hold it tight so she couldn't turn away from him, and amuse himself by spitting in her face till he had no spit left, trying to hit her in the eyes and mouth. And when he was really angry, he would take out his penis and shove it in the old woman's face: "Take it, suck it, and die!" His wife explained his conduct to her brother when he returned: "Well, what can I do when Vasya is drunk? . . . What can you expect from a drunk?" And then, in order to get a new apartment ("We need a bathroom because there is no place to wash our old mother and we certainly can't drive her out to a public bath"), they began to treat her tolerably well. And when—"because of her"—they had got a new apartment, they packed the rooms with chests of drawers and sideboards, and pushed her into a cranny between the wardrobe and the wall fourteen inches wide—and told her to lie there and not stick her head out. And N. Y. Semyonov himself, who was by then living with his son, took the risk, without asking his son, of bringing his mother home. The grandson came home. The grandmother sank down on her knees before him: "Vovochka, you're not going to kick me out?" And the grandson grimaced: "Oh, all right, live here until I get married." And it is quite apropos to add in regard to that same granddaughter Nadya—Nadezhda Nikolayevna Topnikova—that around this time she completed the course in the historical and philological faculty of the Yaroslavl Pedagogical Institute, entered the Party, and became an editor of the district newspaper in the city of Neya in Kostroma Province. She was a poetess as well, and in 1961, while she was still in Lyubim, she rationalized her conduct in verse:

If you're going to fight, then really fight!  
Your father!? Give it to him in the neck!

6. V. I. Zhukov recounts an exactly similar story from Kovrov: his wife drove him out ("Get out, or I will have you jailed again!"), as did his stepdaughter ("Get out, jailbird!").

Morals!! People dreamed them up!  
I don't want to hear of them!  
In my life I'll march ahead  
Solely with cold calculation!

But her Party organization began to demand that she "normalize" her relationship with her father, and she suddenly began to write to him. Overjoyed, the father replied with an all-forgiving letter, which she immediately ran to show her Party organization. And when they saw it, they put a check mark opposite her name, and that was that. And since then all he gets from her are greetings on the great May and November holidays.

Seven people were involved in this tragedy. And so there you have one little droplet of our *freedom*.

In better-brought-up families, they do not chase a relative who has suffered unjustly out onto the street in his underwear, but they are ashamed of him, and they feel burdened and imposed upon by his bitterly "distorted" world outlook.

And one could go on enumerating further. One could name in addition:

10. *Slave Psychology*. That same unfortunate Babich in his declaration to the prosecutor: "I understand that wartime placed more serious obligations and duties on the organs of government than to sort out the charges against individual persons."

And much else.

But let us admit: if under Stalin this whole scheme of things did not just come into being *on its own*—and if, instead, he himself worked it all out for us point by point—he really was a genius!

■

So there in that stinking damp world in which only executioners and the most blatant of betrayers flourished, where those who remained honest became drunkards, since they had no strength of will for anything else, in which the bodies of young people were bronzed by the sun while their souls putrefied inside, in which every night the gray-green hand reached out and collared someone in order to pop him into a box—in that world millions

of women wandered about lost and blinded, whose husbands, sons, or fathers had been torn from them and dispatched to the Archipelago. They were the most scared of all. They feared shiny nameplates, office doors, telephone rings, knocks on the door, the postman, the milkwoman, and the plumber. And everyone in whose path they stood drove them from their apartments, from their work, and from the city.

Sometimes they trustingly based their hopes on the belief that a sentence "without the right of correspondence" was to be understood as meaning just that, and that when ten years had passed, *he* would write.<sup>7</sup> They stood in line outside prisons. They went distances of fifty miles and more to places where, they had heard, food parcels were accepted for mailing. Sometimes they themselves died before the death of their relative in prison. Sometimes they learned the date of death only from the notation on a food parcel that had been returned, which read: "Addressee died in hospital." Sometimes, as in the case of Olga Chavchavadze, who got to Siberia, carrying to her husband's grave a handful of the soil of his native land, they arrived on such a mission only to find that no one could tell them which mound he lay under together with three other corpses. Sometimes, as in the case of Zelma Zhugur, they kept on writing letters to be delivered by hand to some Voroshilov or other, forgetting that Voroshilov's conscience had died long before he died himself.<sup>8</sup>

And these women had children who grew up, and for each one there came a time of extreme need when they absolutely had to have their father back, before it was too late, but he never came.

A little folded triangle of school notebook paper with crooked handwriting. Red and blue pencils in turn, one after the other—in all probability a childish hand had put aside one pencil, rested, and then taken up a new one. Angular, inexperienced, tortuously written letters with breathing spaces between them and sometimes even within words:

Hello Papa I forgot how to write soon in School I will go through the first winter come quickly because it's bad we have no Papa mama

7. Sometimes there really were camps without the right of correspondence; not only the atomic factories of the period from 1945 to 1949, but also, for example, Camp 29 of Karlag allowed no correspondence at all for a year and a half.

