Journey Into the Whirlwind Study Guide

Journey Into the Whirlwind by Yevgenia Ginzburg

BOOKRAGS

Contents

Plot Summary

In the winter of 1937, Eugenia Semyonovna Ginzburg is a loyal and active Communist Party member, schoolteacher, and writer. She is a good mother and a loyal wife to Pavel, who is also a loyal Communist and Party worker. When a Communist Party official is assassinated, Stalin's regime seeks out the culprits, arresting anyone for the slightest offenses. Ginzburg's friend Elvov, a writer who has contributed an article to a history of the Communist Party, is targeted because Stalin says the article is full of Trotskyist ideas. Elvov is arrested, and Ginzburg is arrested for not denouncing Elvov. Ginzburg is taken to Black Lake, a lakeside resort town which also has a secret police building. There she is interrogated and accused of terrorism and her case is referred to military tribunal in Moscow.

The military tribunal finds her guilty and sentences her to ten years of imprisonment and five years without civil rights. For the next three years, Ginzburg suffers horribly as she is shifted between prisons, brutally interrogated, denied adequate food, water, and medical care. Her sentence is revised and she is ordered to carry out the rest of her sentence doing hard labor in an isolated prison camp called Kolyma, and then to the state farm Elgen. There, she is forced to fell trees in the freezing snow without proper clothing or protection against the elements. By bribing her prison team leader, Ginzburg is given work in the guesthouse and the kitchens.

She later meets a visiting doctor named Petukhov. Petukhov recognizes Ginzburg from her family resemblance to her son who is staying in Leningrad with family, and Petukhov arranges to have her work in the children's hospital at the camp because Ginzburg can read Latin. In the epilogue, Ginzburg states that she had originally intended to write the book as a letter to her grandson.

Part I, Chapter 1, A Telephone Call at Dawn

Part I, Chapter 1, A Telephone Call at Dawn Summary and Analysis

Journey into the Whirlwind is an account by Eugenia Semyonovna Ginzburg of life under the brutal and deadly Stalin regime. A loyal Communist, Ginzburg is falsely accused of being a counterrevolutionary, and sentenced to imprisonment. She recounts her struggles in terrifying prisons and horrendous labor camps. Ginzburg's memoir is a story of human survival against the horrors of Communism.

In Part I, Chapter 1, Eugenia Semyonovna Ginzburg is awakened at four in the morning by a telephone call on December 1, 1934. A loyal Communist, Ginzburg actively serves the party as a teacher and her husband Pavel Aksyonova works for the Tartar Province Committee of the Communist Party. The telephone call directs her to report to the regional committee office.

She has been called to the office along with forty other teachers. Sergy Kirov, Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, has been assassinated. The teachers are to deliver the news to factories and other places of work. Ginzburg is assigned the textile mill in Zarechye in the district of Kazan.

When she returns to town, she has tea with Yestafyev, director of the Marxist Institute. He reveals to Ginzburg that Kirov's assassin was a Communist.

In the first chapter of Ginzburg's memoir, readers learn quickly that the author is a loyal and active Communist, and they can see some of the intrusive government structure that coordinates the lives of citizens in order to maintain control. There is a regional group of leaders as well as local groups of leaders. Ginzburg, a teacher who would be considered a private citizen in most countries, is simply ordered out of her house at four in the morning to report to the regional committee office by local Communist leaders. There, she is assigned to spread news of Kirov's assassination and designated a place to do this. She has no choice in the matter at all. But Ginzburg doesn't even question whether or not she wants to perform the task; she does it willingly because she is a loyal Communist.

Readers learn later in the chapter that Kirov's assassin was a Communist. This fills Ginzburg with a sense of foreboding. It also demonstrates that the government does not have complete control over its citizens, because the assassin is a Communist. It a Communist assassinates another Communist, it further implies that there is no such thing as a loyal Communist any longer.

Part I, Chapter 2, The Red-Haired Professor

Part I, Chapter 2, The Red-Haired Professor Summary and Analysis

In Part I, Chapter 2, the newspapers report the identities of the murderers -men named Nikolayev, Rumyantsev, and Katalynov. But the government's crackdown does not end there. In February 1935, Professor Elvov from the Marxist Institute visits Ginzburg. Elvov has contributed an article to a series of books dealing with the history of the Communist Party. Elvov's section in particular has been targeted by Stalin for errors that are labeled "Trotsykyist".

Elvov has been a Party-approved professor, is thirty-three, and has a son. He is a prominent speaker in the Party. He also comes to apologize to Ginzburg because his association with her may prove costly for her. They have known each other since 1932, and collaborated on a handful of projects together.

The next morning, Ginzburg discovers that Elvov has been arrested in the middle of the night.

Since a Communist has assassinated another Communist, the government is now weeding through Party members to determine loyalty. Elvov is considered dangerous because Stalin has accused his work of harboring Trotskyist ideas. In order to maintain control, and in order to spread fear among citizens, the Communist government resorts to tactics such as middle-of-the-night arrests, of which Elvov suffers from. This puts tremendous fear into the people, though many -like Ginzburg- believe they are safe because they have been loyal and active Communists. But loyal Communist activity simply will not be enough.

Part I, Chapter 3, Prelude

Part I, Chapter 3, Prelude Summary and Analysis

In Part I, Chapter 3, shortly after Elvov's arrest, Ginzburg is summoned to a Party meeting where she is denounced for having not condemned Elvov. Ginzburg attempts to defend herself, saying that no one has condemned Elvov in their area. She also notes that the local Party leaders reverse logic against her. She wants to know if Elvov has even been found guilty of being a Trotskyist; the leaders reply that he has been arrested, so he is a Trotskyist.

During a recess break, Alexandra Alexandrovna, a typist at the newspaper Red Tartary, tells Ginzburg it would be in Ginzburg's best interest to admit guilt and repent. If not, Ginzburg is headed for serious trouble. She refuses, and she is reprimanded, though the reprimand is later canceled on appeal. Elsewhere, the same thing is happening to countless others, and their appeals are not successful.

Stalin's regime, in conjunction with the frailties of the Communist system, seek to stamp out even perceived opposition to their control. They fear a popular uprising, similar to the uprising they led years before against Czar Nicholas. And in order to maintain power, and continue to instill fear in their people, they continue to apply weight to the people. Apathetic and disinterested Communists are libeled for not denouncing their lesser fellow citizens. The local Party chapters do everything they can to organize and maintain control, because they know that if they do not, their own lives will be in jeopardy from the government hierarchy. But Ginzburg will not be dissuaded because she knows she is right, which causes Party members to place even more pressure on her.

Part I, Chapter 4, Snowball

Part I, Chapter 4, Snowball Summary and Analysis

In Part I, Chapter 4, Mikhail Razumov is a builder and a close friend of Ginzburg and her husband. Razumov has built Livadia, the regional committee's country villa. There, in the spring of 1935, she is introduced to Comrade Beylin, the new chairman of the bureau of Party Political Control. Beylin calls her to his office later on, and interrogates her over her association with Elvov. They have daily meetings over the topic. Tolerance toward Elvov is construed as disloyalty to the Party. Another unnamed man joins in the interrogations, which continue for two months.

At the same time, Ginzburg tells of her friend Pitkovskaya, a militant communist who loses her husband, whom she condemns as a traitor to the Party. Pitkovskaya loved him dearly, but she loved the Party more. She ultimately committed suicide by drinking a glass of acid. Her suicide note begged others to remember her as a good Communist.

In autumn 1935, Ginzburg is given a severe reprimand, and has her teaching license revoked.

Ginzburg's problems continue to escalate. She is now brought before official bureau for Party Political Control to be officially reprimanded. In the process, she has her teaching license revoked. The same thing is happening to dozens of others across Russia. The confusion at the local level initially seems to be on some form of hesitance from the higher ups on how to deal with the issue of a potential popular revolt. Soft methods are first employed, which slowly gain strength -from local reprimand to official reprimand to official punishments, such as having teaching licenses revoked. Appeals are granted, and then overturned. Whether or not this is abject confusion on the part of the Party, or deliberate efforts to instill fear in the people -or both- Ginzburg does not elaborate on. It is likely a mixture of both -that at first, the Communists do not know how to handle the problem (How could a Communist kill another Communist?) and then the government seeks to confuse and intimidate the people as time goes on (If there can be one Communist assassin, there are probably more).

Part I, Chapter 5, There's No One So Silly as a Clever Man

Part I, Chapter 5, There's No One So Silly as a Clever Man Summary and Analysis

In Part I, Chapter 5, Ginzburg recounts with sadness September 1, 1935, when the new school year begins and she is no longer allowed to teach. Her mother-in-law, Avdotya Aksyonova, is a simple, traditional woman whom Ginzburg calls "Grandmother". Grandmother warns Ginzburg that a trap is being set for her, and that she should go as far away as she possibly can. But Ginzburg wants to prove her innocence, and her husband dismisses the idea of leaving.

Ginzburg recounts that some intelligent people did indeed escape Communist oppression by slipping away to distant places. But Ginzburg admits she was not one of them.

Ginzburg is still a devout Communist and wants to prove her innocence, against the wishes of her mother-in-law. Even though it is a time of relative peace, night arrests and confusion are seeping into the lives of Communist citizens. Fear is becoming constant. Gimzburg reflects with sadness how others managed to escape Communist oppression at the early stages, and she herself did not try to do so. These other people saw the writing on the wall, and did their best to avoid the storm that was coming. Many of them were successful. Ginzburg's mother-in-law predicts the coming storm as well, but Ginzburg cannot see it because she simply wants to teach and continue living her life how it always had been.

Part I, Chapter 6, My Last Year

Part I, Chapter 6, My Last Year Summary and Analysis

In Part I, Chapter 6, Ginzburg is in Moscow to appeal her reprimand. All over, people are being rounded up, arrested, or accused of crimes against the state. During a public funeral, Ginzburg gets a glimpse of Stalin. She finds him ugly and repulsive. She meets a number of people, including the manager of a factory in Kharkov and a printer, all accused for the slightest of circumstances. The printer mentioned a name frowned upon by the Party during an interrogation, for example.

