

tionship with Sarah, but I am sure she would have no objections. We both realize that personal growth in a marriage is tremendously important. My love for Sarah could only strengthen our marriage.

Sunday, Dec. 7. Sermon: "The Parable of the Prodigal Son and Prison Reform."

Dec. 9. I saw an interview with President Ford's daughter Susan on the news tonight. She frightens me.

Sunday, Dec. 14. Sermon: "The Sermon on the Mount and the Authoritarian Personality."

Dec. 16. *The Many Faces of Love* has been well received on the junior high level. What we are thinking of now is entering it in some film festivals and then trying for commercial distribution.

Dec. 24. Saw the Pope conduct Mass on television tonight. Roman Catholics scare me.

Dec. 27. There is in this country a net-

work of highly-trained and heavily-armed paramilitary units which could, at any moment, seize total power—the metropolitan police forces.

Dec. 31. Most people see today as the end of one year. I prefer to think of it as the beginning of a new one.

The End...Or the Beginning?

The year 1975 is over now but, for those of us who lived through it, the memory will never fade. Life was not healthy in 1975; one could merely exist—from day to day and hour to hour—never knowing when the tanks and jackbooted soldiers would arrive. (When will we learn to control the sale of handguns?)

Franklin Vanderloon's *Love in Focus: A Presbyterian Filmmaker's Odyssey*

brings 1975 back in the most vivid terms. America was deep in depression that year. Legislation was pending in Congress which would have cut off the funds needed to help young women keep from bringing into the world infants who could not be properly loved or cared for. Milton Friedman was still at large. In 1975 the means of production were in the hands of individuals, the freedom to read was under attack, and, lastly but perhaps most importantly, some people had more things than other people had.

As it turned out, the Far Right was not successful in taking power in 1975, but that's not what's important. What's important is that the most dedicated and sensitive people in this country thought that it might. The message of Franklin Vanderloon's diary is, essentially, a human one: 1975 is a year which must never happen again. □

—Adam Meyerson—

Torture in the Soviet Union

Two blocks from the Kremlin, on perhaps the busiest square of an increasingly congested Moscow, there stands an imposing statue of Felix Dzerzhinsky, the Polish aristocrat who joined the Bolshevik revolutionaries. The location seems somehow appropriate, for facing the square is a wonderful department store, *Detsky Mir*, a world just for children; and Dzerzhinsky, as your friendly Intourist guide will surely tell you, was the first Soviet Minister of Youth and founder of the Pioneers, Soviet counterpart to our Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts. But your guide will not tell you that Dzerzhinsky also founded another organization, called the Cheka, nor will she point out the massive unmarked building on the other side of the square, even though it confers upon the statue just as much significance. The Cheka was the first name for the Soviet secret police; it was the original predecessor of what is today the Committee for State Security, or KGB. The building is the Lubyanka, KGB headquarters and site of one of the most infamous prisons in all history, where Dzerzhinsky's praxis of terror and torture continues, though less frequently, to this very day.

The Lubyanka, and Soviet prisons generally, are far less horrifying today than they were under Stalin. No longer are hundreds of prisoners executed daily. No longer do a million innocents die each year in the Arctic and Far Eastern labor camps. After Stalin's death in 1953, an estimated ten million political prisoners were granted amnesty, the infamous

"night visits" by the secret police were forbidden, at least on paper, and in the wake of "de-Stalinization" Soviet courts have made a much greater pretense of following due process. And yet it is important to contemplate the statue of Dzerzhinsky, and to consider that it was built, on Nikita Khrushchev's orders, in 1961. This was the very year in which Stalin's body was removed from Lenin's side in Red Square, five years after Khrushchev's "Crimes of Stalin" speech, one year before Solzhenitsyn was allowed to publish *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*. That the Soviet regime would so honor the founder of its secret police at a time of "de-Stalinization" and comparative intellectual freedom, indicates the limits of its genuine change.

