compassion. After a few unimportant questions about how I had crossed the frontier—to which he noted my replies with apparent indifference—he addressed me in a warm, paternal voice.

"In the opinion of the Interrogating Commission you have realised that you will die only when it decides to let you, even if you long for the end to come. We are perfectly aware of everything that is going on in your mind and soul. It is just because we have great experience of this that we are leaving you in your present situation and giving you the chance to reflect without interruption on your past—on every act, on every detail. In this way you will recognise your faults and form conclusions. The only wise thing is to capitulate—that is the only way to have the peace you long for."

The Interrogator drummed lightly with his fingers and stared abstractedly at some point on the carpet which seemed visible only to him. He was wearing a brown suit of good material; his high forehead and rich chestnut hair, streaked with grey and brushed to the back of his head, made him look like a professor or a philosopher. He did not appear to be more than fifty.

"I want to say something else before we part," he continued, still in a friendly voice. "You must realise that we are in no hurry. We are patient; we give a man just as much time to think as he wants. We can wait for a month, a year, five years, or even longer. The longer you take to make your decision to talk, the greater and the more intense your suffering will be. We regret this, but your own behaviour warrants this procedure. As for going on living—we will see that you do this in any case, even if your resistance should last a hundred years!"

With a calm gesture, he pressed a bell on the wall beside him. When the warder was about to place the metal shade over my eyes, the man who had just given me this fatherly advice saluted me as though confirming the impression of good will. I returned the salute though spiritually I was far away and indifferent to him.

The fact that I had hardly been allowed to sleep since I had come to this new prison made me believe that the Commission were not satisfied with my final declaration. No doubt the heads of the Security Police, having examined it and compared it with information gathered by their agents, had come to the conclusion that many secrets were still hidden in my brain. Probably it had not taken them very long to find out that, driven to the verge of insanity, I had invented a plot which had led them on a wild goose chase, and they had therefore decided to continue to exert pressure on my mind by a new method. The régime of sleeplessness which I had undergone almost without interruption for about two months (as far as I could judge) had prevented me from recovering my mental powers and had also given rise to excessive irritability and a psychological upheaval of terrifying dimension. There was little I could do about it, however hard I tried. I felt as though I were on a huge merry-go-round which revolved by day and by night at the speed of thought and caused a continual state of giddiness, an emptiness in the stomach, a light-headedness, an unimaginable mass of confused hallucinations.

The first team of warders had been replaced by fresh, young recruits and I had not a moment's respite from their relentless supervision. I had become a victim of the earth's gravity, of the winter's cold, of the radiator's heat, of the stimulant which drove away sleep, of the warders who kept me awake—all these were part of the net which entangled me.

The memory of the floggings and of running round in that eternal circle still terrorised me and to avoid these tortures I used all my strength in fighting sleep. For hours on end as I took three paces to and from the door (which, like the doors of burial vaults, was without a knob or handle on the inside) I repeated a kind of incantation I had made up. It was based on an old legend about a sculptor who had begged God to transmute his being into some other form and had become a tree with golden leaves, then the sun, then a cloud, a rock . . . "Lord, change me into a rock," I prayed, "help me to stand up to these frightening storms; make me strong, so that they cannot break me."

Repeating these words thousands of times, I began to imagine that I had indeed been changed into a rock. The rock was lashed by breakers and struck by lightning, apocalyptic monsters flew towards it through the crests of giant waves; but only small fragments were torn away from it—its rocky substance resisted the claws of the wild beasts and its head remained above the swirling waters.

The spy-hole opened softly and I could see the warder's eye through the round opening in the door. I could see his long, black eyelashes, the whites of the eyes, the iris with its golden specks, the pupil trying to discover what was going on inside my soul. After a long, fixed look, he shouted: "Come on! Walk! Don't stand still!" As I went on walking, I repeated another prayer: "Oh Lord! Keep me from dying under the gaze of this inhuman, hating eye. Nothing has ever filled me with so much dread as its watchfulness, its lack of pity."

I longed for a different death and my mind was filled with visions which I could hardly distinguish from reality.

