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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY *

This Report contains two parts: (1) a brief summary of a book-length study of Soviet occupation policies and practices in Poland for 21 months at the outbreak of World War II; and (2) a vivid account of one aspect of that occupation, the Soviet coercive apparatus (the NKVD) at work.

The main conclusion of Part One is that by exploiting and sharpening internal antagonisms of the occupied society and placing the unbridled coercive power of the state at their disposal -- a kind of privatization of absolute state power -- the society was brought to subdue itself to Soviet control and purposes.

Part Two is unremitting horror; an account of massive action of such bestiality, so primitive in its barbarity, savage, and depraved, as to make commonplace all atrocity that followed on the Eastern front. The author traces this behavior to the nature of the Soviet society.

It is perhaps opportune that now, as the West debates its relations with the USSR and armed deterrence, this study and the book that will follow recall what was at stake in an earlier soviet occupation of a Western nation. The Soviet society has changed in 40 years, but there is enough in common between the findings of this study and accounts of current KGB practices, or Soviet extermination tactics in Afghanistan, to suggest that it is still profoundly alien.

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The Soviet occupation of Eastern Poland began on September 17, 1939 and ended with Hitler's attack on the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941. During these 21 months, the process of Sovietization was compressed into a relatively short timespan, thereby offering an opportunity to observe the most fundamental mechanisms of Communist revolution in particularly stark terms. The case of Russian rule in Poland, 1939-1941, is an important one for helping to explain the processes through which a Communist regime is established, and through which a society subdues itself.

During the 21 months of Soviet occupation, the USSR controlled slightly over half of the territory of the prewar Polish state. Originally, only 37.7 percent of the Polish population lived there -- some 13.2 million people, including Poles, Ukrainians, Jews, Belorussians and "locals" primarily of peasant stock. In addition, several hundred thousand refugees from central and western Poland fled east to Soviet-controlled territory at the time of the German invasion.

* Prepared by the Staff of the National Council for Soviet and East European Research

Neither side anticipated their initial reactions to each other. Neither the conquerors conformed to the image of a victorious army nor did the liberated fit the image of the oppressed. The victorious Red Army arrived on underfed horses, was shabbily dressed, rifles hung over their shoulders by string. This ragged image only bred contempt among the conquered. Meanwhile, the superior material wealth encountered in the occupied territories lured many Soviet soldiers astray.

During the early days of occupation, the Soviets allowed vigilante justice and the settling of personal vendettas to go unaccounted for. Within a few days, local militias or village committees took over the enforcement of "law and order" in the territory. Still, the personal mode of dispensing coercion continued to be the main feature of the newly established regime. Volunteers flocked into local committees and militias, and they were very often the same people who responded enthusiastically to the initial appeals of the Soviet officers and agitators to take justice into their own hands. Thus, the establishment of Soviet rule in the area was characterized by a privatization of the instruments of social control.

How one fared under the Soviet occupation depended to a large extent on one's ethnic background. The Soviet authorities were able to break the resistance of the local society by skillfully manipulating ethnic hatreds. Different ethnic groups were adversely affected by different aspects of Soviet policies: Jews suffered mostly due to nationalization of small shops, crafts and commerce, and were arrested most frequently for speculation; Ukrainians and Belorussians suffered due to the Soviet exploitation of the countryside, and were arrested most frequently for nationalism and terrorism. The Poles unquestionably found themselves at the bottom of this new social hierarchy. This breakdown of the ethnic and class domination of the Poles released powerful and hitherto repressed social energies which turned against them.

Arrests came in waves and affected different social groups each time. Throughout, a constant flow of indiscriminate arrests also continued and it instilled fear in the minds of everyone but the most outspoken enthusiasts of the new order. Anticipation of impending personal disaster brought psychological tension that many could not bear. Thus, when the arrest finally came, they reported experiencing relief as if the threat, by being carried out, had been removed. A well-adjusted personality in such conditions was that of an individual who welcomed anticipated imprisonment. Only then could one get rid of the fear of arrest and acquire some peace of mind.

Even the best adjusted, those who welcomed imprisonment as they were unable to withstand the eerie and frightening

atmosphere of life outside the prison walls, were stunned when arrest finally came. Entry into a prison cell introduced one into a realm of new sensory experiences, conditions were so appalling.

Following arrest, people were held in prison to be investigated and not to be punished. A real distinction should be made, then, between life in a prison cell and interrogation. During the latter, one's whole biography was stood upside down. Virtually all sacrifice, distinction and achievement throughout the preceding 20 years of life turned overnight into liabilities. Any past action or association was open to condemnation and there was no way to foretell what might arouse the suspicion of an NKVD interrogator. To compound matters further, the prisoners were, time and again, confronted with the ignorance of NKVD operatives. This is not to say that the NKVD lacked relevant information. The information was available to them, but they did not know how to interpret it. Traveling abroad became synonymous with being on a spy mission, donning any uniform turned one into a particularly hostile enemy, and a polytechnic became a school for training political cadres. Under such circumstances, no amount of information and concrete detail could have helped those who advanced these interpretations to understand the prewar Polish society or their prisoners.

A crucial point to remember here is that the behavior of Soviet authorities in occupied Poland and in their own country was similar. They, and their families, had experienced the same hardships to which the population of the newly liberated territories was now being subjected. What this means is that, in a sense, everybody in Soviet-occupied Poland was a victim--potential, past or present.

Prison was in the mainstream of Soviet society and imprisonment was merely a part of the life cycle, often cutting it short. If 1.25 million were incarcerated and deported from the Polish territories during these 21 months, then somewhere between a quarter and a half million families remaining on the outside of prisons and forced settlements were directly affected. This amounts to about one-fifth to one-fourth of the entire population residing in the area, which is to say that everybody at least knew someone who was either deported or imprisoned.

Thus, Sovietization was not a process imposed on a society from the outside. The incoming Soviet administration exploited ethnic antagonisms and personal animosities. The all-pervasive and awesome power of totalitarianism came not as a consequence of its being well-informed and efficient (as it was both dismally ill-informed and mismanaged), but rather, the real power of the totalitarian state resulted from its being at the

disposal of -- available for hire at a moment's notice to -- every inhabitant. Consequently, strange as it may seem, the decision of who would actually go to jail was largely left to the discretion of the ordinary citizen.

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This report is based upon archival materials from the Hoover Institution at Stanford University, from the Sikorski Institute, the Underground Poland Study Trust and the Foreign Office in London, from the Bundesarchiv in Koblenz, from the Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, and from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Paris. In addition, the author interviewed Jews, Poles and Ukrainians, including former communist officials and (Ukrainian) nationalist guerillas. Some research results and various excerpts of this report can be found in the introduction to War Through Children's Eyes (published by Hoover Institution Press in 1981) and in "A Note on the Nature of Soviet Totalitarianism" (published in the July, 1982 issue of Soviet Studies).

PART ONE

The Soviet occupation of eastern Poland began on September 17, 1939, and ended on June 22, 1941, with Hitler's attack on the Soviet Union. During these 21 months, the USSR controlled slightly over half of the territory of the prewar Polish state -- 201,000 square kilometers, i.e., 51.6 percent of Poland. Originally, only 37.3 percent of the Polish population lived there -- some 13.2 million people. In addition, during the Soviet administration of this territory, several hundred thousand refugees from central and western Poland, who had fled east at the time of the German invasion, settled in the area.

The indigenous population was of predominantly peasant stock -- 80 percent of the local inhabitants lived in the countryside. They were, also, mostly of non-Polish ethnic background. According to official Polish statistics (which can be suspected of anti-minority bias), only 40 percent of the residents in southeastern Poland declared Polish as their mother tongue. Ethnic, linguistic and religious cleavages overlapped in this territory, presenting the new Soviet administrations with a population that was a mosaic of separate, culturally distant and socially insulated groups. Due to rather high-handed attempts of colonization of these territories by the prewar Polish administration, 5.2 million Poles, 4.6 million Ukrainians, 1.2 million Jews, 1.2 million Belorussians, and about 1 million, as they defined themselves, "locals" lived in the area in an often uneasy truce.

The peasantry was mostly of "local," Ukrainian, and Belorussian stock. Jews lived in small as well as large towns, sometimes making up the overwhelming majority of their population. They were employed in commerce, small cottage industry, and crafts. Although Poles could be found throughout the country, they were mostly concentrated in the larger cities. Sixty-three percent of Lwow's and 66% of Wilno's inhabitants, for example, declared Polish their mother tongue.

In the 1930's Ukrainian national aspirations were undergoing a rapid radicalization, and the illegal Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) was especially successful in winning the hearts and minds of young Ukrainians. Its goal was the establishment of an independent Ukrainian state and it was ready to use any means, including terror, to achieve it. The Soviet authority was superimposed on this highly explosive political situation and, as it turned out, the occupiers proved very skillful in exploiting these conflicts for their own advantage.

The Soviet attack against Poland on September 17, 1939, came as a complete surprise. The official justification of the Red Army's orders to march into Poland was allegedly to "save the Ukrainians and the Belorussians who" -- while Poland was being defeated in its war with Germany -- "have been utterly abandoned to their fate and are defenseless." In any case, at the time of the Red Army's invasion, Poland had already lost the war with Germany and the Soviet offensive encountered little organized resistance.

Polish Communists were treated with mistrust by the Soviet occupiers. Important Communist leaders from before the war were placed in low positions while others, who had played marginal roles before the war, were allowed to exercise considerable influence. Altogether, it was a highly personalized system of exercising authority whereby individuals with personal connections and access, rather than nominal office holders, wielded effective power. These, the so-called "activists", were often quite young and employed as school teachers, in the post office, or, for example, in the local "co-operative" store. At times, they became quite powerful and even dangerous to the local officials on account of their blinding, youthful, doctrinaire enthusiasm and zeal.

How one fared under the Soviet occupation depended to a large extent on one's ethnic background. Poles found themselves unquestionably on the bottom of the social hierarchy. Ukrainian and Belorussian were introduced as principal languages of instruction in the school system. National minorities suddenly became employable in state administration, in the school system, in the professions. It was an immediate enfranchisement and promotion to full citizenship which was made even more conspicuous in view of the discrimination imposed by the Soviet rulers on the Poles.

Their newly won equality was, for a time, much more important for the national minorities than the deprivations they all had experienced under Soviet rule. Besides, different ethnic groups were adversely affected by different aspects of

Soviet policies and, consequently, they felt little sympathy for each other's predicaments: Jews suffered mostly due to nationalization of small shops, crafts and commerce; Ukrainians and Belorussians bore the brunt of the exploitation of the countryside. As time went on, their symbolic gains -- equality bestowed on all minority groups -- became overshadowed by the experience of material hardships and political persecution meted out especially against the elite (social, economic, and political) of each of the ethnic groups.

Notwithstanding these conflicts with national minorities, the Soviet authorities enjoyed, especially in the initial period of the occupation, the welcome and collaboration of significant segments of local populations. This collaboration of ethnic minorities had paralyzing effects on the Polish national groups living in the area. In general, the Soviet authorities were able to break resistance of the local society to Sovietization by skillfully manipulating ethnic hatred and pitting one national group against another.

The Soviet economic policy in occupied Poland was clearly exploitative. Neither the peasants nor the working class of Western Belorussia and Western Ukraine benefited from the new economic system. Initially, poorer peasants were encouraged to help themselves to property expropriated by the new authorities from landowners or Polish military colonists. But they were soon as heavily taxed as everyone else; they were ordered to repay all back taxes due the Polish state, subjected to compulsory deliveries and periodically called on to make "gifts to the Red Army." Property rights were effectively

suspended. Industrial workers were subject to a ruthless system of work discipline, and their wages were contingent on fulfillment of quotas that were often established in a random and capricious manner.

In the general context of impoverishment there was still a considerable transfer of wealth from the cities to the countryside (starving urban populations had to buy foodstuffs on the black market) which resulted from the growth of the "second economy." Indirectly, therefore, Soviet policies had equalizing effects on the local society compensating, as it were, for the drastic prewar rural poverty.

In addition to imprisonment, the subject of Part Two of this report, people were subjected to deportations. About 900,000 Polish citizens were transported to the USSR in four big deportation waves. There were no exceptions from deportation orders -- the sick, the elderly, or the newly born, all had to go.

One can analyze the pattern of Soviet rule in Poland in 1939-41, with special emphasis on such factors as:

- patterns of terror during the early stages of the imposition of the new rule;
- kinship ties of administrative personnel appointed by the new regime;
- practice of denunciation of one's enemies.

After so doing, one has to conclude that the nature of totalitarianism consists of the privatization of the public domain. Under totalitarian systems virtually all individuals

in society have immediate access to the coercive apparatus of the state and are encouraged to use it for the settlement of private disputes.

Diplomacy and Invasion

As noted above, the Soviet attack against Poland on September 17, 1939 came as a complete surprise. Neither the Polish authorities nor diplomatic circles abroad suspected that the Soviet-Nazi Treaty of Non-Agression would culminate in a joint military intervention by Hitler and Stalin. Three days before the invasion, on September 14, 1939, an article prominently displayed on the front page of Pravda proffered internal reasons for the destruction of Poland in the current war. The principal reason cited was ruthless oppression of ethnic minorities by Polish "leadership circles." In consequence, during the military confrontation with Germany, Poland "disintegrated from within," just as tsarist Russia had done 20 years earlier. Three days after the publication of the Pravda article, in the early morning hours of September 17, the Polish Ambassador in Moscow was served with a diplomatic note that reiterated these points. The Red Army was ordered to march into Poland, the note explained, to save the Ukrainians and the Belorussians "who have been utterly abandoned to their fate and are defenseless." Since Poland "had disintegrated from within" (and thus ceased to exist), the USSR was no longer bound by any treaties it had signed with Poland and, consequently, could send its armies westward without violating Polish sovereignty.

The entry of Red Army units into Poland was preceded by covert activity. A few hours before the invasion, numerous outposts of the Polish border guards were attacked by Soviet armed groups that later withdrew. Even more importantly, in the second week of September, agents were either sent into eastern Poland or trusted sympathizers living there were alerted to begin a propaganda campaign preparing the local Belorussian and Ukrainian peasantry for the possibility of national liberation by the Red Army. While all of this activity did not have a decisive influence on the outcome of military confrontation between Poland and the USSR (for Poland was already militarily defeated by September 17), it certainly served to heighten class and ethnic animosities in the countryside. In so doing, it facilitated what, in all probability, would have taken place anyway -- vigilante justice and settling of personal vendettas during the period of transition from Polish to Soviet rule in their territory. This phenomenon of settling personal scores offers an important insight into the mechanisms of the Communist revolution and I shall comment on it more extensively in what follows.

In the meantime, it should be remembered that even before the arrival of the Red Army units, many towns and hamlets had shown some activity from vigilante groups, citizens' committees or militias. These groups had sprung up naturally, so to speak, to fill the vacuum after the local Polish administration had either fled or lost the ability to enforce order. These groups varied in ethnic composition and in the tasks that they set for themselves. In some cases, the local Polish

minority was organizing in order to protect itself until the new military authorities would reach the area. Most often, however, the local peasantry was putting up small armed groups (sometimes at the instigation of local Communist sympathizers or, more often, urged by nationalist leaders from the OUN -- Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists). These had the dual purpose of rectifying injustices suffered during the Polish rule in the area and protecting the village, usually against units of the Polish Army that were trying to reach the Romanian or the Hungarian border.

The entering units of the Red Army were largely well received by inhabitants of eastern Poland. The reasons for this hospitality were varied. For Ukrainians and Belorussians the appearance of the Red Army symbolized the end of the Polish rule in the area; for Jews, it meant that they escaped the danger of Nazi occupation; for Poles, and terror that followed the few days during which the local vigilante groups had been able to do as they pleased. The Soviet behavior was characteristically ambiguous in the early days, but this ambiguity, I believe, was introduced in a deliberate manner and for a well-defined purpose.

The entering Red Army units made efforts to assuage the fears of the populace by spreading rumors that they had come to assist Poland against Germany. Simultaneously, however, leaflets were distributed and speeches were made calling the Ukrainian and Belorussian masses into action under the banner of national liberation from the yoke of their Polish masters. An overwhelming majority of witnesses report that the

behavior of entering units was correct and peaceful, but on the other hand, the local peasantry was encouraged to carry on the campaign of retribution against Polish landowners and military or civilian officials.

The October Plebiscite

The future of western Belorussia and western Ukraine was undoubtedly settled in the minds of Soviet rulers prior to their military intervention in Poland. Barely five weeks after the Red Army entered the Polish territory, on October 22, 1939, a "plebiscite" was held in which the population allegedly expressed the desire to join the USSR or, more specifically, the Soviet Ukraine and Soviet Belorussia. To organize the plebiscite was a formidable task, but it was in accord with the general purpose of administrative reorganization.

The organization of the plebiscite in the occupied territories served several purposes simultaneously. First, it could be divided into a sequence of relatively simple tasks with which to entrust the new temporary administration. Thus, it offered something concrete for the new administration to accomplish allowing, therefore, for a simple, preliminary test of loyalty of the new personnel. It also facilitated the initial separation of those who openly associated with the new order from the rest of the population. The latter point is important since the individuals who entered the temporary administration did so often for reasons other than the espousal of communist ideology. The loyalty of these newly recruited administrators could be guaranteed, therefore, only by an

indirect method of generating hostility towards them among the local population. Altogether, the plebiscite was a masterful rehearsal of life under a Soviet regime. It was a staged mass mobilization for purposes that people found either incomprehensible or hostile. In the process, the new administration acquired a taste of power while the population learned to fear and obey by consenting to perform on command a series of symbolic gestures.

One may, of course, argue that it did not matter who voted in the plebiscite because its "results" were decided in advance. But the plebiscite had purposes other than to allow people free choice between some political alternatives. In fact, everything about this "election" mattered once we realize that it was meant to be a lesson in intimidation for many and in arrogance of power for some.

