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e day in the life of an Denisovich

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BY ALEXANDER SOLZHENITSYN

TRANSLATED BY MAX HAYWARD AND RONALD HINGLEY

INTRODUCTION BY MAX HAYWARD AND LEOPOLD LABEDZ

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ONE DAY IN THE LIFE OF IVAN DENISOVICH
A Bantam Book / published by arrangement with Frederick A. Praeger, Inc., Publisher
Praeger edition published January 1963
Bantam edition published June 1963
2nd printing

WHICH TRANSLATION?

There are two entirely different translations of
ONE DAY IN THE LIFE OF
IVAN DENISOVITCH
currently offered to the American public—
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Moscow and this: the completely unauthorized,
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LIBRARY JOURNAL

Introduction

ALEXANDER SOLZHENITSYN'S *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* is beyond doubt the most startling work ever to have been published in the Soviet Union. Apart from being a literary masterpiece, it is a revolutionary document that will affect the climate of life inside the Soviet Union. It is a pitiless and relentlessly told tale of forced labor camps under Stalin.

Solzhenitsyn has laid bare a whole new world. For a quarter of a century, the vast concentration camp system created by Stalin was, directly or indirectly, part of the daily life of all Soviet citizens. There was hardly a family that did not have a son, a husband, a brother, or some other relative in a camp, and the truth of what Solzhenitsyn says has long been known, but not always believed, outside the Soviet Union.

But Solzhenitsyn's book, because of its supreme artistic quality, creates a greater impression of horror and revulsion than anything ever published abroad by even the most embittered victims of Soviet camps.

For several years now, it has been possible to mention the existence of concentration camps under Stalin in Soviet literature, and, indeed, the figure of the returned prisoner has become a commonplace, but what life was actually like in this man-made hell has never before been revealed in print to Soviet readers.

The blanket of silence over the prison-camp universe was as thick as the snow over the world's greatest land mass, stretching from the Kola Peninsula to Magadan, from Vorkuta to Kolyma.

In their struggle to rise from the depths of degradation into which they were plunged by Stalin, Soviet writers had to come to terms sooner or later with his betrayal of that deep humanity which once made Russian literature so great in the eyes of the world. It has fallen to Alexander Solzhenitsyn to restore the literary and human values of the past. It is fitting that he has chosen to do this by ruthlessly exposing the shameful institution that was at once the instrument and the embodiment of an utterly despicable tyranny. Solzhenitsyn has thereby eased the tormented conscience of those innumerable Russians who for so long have had to live in silence with the knowledge of this shame. As Alexander Tvardovsky says in his preface: "The effect of this novel, which is so unusual for its honesty and harrowing truth, is to unburden our minds of things thus far unspoken, but which had to be said. It thereby strengthens and ennobles us." The power of the novel is such that we too can share this feeling.

The conscience of the nation could scarcely be satisfied by the smug formula, sickening in its hypocrisy, by which, since the years of the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU, the "mistakes" of Stalin were ascribed to "certain phenomena associated with the

personality cult." Solzhenitsyn's novel transcends this convention.

In other ways, too, Solzhenitsyn goes far beyond the bounds of what had hitherto been permissible in public discussions about the past. He shows that the camps were not an isolated feature in an otherwise admirable society—the unfortunate result of a temporary "infringement of socialist legality"—but that they were, in fact, microcosms of that society as a whole. The novel draws an implicit parallel between life "inside" and "outside" the camp: A day in the life of an ordinary Soviet citizen had much in common with that of his unfortunate fellow countrymen behind barbed wire. We now see that on both sides of the fence it was the same story of material and spiritual squalor, corruption, frustration, and terror.