During Ginzburg's meetings, it is revealed to her that her sentence will be reduced and eventually lifted. She returns home, but is summoned back to Moscow immediately for her final hearing. Beylin has gone to Moscow, complained, and falsely accused Ginzburg of other associations. The head of the final hearing, Yaroslavsky, denounces Ginzburg for not denouncing Elvov's contribution to the historical series of books. Ironically, Yaroslavsky was the editor of that series of books.

Local Party officials may fall into disfavor with higher-up officials has come to pass and local Party officials increase charges against their local constituents to placate the ire of their superiors. At the root of everything is Stalin, who demands vengeance. Seeking to redress their own reputation against overturned judgments, local officials increase charges for this reason as well. Ginzburg is the victim of such pettiness and rampant fear among official Party workers.

Part I, Chapter 7, Life Counted in Minutes

Part I, Chapter 7, Life Counted in Minutes Summary and Analysis

In Part I, Chapter 7, traveling back to Moscow, Ginzburg considers suicide. At her final hearing, Ginzburg discovers the charges against her have intensified. She is now accused of collaborating with the enemy, a criminal offense. She explodes in anger, and denounces Yaroslavsky for not denouncing Elvov, either. Yaroslavsky, an old man, has apparently paid for his wrongs by acknowledging them; Ginzburg wonders why she must pay for a false accusation with everything in her life. She is sent home to await her sentence.

Ginzburg's frustration over failing to prove her innocence increases to anger over the hypocrisy and corrupt nature of the hearings. The charges multiply against her. Suspicions, rumors, and false accusations are rippling throughout Soviet Russia, and as a result, no charges are being taken lightly. Ginzburg's charges now carry the weight of criminal offense.

Part I, Chapter 8, The Year 1937 Begins

Part I, Chapter 8, The Year 1937 Begins Summary and Analysis

In Part I, Chapter 8, protests and government crackdowns are in full swing. Several family friends have disappeared. Ginzburg's eldest son, Alyosha, is sick. She and Pavel decide to take their family away for the school holidays to Astafyevo, a former prince's estate. It is the last moment of relative peace the family enjoys. Ginzburg reveals that nine-tenths of the people at the New Year's 1937 gathering at Astafyevo will be consumed by the coming purge.

Ginzburg begins to realize that the arrests and accusations are becoming more and more widespread. In a desperate attempt to get away from the horrors around them, the family goes on vacation for the holidays. The ultimate reach of the coming storm will wipe out ninety percent of the people on vacation with them at the New Year's Party. It is the final breath before the plunge. Everything after this will only get worse for her.

Part I, Chapter 9, Expelled from the Party

Part I, Chapter 9, Expelled from the Party Summary and Analysis

In Part I, Chapter 9, on February 7, 1937, Ginzburg is summoned to the district committee. The head of the committee is one of her former students, who agonizes over the hearing. Ginzburg is expelled from the Communist Party.

The following month, Ginzburg is stripped of her Party membership. This is especially telling because she no longer enjoys the rights of a Communist Party member. It adds insult to injury, because Gimzburg has long been an active and loyal Communist, and her entire course of efforts thus far have been directed at proving her innocence and securing her place as a loyal Party member.

Part I, Chapter 10, That Day

Part I, Chapter 10, That Day Summary and Analysis

In Part I, Chapter 10, eight days after she is expelled from the Party, Ginzburg is arrested. She is called down to the local offices, where she says goodbye to her husband for the final time. She considers stopping by her mother's house, but her husband advises against it.

It is only a matter of time before the sky falls apart for Ginzburg. She is arrested and says goodbye to her family, and her husband advises her not to make any stops along the way so as to avoid endangering herself any further, or endangering any others. If an old friendship can lead to Ginzburg's arrest, a contemporary friendship or relationship would affect others far worse. The Communists are arresting people for the slightest offenses, moving beyond simple reprimands and interrogations.

Part I, Chapter 11, Captain Vevers

Part I, Chapter 11, Captain Vevers Summary and Analysis

In Part I, Chapter 11, Captain Vevers questions Ginzburg. Vevers is a cold and calculating man. He antagonizes Ginzburg, calling her a traitor. He also tells Ginzburg her husband has already disowned her. Vevers has her locked up in the cellar, where he declares she will stay until she confesses to being a secret terrorist.

In keeping with the evils of the Soviet system, as well as their methods for punishment, Ginzburg is denied rights and thrown into a cellar prison until she confesses to being a terrorist, which is an elevation of the previous charges against her. Without a lawyer, or any legal recourse through being a Party member, Ginzburg has two choices: falsely confess, or suffer. Ginzburg refuses to sign something that isn't true and is imprisoned.

Part I, Chapter 12, The Cellars at Black Lake

Part I, Chapter 12, The Cellars at Black Lake Summary and Analysis

In Part I, Chapter 12, Black Lake is a lakeside resort; the Soviet secret police also had a building there, and the name "Black Lake" became infamous. Ginzburg is taken into the cellar of the secret police building at Black Lake, where she was put into cell 3. Her cell mate is Lyama Shepel, twenty-two years of age. Lyama's family worked on the Chinese-Far Eastern Railway, which was sold to the Manchurians. When the railway families returned to Soviet Russia, most of them were arrested as spies.

The cell they are in is dark, barely lit by a red light bulb, damp, and full of rust and foul smells. Lyama teaches Ginzburg the ways of communicating in the prison, such as scrawling her initials on wood planks in the restrooms. Ginzburg braces herself for the interrogations that are coming.

The crimes committed by the Soviet government against its own people increase in number. Ginzburg is shocked to learn that repatriated citizens, such as Lyama, are declared to be spies. Layama teaches Ginzburg a very simple, effective, and very crucial set of skills for her coming prison life. Lyama shows Ginzburg how to communicate by tapping on the walls and writing on washroom walls. These skills will prove to be invaluable to Ginzburg in the coming years. The Communists are now doing everything they can to cut off influences from the outside world, including the influences carried into Russia by her own citizens, such as Lyama.

Part I, Chapter 13, The Investigators Have Conclusive Evidence

Part I, Chapter 13, The Investigators Have Conclusive Evidence Summary and Analysis

In Part I, Chapter 13, Ginzburg is interrogated by Interrogator Livanov, who asks Ginzburg how long she knew Elvov. She tells him she's known Elvov since 1932, but Livanov puts down her answer as her having known the "Trotskyist Elvov since 1932." Ginzburg is incensed at this, and demands to know why her answers are being misreported. Another man in the room, State Security Lieutenant Tsarevsky, reveals that Elvov is in the same cellar, and has confessed against Ginzburg.

Livanov tells Ginzburg if she signs a confession, things will be easier on her. She refuses to sign and is sent back to her cell.

The interrogators are doing everything they can to get ahead of, or around Ginzburg at any cost -even to the point of misstating her answers. Even confronted with the news that Elvov is also imprisoned and has confessed, Ginzburg refuses to sign a statement that isn't true, and is sent back to her cell. Things are becoming much more serious, as now members of State Security are beginning to oversee secret police operations, which serves as more evidence that Stalin is growing increasingly angry and paranoid by applying more pressure to Communist Party groups and organizations to do their job more effectively.

Part I, Chapter 14, Stick and Carrot

Part I, Chapter 14, Stick and Carrot Summary and Analysis

In Part I, Chapter 14, a week passes by, full of meetings with Livanov and Tsarevsky. But on Red Army Day, Ginzburg is taken into a different office, comfortably decorated, and with a large window that gave a view of the skating competition on Black Lake. The office is occupied by a short man in a military uniform named Major Yelshin. Yelshin tries a soft approach with Ginzburg, telling her that she can go back to her children if she admits her wrongs, names names, and asks for Party forgiveness.

She is given paper and a pen to write everything down, but instead she writes a letter to the secret police, criticizing them for their methods.

After a week of futile interrogations, the Communist secret police try a different approach to handling Ginzburg's case, and the other difficult cases. Major Yelshin provides the carrot approach: soft power, appealing to Ginzburg's emotions. He is gentle and chiding, telling Ginzburg that if she signs, she can go back to her children. The Communists secret police recognize that different cases have to be approached in different fashion. Some people break through fear, others through exhaustion, and some through emotional appeals. Ginzburg still refuses to sign anything false, and instead writes a letter criticizing the secret police.

Part I, Chapter 15, The Walls Come to Life

Part I, Chapter 15, The Walls Come to Life Summary and Analysis

In Part I, Chapter 15, after a while, Ginzburg is no longer interrogated. Lyama tells her they refuse to interrogate prisoners, hoping to break them, so that they will sign anything out of desperation to be out of prison Ginzburg also learns a form of communication, through knocking on the walls. There she communicates with an old professor, Garey Sagidullin, who relates to her stories of Communist atrocities. Garey hates Stalin, and advises Ginzburg to name all the names she can. Garey believes the purge is also an excuse to kill off anyone that might challenge Stalin's supremacy. Garey has the idea that if Stalin is seen as the cause of all the Communist unrest, a congress will be called in which Stalin's leadership can be ended.

But Ginzburg decides to follow her own conscience, and will not name names. Garey was eventually shot.

The secret police try another approach where they do not interrogate prisoners at all, hoping to force them to sign confessions out of desperation. This is usually brought on by isolation and loneliness, but Ginzburg does not break. She employs the communication system of taps taught to her by Lyama, and meets an old professor, who wants to see Stalin overthrown and order restored. Many Communists have already begun to grow disillusioned with Stalin, the system, or both. Garey hopes there will be a congress which will depose Stalin, and so he advises Ginzburg to name as many names as she can, in order to sow discord and confusion. But Ginzburg does not want blood on her hands, and will not listen to Garey.

Garey's case also represents another dramatic and unfortunate turn of events in the purge early on. The accused name many names, increasing the pool of potential counter-revolutionaries. The ever-widening circle of conspirators will only add to the fear and paranoia of Stalin and his government. It is reminiscent of the Salem Witchcraft Trials, where accusations and rumors alone were enough to warrant imprisonment.

Part I, Chapter 16, Can You Forgive Me

Part I, Chapter 16, Can You Forgive Me Summary and Analysis

In Part I, Chapter 16, one month after her arrest, Garey reveals to Ginzburg that far more brutal methods of interrogation are to be employed. Lyama and Ginzburg get a cellmate, a graduate student named Ira Yegereva, who has been accused of belonging to a rightwing group. Other Communist officials are even arrested, lending credence to Garey's theory about Stalin eliminating potential contenders. Garey's new cellmate is Secretary Abdullin, whom treated Ginzburg with contempt during a hearing prior to her expulsion.