8. He did not even have the courage to shield his closest adjutant, Langovoi, from arrest and torture.

says you are away on work or sick and what are you waiting for run away from that hospital here Olyeshka ran away from hospital just in his shirt mama will sew you new pants and I will give you my belt all the same the boys are all afraid of me, and Olyeshenka is the only one I never beat up he also tells the truth he is also poor and I once lay in fever and wanted to die along with mother and she did not want to and I did not want to, oh, my hand is numb from write thats enough I kiss you lots of times

Igoryok 6 and one half years

I already know how to write on envelopes and before mother comes from work I will drop the letter in the mailbox.

Manolis Glezos, "in a clear and passionate speech," told Moscow writers about his comrades languishing in the prisons of Greece.

"I understand that I have made your hearts tremble by my passionate speech. But I did it intentionally. I would like to have your hearts ache for those languishing in imprisonment. . . . Raise your voice for the liberation of the Greek Patriots."<sup>9</sup>

And those well-worn foxes—of course, they raised their voices! After all, a couple of dozen prisoners were languishing in Greece! And maybe Manolis himself did not understand the shamelessness of his appeal, and maybe, too, in Greece they do not have the proverb: "Why grieve for others when there is sobbing at home?"

In various parts of our country we find a certain piece of sculpture: a plaster guard with a police dog which is straining forward in order to sink its teeth into someone. In Tashkent there is one right in front of the NKVD school, and in Ryazan it is like a symbol of the city, the one and only monument to be seen if you approach from the direction of Mikhailov.

And we do not even shudder in revulsion. We have become accustomed to these figures setting dogs onto people as if they were the most natural things in the world.

Setting the dogs onto us.

9. *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, August 27, 1963.

## Chapter 4

### *Several Individual Stories*

I have fragmented the fates of all the prisoners I have previously mentioned in this book, subordinating their stories to the plan of the book—to the contours of the Archipelago. I have steered away from biographical accounts; it would have been too monotonous, it's how they write and write, shifting all the burden of inquiry off the author's shoulders onto the reader's.

But precisely because of this I consider that at this point I have the right to cite several prisoners' stories in their entirety.

#### 1. Anna Petrovna Skripnikova

The only daughter of an ordinary worker of Maikop, Anna Skripnikova was born in 1896. As we already know from the history of the Party, under the cursed Tsarist regime all paths to an education were closed to her, and she was condemned to the half-starving life of a female slave. And all this really did happen to her—but after the Revolution. At the time she was accepted in the Maikop gymnasium.

Anna grew up to become a big girl who also had a large head. A girl who was her gymnasium friend made a drawing of her which consisted solely of circles: her head was round (from all angles), she had a round forehead and round eyes which somehow expressed eternal perplexity. The lobes of her ears rounded off as they grew into her cheeks. And her shoulders were round. And her figure was a sphere.

Anna began to think about things too soon in life. As early as the third grade she asked her teacher's permission to take

Dobrolyubov and Dostoyevsky from the gymnasium library. The teacher was indignant: "It's too soon for you!" "All right, if you don't let me read them here, I'll get them in the city library." At the age of thirteen "she emancipated herself from God," and ceased to be a believer. At the age of fifteen she pored over the Church fathers—exclusively for the purpose of furiously refuting the priest in class—to the general satisfaction of her fellow students. However, she herself adopted the steadfastness of the Russian Church schismatics as her highest model. She learned: It is better to die than to permit one's spiritual core to be broken.

No one interfered with her receiving the gold medal she deservedly won.<sup>1</sup> In 1917 (what a time for study!) she went to Moscow and entered Chaplygin's Advanced School for Women in the department of philosophy and psychology. As a gold medalist she was paid, till the October coup, a State Duma scholarship. This department prepared teachers of logic and psychology for the gymnasiums. Throughout 1918, earning money by giving lessons, she studied psychoanalysis. She apparently remained an atheist, but she felt with her whole soul how

... immovably on the fiery roses  
The living altar of creation smokes.

She managed to pay her dues to the poetical philosophy of Giordano Bruno and of Tyutchev and even at one time considered herself an Eastern Catholic. She changed faiths greedily, perhaps more often than her dresses. (There were no dresses, and she did not pay all that much attention to them anyway.) And, in addition, at the beginning she considered herself a socialist and that the blood of revolt and civil war was inevitable. But she could not reconcile herself to terror. Democracy, but not atrocities! "Let hands be steeped in blood, but not in mud!"

At the end of 1918 she had to leave the school. (And did the school exist any longer anyway?) With great difficulty she managed to make her way to her parents, where the food situation was better. She arrived in Maikop. An Institute of People's Education for adults and for young people had already been created there. Anna became no more and no less than an acting professor of logic, philosophy, and psychology. She was popular with the students.