Indeed, when Khrushchev articulated in 1959 what has since been the official position—namely, that "There are no political prisoners in Soviet prisons today"—he was, in the Soviet fashion, simply lying. Avraham Shifrin, arrested in 1953 during a wave of anti-Semitic hysteria, recently testified before the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee about his ten years in over thirty Soviet concentration camps and prisons, where he met thousands of fellow political and religious prisoners—and this all after Stalin's death. In *My Testimony*, a record of prison camp life in the 1960s, and *Prison Diaries*, a comparable memoir of the 1970s, Anatoly Marchenko and Edward Kuznetsov have each written powerful accounts of the emaciation, beatings, and desperate self-mutilation they have witnessed—stories that recall Solzhenitsyn's grisly descriptions of an earlier time. Despite ferocious efforts to suppress it, the

Soviet *samizdat* (self-published) network continues to circulate the *Chronicle of Current Events*, which, meticulously and undramatically, reports on Soviet political trials, and documents specific examples of mistreatment in prisons, prison camps, and psychiatric institutions. And last November, Amnesty International published a harrowing 154-page report, *Prisoners of Conscience in the USSR: Their Treatment and Conditions*, the most concisely informative survey of present conditions that is now available in English. Celebrated for its reports on torture in Chile (after Allende) and South Vietnam (before its fall), Amnesty International cannot be accused of an anti-Communist bias. Its report on the Soviet Union (available for \$2.00 from AI Publications, 53 Theobald's Road, London WC1X 8SP, England) is therefore all the more convincing, and I draw from it substantially in what follows.

Just how many prisoners of conscience there are, it is very difficult to say. The Soviet Union publishes no penal statistics whatsoever, so one cannot even determine how many prisoners there are overall. Andrei Sakharov has estimated that there are 1.7 million, the CIA has suggested a figure slightly under 2.5 million, on the basis of satellite photos, and scholarly Western estimates tend to posit a minimum of 1 million—a range of remarkably high numbers when one considers that the United States, with only 50 million fewer people, incarcerates but 250,000. Of the one-million-plus in the Soviet Union, no one knows how many are political and religious prisoners, but the consensus of Amnesty International and most Western reports is that the ab-

Adam Meyerson, managing editor of *The Alternative*, recently spent a month in the Soviet Union.

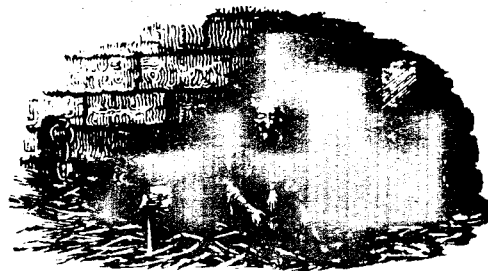
solite minimum is 10,000 and that, perhaps, there are many, many more. However many, Amnesty International knows of at least 330 prisons and labor camps throughout the Soviet Union to which they have been sentenced, with the majority consigned to two major complexes of work camps—one in Mordovia, some 300 miles southeast of Moscow, the other near Perm, in the cold and dreary Urals.

Those prisoners we hear most of are the political dissidents—such as Sergei Kovalev, the biologist sentenced last December to seven years of hard labor for distributing *samizdat* material, whose trial was closed to Sakharov and international observers even though the Soviet Constitution guarantees open trials; such as Victor Fainberg, who was confined to a brutal psychiatric hospital for over five years, merely because he participated in a demonstration against the invasion of Czechoslovakia, and who was told he would be released if he renounced his opposition; such as Mustafa Dzhemilev, the Crimean Tatar leader who was sentenced this April to 2½ years in the labor camps, for protesting the policy that forbids his people to return to their Black Sea homeland after an exile *within the Soviet Union* of 32 years. Such prisoners tend to be convicted of “anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda,” “organizational activity directed to commission of especially dangerous crimes against the state,” “circulation of fabrications known to be false which defame the Soviet state and social system,” and the like—charges in the criminal code which have been interpreted by the courts as covering virtually all dissent, and under which, according to Amnesty International, not one defendant has ever been acquitted. Dissidents have also been tried on trumped-up nonpolitical charges. In 1973, for example, Alexander Feldman, a Ukrainian Jew who applied for an emigration visa, was sentenced to 3½ years in the labor camps for “malicious hooliganism,” even though there is substantial evidence from many witnesses that the charges were completely unfounded.