Abdullin is interrogated harshly and brought back to his cell unconscious. Lyama, Ginzburg, and Ira secretly manage to get him food and cigarettes to keep his strength up. Abdullin apologizes to Ginzburg.

Now, with the supposed conspiracy against the Communist government widening, lower Party officials themselves are being targeted. Abdullin, a secretary whom behaved contemptuously of Gimzburg during a previous local hearing, apologizes after Ginzburg and Lyama smuggle him food and cigarettes. But with the arrest of local party officials, the paranoia will increase among all levels of the Soviet government. Questions of how high the conspiracy extended will lead to increased brutality and more arrests. No one is safe anymore, no matter what their position.

Part I, Chapter 17, The Conveyor Belt

Part I, Chapter 17, The Conveyor Belt Summary and Analysis

In Part I, Chapter 17, Ginzburg is harshly interrogated using the "Conveyor Belt" method: uninterrupted interrogation with different interrogators. Ginzburg endures this for seven days. Among the interrogators is Vevers, who uses cocaine frequently. She still refuses to sign anything, and eventually blacks out. When she awakens, she is back in her cell, and Lyama is caring for her. After Ginzburg eats, she is called back for interrogations.

Part I, Chapter 17, The "Conveyor Belt" Analysis

The brutality against Ginzburg increases through the use of constant interrogation with no sleep. The interrogators continually switch up, employing a mixture of every possible method against her, from Yelshin's emotional appeals to Vever's enraged, cocaine-fueled outbursts. This goes on for seven days, and finally, Ginzburg is allowed to sleep. This is the exact opposite of the isolation method attempted previously. Stalin clearly wants results and wants the conspiracy to be unmasked, but has not yet condoned torture.

Part I, Chapter 18, Confrontations

Part I, Chapter 18, Confrontations Summary and Analysis

In Part I, Chapter 18, Ginzburg's second round of torture lasts five days. Ginzburg still does not sign any of the documents offered to her attesting to terrorist-related activities. Ginzburg says that this was not out of a desire to be courageous, but that she was lucky because far more brutal tactics had not yet become common. As the second round of interrogations is unsuccessful, getting some sort of confession from Ginzburg falls to Lieutenant Bikchentayev. Also present at the next interrogation is Ginzburg's old friend and writer from the newspaper "Red Tartary," Volodya Dyakonov. Bikchentayev explains that he will ask Volodya questions, to which Volodya must answer and Ginzburg must respond.

Volodya states that there were important people on the staff of "Red Tartary", which Bikchentayev writes down as an affirmation that there were counterrevolutionary terrorists at the paper. Volodya says he must consider his family, and he signs the paper. But Ginzburg will not sign. Another old friend and writer from "Red Tatary", Nalya Kozlova, is brought in. Kozlova intends to sell Ginzburg out, and Ginzburg speaks to Kozlova in French, threatening to name her as one of the terrorists if Ginzburg is sold out. Kozlova signs the confessional paper and leaves. Ginzburg is brought back to her cell.

Ginzburg is quick to point out that her bravery in refusing to sign any documents only portended to her luck at having not been around when far more brutal methods of forcing confessions were employed. She places no blame on anyone who signed under this pressure. The secret police, however, are incensed that Ginzburg still will not sign. Old friends are brought in to testify against her, but Ginzburg still will not sign. The secret police have run out of options and send her back to her cell.

Part I, Chapter 19, Parting

Part I, Chapter 19, Parting Summary and Analysis

In Part I, Chapter 19, Ginzburg is being sent to Krasin Street Prison, and she bids a sad farewell to Lamaya, Ira, and Garey. Ginzburg's watch, which had been taken from her on the first day at Black Lake, is returned to her. It still shows the time she was initially imprisoned on February 15, 1937, because it has not been wound.

In a moment of tragic beauty, Ginzburg's watch, which was taken from her at the beginning of the ordeal, is returned to her. It still shows the time of her imprisonment. While the outside world continues on around her, Ginzburg's own world has itself stopped.

Part I, Chapter 20, New Encounters

Part I, Chapter 20, New Encounters Summary and Analysis

In Part I, Chapter 20, Ginzburg is transported by a Black Maria (a nickname for a dark blue transport truck), the kind she had seen before her imprisonment, which she thought carried food or milk. The back of the truck contains cages, where Ginzburg is placed. She begins communicating with the others around her by tapping, and she and the other prisoners begin whispering. She discovers one of her former students, Yefrem, is in the truck. Yefrem has been arrested recently, and he explains to Ginzburg that many people in their village have been arrested.

Ginzburg is transferred, and Ira Yegereva is transferred in second round a short while later. The prison is overcrowded and smells horribly. Ginzburg and six others are crowded into a cell designed for three. Among those in the cell were Big Anna, a railway clerk; Little Anna, a party activist; Lydia Mentzinger, of German ancestry and a Seventh-Day Adventist who has been imprisoned twice before; and Nina Yeremenko , a twenty year-old factory worker. Nina has been imprisoned for "non-denunciation,"for failing to denounce someone for denouncing Stalin. Nina is inconsolable.

As Ginzburg goes to sleep, she begins thinking about the frailty of human systems and ideas, and how horrible human beings can be to one another.

The inhumanity of the Communist system is made physically apparent by the dog cage-like trucks that transport prisoners back and forth. During the revolution, the Communists proclaimed that they had been treated like dogs; now, they are treated their own people in the very same fashion. Arrests are continuing to intensify in number; nondenunciation has become a crime, and is punishable by imprisonment rather than mere local reprimand. The Soviet crackdown is getting harsher.

Part I, Chapter 21, Orphans Twice Over

Part I, Chapter 21, Orphans Twice Over Summary and Analysis

In Part I, Chapter 21, Ginzburg notes that there is a lack of discipline at Krasin Street Prison, which allows prisoners to tap freely between cells. The prisoners also find creative ways to communicate, such as scribbling on scrap cigarette paper, and singing messages to each other. In one such message, Ginzburg receives news that her husband has also been arrested. She immediately worries about what will become of her children. Lydia consoles Ginzburg as she cries, telling her that God watches over fatherless children.

Ginzburg's husband has also been arrested, and she fears for the safety of her children. Stalin's horrors know no bounds as entire families are simply disappearing overnight. A devoutly religious prisoner, Lydia, comforts a grieving Ginzburg, telling Ginzburg that God will be watching over her children. Faith ultimately becomes one of the few saving graces of the situation that Ginzburg, Lydia, and others find themselves in.

Part I, Chapter 22, Tukhachevsky and Others

Part I, Chapter 22, Tukhachevsky and Others Summary and Analysis

In Part I, Chapter 22, one morning, Ginzburg and the other women are awakened by news of something happening with the Red Army. A new member to the prison is Zinaida Abramova, the wife of the prime minister of Tartary. Both of them had come from working class backgrounds, and while her husband never forgot his background, Zinaida shunned hers and was in turn looked upon with contempt by others. Zinaida becomes the first woman to be physically beaten during interrogation.

Zinaida reveals that Tukhachevsky, and other regional commanders, had been arrested.

Paranoia continues to spread. The concept of a conspiracy spreads higher up the chains of command. Military commanders and regional commanders are now also being arrested for involvement in supposed political crimes, as well as the family members of prominent Party officials. Stalin at last allows a full array of interrogation methods, and even the women are brutally beaten to force submission and confessions.

Part I, Chapter 23, To Moscow

Part I, Chapter 23, To Moscow Summary and Analysis

In Part I, Chapter 23, it is revealed that the entire government of Tartary has been imprisoned. Ginzburg is returned to Black Lake in order to sign papers saying that her investigation has been concluded. Her case has been referred to the military tribunal of the Supreme Court of the Soviet Union in Moscow. She is being charged with terrorism and other related activities. The maximum penalty for such a crime is death.

The failure of the secret police in concert with State Security to extract a confession from Ginzburg and others leads them to refer the case to the military, because her investigation is over. The military will hand out her sentence because she is now being charged specifically with terrorism. The arrests, as if they couldn't spread any further, do: the entire government of Ginzburg's region has been arrested. Ginzburg's fate is essentially sealed. The only thing to be decided is whether she will serve time in prison or be executed.

Part I, Chapter 24, Transfer

Part I, Chapter 24, Transfer Summary and Analysis

In Part I, Chapter 24, when Ginzburg leaves, Lydia prays that God will give her the strength not to end her own life. Ira is also being transferred. Two other old friends of Ginzburg's from university, Julia Karepova, a biologist, and Rimma Faridova, a historian, are also to be transferred. Their arrests and transfers are meant to fill quotas for types of enemies of the state; they are to be charged specifically with political terrorism. Rimma has been treated well so far because she has cooperated with the Communists every step of the way, even to the point of signing false confessions.

As the transfer occurs, Ginzburg and the others see that Tsarevsky is among those overseeing their transfer. Moving through town, Ira convinces him to use her money to purchase strawberries for herself, Ginzburg, and the others. Tsarevsky surprisingly does so, which leads Ginzburg to reveal that he was perhaps moved by some fear inside, for purges were occurring in every organization at every level in the Party.

In Part I, Chapter 24, by now, the prisoners know full well that Stalin's purge of the Party isn't stopping with ordinary people or members of the government. No area of the Party is safe from Stalin's paranoia and hatred. Many of those surrounding Ginzburg, including her captors, seem to sense the impending doom. None of them are safe. Some, perhaps Tsarevsky among them, realize that there is little they can do if they are targeted. Faced with this fear, they mete out kindness in measured doses, perhaps soberly understanding that they may soon too suffer at the hands of others, as others have suffered at their hands.

Part I, Chapter 25, Introduction to Butyrki

Part I, Chapter 25, Introduction to Butyrki Summary and Analysis

In Part I, Chapter 25, when Ginzburg and the others arrive in Moscow, they see how massive the purges are. Everyone from the police to the courts are running operations twenty-four hours a day. Ginzburg, Rimma, Ira, and Julia discover they are the only women among those being taken to Moscow from their prison. Many of the passengers pass out from the stifling July heat, including Ginzburg.