1. But what if a schoolgirl challenged the basis of Marxism that way today?

During this period the Whites were living out their last days in Maikop. A forty-five-year-old general tried to persuade her to flee with him. "General, call off the show! Escape before you are arrested!" In those days, at a party for teachers, among themselves, a gymnasium history teacher proposed a toast: "To the great Red Army!" Anna rejected the toast: "Not for anything!" Knowing her leftist views, her friends' eyes popped out. "Because . . . notwithstanding the eternal stars . . . there will be more and more executions," she prophesied.

She had the feeling that all the best people were perishing in this war and only the opportunists were surviving. She already had a presentiment that her great moment was approaching, but she still did not know . . . what it would be.

Several days later the Reds entered Maikop. And a little later a meeting of the city intelligentsia was assembled. The chief of the Special Section of the Fifth Army, Losev, came out on the stage and, in a menacing tone, not far from cursing, began to abuse the "rotten intelligentsia": "What? Sitting on the fence, were you? Waiting for me to invite you? Why didn't you come on your own?" Getting wilder and wilder, he pulled his revolver out of its holster and, brandishing it, screamed: "Your whole culture is rotten! We are going to destroy it and build a new one. And if any of you interfere—we will eliminate you!"<sup>2</sup> And after that he proposed: "Who wants to speak?"

The hall was as silent as the grave. There was not one single bit of applause, and no hand was lifted. (The hall was silent because it was frightened, but the fright was not yet rehearsed, and people did not know that it was compulsory for them to applaud.)

In all probability Losev did not think that anyone would rise to speak, but Anna stood up. "I." "You?" said he rudely. "Well, climb up here, climb up." And she walked the length of the hall and mounted the stage. A big woman, with a big face, even with rosy cheeks, this twenty-five-year-old woman was of the generous Russian type (she got only an eighth of a pound of bread, but her father had a good garden). Thick auburn braids reached to her knees, but as an active professor she could not go around with them like that and had them twisted on top of her

2. Whoever has read Krylenko's speeches in Part I, Chapter 8, already knows all about this.

head, giving herself a second head. And she replied resoundingly:

"We have heard out your ignorant speech. You summoned us here, but it was not announced that it was to bury the great culture of Russia! We came here expecting to see a culture-bearer and found a gravedigger. You would have done better simply to curse us out than to say what you did today! And so are we supposed to understand that you speak in the name of Soviet power?"

"Yes," the already taken aback Losev nonetheless affirmed proudly.

"Well, if the Soviet government is going to have such bandits as you as its representatives, it will fall apart."

Anna had finished, and the whole hall applauded ringingly. (Being all together, they were not yet afraid.) And the evening came to an end on that note. Losev found nothing else to say. People came up to Anna, pressed her hand in the thick of the crowd, and whispered: "You are done for. They are going to arrest you right away, but thank you, thank you! We are proud of you, but you . . . are done for! What have you done?"

At home the Chekists were waiting for her. "Comrade teacher! How poorly you live—a desk, two chairs, and a cot—there's nothing to search. We have never arrested someone like you before. And your father is a worker. How is it that being so poor you could go over to the side of the bourgeoisie?" The Cheka had not yet got itself organized, and they brought Anna to a room in the chancellery of the Special Branch where the White Guard Colonel Baron Bilderling was already under arrest. (Anna witnessed his interrogation and his execution, and later on she went and told his widow: "He died honorably, be proud!")

They took her for questioning to the room where Losev was living and working. When she entered, he was sitting on his stripped bed in his field britches and an unbuttoned undershirt, scratching his chest. Anna immediately demanded of the guard: "Take me out of here!" Losev growled: "All right, I'll wash up and put on those kid gloves in which people make the Revolution."

For one week she awaited her death sentence in a state of ecstasy. Skripnikova now recalls this as the brightest week of her life. If these words are to be understood in their precise meaning, we can believe them completely. That is the kind of ecstasy which descends upon the soul as a reward when you have cast aside all

hopes for impossible salvation and have steadfastly given yourself over to a great deed. (Love of life destroys this ecstasy.)

She did not yet know that the city intellectuals had delivered a petition asking that she be pardoned. (At the end of the twenties this would not have been of any help. And in the beginning of the thirties no one would have been willing to sign.) Losev began to take a conciliatory line in interrogating her:

"In all the cities I have captured, I have never met anyone as mad as you. The city is in a state of siege, and all power here is in my hands, and you called me—a gravedigger of Russian culture! Well, all right, we both lost our tempers. . . . Take back 'bandit' and 'hooligan.'"

"No. I still think the same about you."