I saw a region of great beauty in the Fagaras mountains. The rocky peaks were sharp against a clear sky; forests of oak, beech and fir sloped into a valley with its grasslands and its fields of silvery maize. Winding along a narrow path came a long procession of men in white homespun shirts and trousers, the bright embroidery on their wide belts coloured like the flowers in the fields. These men were followed by old priests whose long white beards and hair made them look like patriarchs. Their copes of ivory brocade stitched with gold gleamed in the summer sun, and from their hands swung chased silver censers spreading the smell of incense over the fields. At the head of the procession, four youths carried a pine-wood catafalque on which my body rested. The priests chanted the funeral dirge—"Lord deliver him! Lord, receive him into his eternal resting-place where there is neither sadness nor torment but everlasting peace"—and the *contakion* was taken up by the whole procession. They came to a wide river flowing between old willows and tall grasses which bowed to the reflections of the sun and the white clouds. The youths laid my body down on a white stone block and the priests blessed it with sacramental gestures. At that moment a white flame burst from the sun, enveloped the block of stone and turned it into pure

crystal. The procession, still chanting, slowly withdrew. Left alone, fixed in the block of crystal, I gazed at the setting sun, the fall of twilight, the beauty of the summer night with its millions of stars, daybreak and sunrise—the universe was displayed before my wide-open eyes; I gazed at it, eternally awake, safe . . .

I led a fantastic life dominated by hallucinations which I could no longer resist. In the evening, the water singing in the radiator pipes conjured up an Indian town and an exotic orchestra. Hundreds of musicians stood in an enormous amphitheatre—with flutes, pipes, gold and silver trumpets, clarinets, and string instruments which were unknown to me. I was the conductor and stood on a raised platform. On my right a choir of young boys and girls dressed in white saris were waiting for me to begin. When I gave the signal the music rose in a plaintive, meditative overture; it gradually increased in volume until it became a great outburst of swelling, protesting sound. Another movement of my baton and the choir took up the melody, their pure voices rising in perfect unison and faithfully interpreting my every gesture. Now they raised their arms and I could hear their words:

"Gods of light, turn away from the abominations of the earth!"

"Dark gods, why do you still suffer men to destroy each other?"

Suddenly, choir and orchestra started to revolve in an immense spiral, and finally vanished though I could still hear the melody, from a long way off, and now returning to the plaintive opening theme.

Then, as from an abyss, rose another music, made up of the screams of millions of tortured men. The vision broke up into many horrible scenes—aeroplanes, hit by missiles, crashed in flames and smoke exploding as they hit the earth; giant tanks crashed into each other, becoming incandescent like lamps . . . Millions of tracer bullets tore through the darkness. . . .

With each of the thin lines by which I marked the passing of the days I knew that I was nearer to madness.

For about two weeks now I had been woken by a scream coming from a cell which must have been about ten yards from mine. It was a woman's voice and the scream held a note of indescribable terror. I concluded that this woman, waking up in her narrow cell with no human being to offer her the slightest consolation, was screaming to relieve her nightmare existence. When this happened, the officer in charge and the warders rushed to her cell and tried to muffle the shrieks. I could hear her quite clearly crying out, struggling, groaning, begging for human company. Finally her voice would dwindle to an almost inaudible murmur and die away. Probably an injection of some strong drug made her fall into a heavy sleep.

One afternoon a man's voice called out:

"Ortansa! Ortansaaa . a . . a . . . a! Do you hear me? I was taken from Jassy to the prison at Ocnele Mari; I am in cell number four. I implore you! Send the car this evening to bring me home . . . I can't bear to stay here any longer—please bring me home! I implore you . . . I implo . . o . . ore you!"

Jassy is a university town near the Russian frontier. Ocnele Mari is about 200 miles from it and is famous for its salt-mines which are worked by convicts.

From this man's voice I took him for an intellectual in his fifties, a professor or a doctor perhaps. In his frenzy, he hammered on the door of his cell calling to his wife, apparently unaware that the secret prison where he was detained was in Bucharest. The officer on duty and the warders rushed to his cell and set upon him:

"What's all the row about? If you've got anything to say, call for your warder and ask him to bring the officer in charge. If you go on shouting you'll be whipped to the bone . . ."