By choosing as the hero of his tale a very ordinary working man, Solzhenitsyn has broken another convention. Ivan Denisovich is no standard hero of labor bearing aloft the banner of triumphant socialism and striding confidently into the glorious Communist future. He is a humble, utterly bewildered plain man who wants nothing more than to live out a normal working life as best he can. He struggles pathetically to maintain his honesty, self-respect, and pride in a hopeless battle with mysterious forces that seem determined—for reasons beyond his ken—to destroy his human dignity, to deny him his right to love his country, and to render meaningless the work of his

hands. Up to now we have heard only about mor exalted victims of "the period of the personality cult In the campaign of rehabilitation initiated by tl heirs to Stalin's power, the emphasis has been c "honest Communists unjustly sentenced." Now, fc the first time, we learn from Solzhenitsyn of the wa in which millions of nameless people paid with thei freedom and with life itself for the "construction o socialism."

Solzhenitsyn has destroyed for all time the web o lies that has surrounded Soviet concentration camp for more than three decades—not to mention th myths propagated with such confidence and witl such arrogance, all evidence to the contrary, by the self-appointed "friends of the Soviet Union," who now stand revealed as traitors to the true Russia and to all humanity. On their conscience be it.

It would be wrong, however, to consider Solzhenitsyn's novel only in crassly historical and political terms. Like all great works of art, it is outside place and time. In showing one man, in one particular time and place, in the most sordid setting imaginable Solzhenitsyn has succeeded in strengthening our faith in the ultimate victory of civilized values over evil His novel is a morality play in which the carpente Ivan Denisovich Shukhov is Everyman.

New York
January, 1963

MAX HAYWARD
LEOPOLD LABEDZ

Explanatory Notes

HE following notes refer to words asterisked in ıe text, in the order in which they appear.

Free" workers (*Volnye*)—The term used by the prisoners about the people "outside" (*navole*). These "free" workers employed on construction sites in the vicinity of Soviet concentration camps were mostly former prisoners themselves who, after serving their sentences, either had no home to go back to or were not allowed by the authorities to return to their former places of residence.

Western Ukrainian—A native of that Ukrainian territory which until World War II belonged to Poland and was subsequently annexed by the Soviet Union. The implication of the passage is that the people in this region still had not lost some of the manners of non-Soviet society.

Ust-Izhma—One of the many camps on the river Pechora, which flows into the Barents Sea. In these camps, the prisoners were employed mostly in cutting timber.

"Special" camp (*Osoblager*)—Camps with a particularly harsh regime.

Volkovoy—A name derived from *volk*, meaning "wolf."

Article 58—The notorious article of the Soviet Criminal Code that covers a wide range of "anti-Soviet" offenses—espionage, sabotage, propaganda against the regime—and was interpreted to cover the activities of any "socially dangerous elements." Under Stalin, it was applied indiscriminately and automatically to untold numbers of people (like Shukhov in this novel) on mere suspicion of disloyalty or disaffection.

Old Believers (*Staroobryadtsy*)—Schismatics of the Russian Orthodox Church who refused to accept certain reforms introduced by the Patriarch Nikon in the seventeenth century. They were persecuted both under the Czars and under the Soviets.

Bendera—Stepan Bendera, the leader of the Western Ukrainian nationalist partisans who at first collaborated with the Germans against the Soviets during the war, but then became disillusioned with the Germans and continued guerrilla warfare on Soviet territory until about 1950. Bendera was assassinated by Soviet agents in Germany in October, 1959.

oner" (*Dokhodyaga*)—Camp slang for a prisoner who was so exhausted by work and wasted by disease that he had little time left to live.

prichniki—Ivan the Terrible's janizaries, who in the sixteenth century were used to crush all opposition to the Czar.

How are you serving?" . . . "I serve the working people."—A standard form of address between officers and men in the Soviet Army.

Kirov business"—Sergei Kirov, a member of the Politburo and Party boss of Leningrad. His assassination there in 1934, probably engineered by Stalin himself, provided the excuse for mass arrests and the liquidation of real and imagined political opponents that culminated in the Great Purge of 1936–38.

ıvadsky—Yuri Zavadsky, a prominent Soviet stage producer associated with the Moscow Art Theater, the Theater of the Red Army, and the Theater of the Moscow City Soviet.