"They keep coming to me from morning to night to ask for you. In the name of the honeymoon of Soviet power I am going to have to let you out. . . ."

They let her out. Not because they considered her speech harmless, but because she was a worker's daughter. They would not have forgiven a doctor's daughter that.<sup>3</sup>

That is how Skripnikova began her journey through prisons.

In 1922 she was held in the Krasnodar Cheka, confined there for eight months "for acquaintance with a suspicious individual." There was epidemic typhus and great congestion in that prison. They gave a bread ration amounting to somewhat less than two ounces per day, made from additives too. In her presence a child died in the arms of the woman sitting next to her. And Anna took an oath never to have a child under such socialism as this, never to let herself be tempted by motherhood.

She kept this oath. She lived out her life without a family, and her fate, her unwillingness to compromise, provided her more than once with the chance to return to prison.

Then began what was supposed to be a peaceful life. In 1923 Skripnikova went to enter the Institute of Psychology at Moscow State University. In filling out the security questionnaire, she wrote: "Not a Marxist." Out of kindness of heart her interviewers advised her: "Are you crazy? Who writes answers like that? State that you're a Marxist, and think whatever you please." "But I have no wish to deceive the Soviet government. I have simply never read Marx. . . ." "Well, all the more so in that case."

3. In 1920 Losev himself was shot for banditry and violence in the Crimea.

"No. When I get around to studying Marxism and if I accept it . . ." And for the time being she took a job teaching in a school for defectives.

In 1925 the husband of her close friend, an SR, fled to escape arrest. In order to force him to return, the GPU seized as hostages (in the midst of the NEP—hostages?) his wife and her friend, that is, Anna. She was just exactly the same round-faced, big-built woman with tresses that reached down to her knees when she entered her cell in the Lubyanka. (This is where the interrogator assured her: "All those flourishes of the Russian intelligentsia are out of date! *Just look after yourself.*") This time she was imprisoned about a month.

In 1927, for participating in a musical society of teachers and workers, doomed to be destroyed as a possible nest of freethinking, Anna was arrested for what was by then the *fourth* time. She got five years and served them out on Solovki and the Belomor Canal.

From 1932 on they did not touch her again for a long time, yes, and evidently she lived more carefully. Beginning with 1948, however, they began to fire her from her jobs. In 1952 the Institute of Psychology returned to her her already accepted dissertation ("The Psychological Conception of Dobrolyubov") on the grounds of her having received in 1927 a sentence based on Article 58! In this difficult time (she was already in her fourth year of unemployment) a hand reached out to help her from . . . State Security! Lisov, a representative of the central State Security apparatus (well, now, here is Losev again! Was he alive? How little had changed even in the letters! Just that he did not stick up his head openly, like an elk—"los"—but sniffed and darted like a fox—"lisa"), who had arrived in Vladikavkaz, proposed that she *collaborate*, in return for which work would be arranged for her and she would be allowed to defend her dissertation. Proudly she turned him down. Then they nimbly cooked up a charge that eleven years earlier (!), in 1941, she had said:

- that we had been poorly prepared for the war (and had we been well prepared?);
- that the German armies were deployed along our borders, and that we were sending them grain (and were we not?).

And on this occasion she got ten years and landed in the Special Camps, first Dubrovlag in Mordvinia, then Kamyshlag at Suslovo Station in Kemerovo Province.

Sensing that impenetrable wall in front of her, she thought up the idea of writing petitions not just anywhere, but . . . to the United Nations! During Stalin's lifetime she sent off three of them. This was not just some sort of trick—not at all! She actually, genuinely eased her eternally bubbling soul by speaking in her mind's eye with the UN. She actually, during these decades of cannibalism, had seen no other light in the world. In these petitions she lashed out at the savage tyranny in the Soviet Union and asked the UN to intervene with the Soviet government and request it either to reinvestigate her case or else to have her executed, since she could no longer go on living under this terror. She would address the envelopes "personally" to one or another of the Soviet leaders, and inside lay the request that it be sent on to the UN.

In Dubrovlag she was summoned by a clique of the infuriated bosses: "How dare you write to the UN?"

Skripnikova stood there, as always, erect, large, majestic: "Neither in the Criminal Code nor in the Code of Criminal Procedure nor in the Constitution itself is it forbidden. And you ought not to have opened envelopes addressed personally to members of the government!"

In 1956 an "unloading" commission of the Supreme Soviet was functioning in their camp. The only task of this commission was to free as many zeks as possible as quickly as possible. There was a certain modest procedure, which consisted in having the zek say several apologetic words and stand there a bit with drooping head. But no, Anna Skripnikova was not that kind! Her own personal release was nothing in comparison with common justice! How could she accept forgiveness if she was innocent? And she declared to the commission:

"Don't be so overjoyed! All accessories to Stalin's terror are going to have to answer to the people sooner or later. I do not know whom you were personally under Stalin, Citizen Colonel, but if you were an accessory to his terror, then you, too, are going to be sitting on the defendant's bench."