"Please let me go home. Ortansa, my wife, is waiting for me, so are my children. They're worried, they don't know where I've disappeared to. I know how worried they must be, they'll go mad if they don't get news of me."

"You'll have to settle that with the Commission," replied the voice of the officer on duty. "It's asked you for a declaration and

you'll go home to your wife and family as soon as you've made it. Until then, we must keep you here, so it's no use shouting. You understand?"

"I understand," replied a resigned, stifled voice.

But a few minutes later he was shouting again:

"Ortansa-a-a-a-a! Ortansa-a-a-a-a! Do you hear me? I was taken away . . ."

Again the warders and the officer on duty hurried to his cell but the prisoner struggled and, instead of calming down, shrieked with all his might.

"Ortansa-a-a-a . . .! Ortansa-a-a-a! Come and rescue me from these Communist vipers. They know I'm a Social-Democrat and they want to bite me, to kill me with their fangs!"

He got more and more excited; he fought, howled, groaned, swore. At last he was taken away, down the corridor in the direction of the interrogation rooms. About an hour later he was brought back. I could hear him stumbling and muttering:

"The Communist vipers have kidnapped me. Death to them! The Communist vipers have kidnapped me . . . have kidnapped me . . . have kidnapped me . . .! Death to them . . . death . . . death . . .! Ortansa, save me . . .!"

He was not the only prisoner whose mind was beyond control. Every morning, in a cell somewhere to my right, I heard the voice of a young man shouting: "I am not General Fanfani; I am Captain Giuliano, his adjutant. There has been a mistake, I am not guilty."

When the warders came near him Captain Giuliano would shriek and howl like a wounded animal.

Then, in the silence of the night, a young woman would start pleading: "Have pity on me. I am pregnant. I am expecting a baby. Please let me go home so that my child will not be born here . . ."

She never spoke very loudly. She pleaded, implored her gaolers to be human, to understand, to have pity. I could hear the warders trying to calm her by all kinds of arguments. Several hours would pass, and then again she would beg for compassion. I could hear her retching at meal times, when the smell of the food always made her vomit.

Every day at about lunch-time an old man in a cell about half way down the corridor would beg: "I'm hungry! I'm hungry! Send me a piece of bread, mother dear!"

Sometimes he recited verses about a matter which apparently obsessed him:

"I have no savings in Beirut!
In Beirut I sold my daughter's body.
That's how I earned my bread!
In Beirut I had no money.
I sold my daughter's body.
That's how I earned my money!"

I imagined that he was an Armenian or a Greek who had perhaps once been a rich merchant. Probably he had been locked up to make him hand over his assets abroad or the gold which he may have buried somewhere.

Sometimes in the evening a young man woke the whole prison with his cries: "I am innocent! I am innocent! I have not betrayed the Party. I have not given in to the Enemies of the People nor to the Imperialists! I have not made any concessions in the class struggle! I am devoted to the Party. Why am I being kept locked up?"

Another, with a high-pitched voice, chanted:

"Come, angel of the Lord,
With a flaming sword in your hand.
Come and break down the walls,
Come and break down the door!
Angel of the Lord, deliver me."

The cries were stifled by threats or by the bedclothes or, when this had no effect, by an injection or a drug.

Those who had gone out of their minds were left in their cells for about a fortnight. Then, when the gaolers were satisfied that

their madness was genuine and not a pretence, they were taken away, presumably to an asylum.