They are taken to Butyrki prison, where they are strip-searched upon arrival. Among the prisoners is German native Carola Heintschke, a film actress. Carol has hidden two earrings in her hair, and an eighteen year-old girl named Katya asks Ginzburg whether Carol should be given up. Ginzburg tells Katya to listen to her conscience, and not turn in Carola.

After being searched, the women are allowed to bathe. Ginzburg is separated from her friends. Yet she comes across another old friend from university, Nushik. The youngest girl in the cell, Nina, is only sixteen, and the other prisoners look after her. It is also revealed that anyone who wore glasses had them taken away. Ginzburg steals herself with the resolve that those torturing and imprisoning everyone were not human beings.

Ginzburg discovers the true scope of the purge when she arrives in Moscow. The city has itself become a court system. People are being tried and convicted around the clock. The inhumane treatment by the Communist troops towards their prisoners is also telling, as they transport them around in the dog cage trucks in the middle of the summer. Women of every age are being arrested and treated this way, from the elderly to teenagers. Anyone with even the faintest trace of association with someone accused or suspected is sufficient evidence to be arrested.

At this stage as well, many of the women are beginning to understand that their enemy is not just Stalin, but the system that Stalin oversees. More and more, their consciences are prevailing over what they have been told since childhood. Tanya, the eighteen year-old girl, asks whether or not she should rat out another prisoner for hiding earrings. This simple act of questioning the existing set of expected behaviors is profound, because it indicates a shift in the attitudes of die-hard Communists towards their fellow man and toward the state. Stalin has been seeking to repress counterrevolutionary activity, but he has unwittingly fostered it.

Part I, Chapter 26, The Whole of the Comintern

Part I, Chapter 26, The Whole of the Comintern Summary and Analysis

In Part I, Chapter 26, on the way back from the washrooms, Ginzburg is taken away by a wardress to another room. It is Ginzburg's new cell, and there are books on her bed. The books are all in foreign languages, and Ginzburg discovers her new cellmates are mostly foreign. She says hello to everyone and answers as many questions as she can, and then she befriends two Germans, Greta and Klara. Greta has been accused of espionage. Klara, who has fled Nazi torture, has ended up in the hands of Communists who have brutally tortured her, deforming her hands and fingers.

Ginzburg also meets Julia Annenkova, a German newspaper editor from Moscow. Julia reveals that treason has spread across the Party. When Ginzburg asks if it is rather one man who has betrayed everyone else accused of treason, Julia moves away from Ginzburg. Natasha Stolyarova, a twenty-two year old girl, warns Ginzburg to be careful what she says to whom. Natasha also reveals that the Gestapo and the Communists have the same style of torture.

Ginzburg meets foreign prisoners in this chapter, and strikingly reveal something hideous. In earlier chapters, captors tells Ginzburg she is better off with them than with the Gestapo. Yet the foreign prisoners reveal that the methods now being utilized to interrogate prisoners by the Communists are in fact the exact same methods used by the Gestapo. The Communists are learning how to torture from people they have called their enemies.

Part I, Chapter 27, Butyrki Nights

Part I, Chapter 27, Butyrki Nights Summary and Analysis

In Part I, Chapter 27, during inspection, the wardens do not count prisoners, but their tin cups. One warden continually miscounts, which causes Chinese prisoner Genia Koverkova to laugh. Ultimately, everyone ends up laughing. The entire cell block erupts in laughter.

Milda, an elderly Latvian woman, sleeps beside Ginzburg. Milda encourages Ginzburg to stop up her ears with cotton in order to sleep, for night interrogations will be carried out. Screams and horrifying sounds are endless after sunset.

The methods of torture utilized by the Gestapo and learned by the Communist secret police are used with exacting precision on the prisoners at Butyrki. All night long, prisoners are tortured to the point of screaming out in horror and pain. Those screams plague the other prisoners with fear and restlessness. This kind of horror becomes taxing on Ginzburg and the other prisoners, who find solace and humor in small, simple events, such as the warden who cannot count properly.

Part I, Chapter 28, In Accordance with the Law of December 1st

Part I, Chapter 28, In Accordance with the Law of December 1st Summary and Analysis

In Part I, Chapter 28, Butyrki Prison is very systematic, Ginzburg recounts. New prisoners are never mixed with older prisoners, in order to keep news from the outside world outside. The women in Ginzburg's cell get birds to eat crumbs of food, and Popov, the prison governor, reprimands them verbally for this but does not punish them. Before long, Popov also becomes an inmate at the prison.

Three weeks after she arrives, Ginzburg is called out for questioning. She is given a summary of her indictments, which includes an unknown law passed on December 1, 1934. Ginzburg believes she now has only forty-eight hours to live. The next day is August 1, 1937, and the birds visit the prison cell as normal.

One of the evil things about the Soviet system is that as laws are updated, rights are taken away from citizens and laws are changed which affect the lives of citizens without their consent. Summary indictments, based on the passage of one such law, allows Communist systems to convert prison sentences into death sentences. Ginzburg is given one such summary indictment, and believes she has only two days to live.

Part I, Chapter 29, A Fair and Speedy Trial

Part I, Chapter 29, A Fair and Speedy Trial Summary and Analysis

In Part I, Chapter 29, Ginzburg is taken to Lefortovo Prison, which is carpeted, clean, and quiet. She remembers Garey telling her that the cleaner and more polite prisons and wardens are, the closer to death the prisoner is. Ginzburg knows her trial is pending, and so she cleans herself up as best she can. Her trial lasts seven minutes. She is brought before the military tribunal of three judges, one secretary, and two wardens.

Ginzburg asks them against whom she is being accused of plotting. The judges tell her she is held in conjunction with the death of Kirov. Because she was supposedly accomplices with the murderers, she was just as guilty. She is sentenced to ten years of solitary confinement, and must forfeit civil rights for five years. Furthermore, all of her possessions will be confiscated. But Ginzburg doesn't care; she is only happy that she will live. Giznburg resolves to live because she does not believe this sort of injustice cannot last ten more years.

Ginzburg is not killed, but rather sentenced to ten years in prison. She loses all of her life possessions, but she doesn't care. She is just happy she will still be alive. Ginzburg also reflects on a poignant and disturbing fact: the closer one is to death, the cleaner prisons are and the more polite the guards are. Extrapolated, this is not some magnanimous gesture towards those who will be killed. Rather, it is a duplicitous and despicable concept. When alive, prisoners are kept in such horrid circumstances as to wish they were dead. When near death, they are kept in quiet, peaceful places to make them want to remain alive and avoid death. Yet they will suffer, knowing they rarely escape execution.

Part I, Chapter 30, Penal Servitude -What Bliss!

Part I, Chapter 30, Penal Servitude -What Bliss! Summary and Analysis

Part I, Chapter 30, Penal Servitude -What Bliss! Summary

Ginzburg eats a good meal for dinner, for she is happy she will not be executed and that she will be sent back to Butyrki Prison. On the way back to Butyrki, Ginzburg is again seized by the gravity of her situation, and begins to cry. She can't understand how human beings -especially fellow Communists -can do this to others.

Ginzburg is the only prisoner on the truck back, and her guard lets her have some fresh air. The soldier is friendly and tells her she probably won't spend more than a year or two in prison if she could invent some gadget useful to the state. The soldier also reveals that more than seventy people are being killed each day. Ginzburg reflects again on how lucky, and happy she is to be going back to prison.

Part I, Chapter 30, Penal Servitude -What Bliss! Analysis

Ginzburg continues to wonder how man can be so cruel to fellow men -especially Communists to fellow Communists. She discovers that more than seventy people are being executed daily, and she is only the third person ever to escape the death sentence. With deaths increasing, it is clear the purge is far from finished.

Part I, Chapter 31, The Pugachev Tower

Part I, Chapter 31, The Pugachev Tower Summary and Analysis

In Part I, Chapter 31, Ginzburg is taken to Pugachev Tower to await transfer. Most of the women with her are given sentences of five to eight years. Only one other woman has a ten-year term: "Grandma" Nastya, sixty-five years old. She has also been indicted on terrorist charges. Ginzburg also reflects on the fact that she was lucky because the Communists had not yet started giving mandatory twenty-five year sentences. Ginzburg later learns that her own parents had been arrested and released after two months. More prisoners are herded into the tower to be transported. Among them is Anna Zhilinskaya who relates the story of her cell mate, Eugenia "Genia" Podolskaya. Genia had been tricked into signing papers accusing others of crimes, and was then shot herself. Genia made Anna promise to tell her children what had happened to her, and Anna tells Ginzburg in case Anna does not survive.

After two weeks, the convoy arrives to transport the prisoners.

Ginzburg discovers that she is fortunate not to have signed false confession papers. Despite promises of safety, signing false papers does not necessarily save one's life, as in the case of Genia Podolskaya. It further illustrates the cruelty and deceitful nature of the Communists and the secret police, who were willing to go to any length to root out supposed conspirators. They likewise cannot be trusted, not even for a moment, and this is cemented firmly in Ginzburg's mind for future encounters.

Part I, Chapter 32, The Stolypin Coach

Part I, Chapter 32, The Stolypin Coach Summary and Analysis

In Part I, Chapter 32, Ginzburg and the others are taken by trail to Yaroslavl Prison. Ginzburg again meets Carola Heintschke. Julia Karepova is also on the train. Near the River Volga, the relief Black Maria fails to show up to transport the prisoners, and they have ten happy minutes of seeing the sky and the land around them. At last an open truck arrives to bring them to the solitary block of the prison, isolated and surrounded by high walls.

Ginzburg will be at Yaroslavl for a little more than two years.

Ginzburg recounts how, because of a delay in the truck system, she and the other prisoners enjoy ten minutes of simply being outside. The simple things that free men take for granted -such as being outside -are valued highly by prisoners who have been forced to reevaluate their priorities. Suddenly, simple things like seeing the sky become immensely invaluable to Ginzburg and the others.

Part I, Chapter 33, Five Steps by Three

Part I, Chapter 33, Five Steps by Three Summary and Analysis

In Part I, Chapter 33, Ginzburg recounts how she can still see every detail of prison cell 3 where she was kept. It is a dingy cell with mold growing at the bases of the walls. Ginzburg is allowed outside for exercise and looks forward with great anticipation to sounds and light. Otherwise, she had sixteen hours of her day to attempt to fill up.