The Occupiers

The first encounter between the Red Army soldiers and the local population revealed what neither side had anticipated. The victorious army was riding on underfed horses, it was shabbily dressed, its rifles were often attached by pieces of string. It was a strange sight, one that induced contempt for the Soviet invaders and yet gave food for thought to the Polish onlookers who, after all, had just been defeated by this army. It was also a very confusing experience for the Red Army soldiers who knew that they had come to liberate their oppressed blood brothers from the Polish yoke. For they had been told that the Polish masters were a small minority and that everyone

else was suffering deprivation. And here, suddenly, they were confronted with the well-fed and well-kept cattle and horses of the local peasants, ample food in peasants' huts, untattered clothing worn by the population, and, above all, various material objects they coveted. Especially in the towns, the soldiers found consumer goods of all sorts. Thus, the surprise was mutual: neither the conquerors conformed to the image of a victorious army nor did the liberated fit the traditional image of the oppressed. This confrontation of the unexpected produced further unanticipated consequences. It had immediate demoralizing effects on the Red Army personnel, and, apparently, there were many desertions from the army.

Thus, as had always been the case during the history of empire building, both the conquered and the conquerors were affected by the experience of living side by side. The coming together of these two societies proved dangerous to both. The superior material wealth encountered in the occupied Polish territories lured many Soviet soldiers astray. Rampant corruption and greed of the Soviet personnel are reported by many witnesses, who attributed this to the inferior quality of the Soviet cadres that were sent to work in the newly acquired western parts of the Ukraine and the Belorussia. But this certainly does not account for the behavior of Red Army personnel which represented a more or less random sample of Soviet conscripts.

Along with their hunger for material objects, the incoming Soviet citizens showed themselves hungry, as well, for a revitalization of their respective national identities. This

had been most pronounced among the Ukrainians and the Jews. Much had been said (and justifiably) about the support that the Soviet occupiers enjoyed among the national minorities living in eastern Poland. However, that the reverse was also true -- i.e., the Ukrainians and Jews who came from the USSR were introduced to branches of their ethnic cultures that were far more lively and intense than what they had been experiencing in the Soviet Union for the past decades. To Yiddish poets and writers who visited the Jewish section of the Writers Association in western Belorussia, it was a profoundly moving experience; to young Ukrainians who were sent on assignment from the Soviet Ukraine and were befriended by Ukrainian nationalist youth in western Ukraine, it was an apprenticeship in politics and conspiracy. As a result many joined the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) and some rose through the ranks to top positions of leadership.

Nationalities

It should be clear by now that how one fared under the Soviet occupation depended to a large extent on one's ethnic background. In this respect, the prewar stratification system was reversed -- the Poles found themselves unquestionably on the bottom of the social hierarchy.

It is much more difficult to assess the relative changes in the position of other ethnic groups under the Soviet rule. Many factors can be weighed differently, and there is a great divergence of opinion depending on whose testimony is taken into account. But in all this variety there is another

consistent pattern that can be discerned: as time went by, all protagonists grew increasingly pessimistic about the opportunities for ethnic revival under Soviet rule.

In principle, all institutions around which community life was organized before the war were closed. No outright ban on churches and temples was imposed, but as a result of governmental pressure many had to close anyway, even though local communities willingly undertook heavy financial burdens to save their religious centers. The numerous Ukrainian, Jewish, and Belorussian cultural outlets, newspapers, libraries, cooperative societies and welfare organizations were closed, their property confiscated or transferred to new Soviet-sponsored institutions. On the other hand, the generally inferior status conferred upon national minorities by the prewar Polish rule, came to an end. The Ukrainian and the Belorussian languages were introduced rapidly into official institutions, including schools. The number of Yiddish classes was increased though Hebrew was banned from schools. In addition, various Zionist organizations were tracked down and their members faced arrest and deportation. But, on the whole, the national minorities suddenly became employable in state administration, the school system and in the professions. I think one should not overestimate the enormous psychological gratification derived by Jews, Ukrainians, and Belorussians from this change. They no longer had to suffer the humiliation of being second class citizens because of their ethnic background. Their newly won equality was, for a time, much more important than the deprivations they all had experienced under Soviet rule. As

time went on, their symbolic gains -- equality bestowed on all minority groups -- became overshadowed by the hardships and political persecution primarily against the elite (social, economic and political) of each of the ethnic groups.

Economy

From the first day, Soviet economic policy in occupied Poland was clearly exploitative. The heaviest burden fell on the well-to-do strata of Polish society, simply because they had things that could be taken away. But neither the peasants nor the working class of western Belorussia and western Ukraine benefited from the new economic system. True, for the first few months the poorer peasants were encouraged to help themselves to property expropriated by the new authorities from the Polish landowners, but they were soon as heavily taxed as everyone else; they were ordered to repay all back taxes due the Polish state and subjected to compulsory deliveries and labor.

There was nothing surprising about this, considering that long-range Soviet plans called for agricultural collectivization in the newly acquired territory. Once the Soviets decided to incorporate western Ukraine and western Belorussia into the USSR, no other solution to the agrarian problem could be considered. The land redistribution that occurred in the initial days and which primarily benefited poor Ukrainian and Belorussian peasants was only a temporary arrangement. It was,

most likely, a propaganda device to elicit the active participation of the lower strata of local society in transforming the social structure.

One ought to note, however, that in the general context of impoverishment there was still a considerable transfer of wealth from the cities to the countryside. Needless to say, this was not planned by the Soviet administration but resulted from the growth of the "second economy." Indirectly, therefore, Soviet policies had equalizing effects on the local society compensating, as it were, for drastic prewar rural poverty.

Repression

The fear of arrest or deportation soon became the constant companion of everybody who fell under Soviet jurisdiction. With the imposition of the Soviet regime, the prison population increased manyfold in eastern Poland. In all depositories one finds accounts of overcrowding in prison cells. Altogether, I would estimate that there were about seven times as many people in jail under the Soviet rule as there were during the Polish administration in these territories. Some categories of people were jailed faster than others -- Polish policemen, civil servants, judges, officers, politicians, activists of various voluntary associations, etc. -- but nobody was above suspicion.

The conditions in Soviet prisons were horrible, as will become apparent in the discussion in Part Two of this report. Overcrowded, underfed and filthy, prisoners were tortured during interrogation. Many were sentenced to death

and shot. Simultaneously and independently from imprisonment, people were subjected to deportations. About 900,000 Polish citizens -- Jews, Ukrainians, Belorussians and Poles -- were transported to the USSR in four big deportation waves: in February, April and June of 1940 and in June of 1941. Typically, selected households were surrounded in early morning hours, given anywhere from 15 minutes to two hours to pack, and then locked in cattle cars at the nearest railway station. There were no exceptions from deportation orders -- the sick, the elderly, or the newly born, all had to go. Many died quickly without medical attention in freezing or overheated cattle cars on their way to Siberia.

The Take-Over: The Nature of Totalitarianism

"After the Red Army entered the village, lieutenant Minkov, battery commander Volov, and the commander of the 234 regiment of heavy artillery from Kiev ordered everybody together and pronounced a fiery speech that brought freedom and equalization to all classes. They said that they authorize people to go and take away what rightfully belongs to them and to avenge pains of 20 years of exploitation -- kill and take the property and those who filled their pockets and barns with your blood. If you are not going to succeed on your own, the Red Army will assist you" (HI, AC 7426). In another village, a Soviet political commissar spoke to the local inhabitants in almost identical words: "For 20 years you lived under the master's yoke, who drank your blood, and now we have liberated you and we give you freedom to do with them as you please" (HI,

Poland Ambassada USSR Collection, Box 48).

Even though the rapporteurs of these first encounters with the Red Army lived far away from one another, one is struck by the similarity of their experiences. Throughout the occupied territory the conquering army decreed a period of lawlessness. "What's the matter with you? Let them play a little," answered a local Red Army commander to an individual who complained about robberies and killings in a village in northeastern Poland (HI, AC, 7758). People were told that they could "square accounts" with their prewar enemies, and for a few days countless cruelties were committed throughout the occupied territory. They were, in a way, inflicted by the local inhabitants upon each other. Furthermore, even though most violence was directed against Polish settlers or against wealthier landowners, also mostly Polish, one would be mistaken in describing this phenomenon as an incidence of class warfare. What motivated people was ethnic hatred rather than class antagonisms. Even though the spontaneous terror of the early days was soon curtailed by the Soviet authorities, the individual method of dispensing coercion continued to be the main feature of the newly established regime. Thus, not surprisingly, in the perception of the local inhabitants, the beginning of the Soviet rule was characterized by a certain privatization of the instruments of social control. In other words, Soviet law enforcement agents tended to settle private disputes while carrying out their official duties; more precisely settling private disputes appeared to be their principal mode of carrying out official duties.

Many eyewitness accounts show conclusively that throughout the occupied territory the newly introduced Soviet authority was vested in a network of families that held executive power -- power of life and death -- over communities in their jurisdiction. The state, as it were, had been franchised to these individuals. For, strictly speaking, they were the state: they were allowed to carry weapons and to use them with impunity or, in a Weberian phrase, they were given the monopoly of legitimate use of coercion in this territory. From time to time, they were ordered to deliver a quota of foodstuffs, to divide a landowner's estate or to mobilize local inhabitants during election day. But how they accomplished these tasks was left to their own discretion. They could use for their own benefit whatever had not been claimed by the hierarchally superior organs of the state. They could redistribute the burdens in the community so as to punish personal enemies and benefit friends.

In addition, one can show that the rank-and-file members of society had a relationship to the state similar to that of the state's functionaries employed in the coercive apparatus, i.e., that they could, and did, use the state freely for the settlement of private disputes. It turns out that everybody had immediate access to the apparatus of legitimate coercion and used it frequently against other members of society.

Conclusions

(1) The crucial point to remember is that the behavior of Soviet authorities in occupied Poland and in their own coun-

try was similar. They and their families had experienced the same hardships to which the population of the newly liberated territories was now being subjected. "You'll get used to it or else you'll croak," they used to say, not maliciously, but merely summing up their own life experience.

This attitude was important in preserving a semblance of humanity under these altogether inhuman conditions. The Soviets in the occupied territories felt they were not exploiting, but sharing; they did not interpret their actions as discriminatory, but rather as bringing redress and equality; their intentions were not vicious or evil, but routine; they did not wish to humiliate or subdue, but to teach proper ways.

What this means is that, in a sense, there were no victims or oppressors in Soviet-occupied Poland. The distinction made little sense -- everybody was a victim, potential, past, or present.

(2) The second closely related point is that Sovietization is never a process imposed on a society from the outside. Indeed, a society has to (and does) subdue itself into the new pattern of collective life. The ability to devise strategies which implicated society into self-enslavement made Communist revolutions irresistible in the past. One is struck, in the first place, by almost complete irrelevance of "ideological" considerations in the choice of allies by the incoming Soviet administration. Where ethnic rather than social cleavages predominate they were ready to exploit ethnic antagonisms and draw collaborators from one nationality in order to terrorize another. Finally, and most importantly, personal

animosities were exploited. As mentioned previously, the Soviet local administration was encouraged to act in pursuit of its personal interests while discharging its functions as representatives of Soviet authority. Throughout the occupied territory, the newly introduced Soviet authority was vested in a network of families that held executive power -- power of life and death -- over communities in their jurisdiction. The state, as it were, had been franchised to these individuals. They were given the monopoly of legitimate use of coercion in this territory. They could redistribute the burdens in the community so as to punish personal enemies and benefit friends.

In addition, the rank-and-file members of society had a relationship to the state similar to that of the state's functionaries employed in the coercive apparatus, i.e., that they could, and did, use the state freely for the settlement of private disputes.

The principal mechanism which allowed for the penetration of the state into the private domain has been the denunciatory practice. An act of effective denunciation (i.e., one that is followed by reprisals against the denounced) could be seen, paradoxically, both as a service rendered to the state (providing the state with sought-after information) and as a service rendered by the state (providing an individual citizen with a prompt settlement in his favor of some private dispute). Since private enmity has been the primary motivation for bringing denunciations to the authorities, the focus ought to be on the latter aspect of the "service." We could then understand better that the all-pervasiveness and awesome power

of totalitarianism come not as a consequence of its being well-informed and efficient (as it is both dismally ill-informed and mismanaged), but, rather, the real power of a totalitarian state results from its being at the disposal -- available for hire at a moment's notice -- to every inhabitant. The absence of the so-called rule of law in a totalitarian regime finds expression also in the fact that every citizen has direct access, unmediated by lengthy and complicated procedures, to the coercive apparatus of the state. Everybody can use the political police against everybody else -- quickly and without delays or undue formalities. The ubiquity of terror as well as the terror's random quality, has its roots in the privatization of the state which I have here described.

Consequently, strange as it may seem, in Stalinist Russia the decision of who would actually go to jail was largely left to the discretion of ordinary Soviet citizens. And since anybody could cause anybody else's arrest, the Soviet terror acquired the awesome random quality that rendered it so effective -- there were as many "reasons" for being sent to jail as there were different motivations inspiring individual denunciations. The famous uravnilovka, or equalization, of Soviet citizens was real despite the built-in stratification of the Soviet society in which access to goods depended upon one's position in the bureaucratic hierarchy. Each individual shared the power to bring down and destroy another. This ability to get anybody arrested was the great equalizer of Soviet citizens. It was a weird power -- power to destroy but not to protect.

Nobody was able to provide for the security of his own person, while anybody was able to ruin anyone else's life; hence, social atomization under totalitarianism. In the end, social atomization is less the outlawing of voluntary associations than the mutual fear and distrust induced in people's minds by a society that offers them the means to cause harm to their neighbors, while leaving them defenseless against similar treatment by others.

PART TWO: IN SOVIET PRISONS

I

Among many items that were brought from the USSR into the western Ukraine and Belorussia in September 1939, one of the most appreciated was a maxim. "In the Soviet Union," it went, "there are only three categories of people -- those who were in prison, those who are in prison, and those who will be in prison" (Vincenz, 1961:125). Dropped by some wit as a clever joke, it caught the fancy of the Soviet people and was carried by the conquering army into the new periphery of the empire as a bylaw of the Stalin Constitution. While little was retained from repeated group readings of "the most democratic Constitution in the whole world" (Czerwony Sztandar, 14.X.1939), this one sentence summary of Soviet citizens' fatal destiny was well remembered. Indeed, as inhabitants of the newly incorporated territories soon discovered, one had no choice but to conclude that this rather peculiar rite de passage lay in store for Soviet citizens. One needn't even be taught this principle by the invaders, the evidence from day-to-day life was unequivocal: "Many people were arrested soon after the Red Army came. We thought so many times that this will be it, but it was only the beginning" (HI,PGC, 7557). Waves of arrests intensified at various times, and campaigns to imprison certain categories of people were launched periodically. But throughout these meanders, a constant flow of indiscriminate arrests continued and it instilled fear in the minds of everybody, but the most outspoken enthusiasts of

the new order. "I knew I couldn't avoid it forever because I am not worse than anybody else, I also felt like a Pole, and so I had to be arrested sooner or later" (HI, PGC, 7718).

Anticipation of impending personal disaster brought psychological tension that many could not bear. Thus, when the arrest finally came, they report experiencing relief as if the threat, by being carried out, had been removed. One could call this good conditioning. A well-adjusted personality in such conditions was that of an individual who welcomed anticipated imprisonment. Only then could one get rid of fear of arrest and acquire some peace of mind, for example, for no longer being responsible to provide the material well-being and security of one's family -- an obligation one generally could not meet while outside of prison and felt guilty about (HI, AC 5908). Fatalistic anticipation of what seemed unavoidable -- as taught by the maxim freshly brought from the Soviet Union -- was widespread, and, ironically, one could be delivered from the mental and emotional anguish which it induced only by a gratuitous act of the very same state which had instilled it in the first place.

Arrest

Denunciations were practiced throughout the period of Soviet rule on an ever widening scale. The NKVD was recruiting confidential collaborators in all social milieus without, necessarily, making sure to tap only the regime's supporters.

Families of the arrested, susceptible to blackmail, were approached quite often. A number of arrested officers' wives testified that they had been called to assist the NKVD. Many were simply offered monetary incentives. Some jobs, such as that of house superintendents, for example, couldn't be had unless the incumbent cooperated with the police (HI, PGC, 3443, 3888, 7101, 9794). The whole system, spontaneous at the beginning and directly exploiting personal animosities, became institutionalized in time and turned into an almost dull routine. Whoever felt like it would simply send a denunciation by mail. Some such letters, in Lwow at least, were plucked out by postal employees working for the Polish underground (SPP, BI, 165-1(5)). But, of course, the new authorities would not accept a merely auxiliary role in the matter of arrests. And though the society in the newly incorporated territories was gripped by terror as a result, mostly, of its unexpectedly zealous self-policing [1], the NKVD had its own priorities and procedures which were distinct from, though comfortably blended with, "initiatives" of the local people.

Initially, the elite in all walks of life was removed, skimmed off the top of society, as it were [2]. Then, the intensity of arrests fluctuated according to a wave-like pattern: a sudden increase was followed by a temporary lull and then another peak, which subsided after a while. One would be hard put to explain this rhythm primarily by the induced spontaneity of denunciations. These, if one were to speculate about the shape of a "denunciations-curve," should multiply early, when

the opportunity to settle scores was freshly offered, personal enemies were still at large and the feelings of revenge were burning hot. Unfortunately, the number of arrests did not decline steadily over time. Also, like a lighthouse beam, they swept from one social group to another, taking people away sequentially, in orderly procession -- an outcome equally difficult to explain if spontaneous denunciations had been the exclusive cause of imprisonment. Arrests, then, came in waves and affected a different social category each time. One's destiny in these circumstances depended less on one's behavior than on being classified as a member of the targeted social group.