The behaviour of those who had lost control over their minds frightened me, for I realised how over-strained I was myself. I had another hallucination, of madmen crowding an immense cavern lit by blazing pine-trees which crackled as the flames rose high into the darkness of the roof. From time to time warders, dressed in the khaki uniforms of the Security Police, seized one of the men and dragged him shrieking and struggling to a river on which a boat shaped like a gondola awaited him. The boatman, in a black cloak with a hood, had the features of my last interrogator, the one whose tone had been so fatherly. The warders forced their captive down on his knees and dragged his head back so that his eyes looked straight into those of the boatman. Then, after a moment, the kneeling man rose to his feet, apparently conscious and master of himself; the warders wrapped him in a white, hooded cloak; serenely he stepped into the prow and standing up, his arms crossed on his breast, looked ahead while the boatman pushed the boat into the middle of the river where an unseen current bore it swiftly down-stream. Only then did the other madmen catch sight of the gondola floating majestically onward with its two upright figures at the prow and at the stern. Seizing torches of burning pine they rushed down to the river bank and there they began to turn round and round as if directed by a ballet master, spinning faster and faster while the gondola vanished through a pointed opening as high as a church steeple. Then the madmen suddenly became aware of my presence and invited me by gestures to join their dancing. "Come, dance with us," they seemed to say. "Come, shout and howl with us. It's the only way to stop thinking and when you have stopped thinking you will know the rare happiness which is our lot!" And such was the strength of their appeal that I could feel a scream forming in me and rising to my lips and it was all I could do to silence it by clutching at my throat and stopping my mouth with the palm of my hand. I felt that the moment I screamed something in my brain would snap. I strove desperately to master the impulse towards lunacy, to throw off my hallucinations and to come back to the world of reality; but I knew that only a small incident was needed to release the suppressed scream.

"Doctor, please don't go without helping me. I am an old, sick woman, please help me to be taken to hospital."

The plea was made in a gentle voice which seemed very familiar to me. Where had I heard that voice before and that sad restrained sobbing which seemed to come from the cell two doors away? Then I remembered: the voice reminded me of my mother at my brother's funeral when she had cried in just that same gentle, pitiful way.

Next day the same scene was repeated, but this time I could hear more clearly. A man whom I took to be the prison doctor was saying: "I am sorry, it doesn't rest with me. It's true, you are ill and you ought to be in hospital. But only the Interrogator in charge of your case can let you go."

"Please, doctor! Do something to help me! Don't leave me in this state . . ."

Surely the voice was my mother's. Surely I couldn't be mistaken. Since the day before I had been obsessed by it and now I was almost certain that it was my mother who was in the nearby cell though I argued with myself that that was impossible. But on the ninetieth day of my imprisonment I had been taken to the interrogator who, perhaps to assess my psychological condition, had briefly questioned me and then given me a little talk: "Your mother will be held responsible for not having denounced you to the authorities when you came back from abroad. We know for certain that you met after your return . . ."

I had in fact carefully avoided seeing anyone belonging to me —but clearly the Interrogator had kept his word all the same. And what was I to do now?

The régime which the Interrogators imposed on me had, as it were, caught my mind and soul in a vice and this new agony far surpassed the pain of flogging.

It was about this time that I became obsessed with the idea of suicide. I was convinced that only my death would save my family and those whom I protected by my silence. But how was I to die ?

For months I had scrutinised every detail of my cell, hoping to find a means of taking my life. The walls were absolutely smooth; the radiator pipes were encased in wood; the window had a close-meshed wire netting between the glass and the bars. I had no hope of getting hold of a cord and still less of finding anything on which to hang it. And even if I had such things, the warder's visits at thirty-second intervals gave me no time to prepare my suicide. In the lavatories the cisterns were fixed so high that they were out of reach and even the chains were encased in pipes cemented into the wall.

In one corner of a lavatory I did find a thick cast-iron pipe—it was part of the drain—fixed to the wall at a height of about ten feet by a large iron ring at each end. It must have escaped the notice of the warders and here it would be possible to suspend a rope.

But where could I find a rope?

While I was trying desperately to find a solution the cell door opened and the officer on duty threw a pair of thin pyjamas on my bed and ordered me to hand over the filthy, evil-smelling shirt which by now had almost rotted away on me. Putting on the clean pyjamas was a pleasant experience; it reminded me of a far-distant life . . . Next day I noticed that one of the mother-of-pearl buttons on the trousers had cracked down the middle, and I managed to break off a sharp splinter, about three-quarters of an inch long.

I intended to cut the veins of my left wrist. First I thought of doing it when I lay down at night—I would have a chance to hide my hand under the quilt and the blood would flow into the mattress; then in an hour or so my heart would stop beating without the warder having noticed anything. But, on second thoughts, what would happen if he ordered me, as he often did,to keep both hands outside the quilt or to turn to face the light? He would certainly notice my increasing pallor, or bloodstains on the bedclothes.