Ginzburg tries exercising in her cell, but is told it is forbidden. She decides to lay down, but is told this is also forbidden. She composes poetry, but has no pen to write it down. The hours after supper before sleep are the worst, for Ginzburg finds that darkness oppressing. She also begins losing sleep because she remembers being up all night due to the Conveyor Belt interrogations. Eventually, she composes poetry in her mind, which helps put her to sleep.

Ginzburg attempts to live some semblance of a normal life while in prison -such as by exercising or relaxing on her bed -but these activities are all forbidden. Simple pleasures are all forbidden. Those simple pleasures, which remind one of one's humanity, are taken away specifically to deny one one's humanity. The Communists want to break apart their prisoners.

Part I, Chapter 34, Major Weinstock's Twenty-Two Commandments

Part I, Chapter 34, Major Weinstock's Twenty-Two Commandments Summary and Analysis

In Part I, Chapter 34, on the wall in her cell, Ginzburg discovers a list of twenty-two rules and regulations for prisoners. For example, prisoners may read two books every ten days (though the library is currently closed for stocktaking); they may exchange letters with immediate family; and prisoners may receive fifty rubles a month to spend in the prison store. Prisoners are forbidden to tap on walls, talk, sing, and so on. Ginzburg remembers how she always hoped and prayed the rules would not get worse.

She compares the two prison governors during her two-year stay. The old governor Weinstock, who is there when Ginzburg first arrives, is relatively decent. The new one, Vachnadze, whom Ginzburg nicknames "Vulturidze." Happily, Ginzburg discovers her cellmate will be her old friend, Julia Karepova.

Ginzburg soon discovers the list posted in the cell of what prisoner may and may not do, what they are entitled to, and what they are forbidden from. Her freedoms in prison -as they are fast becoming at large in the Communist system -are being severely limited to remind her that the prison staff is all-powerful (as Soviet citizens are reminded in life that Stalin is all-powerful). The isolation of Ginzburg's cell would be unbearable, except that she discovers she will have a cellmate, and that cellmate is an old friend of hers.

Part I, Chapter 35, Bright Nights and Dark Days

Part I, Chapter 35, Bright Nights and Dark Days Summary and Analysis

In Part I, Chapter 35, Ginzburg and Julia talk for twenty hours a day. Slowly this dies away until both of them sit in silence. They both wonder whether or not they will make it out of the prison alive. But their sadness is broken up by news that the library is now reopened, Ginzburg and Julia happily begin reading. Ginzburg remarks that it is interesting prison libraries should keep copies of publicly-banned books.

Ginzburg and Julia both discover that it is difficult to read in dark cells, so they develop a careful system of reading at night by electric light and sleeping in sitting positions during the day.

As in most situations, Ginzburg and Julia are able to use their resourcefulness to correct a problem. Poor daylight in the prison cell means that they cannot read during the day, but electric light at night allows them to read at the only time they may sleep. So Ginzburg and Julia read at night and sleep during the day, making it look like they are actually reading during the day, and sleeping at night. This sort of dexterity is evidence of the small triumphs of human ingenuity against forces beyond one's control.

Part I, Chapter 36, Captain Glan's Dog

Part I, Chapter 36, Captain Glan's Dog Summary and Analysis

In Part I, Chapter 36, in order to address forbidden topics and speaking openly with the outside world through letters, Ginzburg and Julia become skillful in the use of double-speak, termed "Glan's Dog" after a novel by Knut Hamsun. Ginzburg and her mother use coded language, referring to themselves in the third person as if they were children, in order to share news and not arouse the prison censor's suspicion. For example, Eugenia's mother writes that Paul has not yet taken his exams; the meaning is that Ginzburg's husband has not yet been tried.

Ginzburg compares herself and Julia to Robinson Crusoe, doing their best to survive on what they have -such as making needles out of fish bones to mend their clothing. They discover their neighbor in the next cell is Olga Orlovskaya, a journalist. They are also given the freedom to subscribe to the local newspaper, the "Northern Worker". From the paper they understand how widespread the arrests, trials, and executions are.

The triumph of human ingenuity continues as Ginzburg and Julia develop methods of coded speaking in order to glean real information and news from those around them, and from those they communicate with out of prison. They also commit to making things like sewing needles out of fish bones and mending their clothes. Necessity is the mother of all invention, and Ginzburg and Julia work with what limited resources they have to make their lives more bearable. Their skillful employment of their resourcefulness also means they manage to outsmart the wardens and the letter censors.

Part I, Chapter 37, The Underground Punishment Cell

Part I, Chapter 37, The Underground Punishment Cell Summary and Analysis

In Part I, Chapter 37, Ginzburg recounts how she is taken out of her cell underground to see the senior warder nicknamed "Nabob." Ginzburg is to be kept underground for five days for writing her name on the washroom wall, and in so doing, continuing counterrevolutionary activity. She tries to fight Nabob when Nabob tries to undress her to force her into different clothes, but Nabob and a female warden subdue Ginzburg.

There she nearly freezes, half-naked, refuses to eat, and recites and writes poetry in her mind to pass the time.

Despite the continuity of prison life, almost as if to refuse to let the prisoners settle in, the wardens conjure up false charges against inmates, and force them into punishment cells. In these cells, prisoners are isolated, kept in darkness, and ill-fed and ill-clothed. Ginzburg nearly freezes, and suffers from severe frostbite on her food which plagues her for the rest of her life.

Part I, Chapter 38, Comunista Italiana

Part I, Chapter 38, Comunista Italiana Summary and Analysis

In Part I, Chapter 38, the prison governor comes to see Ginzburg, and tells her that she needs to eat. She hears screaming out in the hall as the governor leaves, and the youthful, kind prison guard Yaroslavsky opens the cell door window to offer a word of encouragement to Ginzburg. The woman screaming down the corridor is an Italian woman. Ginzburg surmises they are hosing her down with freezing water.

After the fifth day, Gizburg is returned to her cell. But to the day she writes, she can still hear the Italian woman's screams.

While in the punishment cell, Ginzburg hears one of the most sickening sounds she's yet heard: the scream of a torture victim up-close. The woman is a foreigner, being hosed down with freezing water. For what purpose this is occurring is unclear; but it serves as more evidence of the inhuman cruelty of the Communist system.

Part I, Chapter 39, Next Year in Jerusalem

Part I, Chapter 39, Next Year in Jerusalem Summary and Analysis

In Part I, Chapter 39, the year of 1937 comes to a close. Ginzburg and Julia are in ill-health. They are also becoming disillusioned with the Soviet system. Julia is determined to see the New Year. She has been saving butter for toast and sugar to sweeten their water on New Year's Eve. They long to return to the world the way the Jews long to return to Jerusalem.

The year passes and Ginzburg and Julia become increasingly more ill. Between the mold growing in their cells, the lack of heat, air, and proper food and water, they are slowly starving. No matter how many times they or other prisoners plead with the guards for better conditions, their pleas fall on deaf ears. These pleas are unanswered for various reasons, including the desire not to be seen as weak-willed while handling the prisoners.

Part I, Chapter 40, Day after Day, Month after Month

Part I, Chapter 40, Day after Day, Month after Month Summary and Analysis

In Part I, Chapter 40, 1938 does not prove to be better than 1937. Ginzburg and Julia fall into a structured pattern of existence. They read, take notes in notebooks purchased from the prison store, and Ginzburg writes a novel about her childhood. They continue hiding items like fish bones and medicine. And they continue to memorize poetry.

As the year grinds on, Ginzburg and Julia fall into a structured pattern of living in prison, doing everything from reading to writing to memorizing poetry. They do their best to carry on as normal a life as possible, despite being in prison. The reading that they do gives them a glimpse of beauty, and gives them a way to mentally and emotionally escape from the prison.

Part I, Chapter 41, A Breath of Oxygen

Part I, Chapter 41, A Breath of Oxygen Summary and Analysis

In Part I, Chapter 41, the "Northern Worker" carries the news of Lenin's widow's death. This causes Ginzburg to reflect on how the older, more decent people were dying off or being killed. One day, the window fans in the cells are shut off to deprive the prisoners of fresh oxygen, and only turned on for exercise thereafter.

As older members of the Revolution die off or are killed, Ginzburg reflects sadly on the state of the country's affairs. The oxygen supply, already choked, is further reduced, making every breath difficult. Though it is not mentioned why this occurs, the answer is fairly obvious: the wardens want to make life unbearable for prisoners. They can get by reading and attempting to settle into a routine, but to deprive them of their most basic needs -such as fresh air -makes routines all the more difficult. Each moment spent alive becomes far more difficult.

Part I, Chapter 42, A Fire in Prison

Part I, Chapter 42, A Fire in Prison Summary and Analysis

In Part I, Chapter 42, a fire breaks out in the prison, and the prisoners begin to suffocate from the smoke that penetrates the cell blocks. The guards refuse to open up any sources of air. Ginzburg cam hear the boots of soldiers rushing around on the roof. Believing they are about to die, Julia and Ginzburg eat bread and a pound of sugar they have purchased from the prison store. Julia and Ginzburg are at last put outside for an hour and-a-half while the fire is contained. Nevertheless, they see no other prisoners. Ginzburg wonders where the other prisoners were put.

The disdain and unconcern for the prisoners by the wardens is on full display during the fire episode. Prisoners are suffocating to death in their cells, but the guards refuse to bring them out until the very last possible moment. Even then, not all the prisoners are let outside; Ginzburg and Julia are the only two prisoners in the courtyard, which leads them to question where the other prisoners were put. The reader cannot help but wonder if the fire would have been a convenient excuse for the deaths of an unknown number of prisoners that the Communist Party could wash its hands of.

Part I, Chapter 43, Punishment Cell for the Second Time

Part I, Chapter 43, Punishment Cell for the Second Time Summary and Analysis

In Part I, Chapter 43, at the end of June, Ginzburg receives word her father has died; almost immediately thereafter, she is summoned by Nabob. Falsely accused of singing in her cell, Ginzburg is sentenced to three days in the underground punishment cell. Unlike the winter, the cell is crawling with insects. While in the cell, Ginzvurg thinks about her father.

Immediately after receiving news her father has died, Ginzburg is thrown into the punishment cell for trumped-up charges of singing. Instead of freezing as she had the past winter, Ginzburg must now contend with a variety of insects and humidity. She uses the time to focus on her father, rather than focus on herself and her current situation. The fact that Ginzburg was placed into a roach-infested cell is abominable; that this kind of punishment should be meted out at all continues to weigh against the Soviet system's supposed concepts of fairness and equality.