But there are also the religious prisoners, about whom we know little—in part because of the astonishing apathy of Western churches toward their plight. These prisoners cannot be tried on charges like “anti-Soviet agitation,” because “freedom of religious worship” is supposedly guaranteed under the Soviet Constitution. Instead, under the pretext of protecting the laws separating church from state, Soviet authorities can arrest parents who give their children religious instruction, a practice which has come down particularly hard on the Baptists and other groups which insist upon such instruction. The authorities, moreover, have almost infinite latitude in arresting religious leaders, for, according to Article 227 of the Russian Criminal Code, it is illegal to organize activity which “under the appearance of preaching religious beliefs and performing religious ceremonies, is connected with the cause of harm to citizens’ health or with any other

infringements of the person or right of citizens...” All the Soviets need do, in other words, is to conjure up some threat to the public safety, as in 1972 when they indicted Bidya Dandaron, a Buddhist teacher in Siberia, on the preposterous charges that he led his followers to “bloody sacrifices” and “ritual copulations”; Dandaron died in a labor camp two years later, and four of his associates were sent to mental institutions. How much of this religious oppression goes on, no one quite knows, but thanks to the courageous reporting of the Council of Baptist Prisoners’ Relatives, we have precise figures for one sect: between 1964 and 1972, 644 Baptists were imprisoned on religious grounds. It is thought that religious prisoners—Catholics, Jews, Orthodox Christians, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Seventh-Day Adventists, Buddhists, Moslems, and many others—make up the majority of prisoners of conscience, though, except for the Baptists, we do not know how many hundreds of each, or how many thousands.

If we know too little about the number of prisoners, however, we know much, perhaps too much, about the lives they must lead. We know how they are often



denied the right to practice their faiths—how guards in the Mordovian camps have for four years prevented Vasily Roman-yuk, a Ukrainian village priest, from ever once reading the Bible, how hundreds of Christians have been denied the sacrament of confession. We know that labor camp prisoners may receive parcels only after they have completed half their term, that their correspondence is severely restricted, and that they may bring with them no more than five books. We know, particularly from Yuri Galanskov’s tragic death from a stomach ulcer at the age of 33, how abysmal is medical care in the camps and in the prisons. And we know, both from accounts by prisoners and from reading recent official instructions, that camp conditions have in the last few years been getting harsher.

Worse is what we know about the deliberate policy of torture. According to the first article of Soviet penal legislation, “the execution of a sentence shall not aim at inflicting physical suffering or degrading human dignity.” But, as Amnesty International points out, all this article really says is that punishment “shall not aim” at suffering or degradation; nowhere is cruelty or humiliation explicitly prohibited. Thus, although Soviet law does not authorize the occasional beatings and numerous humiliations which guards inflict upon their charges—a

favorite practice is to strip prisoners’ wives naked before allowing them to visit their husbands—neither does it proscribe them; and penal officials, who are accorded considerable discretionary authority, seem never to be punished for their excesses. Furthermore, there are many features of penal life which clearly are designed to inflict human sufferings.

Most prominent among these is the calculated policy of keeping prisoners in a constant state of debilitating hunger. There are four different kinds of labor camps—in increasing severity, the ordinary, intensified, strict, and special regimes—and although work requirements vary according to the harshness of the regime, the major distinction seems to be in rations. Under the strict regime, where many political prisoners are consigned, not only is the food poor in nutrition, mostly rotten, and infested with vermin, but the diet is limited to 2,600 calories daily—and this for strenuous toil in what is often bitter cold, conditions which, according to World Health Organization standards, require a minimum between 3,100 and 3,900 calories per day. (As Robert Conquest has pointed out, even the notorious Japanese prisoner-of-war camps on the River Kwai provided 3,400 calories.) What is more, the diet can be reduced still further as a means of inflicting additional punishment. Officials in special regime camps may confine prisoners to “punishment blocks,” where the ration is 2,100 calories; or worse, to “SHIZO” cells, where it alternates daily between 2,600 and 1,300. One example of worsening conditions is that in 1972 Soviet authorities removed the 15-day limit on “SHIZO” isolation. It is no wonder, under such treatment, that most strict and special regime prisoners contract serious stomach and other diseases.