My mind then fixed itself on a single problem: how to get hold of a cord. After several days I discovered that there was a thin piping-cord in each of the outside leg-seams of my pyjama-trousers. I could not undo the seams while I was in the cell for the warder would have noticed my movements, but in the lavatory I should have two-and-a-half minutes to myself. I would take my splinter with me and cut the seams just below the waist; then I could pull the cords out with my fingers.

I spent two days and nights going over the time I would need to slit the seams, pull the cord out, tie it to the iron ring in the wall and put my head into the noose . . . I believed that I could do it in sixty seconds; but I thought that the other minute and a half would not be enough to kill me. Each morning I counted the number of seconds I was allowed to remain in the lavatory. When I got to about a hundred and fifty, the warder knocked loudly and ordered me to come out. If after that I delayed a moment he pushed the door open and ordered me to leave. I believed that in order to be sure that I would not survive I needed at least two hundred and forty seconds. A lot would depend on which of the warders was in charge of me when I went to the lavatory.

These young Security men were between twenty and twenty-five years old; judging by their features, speech and manners, most of them came from the suburban slums of Bucharest while some were peasants. Their discipline was perfect. They never entered into conversation with a prisoner; their only answer to a request was "Yes," "No," or "Wait." All these young men lived under the pressure of a stern rule and of perpetual fear of punishment. Even to attempt to get into communication with them was virtually impossible. Yet one of them—I think he was of peasant origin—seemed more tolerant than the others. On one occasion he had allowed me an extra sixty seconds in the lavatory; on these extra seconds I based my hope of committing suicide. But I would have to wait another five days before this "kind" warder was on duty.

Then two days before the moment which I was awaiting so feverishly, the whole team of warders was replaced by a new one and I had to give up my plan. I was overwhelmed by frustration, I felt as if I had been crushed by an avalanche and buried under the debris so that I could scarcely breathe.

After this my hallucinations became very frequent.

One evening, when the radiator had begun its mournful music, the wall in front of me rolled back and a chain of snowy mountains gleamed in the rising sun. In the foreground was a little Indian temple dedicated to the goddess Kali. A tall tree shaded it. At its foot an old man sat with his legs tucked under him and his hands resting on his knees in Brahmin fashion. He had a long and very thin white beard. His ascetic face had the same serenity as the blue sky stretching over the dazzling peaks. As I gazed at him he bowed his head slightly, smiled and said: "I can see you have forgotten me. Don't you remember Aurobin Dogos, the Brahmin?"

I heard myself replying: "You have no idea how long I have been looking for you and calling you . . ."

"I had to make a long journey to get here," he said. "It took me sixty years."

For months after this I lived in the company of the "Brahmin" whom I believed at the time to be a real person other than myself. But these visions were different in character from the nightmare hallucinations I had had before. It seemed that, somehow, I had reached a deeper level of my being and these new experiences, instead of helping my enemies, marked the beginning of a period of spiritual integration.

I held long conversations with the "hermit" and it was "he" who argued me out of committing suicide, persuading me that life was sacred and must be lived to the last breath.

I complained to him that, locked inside these walls and thinking ceaselessly night and day without a moment's respite, I had reached the limits of my endurance. "Tell me," I begged him, "am I the victim of these men who hold me captive, or at the mercy of some harsh, blind laws of nature?"

He explained to me his view of suffering. "Some people it destroys," he said, "other are challenged by it to resist some evil or to undertake some positive, creative act; some are corrupted, lose control over themselves and become cruel and vengeful, others grow in strength and grace."

"But what can a man do alone, armed with nothing but his free will, against an overwhelming evil?" I asked him.

In answer, he told me a story.

Two swallows nested under the eaves of a fisherman's hut near the sea-shore. Teaching their young to fly, they took them out over the sea, gradually training them to cross long distances and to face the hardships they would have to undergo during their migration. The fledgelings shot into the air, exulting in the joy of flight and freedom, but a gust of wind caught one of them and flung it down upon the surface of the waves. The small bird kept its wings outstretched so that it did not sink, but neither could it rise; floating like a leaf, it called piteously to its parents as they circled over it. The parent swallows did their best to calm and to encourage it, then they flew back to the shore and made innumerable journeys to the water's edge, each time carrying a drop of water in their beaks and pouring it into the sand. Thus they hoped to empty the ocean and to save their young.