The members of the commission gulped in fury, shouted that

she was insulting the Supreme Soviet in their persons, that this would cost her plenty, and that she would just go on serving time from one toll of the gong to the next.

And in actual fact, because of her vain faith in justice, she had to serve three extra years.

From Kamyshlag she sometimes continued to write to the UN. (In seven years, up to 1959, she wrote a total of eighty petitions to various institutions.) In 1958, because of these letters, she was sent for one year to the Vladimir Political Prison. And there they had a rule: once in every ten days they would accept a petition directed to any authority. During a half-year she sent eighteen declarations from there to different institutions—including twelve to the UN.

And she got her way in the end. She got . . . not execution but a re-examination of her case—the cases of 1927 and of 1952. She said to the interrogator: "Well, what do you want? A petition to the UN is the only means of knocking a hole in the wall of Soviet bureaucracy and compelling the deaf Themis at least to hear something."

The interrogator jumped up and beat his breast: "All the accessories to the 'Stalinist terror'—as you for some reason [!] call the personality cult—will answer to the people? And what am *I* to answer for? What other policy could I execute at that time? Yes, I believed Stalin without any doubts and I did not know anything."

But Skripnikova kept hitting away at him: "No, no, you can't get away with that! One has to bear the responsibility for every crime! Who is supposed to answer for the deaths of millions of innocents? For the flower of the nation and the flower of the Party? The dead Stalin? The executed Beria? While you pursue your political career?"

(Her own blood pressure at this moment was rising to the danger point, she shut her eyes, and everything whirled and flamed.)

And they would still have detained her, but in 1959 a case of this sort was a real curiosity.

And in the years that followed—and she is alive right now—her life has been filled with solicitations on behalf of those still imprisoned or in exile, and those whose sentences still remain on the records—those whom she met in camps in recent

years. She got several of them released. She got others rehabilitated. She has also undertaken the defense of those who live in her own city. The city authorities are afraid of her pen and the envelopes she sends off to Moscow, and in some degree they make concessions to her.

And if everyone were even one-quarter as implacable as Anna Skripnikova—the history of Russia would be different.

## 2. Stepan Vasilyevich Loshchilin

He was born in 1908 in the Volga region, the son of a worker at the paper factory. In 1921, during the famine, he was orphaned. He grew up to be a lad who was not very bold, and nevertheless at the age of seventeen he was already a member of the Komsomol, and at the age of eighteen he entered a school for peasant youth, and completed it at the age of twenty-one. At this time they were sent out to help in compulsory exactions of breadgrains, and in 1930 in his own native village he participated in the liquidation of the kulaks. He did not remain behind, however, to build the collective farm there, but “got a reference” from the village soviet and with it went off to Moscow. He had difficulty in finding a job . . . as a manual laborer at a construction project. (This was a period of unemployment, and people were swarming into Moscow especially at this time.) A year later he was called up into the army, and there he was accepted as a candidate member and later as a full member of the Party. At the end of 1932 he was demobilized and returned to Moscow. However, he did not wish to be a manual laborer and he wanted to acquire a skill, so he asked the district committee of the Party to assign him as an apprentice at a factory. But evidently he was a pretty incompetent sort of Communist because they turned down even this request, and instead offered him an assignment to the police.

And at this point—he refused. Had he taken a different turn, this biography wouldn’t have been written. But this he refused.

As a young fellow he was ashamed to admit to the girls that he was only a manual laborer, that he had no profession. But there was nowhere he could get that profession! And he went to work at the “Kalibr” factory, once more as a manual laborer. At a Party meeting there he naively spoke out in defense of a

worker whom the Party bureau had evidently marked down ahead of time for purging. They purged that particular worker just as they had planned, and they began to move in on Loshchilin. The Party dues he had collected from others were stolen from his barracks—and he was unable to make up the missing ninety-three rubles out of his own wages. At that point they expelled him from the Party and threatened to prosecute him. (Does the loss of Party dues really come under the terms of the Criminal Code?) Already in a state of depression, Loshchilin did not appear at work one day. He was fired for absenteeism. With a reference like that he could not get work anywhere for a long, long time. An interrogator kept after him for a while and then left him alone. He kept expecting a trial—but there was none. And suddenly a verdict in absentia was handed down against him: six months of forced labor with a fine of 25 percent of his pay, to be served through the municipal Bureau of Corrective Labor (the BITR).