And yet these labor camp inmates are lucky compared with those who are sentenced to prisons, where conditions are even more debilitating. Most prisoners of conscience are sent to the camps, but others languish in prisons across the country, including 35 in Vladimir, thought to be Russia’s worst jail. There, the daily ration is only 2,200 calories (mitigated somewhat by the absence of hard labor), while those confined to punishment cells breathe air piped in from open sewers and receive a daily ration of 1,500 calories, barely enough to sustain them lying down. And out of Vladimir come gruesome tales of political prisoners being put in the same cells with violent criminals; under such circumstances four years ago, Valentyn Moroz, a Ukrainian historian, was constantly tormented and finally stabbed in the stomach.

The most frightening incidence of torture in the USSR takes place in the psychiatric institutions. The Soviets really are beginning to practice some modicum of legality and due process, but in their use of psychiatry they have discovered a convenient way to circumvent the frustrations of judicial procedure: if

they cannot convict a dissident by legitimate means, they can always have state psychiatrists declare him insane—the favorite diagnosis in political and religious cases is “paranoid schizophrenia”—and confine him in mental institutions, particularly in one of the seven major “special psychiatric hospitals.” Pyotr Grigorenko, Leonid Plyushch, Vladimir Bukovsky, and other hospitalized dissidents have all reported horrifying abuses—for example, of drugs, like sulphazin, being administered not for medical purposes but to induce pain; of widespread beatings by orderlies, many of whom are criminals hired expressly to be vicious. The subject is so vast it demands an article of its own, and indeed

one will soon appear in these pages. Suffice it for the moment just to quote Victor Fainberg, describing one of the favorite forms of hospital punishment, the “roll-up” or “warm-moist roll,” in which “the patient is tied up in damp sheets and not only fastened down to his bunk but cocooned as tightly as possible with strips of the sheets placed almost touching one another. The sheets dry out and squeeze the entire body as in a vice (the patient often loses consciousness), and the whole section can hear the wails of the tortured victim. There have been cases when the patients have been ‘rolled-up’ on ten successive days.”

We have come a long way in Fainberg’s description from *Detsky Mir*, the

children’s world on Dzerzhinsky Square, and perhaps we had best return, for it is important not to exaggerate the impact of terror on Soviet society. The children of Moscow laugh and play just like children all over the world, and as we stand on the square, watching the cars whiz by and the women strolling in their colorful new dresses, we realize that in many ways the Soviet people are much better off today than ever they were before. Yet across the place the Lubyanka still stands, and some poor Russian is being interrogated there this very hour. Within a few months he will be sent to the Urals. And when he returns, many years from now, battered, shriveled, and sickly, the cold statue of Felix Dzerzhinsky will look on. □

Vic Gold

Was Brutus Framed? The Caesar Case Reopened

Nine *anni* have passed, give or take an equinox, since *National Review*, in a treatise entitled “Rush to Philippi,” first raised critical questions regarding the official Shakespeare Commission Report on the Assassination of Gaius Julius Caesar. *Tempus*, as the old saw goes, *fugit*. Yet the dogs of doubt, let slip, are not easily curbed, despite the fact that it was to bury, not to reappraise, such doubt that the Commission was originally appointed in 1623 A.D.