"Their heroic effort is a lesson to us," the "Brahmin" went on. "The human will and spirit must also not be resigned at moments of crisis; it must go on looking for a solution, however overwhelming the odds. You must not accept defeat, you must not believe your efforts to be in vain. If you have the blind courage to continue to endure and to struggle, you will find a new beginning in your life."

My conversations with the hermit living in solitude near the temple to the goddess Kali had lasted several months. Outside spring was appearing; the strength of the light and a suspicion of warmth in the air were the first signs. Who was the "Brahmin"? Why was he trying to give me precious support? Understanding my perplexity, he gently held out a pale, skeleton-like hand and stroked my forehead with his cold fingers. Somehow transfigured, he said to me with emotion:

"You want to know who I am? I am your spirit; your reason! You appealed to me in a moment of abject despair. In your isolation and helplessness, only I am capable of encouraging you to bolster your morale and strengthen your will; apart from me, there is no one who is able to come to your aid. Put your trust in my strength and you will never regret it!"

This encounter was indeed a turning point in my existence. Gradually my nightmares left me and I discovered an inner calm and balance and achieved control over my mind and body.

After days and weeks of practice I found that I could sit motionless on my chair for hours, my head leaning gently against the wall and my eyes open. I breathed deeply and quietly, my will controlling my heart-beats and keeping them steady. Hunger and fatigue took less toll of my strength than when I had dissipated it in pacing up and down my cell, fighting against drowsiness. My small ration of food and the two or three hours' sleep I was allowed out of the twenty-four were now sufficient for my bodily needs.

To detach my mind totally from my surroundings took more time and effort. At first I told myself that I was a spectator in a darkened room: my prison life was nothing but a film projected on a screen, which I trained myself to interrupt at will. At a later stage I succeeded in looking upon my body, sitting motionless in the chair, as though it were a photograph. Still later I felt my spirit able to escape the prison walls and undertake long journeys.

The warders were puzzled by the transformation which had taken place before their eyes: a man who had been frantic, driven to the verge of madness by lack of sleep, now sat calm and as still as a statue. From time to time they knocked on the door and ordered me to move my head or blink my eyes, to make sure that I was still alive and lucid. Inwardly I had reached a peace and a serenity which I had never known before.

Time no longer dragged; solitude was not a hardship, it was the opportunity for ceaseless contemplation. Freed from its anxieties, my mind devoted itself passionately to pure thought. I now longed to survive—even, if need be, in prison—for I was enchanted by the happiness of my new spiritual freedom. I longed to encompass the universe, to search its mysteries, as inexhaustible as infinity. At the same time this transformation made available to me a source of energy which enormously increased my powers of resistance to my adversaries. This triumph of reason over madness radically changed my whole life. I believe now that, through the discipline of contemplation, I did in fact arrive at a new philosophy based on the values of humanism and the laws of concord. Freeing myself from theories and beliefs, I became conversant with the laws of the universe and developed a new understanding of suffering, freedom, discord and harmony, revolution and evolution.

In this book of factual events there is no place for a philosophical treatise. I mention it only because it was the development of these ideas which gave me the will to stay alive in order to pass them on to the West.

The young Security Lieutenant who sat behind the desk in the interrogation room was unknown to me. He looked at me for a moment with an expression of curiosity. The strong daylight falling straight on his head from a window high up in the wall brought out the red tints in his wavy hair. Without any preamble he began to tell me about a wolf-hunt he had taken part in the day before (it was a Sunday). His story was full of detail: the journey to the Danube Delta with two other officers, keen huntsmen; the night spent in a fisherman's cottage; the lying in wait; the beaters, the wolves coming out of their lairs among the reeds; the joy of being free, active, and able to enjoy the beauty of the spring landscape; the return to Bucharest.

"But although I was out of town I was thinking a great deal about you," he went on in a friendly voice. "We are much concerned about those who have been overwhelmed by the exceptional circumstances of our time. The historical process we are living through is not only hard for those who have misunderstood it and opposed it but for those of us who have brought it about and are carrying it through. The difference between us is that because dialectical materialism is a science we can see our way clearly ahead and achieve success after success. The Party makes no mistakes. Such small errors as happen are made by individual institutions or individual members, and they are soon put right.