Mass arrests by social category typically resulted in immediate deportation. Their timing depended on the availability of material resources, primarily a means of transportation, to carry out the assignment. It took about two months to complete the round trip from the newly incorporated territories to places of forced settlement all over the USSR and back. In mid-February, mid-April, and late June of 1940 long freight trains took eastward hundreds of thousands of Polish citizens. Then, there was a one year respite -- it took so long to digest the Baltic states that were swallowed in the summer of 1940 -- and deportations resumed in June of 1941 to be stopped only by the outbreak of the Russo-German war. To the four deportations one should add mass arrests following immediately after the Red Army entered the western Ukraine and Belorussia; those following the October 22, 1939 "plebiscite;" as well as

imprisonment in mid-December 1939 of large numbers of officers and reserve officers in the Polish Army who had previously registered with the Soviet authorities [3]. During the 21 months of Soviet rule, then, mass arrests swept over the territory seven times, each time affecting from a few thousand to about 100,000 people. Together with POW's, and those arrested in the intervals, about 1.25 million Polish citizens (from the population of, roughly, 14 million [4]) found themselves residing in the summer of 1941 all over the Soviet Union -- in labor camps, prisons, and in forced settlement.

Methods of police work and procedures of arrest varied greatly and kept the population in suspense: detention could come at any moment, under most unexpected circumstances. Screeching brakes of a car coming to a halt, after dark, in a deserted street, became the symbol of an impending arrest, both under Hitler's and under Stalin's regimes. Indeed, night visits of the police as well as night interrogations were a routine occurrence. It is certain, however, that arrests were taking place during the day as well, and that the NKVD was working round the clock [5]. In the hubbub of routine, daily life, the secret police was perhaps less conspicuous, but it was nevertheless busy meeting its quotas, like everybody else.

Thus, there were two systems of mass arrests -- by broad social category, and by what I call induced spontaneity. The latter was broadly institutionalized through a wide network of secret freelance collaborators (so-called "seksots") who practiced denunciations as a sideline. The two systems, how-

ever, were not incompatible. Indeed, a rare exception in this centrally planned and administered society, they allowed for a comfortable blending between general policy guidelines emanating from the top of the leadership and grass root initiative.

Broad social categories and numerical quotas for arrest were sent down the administrative hierarchy, while the choice of concrete persons who were actually imprisoned was left to the local enforcers and their friends. Even when a category for deportation or arrest was specified narrowly by occupation, i.e., foresters, or by social class, i.e., landowners (rather than vaguely, such as "kulak," or "well-to-do peasant," or "bourgeois") anybody could be exempted by the locals. Indeed, there was a quasi-institutionalized procedure which could be resorted to for this purpose. Simply, some local people in good standing with the regime -- local sympathizers, or collaborators, or those who were as poor, or poorer, than anybody else around -- could certify that such and such a person did no harm to anybody in the past and was no exploiter. Very often such a voucher was as good as a "not guilty" sentence of a court of law. This procedure, however, was used exclusively, as far as I could ascertain, in agricultural settings, in villages and relatively small communities, and was not without risks for the sponsors themselves. Once a prisoner fell under the jurisdiction of higher level NKVD offices, however, few dared to intervene on his behalf, and even fewer were successful if they did. Much of Wanda Wasilewska's stature (she was the "grande dame" of the

regime even though she had no executive office in the incorporated territories, other than the ceremonial post of Supreme Soviet representative) derived precisely from her ability, unmatched by anybody else, to get people out of jail in Lwow or from forced settlement or labor camps in the USSR. She put her personal connection with Stalin to good use many times and people remembered this (Interview with M. Borwicz, also Wasilewska).

But the point is that effective release, or exemption from arrest, by petition of some loosely defined group of local citizens who felt entitled to file, was, once again, institutionalized arbitrariness. It was, simply, "reverse denunciation." The same people's word was just as good to send anybody to jail as it was to pluck somebody out of it.

One has to count street round-ups -- however less frequent than under the German occupation -- and selective, individual arrests in the street among spontaneous, random arrests, i.e., arrests that struck their victims unexpectedly and were not pre-planned by the security police. These methods were, by and large, employed in an urban setting, progressively robbing it of its relatively safe anonymity until, under the Soviet regime, there was no safety even in a crowded street [6]. One's pace, or facial expression, or an article of clothing, could catch a prowling militiaman's eye. "Every passerby who was better dressed -- and all of us Poles like to dress up," wrote a housewife from Baranowicze, exaggerating somewhat, "was taken in for interrogation" (HI, Poland. Ambasada USSR. Box 46,

Grabiec; also PGC, 8770, 8948). In Rowne, "the local militia pointed out people in the street and the NKVD arrested them on the spot" (HI, PGC, 3852). In the rural setting one could be arrested in equally accidental circumstances. A peasant accompanied by his son was on the way to a mill in Skalat county. "Two militiamen were coming from the opposite direction. Stop. Come with us. They put Father on their cart and took him away; I was allowed to go home. Where they took Father I don't know until today" (Skalat, 36). Not everybody accosted in the street by the militia was immediately arrested but one could never tell what was intended. "On October 21, I was walking down Zyblikiewicz street [in Lwow] with Mrs. Wanda Stamirowska. We were talking about some family matters. Suddenly two men separated us brutally and proceeded to question us about the subject of our conversation. Since our answers were identical, we were released. But I know of people who were arrested in this manner" (HI, PGC, 3469; also PG, 4100; from Stanislawow, PGC, 2704).

But the NKVD could also act with precision. It could pinpoint individuals it was interested in and track them down quite efficiently. It could get after its real opponents: the Polish military underground organization, the ZWZ, which thrived under the German occupation in spite of persistent Gestapo efforts to destroy it, but never was given a chance by the NKVD. Indeed, from the spring of 1940 a Polish officer turned NKVD informer was in charge of the ZWZ in the Soviet-occupied territories. The NKVD was equally persistent in

settling long overdue scores that may seem rather petty: a man in Buczaca was arrested and sentenced for having given testimony in a 1934 trial of some Communists who distributed leaflets around town (HI, AC 994). Not that this individual presented some extraordinary threat to the new regime, but the point was made that the NKVD was exceedingly well-acquainted with biographies of residents of the newly incorporated territories. And not surprisingly so -- the majority of archives, files and official documents of political organizations, voluntary associations of all sorts as well as of the local government fell into the hands of the Soviets and they immediately set out to establish personal records of every inhabitant of the territory (HI, PGC, 2181). Numerous registrations that had been ordered immediately following the Red Army's entry into the area, as well as captured documents, provided the necessary information. Time and again, people were confronted during interrogations with specific questions about their lives stretching back for two decades -- to the 1920 Polish-Bolshevik war. Scores were sentenced for simply living their lives as active citizens of an independent, sovereign country in the 1920's and 30's.

The Soviet security apparatus adopted two complementary strategies in its police work: it acted as a vacuum cleaner, deporting broad categories of people without inquiry into details of individual biographies and, simultaneously, monitored carefully and removed selectively individuals that it identified as enemies of the regime. The NKVD was a competent

professional organization. It had manpower to do good routine police work. Many deportees and former labor camp inmates tell of virtually identical circumstances under which they were arrested. Forewarned that they may be arrested, they fled, and hid, sometimes for months, far from their homes. Then, just for one night or a few hours, they came back home to bid farewell before they set across the frontier, or to pick up something they needed -- winter clothing, for example -- or to rest if they fell ill. In a matter of hours, the police would come to arrest them.

The Soviet security police was also, one must admit, quite cunning. Provocation was among its most successful labor-saving devices that yielded a particularly good crop of prisoners. Arrests resulting from provocation were very economical: victims would appear at a pre-arranged place and time and the NKVD had simply to wait there. But since it was the police which, unbeknownst to the victims, had organized everything, it could suit itself to fit its own schedule and resources. Thus, in April of 1940, a group of students from the Lwow Polytechnic (Engineering School) got in touch with an organization which was supposed to take them across the frontier to Hungary. On the first leg of the trip they were to travel by car from the town of Stanislawaw. It was strictly a business transaction. They met with their guide who collected the agreed sum of 300 rubles from each and instructed them to go in twos to the corner of the Kopernik street. And so they went, a pair every five minutes. Indeed, a car was waiting where they

thought it would be, but with NKVD men inside. Conveniently, two by two, they were driven to prison (IS, Polish Air Force Collection, Box 4, Ostrowski). All along the border the NKVD sponsored individual guides who offered to take people across the frontier.

When the German Repatriation Commission arrived in the western Ukraine in the spring of 1940, tens of thousands of recent refugees, mostly Jews, queued for days to put their names on lists of volunteers to return home (i.e., to leave from under the Soviet occupation). The NKVD did not interfere with this spontaneous inventory of the disillusioned, indeed facilitated it in many ways, only to use lists compiled in the process for sweeping arrests which provided the bulk of victims for the June 1940 deportation.

The method of provocation, as we can see, facilitated the work of the security apparatus. Not only were the circumstances of arrest conveniently pre-arranged, but also those caught "deserved" more to be arrested than an average person living in the area. Whoever fell in the trap of provocation had to show, usually, more initiative and had to be less resigned to their fate as subjects of the Soviet authority than the rest of the population. To be caught they had to do something. They were, then, conveniently from the NKVD's point of view, a self-selected group of potential "anti-regime" activists.

Finally, to give a complete picture of circumstances of arrest under the new regime, one ought to note that the NKVD

was merely one of many institutions which together comprised the Soviet state. Sometimes these institutions were working at cross purposes, but in the end they were all part of a grand design, or rather improvisation, to envelop each individual citizen in a web responsive to the will of those who at any given time embodied the state's interests. Not surprisingly, various institutions eagerly cooperated with the NKVD in making arrests. One could be called for a business conference to the supervisor's office, or be invited by an obliging superior for an inspection tour of the workplace and end up delivered to a waiting squad of NKVD men. Virtually the entire managerial-supervisory staff of the Polish State Railroad in Wilno was arrested this way, just before the Soviets handed the town over to Lithuania in October of 1939 (HI, AC, 6200; see also Czortkow, AC, 3682). On rare occasions the NKVD reciprocated and adjusted its schedule to fit the needs of some other Soviet institution where its prospective victim was currently badly needed. Thus in Zydaczow (Stanislawow voivodeship), the county agronomist was busily putting together statistics of the recent autumn crops and figuring out how much could be apportioned for various uses. "Around December 10, 1939 two NKVD functionaries visited the office where I was working and spoke at length to the man in charge of my department. Then, while they were still present, my supervisor Semionov, asked me when will I be able to finish the current assignment and suggested that I be ready in three days, as he needs the computations for a conference in Stanislawow. I completed my assignment in the

allotted time and on the fourth day, shortly after I came to the office, the said NKVD men also arrived and arrested me" (HI, Poland. Ambasada USSR. Box 51, Pirozynski). Under the new regime, then, anybody, at anytime, in anyplace, and for any reason was vulnerable to arrest.

Detention

Even the best adjusted, those who indeed welcomed imprisonment unable to withstand the eerie and frightening atmosphere of life outside the prison walls, were stunned when it finally came. No matter how routine the circumstances of arrest and how dull the formalities of admission (and neither was so in the majority of cases), the entry into a prison cell introduced one into a realm of new sensory experiences. Prison was like a new environment where one could draw life-supporting resources provided that one's organism adapted by modifying considerably. The entire experience can be encapsulated in one brief sentence: "The crowd was so thick that when they closed the cell doors behind me, I could not move an inch" (HI, AC, 661). Inmates lived in such conditions for months and the jail in Stanislawow was not unique in this respect. Prisons all over the occupied territory were similarly overcrowded even though many additional buildings, which served altogether different functions until September of 1939, were taken over by the Soviet authorities and outfitted as detention centers. The prison housing conditions were perhaps the best indicator of the scale of arrests that swept through the area: "A temporar-

ily empty prison filled first with the Poles, then with the Ruthenians. But it proved too small, so new construction was undertaken to add to it even though into each cell they put four times as many people as the cells were designed for" (HI, AC, 9810).

Both observations were valid generally, not just for the village of Stolin where they were made by a high school student. Additional prison space was requisitioned at break-neck speed without, in most instances, proper modification of the property, or administrative arrangements to provide for the upkeep of jails. In Szczuczyn, for example, where there was no prison before the war, Soviet authorities installed as many as four: in the Piaris cloister, in an elementary school in the center of town, in the courthouse, as well as in the basement of a nearby police station in Zoludek (Szczuczynski, 35). Apparently, even barely adequate toilet facilities couldn't be promptly improvised in the cloister and the entire prison population, in shifts, was paraded daily outside, to relieve themselves in the adjacent meadow. Crowds of relatives were on constant vigil there, undeterred by hostile guards, to see their dear ones even though the circumstances were rather embarrassing (HI, AC, 6941). On the other hand, in Zoludek, inmates were not fed. Relatives and friends supplied food for the prisoners as well as their jailers (HI, AC, 96). Nor was this a unique, extraordinary aberration. In the Przemyslany jail people were, similarly, left to the care, or mercy, of the neighboring population which was never told, however, how many

were on the premises and, consequently, for days they had nothing to eat (HI, AC, 3686). The same in Szumsk, in the Wilno-troki county. There, also, the NKVD kept its prisoners in a pigsty on empty stomachs, dependent on the good will of their neighbors (HI, AC, 1397).

I am not yet describing the diet, or lack thereof, in Soviet jails, but merely pointing out some of the problems accompanying a quick and improvised proliferation of penitentiary facilities. Armed men can roundup and detain almost limitless swarms of civilians. But to keep them under lock requires a logistical support system to supply their bodily needs. True, some of these needs may be curtailed drastically, others eliminated altogether. In Molodeczno, where improvised jails were set up in warehouses of a wholesale salt business and of the "Farmer" cooperative, prisoners were never allowed to take baths or to wash their clothes (HI, AC, 110, 1325, 4772). But biology imposes limits on what can be accomplished through coercion. Though thresholds of individual resistance to deprivation differ from one person to another and are, generally, difficult to gauge, the Soviet prison system functioned at the limits of man's biological endurance, as witnessed by many who died in jails, not from a bullet but from neglect.

As a rule, conditions in makeshift jails were worse than in regular prisons, and such improvised jails could be found all over the occupied territory. Through the summer of 1940, along the entire border -- with Rumania, Hungary, Lithuania and Latvia -- there were dozens of jails, near out-

posts of NKVD frontier-guard detachments. They were christened "pigsties" by the population, who undoubtedly thought about them frequently as they contemplated plans to escape abroad. Millions, I suspect, were thinking about fleeing from under the Soviet occupation, hundreds of thousand must have tried it, and tens of thousands were caught in the act. As a consequence, everybody -- men, women and children together -- were herded into some tumbledown farm building whose only qualification as a place of detention was that it could be securely locked. Indeed, after the first two or three months when the movement across the frontier was rather loosely monitored, those who were getting into the Soviet-occupied zone, whether only fleeing from the Germans, like the Jews, or actually coming to enjoy the benefits of the Soviet rule (some Communist sympathizers and a pathetic crowd of dumbfounded Carpatho-Ruthenian peasants who came by thousands with entire families, mostly from Rumania, heeding the call of Soviet propaganda about national liberation and impending land distribution for the poor) (HI, AC, 6144, 6220, 6847) also ended up in frontier jails and, like everybody else, lingered there sometimes for weeks.

But improvised jails, as I already stated, were established all over the occupied territory and not exclusively in the borderlands where one could, perhaps, justify their proliferation by a massive illegal traffic across the frontier. Once the geographical location was no longer the predominant criterion for selecting some building to serve as an improvised jail

(as it was, of course, in the border region), the new authorities could make more judicious choices. As a result, a number of cloisters, for obvious architectural reasons, were adapted into prisons, as were schools. In larger towns, office buildings were frequently taken over. Basements of government buildings in gmina seats were frequently used for detention of prisoners. And there were a few more exotic settings: the railroad NKVD set up shop in Zdolbunow or Bialystok, for example, in detached railroad cars (HI, AC 3532, 2405), while in Augustow, a Turkish bakery served as a detention center.

Any enumeration, as incomplete as our data is in general, (for we have not heard from inhabitants of a great majority of villages and hamlets of western Ukraine and Belorussia where such improvised jails must have existed) points to an astounding increase in the volume of arrests and incarcerations under the Soviet rule. This proliferation of jails came as inmates could no longer be accommodated in the originally available prison space. Their existence puts in relief the meaning of the quote which I have introduced earlier -- literally, nobody else could be fitted into the cell at the Stanislawow prison where our witness was squeezed in. No wonder; it was, after all, a disciplinary cell, designed to accommodate, under the Polish administration, one prisoner in solitary confinement. At the time of the episode here described, when Stanislawow was already under the Soviet rule, 26 people were kept in it (HI, AC, 661).

Let us assume here that we can rely on numerical estimates concerning prison conditions provided by former inmates. Counting of all sorts of things is, after all, a favorite past-time in jail. And there was little else for the prisoners to do except to ponder the fate that befell Poland in September of 1939. Who else was arrested and deported, or tortured, and how many? Measuring the cell or the food ration, counting co-prisoners, getting information about inmates from other cells whenever anybody was transferred, comparing present conditions to what they were under the Polish administration assisted by former inmates and also by Polish prison officials who were now incarcerated -- all of this, and more, was pursued obsessively by the prisoners in order to get a hold on their present condition, if only intellectually, by way of numbers. Thus they hoped to achieve, perhaps, a semblance of intelligibility in what otherwise, in the experience of one former prisoner, induced in their minds a profound sense of unreality: "While in jail, I frequently asked myself whether my entire life was not merely a dream, whereas in reality we dwell in the Middle Ages which had only modernized techniques of torture" (HI, PGC, 3921). There must have been something compelling about this metaphor as a strikingly similar image was evoked over 20 years later in the reminiscences of Aleksander Wat: "In this prison [Zamarstynow prison in Lwow] we always had a feeling of a return to the Middle Ages: the way we were treated, the prison itself. This is how medieval prisons, mental asylums, or leprosoria must have looked" (Wat, 1977, I:341).