In September, 1937, Loshchilin went to the buffet at the Kiev Station. (What do we know of our lives? What if he had just gone hungry for another fifteen minutes and gone to a buffet in a different place? . . .) Perhaps he had some sort of lost or seeking expression on his face? He himself does not know. A young woman in the uniform of the NKVD came toward him. (Is that the kind of thing you ought to be doing, woman?) She asked him: “What are you looking for? Where are you going?” “To the buffet.” She pointed to a door: “Go on in there.” Loshchilin, of course, obeyed her. (She should have spoken like that to an Englishman!) This was the office of the Special Branch. An official sat behind the desk. The woman said: “Detained during tour of the station.” And she went out, and never in his life did Loshchilin see her again. (And we, too, will never learn anything about her! . . .) The official, without offering him a seat, began to question him. He took all his documents away from him and sent him to a room for detained persons. There were two men there already, and, as Loshchilin himself relates, “this time without permission [!] I sat down next to them on an unoccupied chair.” All three kept silent for a long time. Policemen came and led them off to Cells for Preliminary Detention. A policeman ordered them to turn over their money to him, because, allegedly, in the cell “it would



be taken from them anyway." (What a remarkable identity there is between the police and the thieves!) Loshchilin lied, saying that he had no money. They began to search him, and they took away his money once and for all. And gave him back his makhorka. With two packets of makhorka he entered his first cell, and put the makhorka on the table. No one else, of course, had anything to smoke.

They took him just once from the Cell for Preliminary Detention to the interrogator, who asked him whether he was a thief. (And what a rescue that would have been for him! He should have said then and there that, yes, he was a thief but never caught. And the worst that would have happened to him would have been to be sent out of Moscow.) But Loshchilin replied proudly: "I live by my own labor." And the interrogator directed no other charges at him, and the interrogation came to an end with that, and there was no trial!

He was imprisoned in the Cell for Preliminary Detention for ten days, and then at night they took them all to the Moscow Criminal Investigation Department on Petrovka Street. Here things were crowded and stifling, and it was impossible to get through. The thieves were the rulers here. They took things away from the prisoners and lost them at cards. Here for the first time Loshchilin was astonished by "their strange boldness, their insistence on some kind of incomprehensible superiority." One night the authorities began to haul them all off to the transit prison on Sretenka (that was where it was before Krasnaya Presnya). And there it was even more crowded. People sat on the floor and took turns on the bunks. To those who were only half-clothed—left in this state by the thieves—the police issued clothing—bast sandals and old police uniforms.

Among those sent there with Loshchilin were many others who also *had never been formally charged with anything*, never called to court or tried—but they were transported just like those who had been sentenced. They took them to Perebory, where they filled out an invoice for those who had arrived, and it was only when he got there that Loshchilin found his section: SVE—Socially Harmful Element, sentence four years. (To this very day he is in a state of dismay: After all, my father was a worker, and I myself am a worker, and why then was I an SVE? *It would have been a different matter* if I had been a trader. . . .)

Volgolag. Logging. A ten-hour workday and no days off except the November and May holidays. (And this was *three* whole years before the war!) And once Loshchilin broke his leg and had an operation and spent four months in the hospital and three on crutches. And then he was again sent to logging. And so it was that he served out his four-year term. The war began, but nonetheless he was not considered a 58, and in the autumn of 1941 he was released. Just before being released Loshchilin had his pea jacket stolen, but it was registered on his equipment card. And how he begged the trustees to write off that cursed pea jacket—but no! They refused to take pity on him! They took the cost of the pea jacket out of his "release fund"—double the cost, in fact! And the government inventory prices for those torn cotton-padded treasures were very dear. And so on a cold autumn day they let him out of the camp gates in a cotton camp shirt, with scarcely any money, or any bread or even a herring for the road. The gatehouse guards searched him at the exit and wished him good speed.

And so he was plundered on the day of his release, just as he had been on the day of his arrest.

When the documents were being written up in the office of the chief of the Classification and Records Section, Loshchilin managed to read upside down what was written in his *file*. What was written was: "Detained during tour of station . . ."

He arrived in the city of Sursk, his native area. Because he was ill the district military conscription commissariat exempted him from military service. And that, too, turned out to be bad. In the autumn of 1942, under Order No. 336 of the People's Commissariat of Defense, the district military commissariat conscripted all men of call-up age who could perform physical labor. Loshchilin landed in the *labor detachment* of the Apartment Maintenance Section of the Ulyanovsk garrison. What kind of detachment this was and what the attitude toward it was can be judged from the fact that it contained many young men from the West Ukraine, whom they had managed to conscript before the war, but who had not been sent to the front because they were unreliable. And so Loshchilin landed in another variety of the Archipelago again, a militarized unguarded camp geared to accomplish the same kind of annihilation as other camps—through exhausting the inmates' last strength.

A ten-hour workday. In the barracks two-story bunks without any bedding. (When they went out to work, the barracks was deserted.) They worked and went around in whatever of their own they had when they were taken from their homes and in their own underwear, without baths and without a change. They were paid a reduced wage, from which they were charged for bread (twenty-one ounces a day) and for their other food (which was bad and consisted of a first and second course served them twice a day). And they were even charged for the Chuvash bast sandals which they were issued.