Translators' Note

SOLZHENITSYN'S novel presents unique problems of translation. Not only the dialogue, but the narrative is written in a peculiar mixture of concentration camp slang and the language of a Russian peasant. The translators have sought to render something of the flavor of this by using the uneducated speech forms of American English. A further difficulty has been the author's liberal use of common Russian obscenities. These have never before appeared in print in the Soviet Union, and even here they are rendered in a slightly disguised form. The translators of this version have thought it best to ignore the prudish conventions of Soviet publishing and spell out the English equivalents in full.

The translators wish to thank Mr. Vladimir Yurasov for his help in elucidating certain obscure words and phrases. They are also greatly indebted to Jean Steinberg, Phyllis Freeman, and Arnold Dolin for their invaluable and devoted editorial assistance.

ONE DAY IN THE LIFE OF IVAN DENISOVICH

Instead of a Foreword*

THE subject matter of Alexander Solzhenitsyn's novel is unusual in Soviet literature. It echoes the unhealthy phenomena in our life associated with the period of the personality cult, now exposed and rejected by the Party. Although these events are so recent in point of time, they seem very remote to us. But whatever the past was like, we in the present must not be indifferent to it. Only by going into its consequences fully, courageously, and truthfully can we guarantee a complete and irrevocable break with all those things that cast a shadow over the past. This is what N. S. Khrushchev meant when he said in his memorable concluding address at the Twenty-second Congress: "It is our duty to go carefully into all aspects of all matters connected with the abuse of power. In time we must die, for we are all mortal, but as long as we go on working we can and must clarify many things and tell the truth to the Party

* TRANSLATORS' NOTE: This statement by the Editor in Chief of *Novy Mir* appeared as a preface to the novel in the November, 1962, issue of that journal.

and the people. . . . This must be done to prevent such things from happening in the future."

One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich is not a book of memoirs in the ordinary sense of the word. It does not consist merely of notes on the author's personal experiences and his memories of them, although only personal experience could have given the novel such an authentic quality. It is a work of art. And it is the way in which the raw material is handled that gives it its outstanding value as a testimony and makes it an artistic document, the possibility of which had hitherto seemed unlikely on the basis of "concrete material."

In Solzhenitsyn the reader will not find an exhaustive account of that historical period marked in particular by the year 1937, so bitter in all our memories. The theme of *One Day* is inevitably limited by the time and place of the action and by the boundaries of the world to which the hero was confined. One day of Ivan Denisovich Shukhov, a prisoner in a forced labor camp, as described by Alexander Solzhenitsyn (this is the author's first appearance in print) unfolds as a picture of exceptional vividness and truthfulness about the nature of man. It is this above all that gives the work its unique impact. The reader could easily imagine many of the people shown here in these tragic circumstances as fighting at the front or working on postwar reconstruction. They are the same sort of people, but they have been

exposed by fate to a cruel ordeal—not only physical but moral.

The author of this novel does not go out of his way to emphasize the arbitrary brutality which was a consequence of the breakdown of Soviet legality. He has taken a very ordinary day—from reveille to lights out—in the life of a prisoner. But this ordinary day cannot fail to fill the reader's heart with bitterness and pain at the fate of these people who come to life before his eyes and seem so close to him in the pages of this book. The author's greatest achievement, however, is that this bitterness and pain do not convey a feeling of utter despair. On the contrary. The effect of this novel, which is so unusual for its honesty and harrowing truth, is to unburden our minds of things thus far unspoken, but which had to be said. It thereby strengthens and ennobles us.

This stark tale shows once again that today there is no aspect of our life that cannot be dealt with and faithfully described in Soviet literature. Now it is only a question of how much talent the writer brings to it. There is another very simple lesson to be learned from this novel. If the theme of a work is truly significant, if it is faithful to the great truths of life, and if it is deeply human in its presentation of even the most painful subjects, then it cannot help find the appropriate form of expression. The style of *One Day* is vivid and original in its unpretentious-