What were the numbers then, illustrating the density and volume of the prison population in the Soviet-occupied half of Poland? In spite of all the available details, we can only approximately reconstruct global statistics concerning the number of prisoners, and their density, in this period. An estimate compiled in the research unit (Biuro Dokumentow) of the Polish Army in the East strikes me as somewhat overly cautious (indeed, the compilers warn the reader that they would rather underestimate than inflate their numbers) [7]. But let us say, as they do, that prisons were filled to about five times the original capacity during the Soviet administration. Given that there were about 25,000 prisoners in the area before the war we obtain, for the total, roughly 125,000 as the number of inmates housed in pre-war Polish jails. But, as we have said, many new prisons were established by the Soviet authorities -- the Biuro Dokumentow puts their number at 73 in addition to 104 original Polish prisons. About one-fifth of the regular prison inmate population was housed in these makeshift detention centers. Altogether, then, we arrive at 150,000 as the total number of prisoners held in confinement, at any one time, in this area. If we were, in addition, to consider seven months as the average period of detention prior to being dispatched eastward into a labor camp or some prison in the Soviet interior -- Biuro Dokumentow estimates the average period of detention at six to eight months (HI, AC, AWBD, doc.no. 62c, table 26-c) -- we reach the approximate number of half a million for the total of imprisonments in western Ukraine and Belorussia during the 21

month-long Soviet rule there in 1939-1941. It is a staggering number for a population of somewhere between 13.5 and 14 million (including refugees from western and central Poland). Since men constituted over 90% of the arrested (HI, AC, AWBD, doc.no. 62c, table 27), the numbers we have arrived at reveal that about 10% of adult males in this territory were imprisoned.

Usually, upon arrival in prison, people were meticulously strip-searched (often getting their clothing ruined in the process (HI, AC, 96; Dark Side of the Moon, 80), and after filling forms and depositing whatever was not allowed in the cell for safekeeping, they were finally locked up. The first eye contact with other prisoners produced a reaction of shock and disbelief: "I saw a horrifying scene -- a crowd of dirty, unshaven, hungry, and emaciated people in rags. I wondered whether I entered a bandits' den, or a den of wild animals" (HI, AC, 550). This impression from cell no. 56 in the Bialystok prison, registered on May 12, 1940, was not at all different from a December 1939 entry of an altogether different person into cell no. 12 in the Nowa Wilejka prison: "My hair stood on end when I entered the cell and I could not overcome the impression this made on me for quite a while. There were 43 people in this cell (I was 44th), old and young, but all pale, emaciated, and unshaven with long beards" (the president of the Wilno University, as well as some lawyers and doctors were among them), and but for a loincloth they wore no garment (HI, AC, 549). Especially with the advent of warmer weather, prisoners undressed in their cells, which made the misery of

prison life even more striking and immediately visible to the newcomers (HI, AC, 2375, 4772). "I was frightened by prisoners' faces and their looks," wrote Aleksander Wat. "I thought these were bandits who were here for years" -- but as it was January 1940, nobody from this motley crowd of students, officers, civil servants, lawyers, and merchants was in the Zamarstynow jail in Lwow longer than three months. "During the first few days of incarceration I couldn't tell the difference between 40 year old and 70 year old men" (Wat, 1977, I:324).

Wat's last remark is very much to the point. In Soviet prisons people were subject to an accelerated process of aging, similar to that which affects a terminally ill patient. Deprived of adequate food intake and oxygen, exposed to extreme temperatures (In the Postawy prison inmates' hair froze to cell walls at night and it had to be cut off in the morning with a piece of glass (HI, AC, 2510)), prolonged mental stress and anxiety, as well as infectious diseases (through deplorable hygienic conditions and lack of medical care), people suffered as if they were seriously ill -- their organisms were exhausted and vulnerable. Indeed, most of the people were actually sick. As many as half of the inmates, according to some estimates, required immediate medical attention (HI, AC, 2402, 2375, Dark Side of the Moon, 83, 87).

Conditions of detention were appalling. It gets very hot and stuffy in an overcrowded cell, especially when prisoners are not allowed to operate the windows, which are usually closed or boarded up, or both. In Oszmiana prison they used to

scream, "Air!" in unison on especially hot days, but all the warden kept saying response was that he is going to send them tanks (HI, AC, 548). Perhaps he got replaced, or mellowed, for at some point eau de Cologne was sprayed in the cells, of course only compounding but not relieving the stench (HI, AC, 538). Lungs, starved for oxygen and already accustomed to extract it from a very special mixture of gases, couldn't breathe normal air after a while and many prisoners fainted when taken to the courtyard for an infrequent walk (HI, AC 2375, Dark Side of the Moon, 78). People smell when they don't wash. When they don't eat proper food and when they are sick, they have foul breath and they break wind. They also used to smoke cigarettes and, most importantly, to relieve themselves in the cell into a slop bucket that was never properly covered and was overflowing anyway, for it could be emptied only once or twice a day [8]. The warden of Kowel prison teased his prisoners -- such a cultured people, he used to say, and you stink so badly (HI, AC, 2402). But there was never even enough drinking water at hand -- daily ration in Kowel prison was two buckets for 86 people (HI, AC, 2402), and there was virtually none to spare for washing or laundry. Periodically, prisoners were given a bath and had their clothes disinfected. Frequencies of these memorable events differed from about once a week to never. Together with daily trips to the lavatory they were an important break in the oppressive routine of confinement, an occasion to recover a sense of the surrounding space, for a walk, maybe to catch a glimpse of the outside world through an un-

boarded window and to take care, even though in rather rudimentary fashion, of one's hygienic and physiological needs.

Baths were given at different intervals. In Przemysl there simply weren't any (HI, AC, 1255). From June 1940 through January 1941, inmates of the Bialystok prison were only once allowed to have a bath (HI, AC, 1135). In the Lwow Zamarstynow prison (where, we are told, hygienic conditions were far superior to those prevailing in the other Lwow prison, at Brygidki's (HI, AC, 7759)) baths were given at roughly six week intervals in 1940 (Wat, 1977, I:329), similarly in Kowel (HI, AC, 2402).

Given the erratic frequency and, in any case, rare application of these rather elementary hygienic measures, it should come as no surprise that prisons were infested with lice. Lice were a great discomfort to the prisoners bothering them constantly, bleeding them -- especially whenever typhoid epidemics broke out -- literally to death. Lice-induced misfortunes were hardly redeemed by little entertainment they provided to brighten the dull routine of prison life. Inmates used to kill them with improving skill and compare daily harvests and, in Molodeczno prison, they even raced them along a prison bunk, each inmate poking his favorite with a match. Whoever managed to steer his lice first across the finish line got a cigarette from all the other entrants in the race (HI, AC, 4772).

But as people grew tired of dirt, and lice, and stench, they called for more frequent baths, just as they kept asking

to have windows open or slop buckets taken out of their cells. In most cases their calls went unheeded. Sometimes they produced mixed results. When an NKVD inspection commission visited the Tarnopol prison in November 1940, complaints were voiced about lice infestation due to infrequent baths, So, during the night of November 29/30, in bitter cold, prisoners were ordered to undress, were taken out into the corridor and into the courtyard and they were then very slowly processed through the prison bathhouse. They froze stiff that night. Never again were any demands made for more baths (HI, AC, 9476).

Only, it seems, after typhoid epidemics broke out and the authorities, motivated by self-interest, felt urged to contain them, hygienic conditions in prison seemed to improve (HI, AC, 1311).

When they finally got there, prisoners discovered that bath facilities were not adequate for their needs. Inmates were rarely issued any soap, for example, and when they were, it was not enough to wash off layers of dirt covering their bodies. Then, as a rule, the bath was far too small, Entire cells were routinely ushered into the shower room together. But the old facilities had not been expanded to keep up with the exploding prison population. As a result, there could be a dozen, or possibly even more, prisoners per shower. One can easily figure out the outcome of ablutions in these circumstances, given that guards were rushing everybody through as

fast as possible and that not even water was generously supplied.

When they were given their bath, prisoners' clothes were usually taken for delousing. Soviets were very proud of their delousing facilities; they kept mocking the Poles after they found out that there weren't any in Polish cities before the war. Somehow delousing stations symbolized a higher level of civilization for them, marking the difference, perhaps, between the amenities of urban life and the backwardness of the village. Anyway, irrespective of the reputation delousing stations acquired in the Soviet Union, they didn't seem to work inside prisons of the western Ukraine and Belorussia. Perhaps, once again, explanation lies in the overcrowding of prisons. The volume of clothes to fumigate was too bulky. As a remedy, temperature was set higher during delousing, which only ruined articles of clothing adjacent to the walls of delousing rooms and had little impact on the rest. Prisoners' clothes were then taken out and thrown together on a big pile, most of it barely lukewarm and wet, whereupon a naked crowd, often shivering in cold weather, rushed to retrieve each his own (HI, AC, 2402, 1545; Wat, 1977, I:330). It was altogether very unpleasant, with guards barking orders to move out quickly, everybody angrily eyeing everybody else, pushing and shoving, and always losing something in the process. But worst of all, lice were as vigorous as ever. Wat surmised that incompetent delousing only aroused them sexually. In any case, they were biting furiously and the fact that the purpose of the entire procedure

was defeated made no impression on the prison administration, which continued to operate in the same manner.

The other venture beyond cell walls in quest for personal hygiene -- a daily walk or two to the lavatory -- was also marred by the lack of proper facilities to accommodate the bulging prison population. Sometimes this worked to the prisoners' advantage, as in the cloister in Szczuczyn, for instance, where they had to be walked outside and saw their families and friends in the process. But most often inmates suffered discomfort and humiliations as a result. Lavatories were not big enough. As a result many relieved themselves where they stood, directly on the floor. The lavatory was disinfected with lime, which slaked, emitting dense vapor which hurt everybody's eyes -- "then the guards laughed, and kept us longer in the lavatory" (HI, AC, 6168, see also *Dark Side of the Moon*, 93). In Wilejka there were three toilets in the lavatory and 22 prisoners in each shift given five to eight minutes to do their business (HI, AC, 549). Such trips were organized twice daily in most jails. In Bialystok prisoners went to the lavatory three times a day. In Orsza they went more frequently still, and when there was no warden in the vicinity, they were sometimes escorted there individually -- an unheard of procedure, as far as I could ascertain, in any other jail under the Soviet administration (HI, AC, 1610).

Behind these numbers hides a world of human misery: stinking slop-buckets in prison cells, inmates anxiously awaiting daily trips to the lavatory and often, unable to hold

it in, relieving themselves in the cell, thus drawing anger from other prisoners who were still making an effort. Every person's body became a burden and a shameful stigma to its bearer -- dirty, sore from tortues and lice, bursting with excrement, and hungry. When night fell, they couldn't get any rest, not only because of interrogation sessions but foremost because there was not enough space for everybody to stretch out. Working out sleeping arrangements required coordinated effort of all cell inmates. At a minimum, everybody's consent had to be secured for the adopted solution since even a single dissatisfied individual could prevent others from enjoying their share of the scarce commodity. Rudimentary social organization of the cell became apparent in the process of space allocation as it varied between application of sheer coercion, reliance on expertise, and recognition of personal charisma or seniority.

In most prisons inmates simply slept on the floor. Even if there were bunks in prison cells they couldn't accommodate everybody and the floor had to be used anyway by the majority of prisoners. There were more or less desirable spots to lie down for the night. Consequently, in the allocation of space the cell had to work out a procedure for apportionment of the available surface into individual "plots," as well as a system of assignment of these plots. One couldn't simply equalize their "value" by making them identical in size as they were more or less comfortable depending on their location in the cell. Usually the starosta, or "elder," of the cell was entrus-

ted with the task. He was chosen by the prisoners or imposed himself on the cell with the help of a few personal allies [9]. Depending on the source of his authority ("election," or "usurpation"), he might resort for space allocation to either sheer coercion and arbitrariness or, much more frequently, to some unambiguous procedure sufficiently commonsensical, so to speak, to be accepted by a group of prisoners of very different backgrounds and little respect or sympathy for each other. Seniority was one such principle, and in the Oszmiana jail, for example, were there were two rows of bunks to be used a night in addition to floor space, people moved up during winter months, literally and figuratively, in accordance with the length of their stay in the cell, and in the opposite direction with the advent of hot summer weather (HI, AC, 358, 548). In Lwow, 28 people living in an 11.5 sq.m. cell relied on the geometrical skills of a gifted high school student, who placed everybody, fitting them most ingeniously by size, in an intricate pattern (Wat, 1977, I:330).

People were packed very tightly at night lying on their sides in rows. Whenever anybody wanted to turn around, everyone in the row had to follow. Still, conditions could deteriorate even further. In Drohobycz, for example, prison inmates didn't solve the geometrical puzzle that the overcrowding presented and slept in sitting positions (HI, AC, 523). In Bialystok or Wilejka, they slept in shifts, half of the prisoners standing through half of the night (HI, AC, 549, 6283). And there were constant disruptions. Anybody using the

slop bucket or called out for night interrogation had to step over other people's bodies to get wherever he was going. But not many former prisoners complained about sleeplessness. They were all so exhausted that, even denied elementary comforts, they rested at night, or so it seems.

In addition to prisoners' density, the social composition of prison population set off a special dynamic of relationships within each cell. People who never mixed socially and who knew of each other's existence mostly via stereotyped cliches or ritualized encounters which carefully preserved distance were suddenly squeezed together. The oddity of the mixture was due partly to the quasi-feudal structure of the pre-war Polish society. Partly, it resulted also from the rapid pace of Sovietization which telescoped into a year and a half various stages of the process extended into decades in the Soviet Union proper. For example, while the assault on peasantry didn't begin in earnest in the USSR until the late 1920's and early 1930's in the western Ukraine, already in the summer of 1940, "Ukrainian peasants were being arrested en masse" (HI, AC, 1545). And they were brought into prisons long before those taken in the earlier waves of arrest could be moved eastward. Consequently, the local upper class, mostly Polish, civil servants, professionals, political activists irrespective of their ethnic background, swarms of Jewish refugees arrested for economic crimes as they had to eke out a living from the black market, and recalcitrant peasants -- of Ukrainian, Belorussian, and "local" stock -- were all put together in

prisons, with a handsome contingent of regular criminals in addition. Their mutual relationships varied and no simple rule could be invoked to describe them except for one general observation: with the lapse of time the intensity of ethnic and class conflicts subsided. This is a general truth, valid in prison as much as outside of it.

During the early phase of the Soviet occupation, people were motivated, primarily by resentments and injuries acquired during the period of the Polish administration over this territory. The breakdown of ethnic and class domination of the Poles released powerful and hitherto repressed social energies which turned against them. As a railroad engineer imprisoned in Lwow put it: "Poles were the most miserable prison caste, for both the Soviet authorities and prisoners of other nationalities held us blameful, and for this reason they made us suffer a lot" (HI, AC, 6263). Indeed, in the early period when people were still overwhelmed by the unprecedented spectacle of German victory in its Blitzkrieg against Poland, ethnic Poles were at odds with each other, blaming most of all the incapacity of the pre-war Sanacja regime for the national disaster. Only after the collapse of France, inflicted by the Wehrmacht with even greater speed, did the shock of the September 1939 defeat finally subside (HI, AC, 2402). But until that time, political and class antagonisms within the ethnic Polish community undermined whatever solidarity one might expect on account of rather unanimous hostility of other ethnic groups. Thus, in prison Polish "civilians swore at

civil servants; policemen, to make up for their past bureaucratic subordination, swore at county prefects; there were even fist fights between rank-and-file policemen and officers" (HI, AC, 8027). But, by and large, prisoners clustered together in ethnic groups, stratified as they may have been internally. In time the edge of class differentiation blunted and personal attributes became increasingly more important. There was no privacy to withdraw to, or paraphernalia of rank to hide behind. General composure or wisdom of some were easily apparent, and their authority recognized. Just as were special skills -- such as able storytelling, or capacity to lead communal prayers, or organize group entertainment [10] -- which set apart prisoners who possessed them. But it was a very fragile society, in a process of perpetual change, always vulnerable to outside intervention as inmates were moved in and out of the cells. Given prison housing conditions, one individual, coming in or departing from a cell, could change the entire chemistry of social rapports prevailing in it at the time. The numerical size of each ethnic group and, most of all, the number of criminals in the cell decisively affected the quality of mutual relationships. A few criminals could benefit the cell, for they were experienced about prison life and part of a network that extended over the entire prison complex (HI, AC, 1311). In larger quantity, however, they were a menace just as, to an even greater degree, were convicted Red Army soldiers (HI, AC, 523, 2545, 2375, 7759).

Relationships between different ethnic groups slowly improved. In time everybody recognized that they shared a destiny under the Soviet rule which bodes ill to all, irrespective of nationality and Soviet assurances about "national liberation." Though this was by no means a general rule, we have scattered testimonies from all over the occupied territories indicating that mutual relationships between imprisoned Ukrainians, Belorussians, Poles, and Jews, or some combination thereof, were often good (HI, AC, 594, 661, 664, 1314). As one Polish prisoner put it: "The necessity to live together through some very difficult experiences had a positive aspect too, for it allowed a better understanding between different strata of the Polish society and also made possible a certain rapprochement with the Ukrainians and a broad discussion of problems mutually important to both nations" (HI, AC, 8027).