Among the detachment members one was designated the commandant and another the chief of the detachment. But they had no rights. The whole show was bossed by M. Zheltov, the chief of the repair and construction office. He was like a prince who did exactly whatever he liked. When he gave orders, some of the detachment members were deprived of bread and lunch for one or two days at a time. ("Where was there a law like that?" Loshchilin asked. "Even in camp it wasn't like that.") And at the same time front-line soldiers recovering from wounds and still weak entered the detachment. There was a woman doctor attached to the detachment. She had the right to release prisoners from work because of illness, but Zheltov forbade her to. And being afraid of him, she wept, and she did not hide it from the detachment members. (That is *freedom*! That is our freedom for you!) Everyone got infected with lice, and the bunks were swarming with bedbugs.

But then this was no camp! They could complain! And they did complain. They wrote to the provincial newspaper and to the provincial Party committee. And there was no answer from anywhere. The only response came from the municipal medical department, which carried out a thorough disinfection, gave everyone a good bath, and gave everyone a set of underwear and some bedding—all to be charged against their wages (!).

In the winter of 1944–1945, at the beginning of his third year in the detachment, Loshchilin's own footwear became simply unusable and he did not go to work. He was then and there tried for absenteeism—and given three months of corrective-labor work in that very same detachment with a fine of 25 percent deducted from his wages.

In the spring damp Loshchilin could no longer walk about in

bast sandals, and once again did not go to work. Once again he was sentenced—which, if one counts the other times he had been sentenced in absentia, made the fourth time in his life! This time he was sentenced in the so-called Red Corner of the barracks, and the verdict was three months of imprisonment.

But . . . they did not imprison him! Because it was unprofitable for the state to undertake the maintenance of Loshchilin! Because there was no form of imprisonment which could be worse than this labor detachment.

This was in March, 1945. And nothing worse would have happened, had it not been for the fact that earlier he had written a complaint to the Apartment Maintenance Section of the garrison to the effect that Zheltov had promised to issue secondhand footwear to all of them but did not do so. (And the reason that he alone wrote such a complaint was that any *collective* complaint was strictly forbidden. For any such collective complaint, since it was contrary to the spirit of socialism, they could have given sentences under 58.)

So they summoned Loshchilin to the Personnel Section: "Turn in your work clothes!" And the only thing that that mute slogger had ever gotten for his three years of labor—*his work apron*—Loshchilin took off and put quietly on the floor! And right there stood the precinct policeman who had been summoned by the Apartment Maintenance Section. He took Loshchilin off to the police station and, in the evening, to the prison, but the duty officer at the prison found something not in order in his documents and refused to accept him.

And the policeman then took Loshchilin back to the police station. And the road went past their detachment's barracks. And the policeman said: "Oh, go on, go there and rest; you aren't going to run off anywhere anyway. Wait for me one of these days."

April, 1945, came to an end. The legendary divisions had already rolled to the Elbe and surrounded Berlin. Every day the nation fired off salutes, flooding the heavens with red, green, and gold flares. On April 24 Loshchilin was imprisoned in the Ulyanovsk Provincial Prison. Its cells were just as overcrowded as they had been in 1937. Seventeen and a half ounces of bread, soup made from fodder turnips, or if from potatoes from small potatoes, unpeeled and poorly washed. May 9, Victory Day,

he spent in his cell. (For several days they did not even know about the end of the war.) Just as Loshchilin had greeted the war behind bars, that is how he also bade it farewell.

After Victory Day they sent off to a work colony the *decree prisoners*—in other words, absentees, those tardy at work, and sometimes also those who had been caught at petty thievery at work. What they did there was earth-moving work, construction, and unloading barges. They fed them badly. The camp was a new one. There was no doctor in it and not even a nurse. Loshchilin got chilled and developed an inflammation of the sciatic nerve—and he was driven out to work anyway. He was on his last legs, and his legs had swelled up, and he was in a constant fever. They kept on driving him out to work all the same.

On July 7, 1945, the famous Stalinist amnesty struck. But Loshchilin did not have to last out until he was released under its terms—for on July 24 his own three-month term came to an end, and they let him out then and there.

"All the same," says Loshchilin, "in my soul I am a Bolshevik. When I die, consider me a Communist."

Maybe he's joking, but then again maybe he's not.

■

I do not have here the materials to complete this chapter the way I would like—to demonstrate the striking intersection of Russian lives and the laws of the Archipelago. And I have no hope that I will be granted another secure and unhurried period in which to carry out one more editing of this book, and at that time to include the missing life stories.