"But this is not what I meant to talk to you about. The Comrade Attorney has asked me to see you and find out about your health. Have you any complaints about your food or the warders in attendance on your cell? Today it is exactly two hundred and twenty days since your arrest, and it is our duty to make a check-up after such a time. Have you any requests you wish to make?"

The envoy of the Comrade Attorney brought me back into a world from which I had become estranged. His polite message from a high-ranking authority was a great surprise to me. I replied dryly: "Thank you for your interest in my lot. My health is all right. I have no complaints about my warders and my food is satisfactory."

"Would you like an extra slice of bread?" he interrupted. "The Comrade Attorney would be willing to grant such a request."

"Thank you, but the food ration I am getting is enough. Please ask the Attorney, however, if I could have a few books, and permission to send a few lines to my family."

The young officer—he could not have been more than twenty-five—reddened with anger at my refusing the Attorney's generous offer of a piece of bread. He said sarcastically: "At the moment that's impossible. You must first answer the questions put to you by the Commission . . . Perhaps, after a few more years you'll have learned how to behave in a prison, and then you'll be allowed to read and to write home."

Dissatisfaction was written all over his face when he rang for the warder.

That same evening I was taken before another officer, this time a Captain.

He proudly told me of his proletarian origin and his record as a Communist. The old régime had given him a ten-year sentence for his underground activities; the Party, in recognition of his services, had appointed him Interrogator, thus giving him an opportunity to play his part in the campaign against the "enemies of the people."

He interrogated me on and off for nearly forty-eight hours and ended with an outburst of horrible threats. Most of his questions concerned my helping people to escape abroad and were a repetition of those put to me by the Commission seven months earlier. They were skilful and probing, though as usual, to avoid giving me a clue as to how much was already known to the Commission, they remained fairly general.

Afterwards, once again enclosed in my cold cell under the unsleeping eye of the warder on duty, I sat motionless on my chair, trying to regain my calm. But I was shivering violently and I felt a pain in my kidneys as if they had been caught and squeezed by forceps.

The prison was a strange institute of psychiatric research, in which the research workers tried to read the thoughts of men shut up in cages and constrained by every means to offer themselves for experiment; but I for my part could study these experts, down to the smallest detail of their science. Only those within its walls could understand its secrets, and as few of them emerged into the light of day the secrets remained locked within its dungeons. But as a human guinea-pig I was one of those who had the chance of studying them closely.

It was a paradox that prison life was calculated and built up to appear as harmonious and as inevitable as the stars in their courses.

The impression created was that of a small collective society whose life was based on harmony. But happiness and contentment, the fruits of harmony, were absent; instead were hatred, unhappiness, cruelty, slow destruction and despair. In this struggle of opposites the victors imprisoned the conquered and created a strange relationship. The harmony was not true harmony, but a kind of concord imposed by force.

The vanquished were forced to live a life which was mercilessly imposed upon them by a power which had absolute dominion over them. There was no other power to appeal to, no one to defend them or to judge them impartially.

Moreover this forced concord now constituted one of the basic laws of the "New World" built by the victorious Communists. The "New Society" was divided into two classes, the leaders and the warders (the Security Police); these compelled the mass of the people to live according to their model of collective life.

The only difference between the forced concord within the prison and the forced concord imposed on the millions outside was the degree of constraint and the method of its application, and the resultant difference in degree of suffering and of despair. In essence the two ways of life were the same.

It was true that Communist theoreticians held out the ideal of a classless society and of the "withering of the State"—of a society without injustice or compulsion. But this was to be reached at the end of a ruthless "dialectical" struggle of opposites, and it was clear to me that it was quite impossible for this to be a means to such an end.

Sitting in my cell, I had a vision of our century in which the soul and spirit of man were going through a decisive test. Not only social systems but religions and philosophies were passing through the fire of a terrestrial purgatory. The fate of millions of human beings in centuries to come depended on the triumph or defeat of positive, eternal values, and on every man's capacity to understand and to defend them.