All of the preceding was merely a prelude, however, an introduction. Detention prior to sentencing was, after all, only a means to an altogether different end. Following arrest, people were put in prison to be investigated and not to be punished. Hardly anybody was serving time incarcerated in the newly incorporated territories. The prison population was kept there only in temporary storage, for the convenience of interrogators while the investigation lasted or, after sentencing, until means of transportation became available to take a load of convicts to their destination in the interior of the USSR. A prison cell was, in a sense, a waiting room -- a time and space where one was temporarily left to one's own devices. It

was there, curiously enough, that social interaction thrived spontaneously. Here it was a little easier than on the outside, where people were paralyzed by fear of the ubiquitous presence of the state. Those still free could withdraw, or so they thought, into solitude or a circle of intimates, or move about physically. Either option was exceedingly difficult to exercise in a prison cell. The prisoners were forced to live together, and they did so, sometimes succumbing to sheer brutality inflicted by other inmates, at other times weaving an intricate and delicate web of relationships. In the embryonic society, they formed, many fundamental problems of coexistence were tackled. Natural leadership qualities bestowed authority on some by consensus of their fellow inmates. Scarce resources held in common, such as space or fresh air, were allocated frequently according to principles of equity or merit.

There were learning and sharing of knowledge in the cell, but also games and entertainment. There was functional differentiation and, individuals with special skills applied their abilities to the benefit of the entire community. People worshipped together but also reached for one another in the intimacy of close friendships that flourished in prison as can be deduced from fond reminiscences of many a former prisoner about their fellow inmates.

But, of course, life in prison was hell. Yet, it is a point worth remembering that it was by omission rather than by commission. Lack of proper facilities rather than purposeful action of the new regime was to blame. At most one could

reproach the Soviet authorities for neglecting the needs of its citizens rather than for inflicting hardships on them.

Confined to a prison cell, they were for a moment -- unlike any other in their life under the Soviet regime -- ignored by the authorities. Not for long, alas, only until they were called for interrogation.

Interrogation

The distinction which I want to make, then, is between life in prison cell and interrogation. When the cell door opened at night and the prison guard shouted the fateful words, "na bookvoo..." ([beginning] with the letter...), and those whose names began with the letter came forward, and the one whose last name, first name, and patronymic matched the written order in the guard's hand was identified -- this person was about to cross over into another world. This was well understood by all present at the scene. One was left a few seconds to get ready, enough for the cellmates to bid farewell, perhaps offer some additional garment [11], and prayers, for one was embarking on a long and perilous journey.

Interrogation quite often, literally, implied a journey. Not a very long one, but still memorable. In many towns the secret police had its headquarters in some suitable office building separate from prison and, not infrequently, quite distant from it. People had to be walked, or driven there, to appear before the interrogators. Particularly in small towns this offered an opportunity to see, or be seen, by

family and friends. And as prisoners were never told ahead of time where they were being taken, there was some faint hope, whenever they were ordered out of their cells, that the destination was other than a tete-a-tete with the NKVD. Once out of the cell block in the Wilejka prison, one could be marched straight ahead and then to the right, into the courthouse, where public prosecutors had their offices. A turn to the left meant an altogether different destination, the former residence of the prison warden where the NKVD was conducting interrogations. One could, thus, delude oneself until the order to turn left was barked by the guard on the prison path (HI, AC, 549). Then, what remained, was to brace oneself mentally and prepare as best one could for the encounter with the NKVD.

Indeed, irony and symbolic distance were all that people could insert between themselves and the torturers into whose presence they were about to be ushered. Some feared interrogation quarters were nicknamed by innocuous labels, as if words could tame and somehow transform the unbearable experience by association with a banal or an even pleasing image. A room in Wilno's District Court where NKVD interrogated its prisoners was called "mimosa," while a small building in the compound of the main Lukiszki prison, also in Wilno, where interrogations were conducted, went by the endearing diminutive "little white house") (bialy domek).

In a way Soviet police interrogators had an easy job. The infamous article 58 of the Russian penal code (in the

Ukrainian penal code it bore the number 54), as Solzhenitsyn pointed out in the Gulag Archipelago, encompassed the life of any human being and, accordingly, could be used to charge anybody with crimes allegedly committed against the state. ("Dokazhi chto ty ne verblud"--prove that you are not a camel) was a popular saying that described the status of law and order in the Soviet Union better than most learned dissertations on the subject. But still, there was fact-finding during investigation, if only to fit the appropriate paragraph of the said article. Indeed, I think, there were two purposes for gathering evidence from the prisoners, one clearly stated and another, somewhat intuitive perhaps, but of great importance for the regime's purposes. In its investigative capacity the NKVD was doing either of two things -- tracking down anti-state organizations and, secondly, constantly drawing and updating an associational map of the Soviet society. A randomly arrested individual made to recount his autobiography a number of times, as prisoners were, would necessarily place himself in the context of other people and institutions. And this was all that mattered. The remainder, to a large extent, was nonsense -- a cooked-up accusation, or a beaten-out confession to some crime, deduced according to diamat, (dialectical materialism) from the circumstances of the accused's life. But in the meantime the Soviet state filed another record of a social network. No matter how innocuous, it was still a record of a latent organization. Through millions of such probes an associational map of the Soviet society could be drawn and

rearranged at will to find out the character and strength of ties between any two people in the USSR. The NKVD may have never explored this theoretical possibility, but it strove to attain the capacity to do so out of a good intuition that power in society derives from association. Absolute power, therefore, could be appropriated by the Soviet state only through a monopoly of association, that is, by denying this opportunity to anybody else -- a claim vigorously pursued in the official policy outlawing all but state sponsored organizations.

This striving more than anything else, I believe, embodied the utopian character of Soviet communism. For association and life of men in common are co-terminous. Spontaneous interaction of natural, biologically determined, group bonds cannot be eradicated short of physical annihilation of the parties involved. This is to say that even though any specific, concrete, association can be destroyed, by murder for example, this does not help to abolish kinship loyalties in general or something even more vague, such as "liking." Wanton killings under the Soviet regime which seem so gratuitous and paranoid (much more even than Hitler's who, more "understandably," ordered the murder of "others" rather than his own), or the striking tastelessness with which the official hero of Soviet youth was chosen (a lad who denounced his parents to the police and was in turn killed by surviving relatives) were revealing, if somewhat extreme, consequences of the utopian character of the Communist project. They were demonstrable

proof that the quest for absolute power over society is self-contradictory, for it runs, in the last instance, against nature. To destroy all associations, present and future, one must kill off all potential members, and with them the basis of all power in society, including the absolute power. So, presumably, the project will never be carried to completion. But this, if at all, may serve only as a philosopher's consolation. Staggering numbers of people were killed in the process of accumulation of power by the Soviet state, and it had plenty of it in the end.

Returning to prisons of western Ukraine and Belorussia, one could point out that the mode of interrogation differed slightly depending on whether an extant anti-state, or a "latent," organization was investigated. In the latter case questioning sessions were fewer, shorter, and easier to withstand. People were not always tortured, and it was casual when they were, mostly by beatings and kicking. More systematic and imaginative tortures were applied in cases where suspects were arrested after prior invigilation (or police provocation) which established their membership in some clandestine organization; against those denounced by tortured colleagues; or whose pre-war profession or eminence in the social and political life of Poland were of special interest to their Soviet captors.

There was no way to foretell, however, what might arouse the suspicion of an NKVD interrogator. A photograph in uniform -- any uniform, not necessarily a soldier's or a policeman's -- confiscated during a routine house search, or

finding out that the arrested had once traveled abroad might trigger a long and painful interrogation, for it indicated to the NKVD-man, by analogy with familiar Soviet practices, that one had been an "activist" of the bourgeois state or, worse, a spy sent on a secret mission. Also, arrests made in similar circumstances led to very different interrogations. The so-called "tourists," caught trying to illegally cross the frontier, were sometimes treated leniently and only threatened, but not beaten, during interrogation (HI, AC, 190) while at other times they were accused of espionage and brutally tortured for months.

Whenever the NKVD wanted information that it was relatively confident the prisoner was privy to, it tortured its victims because it found out that this method produced the desired effects. A steadily recurring episode in the reminiscences of those who were in some way connected with clandestine organizations illustrates the point -- inadvertently, during some stage of the interrogation, one would be brought for a face-to-face confrontation with a member of the organization who had been beaten into submission by the NKVD. This was as true of youthful, high-school age, scouting type of conspirators (Wat, 1977, I:345), as of the professional Polish military underground (HI, AC, 7472), or of the experienced Ukrainian conspiratorial organization OUN (Suchasnist, 1981, 9:88). Quite often members of underground organizations were only briefly, if at all, interrogated by the local NKVD and they were transported eastward instead, to Minsk or Kiev, were the proper

investigation was carried out (HI, AC, 1576). The highest ranking officers of the ZWZ were, almost without exception it seems, interviewed by the chief of the NKVD Lavrenti Beria and his deputies. Many, concludes major Bortnowski in a report dated August 13, 1941, fell under Beria's spell and were taken by his personality (UPST, File 3.3.1/5. Obszar Lwow).

"Interrogations began. There were 22 of them, all alike. They began with -- "confess" -- and ended with hitting in the face, kicking, and cursing" (Bialostocki, 27). This is a rather typical reminiscence. Routinely, the NKVD obtained confessions by escalating threats and physical abuse of prisoners. Certain procedures -- up to minute details, phrases, or gestures -- were repeated but their sequence differed. Thus, there was no pre-set scenario as to how the interrogation would unfold: in the case of a man arrested in Dubno, for example (whose participation in a conspiratorial organization they were monitoring for some time prior to his arrest), several initial interrogation sessions consisted of a number of NKVD agents beating him without asking any questions (HI, AC, 594; also AC, 108). In most cases, however, people were first given an opportunity to "confess." Only after they failed to do so would beating commence.

This delay of tortures must have been a traumatic experience. A prisoner, given an hour or, sometimes, even a day or two, to "think it over," lived in a state of mounting fear of the determination of his captors to use physical coercion could not be doubted. If one was in prison for any length of

time prior to the first interrogation (and many spent weeks before being called by the NKVD), one had either seen tortured cellmates returning from their interrogation sessions, or heard screams of prisoners while they were being tortured. Investigative prisons were filled with screams and moans at night (Bialystok, 64) and, given a variety of makeshift provincial police stations or NKVD offices, they could be often heard in the adjoining streets -- in the offices of the railroad NKVD in Molodeczno station the interrogator put on a phonograph record to muffle the screams of prisoners as he beat them (Molodeczno, IV, 3), while in the NKVD prison in Dzisna lieutenant Bobrov tortured prisoners to the accompaniment of accordion music provided by a soldier (HI, AC, 3999). What made their situation especially hopeless was that people were usually called to confess to crimes they didn't commit, or give information they didn't have. Those caught while illegally crossing the frontier were routinely accused of spying and tortured to tell about their nonexistent networks, bosses, or assignments; almost all of the arrested were quizzed about hidden weapons that they knew nothing about; or they were labeled as counterrevolutionaries and asked to give up other members of their organization, which didn't exist. As a forester from Stryj put it: "They didn't know what they wanted, and the prisoners didn't know what they were arrested for..." (Stryjski, 41).

The prisoners were confronted during interrogation with the peculiar reasoning of their custodians, which derived

from Marxist interpretation of historical progress and made no sense to the arrested. Interrogators' argumentation revolved around two especially baffling paragraphs from article 58 of the Russian (RSFSR) penal code: Paragraph four, which defined as counterrevolutionary crime "aid, under any form whatsoever provided to this part of international bourgeoisie which does not recognize the legal equality of communism, which is about to replace the capitalist system," and paragraph 13, which, in turn, defined counterrevolution as "activities against the working class ... under the tsarist government, or any other counterrevolutionary government during the period of the civil war" (Ugolovnyi kodeks RSFSR, 1935:22-27). Article 58 4 (or the corresponding article 54 4 in the Ukrainian penal code) was broadly applied to anybody who participated in the political, administrative, and social life of pre-war Poland. Paragraph number 13 was used mostly against the veterans of the 1920 Polish-Bolshevik war. This resulted in utter confusion and helplessness of the accused. "I was a village head (Soltys) in Skorce for eight years prior to the outbreak of war. And this was the only accusation against me" (HI, AC, 1414). The man got an eight year sentence -- undoubtedly a year of camp for each year of "counterrevolutionary activity." Jozef Dziadul got sentenced because he was "a civil servant in a capitalist state and in this way contributed to the strengthening of a regime hostile to the communist revolution" (HI, AC, 1551). A veteran of the 1920 war found out, when he started to argue with his interrogator, that he should have deserted at the time

to the Bolshevik side (HI, AC, 4411).

Suddenly one's whole biography was stood upside down. Virtually all sacrifice, all distinction, and all achievement throughout the preceding 20 years of life turned overnight into liabilities. Furthermore, to the people's utter dismay, the new standards were enforced retroactively. "This formula of accusation is a legal monstrosity," wrote a lawyer accused precisely of having been a lawyer and a reserve officer in the Polish army and thus "having fostered interests of a bourgeois state." "This runs against fundamental principles of penal and international law which preclude one state to bring accusations against citizens of another state who had merely fulfilled the citizens' duties in their own country" (HI, PGC, 4094). Sure enough, the prisoner made a correct assessment of what had happened to him. It was a legal monstrosity, but one that could not be resolved by legal reasoning. Instead, it was a dialectical contradiction which derived from the very essence of the Communist revolutionary project and could be overcome only within the intellectual framework that went with it: "To my question why do you judge me for having simply fulfilled my duties as a Polish citizen the interrogator told me that the whole world belongs to them, and that everybody will be judged" (HI, AC, 4411). Indeed, this was precisely the answer to the dilemma.

Once revealed, the logic of history voided all other sovereignty claims but that which embodied it. In other words, regardless of the place of residence one should be subject

solely to Soviet authority. Since October 1917, the struggle on earth was between revolution and counterrevolution and one was either with one or with the other. Old notions of international politics did not apply to the Soviet state and its conduct. Thus, the Soviet state, by definition, could not conquer -- it could only liberate; nor could it wage war -- it could only carry further "the banner of the revolution." The justification of its actions was no different in Lwow than it was in Leningrad. Nor would it be different in Paris -- for why should it? Soviet authority was the embodiment of the universal law of history which posited that contradictions of capitalism can and will be resolved only with the advent of Communism. All sorts of legalistic reservations must have seemed rather petty and ridiculous vis-a-vis this historical necessity.

Along with the past, the present way of life also exposed people to the danger of arrest. Those who showed up late for work, didn't pay taxes in time, sold some of their belongings on the free market -- in a word, the overwhelming majority which tried to cope somehow with the rapidly deteriorating economic situation -- went, en masse, to jail. "There were 120 inhabitants in my village [Sokolka county of the Bialystok voivodeship] and by the time I was arrested 20 of them had appeared before the courts" (HI, PGC, 7222). As if to further simplify processing of the arrested, accusations for past and present crimes were conveniently stereotyped according

to nationality. Poles were typically sentenced as counterrevolutionaries in the service of the bourgeoisie, Ukrainians were sent to labor camps as nationalists, and Jews as speculators (HI, PGC, 1955).

To compound their confusion the prisoners were, time and again, confronted with the ignorance of NKVD operatives. Thus, in Kowel prison, Lieutenant Sarkisjan from the NKVD was trying to induce confession from a railroad engineer that he was employed by Polish intelligence service (the so-called 2nd Department) and supervised a network of confidential collaborators along the railroad line from Kowel to Kiwerce. The man protested his innocence, which, of course, only infuriated the interrogator who then proceeded to accuse him of having been a party activist in Poland because he had a diploma from the Polytechnical School. "Polit-technikum, the very name of the school indicates that you were taught party subjects there," argued Sarkisjan (HI, AC, 2402). All of this would be very amusing but for the fact that Lieutenant Sarkisjan, just as any other NKVD interrogator, had the power to declare, among other things, who was and who wasn't a political activist in pre-war Poland. The episode acquires significance as an illustration of ignorance about the realities of life in pre-war Poland among the vast majority of NKVD field operatives. This is not to say that the NKVD lacked the relevant information. As I stated previously, records of most pre-war organizations fell into the hands of the Soviet invaders and virtually anywhere there were people, sometimes many people, who welcomed the

Soviets and were forthcoming with information concerning the local inhabitants and their affairs. The information was available then, but the NKVD didn't know how to interpret it. If traveling abroad is synonymous to being entrusted with a spy mission (see also The Dark Side of the Moon, 92), donning a uniform turns one into a particularly zealous state employee, and a Polytechnic appears to be a school for training party cadres, then no amount of information and concrete detail can help those who advanced these interpretations to understand the pre-war Polish society and make sense as to who was who.

Upon reflection one has to conclude, however, that it could not have been otherwise, and strangely, that it was also unimportant. How could one expect the NKVD to field thousands of operatives trained in, or even merely conversant with, contemporary Polish politics and society? A great majority of NKVD cadres sent into the occupied territories -- everybody, say, under 30 -- had no recollection, or at most a very faint one, of life under any other but the Soviet regime. Thus, they could use no familiar analogies to make sense of life histories of people whom they had in custody. From the testimonies stored in the Hoover Archives one gets two glimpses into personal the biographies of NKVD field operatives. One of them, very proud of his present high station in life, told a woman prisoner he was interrogating in the Wilejka prison that he used to work as a shoemaker (Wilejka, 45). Another (a Polish citizen evacuated with the Anders army), was a jack of all trades only marginally employed before the war, a son of equally marginally employed

declassé parents who used to make a few zlotys on the side as police informers in pre-war Poland (HI, AC, 13792). Why should the rest of NKVD personnel be radically different in their social background from a shoemaker who left his trade or a lumpenproletarian? We have no systematic evidence to characterize the NKVD personnel in terms of social origin except such occasional insights into individual biographies and the record of their behavior when already in the service: a universally acknowledged, widespread, use of terror. Granted, each society and social category include some individuals who pathologically enjoy violence. But I doubt the usefulness of simply dismissing the NKVD as an insane asylum for sadists. People can be trained to dispense violence, even torture, and indeed the police, especially political police, all over the world are familiar with the practice. But it is easier to teach such a profession to people socialized to violence early in life, in their milieu of origin. The socially marginal, the lumpenproletariat, present better recruitment opportunities for the service than any other social category. For a praetorian guard of a tyrannical regime they are also conveniently alienated from, and resentful of, the rest of society. With no other loyalty but to their employer, the security apparatus, they can be unleashed against the rest of society. They are loyal and brutal, which is what the regime wants them to be, but they are also ignorant [12]. This, though of little consequence for the safeguard of

the security interests of the Soviet state, made all the difference for the prisoner who was interrogated. Paradoxically, people were driven to despair by the inability to communicate with their tormentors who heaped abuse and blows on prisoners in the midst of questions that did not make sense. Consequently, the prisoners' answers couldn't make sense either and, at times, were not even listened to, as by one Lieutenant Gubarov, in Wilejka prison, who pounded on interrogated prisoners with the butt of his revolver repeating after each answer: "you are lying, you sly fox" (HI, AC, 549). To fall silent offered no way out of the immediate predicament either. In Brzesc an NKVD interrogator beat up on his reluctant prisoners intoning: "Ne khotchish govorit golubchik, ty budesh piet." (If you don't want to talk, my little pigeon, you will sing instead.) (HI, AC, 4974).