The Commission’s conclusions are, of course, well-known to every secondary school senior in the Western World. After lengthy study and considerable borrowing from the theories of Plutarch and Suetonius, it was determined that G.J. Caesar/ Caucasian male/ Height approx. 5 ft. 4 in./ Weight 145/ Age 56/ Eyes, jet/ Hair, balding with garland/ Distinguishing characteristics, prominent Roman nose/ Occupation, Dictator, was indeed killed on the fifteenth day of March, 44 B.C., “his mantle muffling up his face,” before the orchestrated bladework of a liberal senatorial cabal composed of Casca, Cassius, Cinna, Decius, Ligarius, Metellus Cimber, Trebonius, and (surprisingly) Brutus.

More recently, however, growing public interest and the prospect of expanded newsstand circulation has led other publications—notably, *New Times*, *Ramparts*, *National Enquirer*—to raise fresh questions regarding inconsistencies in the official studies of a number of other political assassinations. Not to be outdistanced in the field of historical skepticism, *The Alternative*, in keeping with its tradition of errant pedantry, assigned crack Occult Inquisitor Vic Gold to dig up the spirit of someone familiar with the Caesar assas-

sination case, with an eye toward cashing in on a hot market.

The following interview with Calpurnia, spiritually located Somewhere on the French Riviera (or, as she sees it, the lower third of divided Gaul), is the result of Gold’s latest venture into the inquisitorial beyond. To be sure, there will be those readers skeptical even of historical skepticism. They may doubt the authenticity of our interviewee’s version of events transpiring during that inauspicious feast of the Lupercalia. Yet we would caution that such readers temper their skepticism. We are not dealing here, after all, with any run-of-the-conspiracy-market literary hustler; rather, with an observer who, in the phrase of the slain Dictator himself, is to be considered above suspicion.

Somewhat gone to chubbiness in the manner of Mediterranean beauties past their prime, Caesar’s wife, according to Gold, was one of his most talkative occult interview subjects. Although, as self-advertised, Calpurnia was not one to stand “on ceremonies,” she nevertheless insisted that her attorney-agent, Marcus Lanus, be at her side during the course of the Q-and-A session. That interview *sequitur*.

Q: Signora Caesar, there will be those who will wonder why you’re only now getting around to criticizing the Shakespeare Report.

A: So? Let them wonder. I should care what other people think. Did anyone ever pay any attention to Calpurnia? Certainly not my husband. May the gods rest his soul.

Q: You mean, Caesar ignored your warning about leaving home...

A: When did he ever pay attention to

anybody’s warning about anything? Signor Know-It-All. I would say, “Julius, be careful.” He would shrug his toga and go about his business. So after he’s dead and buried I’m going to run around yelling his nephew did him in? Who would believe me?

Q: His nephew?

A: People would just say, “There’s that crazy woman again. The one who dreams about lions whelping and graves yawning.” So why didn’t I speak up before? Because you’re the first to ask. Not even Gibbon bothered to look me up.

Q: Your husband’s nephew, you say. Octavius Caesar?

A: No, gumba, Octavius Shapiro. What kind of investigative reporter are you? Would Mike Wallace ask a stupid question like that? Sure, Octavius Caesar. He did his uncle in. The ingrate. My husband, believe me, treated that boy like he was his own son. It just goes to show.

Q: But the Shakespeare Commission Report...

*A: A togawash of the whole affair. I ask you two questions, in plain Latin: *Cui bono? et Quis survivat?* Now you tell me.*

Q: The Report, however...

*A: All right, you want to look at the Report? I count as many holes in the Shakespeare findings as there were in my poor husband—may the gods, *et cetera*. Lying there on that cold marble floor. His own nephew, mind you.*

Q: What kinds of holes in the Report, Signora? Could you be specific?

A: Well, videlicet, for openers: by my own personal count, not including that of my lawyer here, there are no fewer than 57 major and 432 minor discrepancies, anomalies, inconsistencies, contradictions, and weird auguries in the official Shakespeare version. And take my word for it, 44 B.C. wasn’t even a vintage year for au-

Vic Gold’s last posthumous interview was with the ghost of Calvin Coolidge.