Part I, Chapter 44, Memories of Giorano Bruno

Part I, Chapter 44, Memories of Giorano Bruno Summary and Analysis

In Part I, Chapter 44, through the summer, Julia and Ginzburg both become sicker and thinner. At last, they are to be treated. They call their doctor Pickwick, for his kindness and patience. He instructs that Ginzburg and Julia be allowed outside every day, and their their windows opened for twenty minutes a day instead of ten.

Just as Ginzburg and Julia cannot take much more of the cruel prison system in which they find themselves a part of, an angel in the form of a doctor appears to assist them. They have deteriorated to such an extent that even the guards cannot ignore them anymore, and so a doctor is summoned. The doctor, nicknamed Pickwick, instructs that Ginzburg and Julia be allowed more exercise and more fresh air. That the guards must be forced grudgingly into obeying the doctor's orders not only speaks volumes about Communism, but about the guards as people. Human decency is becomes rarer and rarer as time goes on.

Part I, Chapter 45, The End of the Monstrous Dwarf

Part I, Chapter 45, The End of the Monstrous Dwarf Summary and Analysis

In Part I, Chapter 45, through the next year, time clouds together for Ginzburg. This she attributes to lack of clean air and sickness. But she remembers the day when the regulations are changed. The former Commissar-General's name, Yezhov, had been pasted over. Apparently, he had fallen himself. 1939 rolls around, and Ginzburg can't sleep as she considers the prospect that Yezhov and others are imprisoned.

The purge reaches a new height. Stalin's own circles are being picked for possible connections to counterrevolutionary activity, evidenced by the arrest of Yezhov, who had overseen the entire purge thus far. That Yexhov should have contributed to his own demise is an exciting thought to the prisoners. Even more exciting is the thought that Yezhov and the other cruel leaders that are arrested will be forced to suffer under their own system of torture and imprisonment.

Part I, Chapter 46, Great Expectations

Part I, Chapter 46, Great Expectations Summary and Analysis

In Part I, Chapter 46, Ginzburg's health improves slowly, as does Julia's. Julia becomes very optimistic that they will be released; Ginzburg is very pessimistic about their future. One day, as Ginzburg and Julia are walking in the courtyard, they see a small flower that has managed to bloom between two slabs of asphalt. A prison guard nicknamed Worm sees it, and destroys it.

Ginzburg and others are given medical exams, and then they are brought before Vulturidze for a meeting. Their sentences have been revised; they are now to be sent to labor camps.

Over time, Ginzburg and Julia begin to improve their health, and during one of their walks, they see a beautiful little flower which has managed to grow between two pieces of asphalt. The flower is quickly destroyed, so as to forbid the prisoners any sense of beauty, or to stir memories of anything other than the gray coldness of the prison. They also discover -without their prior knowledge in keeping with Soviet irrationality and law- that their sentences have been changed, and that they are to be sent to labor camps.

Part I, Chapter 47, A Bathhouse! Just an Ordinary Bathhouse!

Part I, Chapter 47, A Bathhouse! Just an Ordinary Bathhouse! Summary and Analysis

In Part I, Chapter 47, the prisoners are cleaned and told to pair up. Ginzburg meets Olga face-to-face at this point. All of the women happily share what meager possessions they have with one another and then return to their cells for the night.

Despite the fact that Ginzburg and others are being sent to labor camps, they are overjoyed at being sent out of the prison. They happily talk to one another as they all bathe, getting to know who their cell neighbors were. Human kindness and spirit again show themselves through the simple acts of gift-giving and charity. It is a reminder to the women as well that humanity can never be stamped out if human beings are willing to maintain it.

Part I, Chapter 48, The Ruins of Sclusselburg

Part I, Chapter 48, The Ruins of Sclusselburg Summary and Analysis

In Part I, Chapter 48, when Ginzburg and the others are transferred in July 1939, they are no longer permitted to do anything alone. Everything must be done together, from bathing to to eating. They are sent to the train station, and loaded up.

Instead of doing everything alone, the women must now do anything together. This creates a sense of happy unity among the prisoners that they have been without since their imprisonment. They do everything from bathe to eat together, and they are transported to the train together as well where they are loaded up and sent off to an unknown destination.

Part II, Chapter 1, Car Number 7

Part II, Chapter 1, Car Number 7 Summary and Analysis

In Part II, among those being sent to the camp is Tanya Stankovskaya, who is happy to have a bunk on the train. The train car is full of happy voices, as Ginzburg explains that it was the firs time most of them had seen anyone else in two years. On the train, Ginzburg meets a woman named Zinaida Tulub, a Ukrainian historical novelist. As Ginzburg tells Zinaida about herself, Ginzburg is struck by the sound of her own voice and her own life story, as if she were telling the life story of someone else.

On the train, as the women continue to talk to one another, and learn about one another, Ginzburg discovers the unease she has at hearing her own voice. She has been kept in silence and forced to whisper for so long that she barely recognizes her own voice. Likewise, she doesn't even recognize her own life story, so removed from her life she has become.

Part II, Chapter 2, All Sorts to Make a World

Part II, Chapter 2, All Sorts to Make a World Summary and Analysis

In Part II, Chapter 2, the train trip becomes similar to prison: searches, meal routines, and ration stops. The women learn about each other, offering poetry, agricultural thoughts on the crops they see in passing from the train, and so on. But the women are in disagreement over Stalin when they discuss politics. Some worship Stalin, and believe he knows nothing of the illegalities that are going on. Others think the entire Soviet system is evil. They nevertheless find common ground by singing songs, averting the argument. Many of the women also commiserate with one another as they miss their children terribly.

They decide to stop quarreling over things like politics and enjoy being together. They recite poetry, but the guards overhear them and demand to know from what book they are reading. The female officer in charge of the car explains to the prison guard nicknamed "The Brigand" that the poetry is being recited by heart. The Brigand demands Ginzburg recite poetry, and she does. The Brigand is impressed and accidentally reveals the location of their destination: Vladivostock. Mostly likely, Ginzburg and the others believe, they will be transferred to Kolyma from there.

As the train ride goes on, Tanya's health continues to decline. Appeals to the guards for more water fall on deaf ears. At one train stop, somewhere in the Ural Mountains, the guards leave the train door unbolted, and the prisoners get a glimpse of ordinary life. Old women were beside the train with food and water offering to sell to passersby. When the prisoners ask for water, the elderly women at the station freely give them water, onions, and other foodstuff. Somehow, the guards do not notice this, and the train moves on.

The women decide to band together and demand fresh water later on. The Brigand has Tanya and another woman named Valya Streltsova sent to the punishment car. Bread rations are cut in half, and soup rations are suspended. Tanya and Valya are later released back into the car. At Sverdlovsk, Ginzburg and the others are allowed to bathe. They then move on, and more prisoners are added to the already overcrowded train cars. Among the new prisoners is Lena Kruchinina, whom Ginzburg knows from her old days in Moscow.

After a month-long journey, the train reaches Vladivostock.

The train ride is especially telling of the life that the women are about to be plunged into. It also reveals a host of ideas and differences among the women with respect to Communism, Stalin, and themselves. A few fanatical women believe Stalin is innocent

of the evil of his subordinates; others have come to hate the entire system. But just as their political differences threaten to pull them apart, they decide to band together and look out for each other as best they can, by demanding more water and pleading on behalf of Yanya and Valya. Rations are cut as needed, soup is eliminated, and the women are even further punished for simple infractions. The train ride to Siberia lasts one month, during which time the absolute disregard for the prisoners is painfully apparent.

Part II, Chapter 3, The Transit Camp

Part II, Chapter 3, The Transit Camp Summary and Analysis

In Part II, Chapter 3, Ginzburg and the other prisoners are forced to march in the hot July sun, surrounded by guard dogs and soldiers. At last they reach the transfer camp to find it divided up into sections according to crime. Medical inspections of the new prisoners are carried out over three days, during which time Ginzburg and the other women socialize with the women who were already in the camp.

Ginzburg is sent to the quarries, which she remarks should have been work reserved for strong, grown men. The male prisoners arrive later, and fill up the adjoining camp. Many women and men try to find old friends and family through the wires. They share what little they have with one another. Words of encouragement and love are passed between both groups.

The transit camp is also a labor camp, The women are given a brief taste of the kind of hard labor that they are in store for. While they are there, male prisoners also arrive, and the women attempt to find out more about their own families, seek out new information, or find loved ones. Few do. But seeing men reminds the women that they are women and that they are human. It is a source of comfort unwittingly provided by the Soviet guards. It is a comforting moment for the women and for the men.

Part II, Chapter 4, The S.S. Dzhurma

Part II, Chapter 4, The S.S. Dzhurma Summary and Analysis

In Part II, Chapter 4, Ginzburg and the women are transferred to the transport ship S.S. Dzhurma. Ginzburg is suffering from a fever, but hides her illness as best she can so as not to be separated from her friends. The last group of women brought onto the ship are criminals, charged with everything from murder to sexual deviance. The journey on the ship is uneventful. The hatches are left open to allow air in, and Ginzburg is medically treated. In an attempt to use the bathroom on deck, Ginzburg passes out for two days from sickness and exhaustion, and wakes up under the careful gaze of Krivitsky, who was to be a doctor. A short while later, the prisoners are transferred off the ship to Kolyma.

From one horrible source of transport to the other, the women are loaded up onto a ship to be moved to their next camp. Ginzburg, owing to malnutrition, again becomes sick and does her best to hide it so she isn't separated from the others. At last she passes out, and wakes up with a doctor above her on the ship. It is near-miraculous, between the unconcern from the guards, the horrible clothing, prisons, food, and water rations given to the prisoners that any are alive at all. Yet, their ordeal is far from finished.

Part II, Chapter 5, No Luck Today, My Lady Death!

Part II, Chapter 5, No Luck Today, My Lady Death! Summary and Analysis

In Part II, Chapter 5, Ginzburg is brought to the Magadan Infirmary where she is treated and allowed to take baths. She is treated by Dr. Angelina Klimenko, the wife of a secret police investigator. She allows Ginzburg to remain in the hospital for a month to recover. She believes Ginzburg had been closer to death than any of the others.