The NKVD-men were conditioned to beat prisoners in order to induce their cooperation. A peasant member of the Polish underground organization arrested in Jedwabne (Lomza county of the Bialystok voivodeship) was briefly interrogated by two NKVD-men and when he failed to "reveal everything," one of the interrogators simply ran out into the courtyard, broke a wooden pole from the courtyard fence and then "ran back and started to pound on me with this pole" (HI, AC, 7472). No special instruments of torture were necessary. Anything lying around could be of use, office supplies for example. An NKVD major in Kolomyja used to hit his prisoners with a metal ruler after each unanswered question. Often he beat them unconscious

(HI, AC, 107). Prisoners could be grabbed by the hair and have their heads pounded against a wall, or pulled out in lumps (HI, AC, 523, 7472). In Czortkow prison those arrested after the uprising of January 1940, many of them high school students, were beaten with wooden poles, handguns, bottles, metal bars and kicked until their jaws and ribs were broken (HI, AC, 2056, 9562, 10752). In the railroad prison at Bialystok the NKVD-man Ostapov kicked a prisoner repeatedly in the shin until he lost consciousness (Molodeczno, IV, 3). Nobody was spared, neither youth nor women (See, among others, for Lwow: IS, A.9.III.2a/file 58; for Stanislawow: HI,AC,6335; for Wilno: Wilno-Troki, 23; The Dark Side of the Moon, 87,89). A truncheon wielded in front of a prisoner's eyes was called by spiteful NKVD interrogators "the Polish Constitution," or, alternatively, "the Stalin Consitution" (see, for example, HI,AC,6335). People were thus told in no uncertain terms that it, rather than some law, was the foundation of the new order. And it was sometimes applied with great ingenuity. In Nowa Wilejka prisoners were clubbed over the head through a piece of cardboard or a thin book. This left them stunned and dizzyed for a long time. Upon return to cells they often lost consciousness (Wilno-Troki,22). Some simple props were used during interrogation in traditional, customary ways -- needles were forced under prisoners' fingernails, were crushed in doors (HI,AC,108,392,594, 7472; lomzynski,86). Many were ordered to sit at the edge of a chair with stretched legs and hands extended forward. Then, suddenly the chair was kicked from under them and they hit the floor

with the coccyx bone (HI,AC,7854; Luniniec,43). In Augustow prison people were tortured by having vodka, gasoline, or kerosene poured into their noses (HI,AC,7746). An NKVD-man by the name of Dzikon (a fitting name, meaning something between a wild boar and a wild man) stood his prisoners next to a burning stove in a spot where water dripped slowly on their heads. "Falling drops," wrote one of his victims, "drove one unconscious and felt like hammer blows" (Braslawski,24).

People were tortured frequently by exposure to extreme temperatures. Some were ordered to stand at attention, fully dressed, next to a piping hot stove (HI,AC,541), others were thrown naked, or in their underwear, into cold punishment cells (Ostroleka,13; Lucki,63). Water was routinely poured into these cells (Lomzynski,85; Wilno-Troki,23; Lidzki,32; Luniniec, 43), and it stood there several inches high dissuading exhausted prisoners from lying down on the floor. Sometimes, on the other hand, there was nothing else one could do, as in the punishment cell in Oszmiana (Wilno voivodeship): "It was a hole in the ground where one couldn't either stand or sit, but one had to lie down as in a coffin. It was not aired. I thought I will suffocate. Every day they threw to me a slice of bread and half a liter of water. They didn't take prisoners to the toilet. Stench in this hole was unbearable" (Oszmianski, no page number). In the Pinsk prison (Polesie voivodeship), "The punishment cell, number 45, was in a tiny space one could enter only by getting down on the knees. A sewage pipe was passing through this space and the electric light was so strong there

that it was impossible to open one's eyes. The strongest man couldn't last there longer than 15 minutes. Unconscious prisoners were hauled back to their cells, splashed with water, and, after a short while, the treatment was repeated again" (Pinski, 63). In Berezwech prison people were burned during interrogation (HI,AC,499). In Wilejka, a prisoner was ordered to stand at attention with head tilted backwards as far as possible. Then, burning cigarettes were squashed against his chin (HI,AC,-392). In Bukaczowce, a village in Rohatyn county of the Stanislawow voivodeship, a prisoner had his penis wrapped in paper and set on fire during questioning (HI,AC,7854).

The NKVD-women were fewer among the interrogators, but they were remembered. They beat some of their prisoners and cursed them, just as their male counterparts did. Unlike the NKVD-men, however, they reached for the genitals -- their prisoners' as well as their own. "We will sentence you for 15 years, and you won't see a cunt anymore," said a pretty NKVD-woman to her prisoner (HI,AC,6259). "In the end she lifted her skirt," recalls another victim, "and showing her genitals she said that I am looking at this for the last time in my life" (HI,AC, 10570). Marian Pludy was sentenced to one year of prison by a court in Lwow presided over by a woman judge. After the sentence was read, "Malka, who judged me, stood up and said loudly so that the listening public could hear: 'Nechevo, zhit boodesh, tolko iebat ne zakhochish i nikogda zhivoi pizdy ne oovidish' [It's okay, you will live, but you won't want to fuck anymore and you won't see a live cunt], and

she gestured accordingly with her hands and lifted her skirt" (HI.AC,3538; for a similar episode from Stanislawow see IS, Collection of Polish Armed Forces, File no. 6, Abczynski). This was a ritual incantation, very much like: "You will see Poland like I will see hair growing in my palm," or, "You will see Poland like you will see your own ear," with which everybody was mocked during interrogation; the phrase and gesture must have been passed around from one Soviet woman-interrogator to another. They must have liked it, otherwise it would not have become a cliché in the repertoire of the NKVD. Neither skillful manipulators of ideas trained in diamat, nor faceless bureaucrats preoccupied with organizational efficiency, the field operatives of the NKVD appear instead as a host of ignorant, brutal and vulgar individuals.

Then, at the limits of their endurance and their torturers' zeal, prisoners of the Soviet state confronted death. Death in a variety of guises -- as a sentence which could be eventually commuted; as a mock execution staged to break the prisoner's psychological resistance; death from exhaustion as the result of tortures and confinement in unsuitable conditions; succumbing to madness and, finally, suicide. Mock executions were widely practiced as a mental torture, so widely in fact, that a prisoner who spent some time in jail would be forewarned by his cellmates and, in a way, immunized against it. Still, it was a frightening experience. Usually, people were taken at night to a nearby forest, ordered to dig a grave for themselves, stood at its edge with questions being asked of them all along,

and if they remained silent they would be fired at, and missed of course (HI,AC,107,7472; Kobrynskie, 44; Sarnenski, Uzupelnienie,2). In Wilejka prison, on the other hand, a prisoner was brought to a bloodstained basement cell, undoubtedly used for real on other occasions, [13], where he was stood against a pile of sandbags. "Confess who belonged with you to Polish bands, who gave you underground newspapers, where are your weapons hidden and who else has got them, or you will perish here as a dog. I refused to answer and so they called the torturer, who was supposed to frighten me by carrying out the execution. He unloaded his gun and gave it to me to check whether it was good, then took it back and gave me some bullets also to check whether they are okay. Then he loaded the gun, aimed at my head and asked for the last time whether I confess to the accusation (I knew well by then, from what fellow inmates told me back in the cell that they do such things just to frighten, that I will not be shot). Then, he shot twice and bullets passed a few centimeters from my ear and got stuck in sandbags. The chief of the NKVD chased him away saying that he doesn't know how to shoot and that he has a woman's heart because his hand trembles. I will do it myself. Once again he asked for my confession and then he shot a few times, the same way as I was shot at before..." (HI,AC,392). Such execution cells were in other prisons as well, in Luck for example (HI,PGC,1393). The theatricality of the scene may appear today as a little overdone, but given the circumstances and the reputation of parties involved, most people were undoubtedly numbed

by the experience. The NKVD must have been satisfied with the results, otherwise the mis-en-scene would not have been routinely practiced.

But real death, as well, awaited prisoners in Soviet custody. Conceivably thousands died from neglect -- from torture beyond prisoners' physical endurance, lack of medical attention, or proper detention facilities. These deaths were not intentional. In the internal accounting of the NKVD they were probably written off as "accidents at work," or itemized under some other equally inconspicuous heading. They were different from "liquidations" -- to use the Soviet newspeak equivalent of Nazi "special treatment." They were different, though hardly so from the victims' point of view, from death sentences or executions (without "legal" justification) carried out on prisoners.

Death sentences were passed by Soviet courts, or military tribunals, and the Soviet authorities were not especially shy about it. There were press reports of such convictions from the very first days of the occupation (Czerwony Sztandar, 8.X.1939)[14]. In the trial of young Ukrainian nationalists (the so-called "Trial of 59") 42 accused were sentenced to death, though half of them -- 10 young women and 11 men -- eventually had their sentences commuted (Suchasnist, 1981,10:98). Many were shot for participation in the Czortkow uprising (HI,AC,10752). Death sentences, in short, were given out generously. As to how they were carried out we can extrapolate from the mis-en-scene of mock executions.

There were, as we recall, two scenarios repeated with only minor variations -- death in the forest, or in the prison cellar: "I want to tell how Poles were shot in the Wilno prison in 1940/41. The condemned prisoner was taken from the cell together with his belongings, he was brought to the prison office where his personal effects and documents were returned and then a decree of pardon was read to him. Afterwards he was taken to the main gate where a few armed soldiers and some civilian agents came up to him and drove him to a nearby forest to be shot. The executed prisoner was then stripped of all his belongings and buried naked" (Wilno, 68). Another witness, a cook, states that in a period of three days he counted 17 cars which took condemned prisoners to execution in Belmont Forest on Wilno's outskirts (Wilno,68).[15]

Finally, there was escape into insanity and suicide. Again, only a few names can be rescued. But we are assured by witnesses that there were many more who succumbed to despair. In Nowa Wilejka lieutenant Stanislaw Piorko lost his mind as a result of tortures, as did "many others" (Wilno-Troki,22); in the Lukiszki prison, in Wilno there were several suicides and cases of madness (Wilno-Troki,23), in Stanislawow engineer Bauer cut his wrists and died in the prison cell after a torture session administered by an NKVD-man named Morozov, who was feared as one of the most brutal interrogators (HI,AC,661). There was the suicide of Eugeniusz Muraszow in the Berezwezc prison, near Glebokie: "In January or February of 1940, after he returned to the cell from interrogation, he told us about

brutal tortures he suffered and that he was told that unless he signs a statement submitted to him, his wife and son will be arrested and tortured in his presence. The same night Muraszow, while we were asleep, tried to cut veins on his neck with a piece of broken glass. We noticed what he was doing, and we stopped it and held him by the hands. When we let him go, he tried to reopen the wounds which he managed to inflict upon himself with his bare hands. Then we called guards who came and took him to another cell. There, in the morning of the next day, when other prisoners were out in the corridor, Muraszow put his head into a burning stove. He was pulled away, but the burns were so extensive that he lost sight and was all covered with blisters. He was still conscious though, and gropingly found a wall and rushed against it, head forward, with all his strength. This is how he died. It all happened so fast that the guards didn't have time to remove witnesses from the corridor..." (HI,AC,3999; see also, HI,AC,499,4342).

We need to state for the record as well that the prisoners resisted their tormentors. Not only that many chose to be silent or evasive under questioning -- a heroic enough attitude given methods of persuasion used by the NKVD -- but some actually fought their captors or filed complaints against mistreatment they were submitted to. I have three testimonies -- from Molodeczno, from Baranowicze, and from an unidentified prison -- of former prisoners who actually fought back the NKVD officers when the latter began to torture them during interrogation. All three prisoners were quickly subdued and given a

solid beating. But all three report that nobody ever layed hands on them again during interrogation (HI,AC,110,452, 9733). One should not hastily draw conclusions from these three depositions. It may very well be that many more people resisted and that they were all killed and that is why all recorded cases of physical resistance have a happy ending. But it is also possible that the desperate prisoners who assaulted their interrogators -- indeed, only a handful -- were, as a consequence, treated better. The reason for it, I think, may have been that the NKVD-men, judging what was going by standards derived from their experiences in the Soviet Union, may have viewed them as some weird Polish rendition of Soviet "criminals," "thieves," or "urkas." They, as we know, were left alone by the NKVD. They could do as they pleased in prisons and especially in labor camps, where they were in fact used by the camp administration to terrorize and police the political prisoners.

Finally, the only reported case of a complaint against physical abuse during interrogation which was reviewed by a panel composed of two public prosecutors, two high NKVD officials and a Soviet officer, resulted in the exculpation of the NKVD: "after an exchange of opinions I was told that the prisoners were to blame if the interrogators sometimes resorted to improper measures because they did so, apparently, when the arrested refused to confess to crimes they were accused of" (HI,Poland.Ambasada USSR,Box 43,Pialucha).

Prisons and prison life, removed and separated from the mainstream of society, affect, predominantly, only societal margins, and when they touch others it is shame and odium that they induce rather than fear or resignation. For if the boundaries of legality are clearly drawn through consensus and compromise, to transgress is a matter of choice, and to choose against the ways sanctioned by the community calls for its censure. Not so in the Soviet state. There, prison was in the mainstream of society and imprisonment was merely a part of the life-cycle, often cutting it short. So many were arrested that virtually everybody, because of friendships or kinship, devoted a share of their time, resources and thoughts to life in prison. If one and a quarter million were incarcerated and deported during the 20 month-long Soviet rule in western Ukraine and Belorussia, then, somewhere between a quarter and a half million families remaining on the outside were directly affected by these repressions. This amounts, roughly, to about one fifth or one fourth of the entire population residing in the area. Which is to say that everybody at least knew someone who was either deported or imprisoned. How did this abstraction concretize in the daily lives of cities, towns, and villages of the incorporated territories? As a mass phenomenon it found fitting expression through crowds assembled -- throughout the occupied territories -- in front of prisons. "The sight of a dense crowd made up of wives, children, and mothers waiting for hours in front of the Kolomyja prison for permission to hand in a meager food package or a pot of already cold soup to the

loved one was so moving and tragic that I will probably keep it forever in my memory and in my heart" (Poland.Ambasada USSR. Box 47. Moszoro). In all weather, from early morning hours, mostly women and children gathered, sometimes in the very center of town -- in front of the school and court building in Szczuczyn (HI, Poland. Ambasada USSR. Box 46. Maliszewska), or town hall in Kalusz (HI,PGC,8025) which were used as prisons -- to find out the whereabouts of their loved ones, or to perhaps see them in the street when they would be led for interrogation, or to bring a parcel of food, or with a change of clothing. Countless hours were wasted in lines as the prison officials were capricious and uncooperative. The guards accepted or rejected parcels as they pleased, stepped out of their offices whenever it suited them, and cursed petitioning families when they felt like it [16]. Dirty linen returned to a wife or a mother was often stained with blood leaving no doubt that the prisoner had been tortured (HI,PGC,4621,8025).

What can be rescued then, worth preserving, from this "grief which could make mountains stoop?" Not much, I am afraid, perhaps only a few slender volumes of writing: "In the terrible years of Yezhov terror I spent 17 months waiting in line outside the prison in Leningrad. One day somebody in the crowd identified me. Standing behind me was a woman, with lips blue from the cold, who had, of course, never heard me called by name before. Now she started out of the torpor common to us all and asked me in a whisper (everyone whispered there): 'Can you describe this?' And I said: 'I can.' Then something like

a smile passed fleetingly over what had once been her face." Anna Akhmatova, for it was she who had been recognized in that line, then began her Requiem, a masterpiece of Russian poetry: "That was the time when only the dead could smile, delivered from their wars."

Evacuation and Executions

No other truth was held as more self-evident during the first 20 months of war than the conviction that Hitler's and Stalin's marriage d'interet would come to an end. Though this implied the physical destruction of western Ukraine and Belorussia where military hostilities would certainly take place as a result, the overwhelming majority of local residents rejoiced over the prospect and awaited its realization impatiently. People of western Ukraine and western Belorussia were not different in this respect from the population of western Europe, only their conviction that the Soviets would suffer defeat in the conflict with Germany set them apart. While the rest of Europe yearned to see the former archenemies go to war in order to break out of Hitler's grip, the 14 odd million newly enfranchised Soviet citizens couldn't wait to see their Soviet motherland defeated by Hitler's war machine. In a way the same psychological motivation was at work here -- they also wanted to break out from under an occupation, only the Ukraine and western Belorussia were occupied by the Soviets instead of the Nazis. Also, the mindboggling inefficiency, corruption, ignorance and clumsiness of the Soviet sponsored administration

removed all doubts, for anybody who hadn't seen Hitler's occupation administration at work, that the outcome of a military confrontation between the two countries was all but decided beforehand. Nowhere were the prospects for imminent Soviet-German war debated more vigorously than in the Ukraine's and Belorussia's prisons. Nowhere, I think, when they finally could be heard, were the sounds of war welcomed as warmly as there. Little did the prisoners know of the fate awaiting them.