I think it would be very appropriate here to include a sketch on the life, prison and camp persecutions, and death of Father Pavel A. Florensky, perhaps one of the most remarkable men devoured by the Archipelago of all time. Well-informed people say of him that he was a scholar rare for the twentieth century, who had attained a professional mastery of a multitude of knowledge. He was educated as a mathematician, and in his youth he had experienced a deep religious conversion and become a priest. The book he had written in his youth, *The Pillar and the Affirmation of the Truth*, is only today coming into its own. He had to his credit many essays in mathematics (topological

theorems, proved much later in the West), in art history (on Russian icons, on religious drama), and on philosophical and religious subjects. (His archive has been in the main preserved and has not yet been published. I have not had access to it.) After the Revolution he was a professor at the Electrical Engineering Institute (where he delivered his lectures in his priest's robes). In 1927 he expressed ideas anticipating those of Wiener. In 1932 he published in the magazine *Socialist Reconstruction and Science* an essay on machines for the solution of problems which were close in spirit to cybernetics. Soon after that he was arrested. His prison career is known to me only at several separate points, which I list with trepidation: exile in Siberia (in exile he wrote works and published them under a pseudonym in the works of the Siberian expedition of the Academy of Sciences), Solovki, and after Solovki was shut down the Far North, and according to some sources the Kolyma. In the Kolyma he studied flora and minerals (in addition to his work with a pick). Neither the place nor the date of his death in camp is known. But according to some rumors he was shot during wartime.

I certainly intended to cite here also the life of Valentin I. Komov from the Yefremov District, with whom I was imprisoned in the years 1950 to 1952 in Ekibastuz, but I simply do not recall enough about him, and I ought to have remembered more details. In 1929, when he was a seventeen-year-old boy, he killed the chairman of the local village soviet and fled. After that the only way he could exist and hide was as a thief. He was imprisoned several times, always as a thief. In 1941 he was released. The Germans carried him off to Germany. Did he collaborate with them? No, he ran away twice and as a result landed in Buchenwald. He was liberated from there by the Allies. Did he stay in the West? No, under his authentic family name ("The Motherland has forgiven, the Motherland calls you!") he returned to his own village, where he married and worked in the collective farm. In 1946 he was imprisoned under 58 for his 1929 crime. He was released in 1955. If this biography were set forth in detail, it would explain much to us about the Russian lives of those decades. In addition, Komov was a typical camp brigadier—a "son of Gulag." (And even in the hard-labor camp he was not afraid to shout at the chief at the general roll call, "Why do we have a Fascist system in our camp?")

Finally, it would have been appropriate to include in this

chapter the biography of some socialist who was exceptional—in personal qualities, in the steadfastness of his views—in order to show his peregrinations through the moves of the Big Solitaire over a period of many years.

And perhaps the biography of some inveterate MVD man—a Garanin, or a Zavenyagin, or else someone not so well known—would have been highly suitable here.

But evidently I am not fated to do all that. Breaking off this book at the beginning of 1967,<sup>4</sup> I do not count on having a chance to return to the theme of the Archipelago.

Anyway, it's enough. I have been with it . . . twenty years.

#### END OF PART IV

4. No, completing it a year later.

## Translator's Notes

### Page

- 1 **The Destructive-Labor Camps:** This, the title of Part III of this work, is a play on words which is not as effective in English translation as in the original Russian. The full official title of Soviet corrective-labor camps in Russian is *Ispravitelno-Trudovye Lagerya*. The author switches "corrective" labor to "destructive" labor (or "extermination" labor) by rendering this in abbreviated form *Istrebitelno-Trudovye*.
- 1 **Hutzul:** The Hutzuls are a mountain people of the Carpathians who speak a Ruthenian dialect—and this quotation is given in that dialect.
- 9 **the shots of the cruiser Aurora:** Began the October Revolution in Petrograd.
- 9 **the militia:** Following the October Revolution, when most governmental terminology was radically changed, the police were rechristened "the militia." This is one of the few new revolutionary terms which has stuck, and the ordinary police in the Soviet Union are still called "the militia." Throughout the rest of the book "militsiya" is translated as "police."
- 10 **Razliv:** When Lenin went into hiding in July, 1917, at a time when he was being sought by the Provisional Government, he found shelter at Razliv, a summer home village about twenty miles from Petrograd, where he camped out in a hunter's shack.
- 14 **"subbotniki"** (sing.: "subbotnik"): These were "voluntary Saturdays," in which Soviet citizens allegedly volunteered for socially useful labor on their day of rest. In actual fact, as a mass movement sponsored by the Soviet leadership from April, 1919, on, there was nothing voluntary about them.
- 16 **Central Penal Department:** The term here translated as "penal" could also be translated as "punitive" and is the same Russian term as that used in the official title "punitive detachments," which were sent by the Bolsheviks to carry out bloody reprisals against protest-