When she returns to camp, to Hut 8 where she is assigned, Ginzburg feels as if she has betrayed her friends by being treated so well in the hospital. Some of them are spiteful toward Ginzburg; others understand. The hut is bare and cold. The hard labor to which Ginzburg is assigned consists of hacking at the earth with pick and shovel, simply to bide time.

On Sundays, the women are allowed to rest, take care of their huts, and visit other prisoners. Hut 7 contains prisoners with shorter sentences, and they are given more liberties than other prisoners. They use their freedoms in Hut 7 to put on shows for the others and for camp officials.

Ginzburg is given a month of recuperation at the camp infirmary, where she regains her weight and health, much to the spite of other prisoners, whom Ginzburg feels she has betrayed in the process. Yet nevertheless it is quite clear that without medical attention, Ginzburg would probably not have survived. Although the women are once again together, and can form a certain community with each other, they are isolated at their camp, miles away from civilization. Ginzburg feels as if she is at the end of the earth through the camp part of her experience, and with good reason.

Part II, Chapter 6, Light Work

Part II, Chapter 6, Light Work Summary and Analysis

In Part II, Chapter 6, Ginzburg meets a doctor from her town, Maria Nimtsevitskaya, who gives Ginzburg a wool jacket. The hut's team leader, Verka, takes the coat for herself and gives Ginzburg light work duty at the guesthouse. There, freed prisoners await the spring thawing of ice to return home. At the guesthouse, Ginzburg and the other prisoners assigned to duty there clean and tend to things like laundry. Doing laundry, Ginzburg is delighted that she will earn money for her work.

She is propositioned by one of the waiting prisoners at the guesthouse one day, and a man named Rudolf Krumisch comes to her rescue. In exchange for mending his things, Rudolf gives Ginzburg candy and whatever else he can manage. Ginzburg's work in the guesthouse lasts for only a month. But the next night, Anka Polozova, who works at the guesthouse, brings money from those lodging at the guesthouse in order to bribe Verka for Ginzburg. Ginzburg is subsequently assigned to kitchen duty as a dishwasher. Ahmet, who is in charge of the kitchen, is precise in carrying out his operations. To win better favor with Ahmet, Ginzburg pretends to be a Muslim, like Ahmet.

In the kitchen, Ginzburg meets and befriends Helmut, a deaf German and devout Catholic. By an extraordinary twist of fate, one night, Ginzburg is asked for a loaf of bread by the friend of a dying prisoner. The prisoner, it turns out, is Major Yelshin who labeled Ginzburg a terrorist years before. Helmut is moved by this, and tells Ginzburg he would give his life for her.

Ahmet wants to sleep with Ginzburg, and Ginzburg asks Helmut to keep an eye on her. Helmut barges in on them as Ahmet is trying to make an advance on Ginzburg. Ahmet threatens vengeance but the prisoners must be fed, so Ahmet can do nothing. The next day, Ginzburg is taken off kitchen duty and never hears from Helmut again.

Ginzburg discovers that with proper bribing, she can be given good, light work, such as in the guesthouse or the kitchen. In a tremendous illustration of irony, Major Yelshin -who emotionally harangued Ginzburg years before -is dying at the camp, and asks for a piece of bread. Ginzburg sends it along, making sure he knows who it is from -though she later regrets making sure he knew who she was. The same progenitors of the evil system to which Ginzburg has fallen pray, are continuing to fall to it. Stalin's purge is near-suicidal for the Party.

Part II, Chapter 7, Elgen is the Yakut Word for Dead

Part II, Chapter 7, Elgen is the Yakut Word for Dead Summary and Analysis

In Part II, Chapter 7, the prisoners are again transported and all the while, Ginzburg writes to her mother. Ginzburg is sent to the state farm of Elgen. Elegen is a far worse place, freezing and harsh. The prisoner in charge of Ginzburg's hut, Marya Dogadkina is an angel, who fusses over her hut like a mother over small children. To Ginzburg, Marya makes the hut seem more like a dirty peasant cottage than a prison hall.

Ginzburg and others are assigned to fell timber. A man named Kucherenko, a medical orderly in the Army and now in charge of the hospital, demands the prisoners be given better clothing or be driven to the location of the timber camp so they do not die on the way. It was now April 1940.

Ginzburg and some of the others are sent to an even harsher, more inhospitable camp called "Elgen". There, conditions are even worse. It is April 1940, and the snow still covers the ground in thick layers. Ginzburg is assigned to fell trees. The worst possible punishments are reserved for her, because she has been accused of political terrorism. The fact that she is a woman makes no difference. She will be assigned a punishment fitting her crime, and not her person in coordination with the crime.

Part II, Chapter 8, Tree-Felling

Part II, Chapter 8, Tree-Felling Summary and Analysis

In Part II, Chapter 8, the timber camp is remote and isolated. The overseer is named Kostik, nicknamed "The Actor" for his past education and work in the theater. He is kinder toward the prisoners than his superior, Keyzin. Keyzin demands a high output from the prisoners, even in the heavy snow and cold. Their rations equaled what they earned in terms of output. Eventually the low output was labeled sabotage and Ginzburg and the other political prisoners are put in punishment cells.

Tree-felling is dangerous and bitter work, especially when it is done in the snow. Already suffering from poor health, Ginzburg and the other female prisoners struggle to do their work for each day. As their output decreases, so does their food, until they are eventually accused of attempting to sabotage the tree-felling system and put in punishment cells. This is not ignorance of the condition of the women from the Soviets, this is voluntary oppression and brutalization of them.

Part II, Chapter 9, Salvation from Heaven

Part II, Chapter 9, Salvation from Heaven Summary and Analysis

In Part II, Chapter 9, the Actor gives Ginzburg and the others advice on how to survive -such as through deceit. One woman, Polina Melnikova, explains that she finds piles of previously cut timber in the woods, saws off the ends to make them look freshly-cut, and rests for the rest of the work period.

In June 1940, Ginzburg is saved by a doctor from Leningrad named Vasily Petukhov, Petukhov notices a family resemblance in Ginzburg to her son who is staying with relatives that are friends of Petukhov, and Petukhov vows that Ginzburg will live. Because she knows Latin, Petukhov arranges for Ginzburg to be made a medical attendant in the children's hospital.

Conditions at the timber camp only go from bad to worse, but relief comes in two forms: first, in The Actor, who tells the women how they can survive if they choose to; and the second in the form of Dr. Petukhov. In a roundabout way, Ginzburg's son saves her life. Petukhov recognizes a family resemblance between the son and the mother. The doctor enables Ginzburg to work at the children's hospital, which ultimately saves her life. Were it not for individual kindness amidst the greater array of evil against them, women like Ginzburg might not have otherwise survived.

Part II, Epilogue

Part II, Epilogue Summary and Analysis

In the Epilogue, Ginzburg states that she is in her fifties when she is writing her book. She can't believe, in reflection, that such things could happen to anyone. She was freed years later after Stalin's death, and wrote the book as a letter to her grandson. But she is happy that "true" Communists have again come to power in the Soviet Union.

Despite her experiences with Stalin, Ginzburg is still a Communist dedicated to the Communist ideal, happy that Stalin is gone and Leninist ideas are back in play. The irony is that Ginzburg, despite her experiences in the Soviet system, does not recognize that it is not just Stalin that has corrupted the system, but that Communism itself is inherently evil and naturally corruptible.

Characters

Professor Elvov

Professor Elvov is thirty-three, a fiery and prominent speaker in the Communist Party, and a Party-approved professor teaching at the Marxist Institute. He is friends and coworker with Eugenia Ginzburg. He is known for his loyalty to the Communists, and he contributes to a multivolume history of the Communist Party. But Joseph Stalin writes a letter to the newspapers declaring some of Elvov's writings to be false as well as Trotskyist in nature. Elvov is then arrested and taken away in the middle of the night. His arrest sets of a series off arrests in Ginzburg's town and region.

Eugenia Semyonovna Ginzburg

Eugenia Semyonovna Ginzburg is a wife and mother living in the province of Tartary in Communist Russia. She is a loyal Communist Party member and teacher. She is falsely accused of terrorism and is taken to Black Lake, transferred to Butyrki Prison, and then is later sentenced to ten years of solitary confinement. She is labeled a terrorist by Major Yelshin, who attempts to appeal to her on an emotional level to sign a false confession, to which she refuses. She is later ordered to finish out her sentence in the state farm of Elgen, where she engages in hard labor, such as felling trees.

In a dramatic twist of irony, and in a tremendous show of the human spirit, Ginzburg hears that Major Yelshin has been imprisoned and is dying at the same camp. She has bread send to him, and tells the messenger that Yelshin be notified of who has sent him the bread. She later regrets the decision to make sure Yelshin knows who has sent the bread, and regrets it to the day she writes the book.

She goes through periods of doubt about Communism, Stalin, and human nature. She questions human ideas and human actions, and wonders how it is that human beings can be so unspeakably cruel to one another.

Eugenia is finally released years later, when she is in her fifties, after Stalin has died. Sadly, despite her experiences in the Soviet system, she does not turn against Communism but rather exults the fact that Lenin's principles are again being espoused by the government, as they were not during Stalin's reign. She fails to realize the very system which led to her suffering is, ultimately, unchanged.

Lieutenant Tsarevsky

A member of the State Security, Lieutenant Tsarevsky is an angry, cold man, who appears at Ginzburg's hearings at Black Lake. He is cold and callous, and repeatedly tries to get Ginzburg to sign false confessionals. By the time Ginzburg is being transferred, Tsarevsky is given to small acts of kindness -such as allowing the prisoners

to purchase berries -given that he knows the entire system may topple on him like it has on Ginzburg.

Julia Karepova

Julia Karepova is an old friend of Ginzburg's. She is a biologist, and the two of them meet in prison. They become cellmates and rekindle their friendship at Butyrki Prison, and are both later forcibly removed to the labor camps in Sibera.

They become a source of strength for each other. Julia plays the eternal optimist while Ginzburg is always pessimistic. Julia believes that any day, they could be released, that someone will discover the illegalities of the prison system, and will right them. She believes they will be returned to their families and life will eventually return to normal. Ginzburg does not agree.