The USSR was unprepared for the Nazi attack on June 22, 1941, and the speed of the subsequent German advance was unprecedented. By the first week of July the entire territory of pre-1939 Poland was already under German occupation. Soviet administration was routed from western Ukraine and western Belorussia, millions of Red Army soldiers were taken prisoner during the first months of the campaign, nothing remained of the cumbersome and all-pervasive state machinery recently implanted into the area. In the space of three weeks the Soviet state gave up miles of territory, countless subjects, millions of soldiers, heaps of secret documents but it did not let go of one commodity which, we are therefore bound to conclude, it must have considered the most prized possession: its prisoners. General orders binding on the NKVD personnel in this matter must have been very clear: with very few exceptions all those imprisoned in western Ukraine and Belorussia on June 22, 1941 (some 150,000 people by our prior estimates) were either moved east, or killed, or both. But who decided what to do in each case, and according to what criteria, will probably

never be known. For it can not even be argued that summary killings were carried out only as a measure of last resort, after attempts to evacuate prisoners had failed. In Lwow prisons, for example, many thousands were killed but there is no record to show that evacuation was ever contemplated. Several hundred prisoners from Czortkow, on the other hand, were evacuated only to be killed at their destination, in Uman. Ukrainians, Poles, Germans, Jews, and a Belorussian have identified no less than 25 prisons in western Ukraine and Lithuania [17] where inmates were summarily executed by the Soviet authorities prior to the occupation of the area by the Wehrmacht in the summer of 1941. There is abundant evidence of evacuation of prisons accompanied by widespread killings of prisoners. Mysteriously, no testimonies concerning the summer of 1941 in western Belorussian prisons could be found [17].

Massacre in Lwow

Soon after the first German bombs fell on Lwow the NKVD began to call out names of prisoners from different cells at Brygidki prison, took them to the cellars, and shot them. "The sound of shooting could clearly be heard in the cells" (Russian Oppression in Ukraine (ROU), Ukrainian Publishers Ltd., London, 1962:177). Executions continued for about 24 hours. Then, late Monday evening, a strange silence prevailed in prison (ROU, p.179). The NKVD guards had left the compound and, upon realizing this, inmates proceeded to break cell doors during the night and ventured into the courtyard in the early hours on

Tuesday. Some, it seems, either ransacked or destroyed records in the prison administration office (ROU, p.183). There were Soviet troops moving through the streets of the town and therefore few, if any dared to go beyond the prison gate. In any case, early on Tuesday morning NKVD guards returned shooting at and killing scores in the crowd which had already assembled in the courtyard. They drove the prisoners back into their cells, ordered everybody to lie face down on the floor, shot a few recalcitrant prisoners in their cells and, having thus restored order, continued with the executions (ROU, p. 184, 185; Select Committee..., 1954: 112-113).

Shootings went on for the whole week, through the morning of Saturday, June 28. Truck engines in the prison garage were switched on to muffle the sounds. When cellars were filled with bodies, a trench was dug in the courtyard and prisoners were henceforth executed there. "During that week, we did not get any food at all and many people lost their minds" (Select Committee...,1954:113). From a cell housing about 100 prisoners at the beginning of the week, 12 inmates were alive when everything was over. Bohdan Kolzanivsky, who gave this information, survived because he didn't respond when his name was called out, and when guards came for him again, he said that a prisoner by this name had already been led away.

There was bureaucratic supervision of the killings, or at least of the order in which they were carried out. It was an assignment like any other, and it must have been carried out observing the usual office routines. It appears that political

prisoners, i.e., those accused of having committed crimes against the state predominantly under Article 58 were to be eliminated first.

There is no clear evidence that the so-called "criminals," bytoviki, were spared. I know of only one instance when a group of prisoners, "criminals" of course, was actually released from Soviet custody. But it is from indirect testimony that we learn about the episode and the account confirms our supposition about priority given to the elimination of "politicals." From smaller prisons, where there was time to dispose of everybody, there seem to be no survivors, only witnesses who discovered mass graves after the Soviet withdrawal from the area. Criminals may have been released, of course, and conceivably we never would have heard from them later, but the population living in the prison's vicinity would have recalled this somewhere.

When prisons were evacuated, "criminals" were evacuated as well, this much we know. But this was segregation, this much we know as well. For one thing, calling prisoners for execution by name rather than taking them cell by cell shows that the treatment was individualized and that, given the paper work this must have entailed, there was some form of accounting. Indeed, several episodes from the Lwow massacre indicate that the NKVD was merely "doing its job," and going about this madness in an orderly fashion. Thus, a man arrested in the morning of June 22, 1941 was questioned in prison by a team of prosecutors about the circumstances of his

arrest to determine the paragraph he would most likely be charged under. Benefitting from a quick mind and helpful hints of fellow prisoners, he invented some brawl in which he was allegedly involved and was classified as a common criminal (Rudnycka, 1958: 443).

In another cell, after the NKVD returned and apparently found some records destroyed or misplaced, prisoners were handed out a piece of paper and a pencil, and were told to write down their names, dates of birth, and sentences (ROU, p. 184). A group of women prisoners taken out on Friday, June 27 (i.e., after the executions had been going on for several days) were brought back to their cell -- to the utter disbelief of the remaining prisoners -- "as the men in the guard room had not known what was to be done with them, since there was no information in their files regarding an offense" (ROU,p.181). But I have doubts whether anybody was to be spared in the end: when it finally fled from the Brygidki prison, the NKVD had killed all but some 600 or 700 of its approximately 13,000 inmates (Select Committee...,1954:113).

After the Germans entered the city, the population of Lwow, in grief, went to its prisons to search for relatives and friends. There were heaps of bodies everywhere. Many remained unidentified. Bricked up cellars full of corpses, at the Brygidki and the Zamarstynow prisons were not even opened out of fear of epidemics. Many bodies, witnesses reported, were mutilated (ROU,1962:179, 182,184,185,186,187).

Death by Torture

In respect to death by torture, the evidence is especially abundant from smaller towns, which had relatively small and manageable prison populations that could be killed at leisure. In Bobrka many were scalded with boiling water (ROU, 1962:188); in Berezwech people's noses, ears, and fingers were cut off and there were children's corpses in the prison compound as well (HI,AC, 15725); in Czortkow female prisoners' breasts had been cut off (ROU,1962:189); in Drohobycz prisoners were fastened together with barbed wire (ROU, 1962:189); in Luck, next to one of three mass graves unearthed in the prison yard stood a murder weapon -- a drum lined with barbed wire inside (ROU,1962:190); in Przemyslany victims had noses, ears, or fingers cut off, and eyes put out (ROU,1962:191); similarly in Sambor, and Stanislawow, and Stryj, and Zloczow (ROU,1962: 192,193,194,197).

"When Germans entered town, [Boryslaw, in the Drohobycz county], Ukrainians wearing armbands and carrying rifles immediately appeared in the streets. They dragged Jews out of their houses, presumably to work. What kind of work was this? We were brought to the NKVD building -- I was taken together with a friend -- where there were already about 300 Jews, and we were ordered to bring corpses out of the cellars and to segregate them. Heaps of corpses. We had to wash some of the bodies. I went once into this cellar. Corpses were not really buried. They were covered with five to ten centimeters of dirt.

These were fresh corpses. These were the bodies of people arrested during the last week or ten days. This fellow Kozlowski and his sister were among them. The girl's nipples, she was about 16 years old, were torn out as if with pliers, her face was burned -- people said it was done after execution so that victims couldn't be recognized but I think not. Kozlowski had only one eye and it was all swollen, his lips were sewn together with barbed wire, his hands were crushed and also burned, the skin was peeling off as if they poured boiling water all over. She was naked, he wasn't. They had no shoes. The impression was horrible. I didn't look at any more corpses, because I simply couldn't. But these were my friends. So I washed their bodies. There were several dozen corpses altogether. I remember a very long row. The majority of these people were not normally killed with a shot, but badly maimed" (Interview with Jan Moldauer, Tel Aviv, Summer 1980; see also Yad Vashem 03/1323) [19].

We cannot escape the conclusion -- Soviet state security organs tortured its prisoners not only to extract confessions (which we grow to accept as a commonplace and "understandable" procedure in a police state), but to put them to death. Not that there were sadists in its personnel run amok -- rather, this was a widespread and systematically carried out procedure. I am at a loss for an interpretation, especially, as the victims were not a breed apart -- they didn't necessarily speak a foreign tongue, weren't of a different hue or of a different tribe, nor were they even of a distinct social class.

They were a motley crowd, common men undistinguishable from their co-citizens still enjoying the benefit of freedom. What we have recorded here is a breach of some foundation underlying human association. I cannot name it for fear of saying something trivial. I cannot even domesticate it by thinking of an analogy -- all that comes to mind is the bewildering spectacle that reached us in the 1970's from the jungles of Communist ruled Cambodia.

Evacuation from Wilejka

Yet some inmates walked out of their prisons alive. Their escort, sometimes mounted on horses, in good physical shape and fearing for its life, was driving prisoners eastward as fast as possible. Usually, to set the pace, the strongest were put in front of evacuation columns -- the so-called criminals, or the recently arrested who were not yet exhausted by life in prison. "After the war broke out, on June 24, the Nowa Wilejka prison was evacuated. Cells were unlocked and prisoners were ordered to get on the road in front of the prison gate where they were told to kneel until a certain number of them will be ready to depart" (HI,AC,2103). Thus begins the testimony from a survivor of one long march. Many a Soviet prison, as late as mid-October of 1941 and as deep inside the country as Artiomovsk in Donetsk region (HI,PGC,Box 132, Jozef Solczynski), were evacuated on foot before advancing German armies (HI,AC,5455,15162;HI,PGC,Box 234, Marian Nowosad). Here follow details from one such calvary Anno Domini 1941. Not a

particularly vicious one, I should think. If anything, it was probably relatively benign since many people lived to tell about it.

On Tuesday, June 24, 1941, three columns of prisoners were put together in front of the Wilejka prison (HI,AWBD,Dr. T. Wieliczko, ms. "Wilejka;" HI,AC,15523). When they were finally ordered to rise from the kneeling position many thought they will be walked to the train station (HI,AC,2921). Only the last group, about 450 women, went in this direction. In retrospect, however, there is no reason to envy them. Maybe no more trains were available, we don't know for sure. "In any case," writes Jan Bezdell who marched in the second column, "none of the women can now be located here" (HI,AC,15223). Dr. Tadeusz Wieliczko (pennname of Dr. Tadeusz Dymowski), author of a brief monograph about the Wilejka prison written for the Bureau of Documents of the Polish Army in the East, estimated that about 100 women were returned to prison from the train station and killed there, while the rest were freed (HI,AWBD, Dr. T. Wieliczko, ms. "Wilejka"). But, in an otherwise carefully documented text he does not say what information leads him to this conclusion.

Before the columns were set ready, when everybody was still in the prison courtyard, several dozen prisoners were called by name and separated from the rest. All sentenced to death in a two-day trial of an underground organization, for example, were thus led away (HI,AC,5908). It was somehow clear what would happen to those who were told to step aside in this

courtyard and many chose not to respond when their names were called. "I didn't answer even though they called me several times, then they read some other names, and mine again, and I didn't answer. They didn't look for me in the crowd. They were in a hurry" (HI,AC,392).

The column of prisoners, five abreast, marched out of Wilejka at four in the afternoon. The escort, several hundred strong, included militiamen from all over the Wilno area besides the local NKVD personnel. Around 10 in the morning on the next day they rested for the first time. Bread was distributed, some 300 grams per prisoner, a lump of sugar, and cold water. This was the only meal during the entire march. Not until they boarded a train in the village of Borysow, on the 29th or 30th of June, were the prisoners fed again. The entire evacuation march lasted just under a week.

It seems that whoever fainted or couldn't continue to march for some reason during the first two days was put on wagons accompanying the column. On the 25th, in the evening, water was distributed. When they set on the road, at 3 a.m. on the 26th, they weren't allowed even a drink anymore (HI,AC, 12599). "On the third day prisoners started to collapse from exhaustion" (HI,AC,2103). Then, around 10 in the morning, in the vicinity of the town of Pleszczenice, German planes attacked the column (some say the attack took place on the 27th rather than 26th of June). "During this time everybody was ordered to lie by the escort in the middle of the road [in any emergency, or disturbance, the escort simply ordered prisoners to "lie

down" (HI,AC,2103,12398)], whoever tried to crawl into the ditch was shot, six were killed in this way. Bombs fell away from the road where NKVD-men were hiding, one was killed and another badly wounded and then he was finished off. [...]

After the air raid, they ordered us to drop all our bundles and to run to a nearby grove. Who could not run was shot on the spot" (HI,AC,392). Scores were murdered, especially from among sick and elderly trailing at the end of the column. The escort was in a state of panic and shot indiscriminately. At the end of this wild run some 200-250 people could not be accounted for (HI,AC,392,1230,1257,2392).

During a brief rest in the grove following the massacre, a high school student, Czeslaw Siwicki, was shot in front of everybody because he loudly protested against killings of prisoners (HI,AC,392,1257,12398). "After a one hour rest, prisoners were ordered to stand up again and get going. When all rose Marczanski, a school teacher from Swieciany county, was very weakened and his son wanted to help him to march, as a son should a father. An NKVD-man noticed everything, ran up to Marczanski and ordered him to drop his father, the son hesitated knowing what that means. The NKVD-man shot Marczanski in the head without hesitation, killing him instantly, and kicked the son who with a heavy heart had to drop the father and run along" (HI,AC,2103). Several other prisoners were killed in this forest as well (HI,AC,6467,8499).

The column finally came to a standstill, some 15 kilometers from Borysow on June 29th, and the escort had to

bring lorries from the town to ferry utterly exhausted prisoners to the train station, many people were killed. When crossing a bridge over Berezyna, a prisoner, in a fit of despair, jumped into the water. Everybody was ordered to lie down and the wretched man was shot. By then the escort had enough as well. Machineguns were placed on the bridge and the commander ordered first three "fives" to stand up in a line for execution. Perhaps all of them would have been killed in this spot but for a higher officer coming down the road in a car who couldn't get through because the passage was blocked by lying prisoners. He ordered that the march be continued. NKVD-men put everyone back on their feet and ordered the column to run. Prisoners bent over, as if into a running position, but could not move forward anymore. Right then another prisoner, Jozef Jaroszewica, shouting "betrayal," jumped into the river. Once again the column was ordered to lie down and the would-be escapee was shot. Angry escorts, seemingly afraid of killing everybody against explicit orders, trampled over flattened prisoners beating them with rifle butts and sticking with bayonets (HI, AC,2103,3556,8474,12398). In the end, trucks were brought to take prisoners to the Borysow train station. There, and again in Orsza where they changed trains, the weakest who couldn't make the transfer on their own, were also killed (HI,AC,2103,21398). Fifty-four prisoners from Jan Cieplucha's cell marched out of Wilejka on June 24, 1941. Fourteen lost their lives during the march to Borysow (HI,AC,2582). Altogether about 2000 people were evacuated. In a conversation overheard by one

of the evacuees the commander of the escort said that he could not account for 547 prisoners at the end of the evacuation march (HI,AWBD,Dr. Tadeusz Wieliczko, ms. "Wilejka").

Finally, many prisons were evacuated by train -- notably, those from Pinsk, Rowne, Luniniec, Nowogrodek, Stanislawow (HI,AC,3223,3479,3366,3837,3929,4298,4967). But conditions under which prisoners journeyed were appalling, and the loss of life among them often comparable to what it was during evacuation on foot. One group of prisoners from Czortkow was evacuated by train to Gorkii (another, as we already know, was marched to Uman only to be killed there). The journey lasted 17 days. People were packed into freight cars with horseshit all over the floor. In a wagon with 135 prisoners, 34 died by the time the train had reached its destination; in a wagon with 89, five had died (HI,PGC,Box 132, Zenon Wcislo, ms. "Wiezienie w Czortkowie"); in still another, where 130 began the journey, 41 perished, many strangled by Soviet soldiers, now imprisoned, who terrorized their fellow inmates (UPST, B II, 589, 4). The dead, let us add, traveled for days with the living. It was July then, and very hot. From Tarnopol prisoners were first marched, with many killed on the way, to the railroad station at Woloczyska (HI,PGC,8978; AC,489,3477,5134) and then sent further east by train, on a journey where "many died" (HI,AC, 5592).

Hundreds of thousands of people, emaciated by incarceration in a Soviet jail, were either tortured to death, shot in the back of the head, sent by train in inhuman conditions, or

put on the road and ordered to march for days in summer heat without food or water. What is left there to say about a regime whose most trusted custodians were capable of such crimes? We have yet to see another country which in the wake of a foreign invasion carried out mass executions of its own citizens.

Notes

[1]

A characteristic vignette from the city of Wilno: "my mother, at the time in the NKVD building to find out about my father who was already arrested, told me that at some point an employee came out from his office and announced to the waiting crowd: "Go home, comrades, today we will accept no more denunciations" (HI,AC,13975).

[2]

A revealing NKVD document signed by Guzevicius, the head of Lithuanian NKVD in 1940, was published by the Lithuanian American Information Center in New York in August 1944. It is entitled An Appeal to Fellow Americans on Behalf of the Baltic States. I am convinced of its authenticity having found a mention of its capture on July 20, 1941, together with translated excerpts, in the Ereignismeldung UdSSR, no.28 (Bundesarchiv, R 58/214,fol.1-268). Even though it had been issued in Lithuania, on November 28, 1940, it is only a local version of the order no. 001223 of NKVD of the USSR "about the accounting concerning anti-Soviet and socially alien element" (p.19). It orders the preparation within ten days of "the index account covering all those persons who by reason of their social and political past, national chauvinistic opinions, religious convictions, moral and political inconstance, are opposed to the socialist order and thus might be used by the intelligence services of foreign countries and by the counterrevolutionary centers for anti-Soviet purposes. These elements include:

a) All former members of anti-Soviet political parties, organizations and groups: Trotskyists, SR's (socialist revolutionists), Mensheviks, Social Democrats, Anarchists, and the like;

b) All former members of national chauvinistic anti-Soviet parties, organizations and groups: nationalists, Young Lithuania, voldemarists, populiata, Christian Democrats, members of nationalist terroristic organizations ("Iron Wolf"), active members of student fraternities, active members of Riflemen's Association, and the Catholic terrorist organization "White Horse";

c) Former gendarmes, policemen, former employees of political and criminal police and of the prisons;

d) Former officers of the tsar, Petliura and other armies;

e) Former officers and members of military courts of the armies of Lithuania and Poland;

f) Former polit(ical) bandits and volunteers of the white and other armies;

g) Persons expelled from the Communist Party and Comm-youth for anti-party offenses;

h) All deserters, polit(ical) emigrants, re-emigrants, repatriates, and contrabandists;

i) All citizens of foreign countries, representatives of foreign firms, employees of offices of foreign countries, former citizens of foreign countries, former employees of legations, firms, concessions and stock companies of foreign countries;

j) Persons having personal contacts and maintaining correspondence abroad, with foreign legations and consulates, esperantists and philatelists;

k) Former employees of the departments of ministries (from referents up);

l) Former workers of the Red Cross and Polish refugees;

m) Religionists (priests, pastors), sectants and active religionists of religious communities;

n) Former noblemen, estate owners, merchants, bankers, commercialists (who availed themselves of hired labor), shop owners, owners of hotels and restaurants (p.20-21).

The document includes a sample form for daily reports on arrests divided into eight sections. The first section concerns Lithuanian, Polish, Jewish, Ukrainian, and Belorussian "National Counter Revolution. Regular contributors to party press (of any political party) and the leadership personnel ("starting with county committeemen") are to be accounted for within each of these national categories. Section two covers in great detail police and prison personnel; section three "former large landlords, manufacturers, and state employees" (each subsection divided into about 20 specific categories); section four "former officers of the armies of Poland, Lithuania, and White bands;" finally, section eight singles out "members of families of the persons indicated in the first, second, third and fourth sections." Section five, we may add, refers to common criminals, section six to prostitutes, and section seven to repatriates from Germany. From the perspective of a victim this translated into the following observation of an engineer who had been arrested since September 1939 in Kowel: "at the beginning,

among the prisoners, there were mostly leadership cadres, the military, and the police; later middle level Polish intelligentsia appeared and then the settlers and Ukrainian peasants" (HI,AC,2402).

[3]

In one respect the post-plebiscite arrests were unlike other mass arrests for they affected, primarily, people whose behavior had been monitored during elections. They were incarcerated for what they had done (or, more specifically, had not done, i.e., abstained from voting) while others primarily were taken for what they had been.

[4]

It is difficult to give more precise estimates because of population movements across the frontiers due to war. Many people, primarily Jews, escaped to the Soviet occupied territory from under the German occupation. Many Ukrainians, Poles, and eventually Jews as well, went in the opposite direction. Similarly there was a substantial, illegal traffic across the frontier to Lithuania, Hungary and Rumania. For the most careful estimate of the number of the deported see a memorandum prepared by the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs in London on March 15, 1944 entitled Obliczenie ludnosci polskiej deportowanej do ZSSR w latach od 1939 do 1941 (HI,PGC, Box 588).

[5]

Why interrogations were conducted at night seems easy to explain. It was a simple device to weaken prisoners, by depriving them of sleep. One may also speculate that the lack of adequate prison facilities, after the volume of arrests increased many times under the Soviet regime, induced the secret police to spread its workload over 234 hours. Prisons were overcrowded. New ones had to be improvised in buildings originally constructed for other purposes. Often, interrogations had to be conducted on some other premises, in NKVD buildings, which were separate and sometimes quite distant from local prisons. Walking the detainees for interrogation across town in broad daylight (for of course, even the NKVD -- especially in small localities -- did not have enough transport to accommodate its prisoners and they were seen being walked through town under escort (HI, PGC, 4343)) was bad public relations given physical tortures the arrested were routinely subjected to.

Finally, it may have occurred to somebody that a praetorian guard of the regime ought to be kept separated from the rest of society, and that the NKVD-men who worked nights would sleep during the day and, thus, keep to themselves. Last but not least, Stalin kept late hours

and offices of the state, particularly in Moscow, had to accommodate his working habits (see, for example, timing of Ambassador Grzybowski's interview in the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs). This must have also affected the nervous system of the regime -- the political police -- down to its local, provincial offices. An engineer from Rowne, I may add for the record, found out that "hourly wages for night shifts were much higher in the NKVD and so they preferred to work nights" Rowiński, Uzupełnienie, 2). If this were true, we ought perhaps to add greed to all the other hypothetical explanations.

[6]

On the other hand in rural districts, in villages or small towns where all residents knew each other at least by sight, an unknown, anonymous visitor would be picked up immediately by the local militia. Thus, whether one distinguished oneself by prominence (the elite in virtually all walks of life was vulnerable to arrest and was hauled to prisons almost immediately after the Red Army entered the area) or by conspicuous lack thereof, it did one no good.

[7]

Even when quoting the number of prisoners in the area on January 1, 1938 that are still under Polish prison administration, the compilers give approximations substantially lower than statistics provided in the Statistical Yearbook for 1938 (GUS, 1938:354). For Wilno court district (Apelacja) they give 7.6 thousand while the Statistical Yearbook informs that there were 7,854 prisoners there at the time; for Lwow court district corresponding numbers are 10.7 thousand and 10,828. Both Warsaw and Lublin court districts' statistics quoted in the table compiled by the Biuro Dokumentow cannot be directly compared with Statistical Yearbook data because these districts were only partially included within the boundaries of the Soviet occupation. For the sake of ease of computations and in view of consistent underestimations by the Biuro Dokumentow I shall consider 25,000, rather than 23,300 as they suggest, to be the total number of prisoners in this area before the war (HI,AC,Archiwum Wewnetrzne Biura Dokumentow (AWBD), doc.no. 62c, table 25).

[8]

In the basement cells of Nadworna prison the slop bucket was emptied only once a day. Consequently there was excrement and urine on the floor. For the first two or three days the newly arrested stood around the clock refusing to lie down at night. But they grew tired in time and finally relented and went to sleep (HI,AC,1680). In a cell in the Przemysl prison inmates urinated on the floor or, a few bolder ones, through a crack under the

celldoor into the hallway, to upset the guards. They had a small washing bowl, not even a bucket, in their cell to use as a latrine (HI,AC,1255). Similarly, in the Kowel prison (HI,AC,2402). Also in Dzisna NKVD prison feces were all over the prison floor for lack of adequate toilet facilities (HI,AC,3999). Of course, like everybody else, prisoners didn't want to live in dung. So, they were holding it in which, in addition, made them irritable and sick (HI,AC,1545).

[9]

In Lida prison there was a special "educational cell," cell number 10. Originally designed to hold 12 inmates, at the time when our witness was there -- a 34-year-old engineer forester -- it housed 96. A certain Falenty, a bricklayer from Lomza county was in charge there. He had worked briefly for the NKVD, after the Soviet occupation but, apparently for bribe taking, was eventually sent to prison. Eleven sentenced Red Army soldiers and a thief from Lida named Wieckiewicz, or Wieckowski, were his cronies. Together they introduced a reign of terror in the cell. Prison authorities were, of course, in tacit complicity with them. Falenty had special rights -- he could leave the cell whenever he pleased. He took property of other prisoners and divided it with his associates and the prison guards. Torture sessions which they inflicted on other prisoners were watched and openly enjoyed by the guards. Every new prisoner entering the cell was beaten by Falenty's bullies until he fell unconscious -- "hot buns" these receptions were called. The group introduced a variety of games to play with fellow prisoners. Under imaginative names, such as "windmill," "photographs," or "sawmill" hid always some sexual abuse and violence of the chosen victim. A religious medal found on a young school boy from Lida was tied to his penis and the boy was then forced to recite a blasphemous prayer. Individual inmates were picked out, spread on the floor and made to repeat an oath that western Ukraine and Belorussia are Soviet forever, while convicted Red Army soldiers walked over them. Later, they were forced to carry inscriptions -- "Polish pig, enemy of the Soviet authority" -- pinned to their backs. Each evening, purportedly to fit everybody to sleep in the cell's cramped space Falenty played the "tin of sardines" -- he stamped all over laying inmates, beating right and left with the buckle of his military belt (HI,AC,9411).

[10]

Lectures were very popular in prisons. Topics varied from "how to make preserves and ferment wine," in Bialystok prison (HI,AC,1311) to systematic coverage of political, religious, and economic problems of pre-war Poland in a

cell of the Dubno prison (HI,AC,594, see also, Dark Side of the Moon, 91).

[11]

Each layer of clothing provided additional protection against blows -- that was the reason to give, especially the inexperienced prisoners who were called for their first interrogation, an additional sweater, or a pair of underwear. But it sometimes backfired. A young Ukrainian girl was thus prepared for her interrogation by fellow inmates in the Lwow prison only to be ordered by the NKVD-man to squat-jump, with all her garments on, next to a piping-hot stove (Suchasnist, 1981, 9:104-106).

[12]

Though, simultaneously, at the higher echelons of the NKVD hierarchy one finds brilliant and learned specialists, knowledgeable about their field and sophisticated. See, for example, Aleksander Wat's reminiscences from his interrogations at the Lubianka prison (Wat, 1977, II, ch. 27-29).

[13]

A Belorussian teacher from Wilejka, Vasil Misiul, testified before the Select Committee on Communist Aggression (83rd Congress, 2nd Session, 8th Interim Report, Washington, GPO, 1954:323-235) how, together with a few other members of the local community, he investigated the prison following Soviet rout from the dugout, and there was a trail from it as if a body had been dragged along the ground. We went along that trail and into that cellar there where we noted that the walls were spattered with blood, and there were holes in the walls as if from bullets. When we could see better in the darkness, after getting accustomed to it, we noted in one corner a large amount of dry blood. From the evidence it appeared to us that this was the place where many people had been murdered. Then we went along, following a trail of a body being dragged. This took us to another section of the yard of the prison and there we saw a long row of fresh earth. We decided to dig it up and see what was underneath. At a depth of about one foot we began to find bodies. (...) The condition of these bodies indicated that they had only recently been killed and buried. (...) Then we started digging deeper and we started working on a second and on a third layer of bodies. (...) The lowest layers were in such a condition of decomposition that they could not be touched, and those were not counted." Still, they counted over 500 bodies.

[14]

A Lithuanian witness before the Select Committee on Communist Aggression (83rd Congress, 2nd Session, 8th Interim Report, Washington, GPO, 1954:273-278) was kept as a warden of one of the largest Lithuanian prisons (he does not say which one) through September 15, 1940, i.e., for three months after the Red Army took over Lithuania. Prisoners who died during this time (we are not told whether these were torture victims or victims of executions) "were buried in the night in the prison yard or in the forest near the city. When I suggested to the chief investigator that it would be quite humane to inform the relatives of the prisoners about their deaths and that this would raise the Bolshevik prestige, I was called a fool" (ibid., 275).

[15]

How could this cook tell a car carrying prisoners for execution from any other car we are not told, but apparently he thought he could. We have no choice at this point but to use evidence that is available. Only if mass graves of executed prisoners were unearthed and circumstances of their death established through autopsy could we be more confident in our conjectures. Unfortunately, such discoveries were made, and not exclusively in the ill-famed Katyn forest. Ukrainian Daily News, that began publication after the Soviet withdrawal from the western Ukraine, carried a story about Dobromil mass graves in its August 3, 1941 issue. We learn there that not all the bodies were recovered from the salt mine shaft, only five meters deep of corpses -- in all 77 dead. It was not unusual then to leave lower layers of corpses in mass graves without exhumation. Otherwise, the summer weather and the bodies' advanced state of decomposition could produce epidemics in the community. More corpses were discovered in the prison compound as well as in the city hall and in the building of the forestry administration. These victims were killed, mutilated before execution, just before the Soviet authorities fled from Dobromil. The executioners, according to the article, were head of the city administration Petrovskii, secretary of the party committee Bubnov, and a militiaman Kremer (Milena Rudnycka, Western Ukraine under the Bolsheviks, IX 39-VI 41, Shevchenko Scientific Society in the USA, New York, 1958, p. 491).

[16]

"We could bring clean linen to the prison once a month. Who didn't live through it couldn't believe how we were persecuted. I left the house at 2 a.m. to stand in line in front of the prison. They opened at 8 a.m. and we all

entered into a hall, the crowd was enormous, and in the window was one of ours who served the Bolsheviks -- Kozdra -- and he screams, there are no more masters they are all in jail and threatens with imprisonment if anybody says anything, but worse, he wouldn't take the linen, so one stood without muttering a word and only prayed to God to shorten our misery. And so in the evening hours he took linen and on the next day one had to go there again to find out whether the loved one was still in this prison" (Poland.Ambasada USSR. Box 46. Nowosielska [Lwow]). "And it was like this, we came there to hand in a package, a chief came out, looked around, listened to our pleadings, didn't say a word, and left. And we women waited until the chief comes back from dinner in a better mood and it will be possible then to hand in something. We waited from 7 in the morning to 3 p.m. and it was 35 C below zero. And many, many times we didn't manage to hand in anything because the chief was in bad mood" (HI,AC,1613 [Zloczow]). "Prisoners' families gathered in front of the prison every day waiting for some news about their fold, or pleading to hand in a package. On the doors it was written that office hours begin at 7 in the morning. Very often, however, the door didn't open before 12 and freezing women and children were kept 4 to 5 hours outdoors where it was 40 C below zero (such was the winter in Poland in 1939/1940). Then, a "commendant" appeared in the doorway and if he was in good mood, he accepted packages, otherwise he cursed us in non-parliamentary language and shut the door telling us to come back tomorrow" (Poland.Ambasada USSR. Box 48. [Bialystok]).

[17]

Lwow voivodeship: Boryslaw, Borrka, Dobromil, Drohobycza, Komarno, Lwow, Sambor, Zolkiew. Stanislawow voivodeship: Nadworna, Ottynia, Pasiecz, Stanislawow, Stryj. Tarnopol voivodeship: Brzezany, Busk, Czortkow, Lopatyn, Przemyslany, Zloczow. Wilno voivodeship: Berezwezc-Glebokie, Nowa Wilejka, Wilno. Wolyn voivodeship: Dubno, Krzemieniec, Luck. (Bundesarchiv, R 58/214, Ereignismeldung UdSSR, no. 9, 10, 24, 28; ROU, 1962: 176-197; Rudnycka, 1958: 441-444, 477-492; Select Committee..., 1954: 112-113, 232-235; HI, AC, 2422, 5455, 15162, 15723, 15725, 15739; UPST, BI/104; Yad Vashem 03/1323; Interview with Jan Moldauer, Tel Aviv, Summer 1980).

[18]

There are many lacunae of this sort, all rather ominous. For example, we have several detailed testimonies about the massacre in the Brygidki prison in Lwow but no survivors' accounts from either Zamarstynow prison or from

the NKVD prison at Lacki's Street, only piles of corpses found after the Soviets left the city.

[19]

A confirmation of the spread of the practice may be found in a completely independent source -- in recollections of a Lithuanian who couldn't possibly be influenced by either Moldauer's experience or Ukrainian accounts quoted earlier. Edward Kuznetsov in his prison diary kept in 1970's in the Soviet camp reproduces a petition written to the authorities by his fellow prisoner. Its opening paragraph reads as follows: To the President of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR from Adomas Ludwikas Simutis - Declaration: "I was five years old when I was shown the corpse of my father. Half his face was swollen, blue, while the other half was covered in blood. His eyes had been gauged out. On his arms and legs the skin was white, peeling, scalded. His tongue had been bound with a piece of string. His sexual organs were crushed (I found this out later). Round him lay many other distorted corpses. I remember the sobbing of my mother and many people I didn't know.[...] This was in June 1941, after the retreat of the Red Army" (Edward Kuznetsov, Prison Diaries, New York, Stein and Day.

Glossary

The Polish Government Collection, the Anders Collection, and the Poland, Ambasada (USSR) Collection at the Hoover Institution Archives contain over twenty thousand transcripts of interviews conducted with Polish citizens deported to the Soviet Union between 1939 and 1941. Individual interviews were sorted and arranged according to the territorial divisions of eastern Poland. Later, based on these interviews, reports describing the process of sovietization in each county were written by a study center in the Polish Ministry of Information and Documentation.

I quote from both individual interviews and county reports. Whenever reference is made to an individual interview, I identify the number appearing on the interview schedule (for example, HI, PGC, 4261). Sometimes, if there is no interview number, I identify the name of the interviewee. Whenever I refer to a county report I identify the county and the page number on which the pertinent information appears (for example, HI, PGC, Postawy: 20). Most depositions were written by semi-literate respondents. Hence, the awkward English in some quotes that appear in the text.

AC	Anders Collection (at the Hoover Institution)
DGFP	Documents on German Foreign Policy, Sontag, R.J., ed., Washington, D.C., Government Printing Office, 1954
FO	Foreign Office (British)
GG	Generalgouvernement (German occupied Poland)
GSHI	General Sikorski Historical Institute (London)
HI	Hoover Institution
KOP	Frontier Defense Corps (Polish)
KPP	Polish Communist Party
OUN	Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists
PGC	Polish Government Collection (at the Hoover Institution)

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