In prison, Julia and Ginzburg both develop a code language to use to speak to one another, so that the wardens cannot make sense out of them, and because Julia believes there is a hidden microphone in their cell.

Ira Yegreva

A young graduate student, Ira Yegreva has been falsely accused of belonging to a conservative group, and has been imprisoned for the crime. Ira learns and adapts to the prison system of communication and befriends Lyama and Ginzburg. Her eventual fate is unknown.

Lyama Shepel

The wealthy twenty-two year old daughter of a railroad magnate, Lyama Shepel is imprisoned as as a spy after the railway is sold to the Manchurians. She is kept at Black Lake where she meets Ginzburg. Lyama teaches Ginzburg how to survive in prison by doing things such as communication via tapping on walls. Her ultimate fate is unknown.

Major Yelshin

Major Yelshin appears during Ginzburg's initial interrogations and is responsible for her being labeled a terrorist. He attempts to appeal to her emotions in order to get her to sign false confessions, to no avail. Eventually, he too succumbs to the Soviet purge; and he ends up dying in Siberia. Before he dies, he asks for bread, and Ginzburg has bread brought to him, making sure to explain to him that she was the one who sent the bread.

Sergey Kirov

The Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, Kirov is assassinated on December 1, 1934, in Leningrad. His murder is used an excuse for Stalin to cleanse the Communist Party, and this is done with vigor and horrific terror. The purge is conducted at every level, from peasant villages to the highest offices of the Party officials.

Pavel Aksyonova

The husband of Ginzburg, Pavel is a leading Party member of the Tartar Province Committee. He is often away on business, and appears to be a loving, though realistic husband to Ginzburg. When she is first called in for questioning, Pavel is supportive, telling her that things will clear up soon. But as things get worse, Pavel continues to stand beside Ginzburg, until she is ultimately arrested. In prison, Ginzburg is told that her husband has disowned her, though the truth of the matter is left open. Ginzburg later discovers that her husband has also been arrested.

Avdotya

Grandmother Aksyonova is Ginzburg's mother-in-law, a simple, kind and spiritual country woman who advises her to leave and go far away to avoid the reaches of the Communist Party. Ginzburg does not heed Grandmother's warnings, and later regrets it, for many escaped the wrath of the Communists by simply leaving and disappearing quietly of their own accord. She is comforting and kind to Ginzburg throughout the ordeal, up until she must leave.

Objects/Places

Tartary

This is the region of Tartary is home to Eugenia Ginzburg and her family. It is very rural, and is a quiet country landscape. There, Ginzburg is arrested. Later on, it is revealed the entire government of Tartary is imprisoned for suspected involvement in crimes against Stalin and the Communist Party.

Black Lake

A lakeside resort town, Black Lake is also the location of a Soviet secret police barracks, where Ginzburg is initially brought for interrogation. Once a romantic place which inspired peaceful images, the Purge of 1937 forever synonymously links Black Lake with unspeakable barbarity.

Butyrki Prison

This is the nightmarish prison to which Eugenia Ginzburg, Julia Karepova, and hundreds of other convicted women are sent, Butyrki Prison becomes their home for a little over two years. It is a strict prison with uncaring guards. Prisoners are given little leniency, and are forced time and time again into punishment cells for the slightest offenses. The main cells are not well-lit, nor are they aired out properly. Mold grows at the bases of the walls, the cells are damp and bare, and medical care is wanting.

Kolyma

Kolyma is a forced labor camp located in Siberia. Ginzburg is sent to Kolyma after narrowly avoiding execution, but does not stay there long, as she is transferred to an even more remote labor farm, Elgen.

Elgen

Elgen is a remote forced labor camp where Ginzburg is ultimately sent and nearly dies. Ginzburg is assigned to tree-felling duty there, and she and the others are forced to cut down trees at a rate that will equal their meal rations. Elgen also has the striking horror of being the Yakut word for "dead".

Moscow

The capital of Soviet Russia, Moscow is where Stalin has headquartered the purge movement. People who are arrested and accused must go to Moscow to plead their cases and be sentenced. Moscow is a physical manifestation of the bureaucratic nightmare and evil perpetrated on Ginzburg and other innocents by the Communist government.

Fish Bone Needles

Because prisoners are rarely given clothing, they must mend and keep their own clothing as neatly as they can. In order to mend clothing, Ginzburg and the other prisoners fashion sewing needles out of fish bones in order to repair their clothing.

Sugar

Sugar is in short supply in places like Butyrki Prison. There, prisoners are given two sugar cubes a day. The week before New Year's, Julia saves up half of her sugar rations so that on New Year's Eve, she and Julia can enjoy sweetened water. Sugar also proves to be a valuable energy supplement to prisoners who are facing exhaustion or continual interrogation. The prisoners smuggle sugar back and forth to one another as needed.

Money

In some prisons, like Butyrki, prisoners may receive money from their relatives in order to spend at the prison store. In prison labor camps in Sibera, money can be used to bribe team leaders to receive easier work for undetermined amounts of time.

Paper

When Ginzburg enters the prison system, she and other inmates are allowed to contact their loved ones through the use of letters. Paper can be purchased from the prison stores, and the messages scrawled on them must be encoded so that the prison censors do not stop the flow of mail. For example, Ginzburg discovers from her mother that her parents have been arrested and later freed, and that her husband has also been arrested.

Clothing

Clothing is in short supply in the prison systems. The women carefully tend and mend their clothing; when they are transferred to other prisons, and meet other women, they

freely give up anything they have to each other, so that no one goes without if it can be helped.

Themes

Oppression

"Journey into the Whirlwind" is the story of Eugenia Ginzburg's experiences while imprisoned under Communism. At every step of the way, Stalin and the Communist government attempts to suppress freedom and oppress the people. The Communists fear a revolution, just as they led a revolution against the Czar two short decades before. In so doing, any acts of revolt against the government are brutally put down, and the punishments become more and more severe. Oppression is one of the major themes of Ginzburg's work.

For the killing of a prominent Communist official, the government begins arrested anyone associated with the assassins or their ideas. In an effort to head off any possible popular revolt, the government does everything from banning particular books to arresting people in the middle of the night in order to instill fear in the people. Over time, more and more people are arrested, and the very ranks of the Communist Party hierarchy are rifled through for traitors. Entire governments, such as that of Tartary's, are locked up. Even members of Stalin's governing circles are arrested and executed.

More than seventy executions are being carried out daily, and people are being imprisoned for false confessions and the slightest transgressions. The case for arrest becomes so sensitive that failing to properly denounce enemies is grounds for imprisonment. Loyal Communists returning to Russia from other countries are locked up as spies; spouses and children are also locked up for being related to convicted criminals. Violence and murder brought Soviet Russia into being and during the period in which Ginzburg writes, the Communists continue to use violence and murder to maintain control.

Human Spirit

The will to prevail against odds through the human spirit is the overarching and dominant theme of Ginzburg's book "Journey into the Whirlwind." Faced with unspeakable cruelty -from punishment cells, withholding of rations, lack of medical care, brutal interrogation methods, and hard labor without adequate shielding against the Siberian winter -Ginzburg and the others must look inside themselves and to each other to survive.

In prison, Ginzburg and the other female prisoners smuggle food, sugar, and medicine back and forth to one another in order to take care of the sick, dying, and those in serious need. They do this with the knowledge that they could be killed. When the women meet one another between prisons and during transport, they share what meager possessions they have with one another -from sugar cubes to stockings -so that none of them has to go without anything if it can be done.

Ginzburg even finds the strength within herself to mete out kindness to Major Yelshin, who himself ends up a dying prisoner before the end of the book. There is kindness in human beings, shown most nobly by the prisoners themselves. The human spirit, encompassing kindness and compassion, can indeed flourish even under the most ardently strenuous circumstances. Ginzburg's care for those who have wronged her in the past -including those who have directly contributed to her personal suffering -as well as strangers, demonstrate that humanity cannot be undone.

Consolation

Finding ways to prevail against the odds through the concept of consolation is another major theme in Ginzburg's "Journey into the Whirlwind". Most of the women who are imprisoned are mothers and grandmothers, and must cope with the understanding that, not only are they enduring limitless suffering, but their families -especially their children -are without them. That hurts them the most.

In order to console one another and find strength through being consoled, the women turn to different avenues. They hug one another and share what small possessions they have with each other.

In order to console themselves spiritually, mentally, and emotionally, the women resort to different things. Lydia, for example, tells Ginzburg that God will look after her children. Beyond prayer, in order to seek out some measure of beauty and understand their position in life, the women read and recite poetry, as well as sing when they are allowed. They are determined to find a measure of beauty against the ever widening depths of the tragedy in which they are trapped. Their attempts to give and receive consolation are usually successful because the consolation helps empower the women to live through their difficulties.

Style

Perspective

"Journey into the Whirlwind" is told from the perspective of the author, Eugenia Semyonovna Ginzburg. She tells her story in first person, relating her experiences in the prison system of the Communist regime under Joseph Stalin. By doing this, she is able to appeal to and connect with the reader on a personal, nearly spiritual level.

By telling her story in her own voice in the first person, Ginzburg places the reader in her place. The reader then experiences everything firsthand, and is able to understand what Ginzburg felt, thought, and saw, all firsthand rather than being filtered through the voice of a narrator. This also allows the reader to see and understand things as Ginzburg has seen and understood them, leading the reader to wonder how someone who suffered so horrific a nightmare under the Communists would ever seek to remain one.

Tone

The tone of Ginzburg's "Journey into the Whirlwind" is one of a poetic realism. Ginzburg was a writer and a school teacher who could recite poetry by heart and could write it in her head. She is able to provide the reader with poetic prose which seems to float along with the horrific events that she writes about. She intermixes her prose with pieces of poetry, both original and previously written. While she does not hesitate to expound on the horror of her situations and the cruelty of others, Ginzburg does so in a manner that is not overwhelmingly graphic or unnecessarily negative. Despite the unrivaled suffering she experiences, she finds beauty in the world around her, and eagerly incorporates this into her writing -such as when she remembers warm memories of her father while in the Butyrki punishment cells.

Structure

Ginzburg divides her personal account of her experiences during Stalin's reign of terror in two parts, each subdivided into chapters. The first part of her book deals with the end of her life before prison, her interrogations, investigations, and experiences in brick-and-mortar prisons. The second part of the book deals with her experiences in Siberia, at the forced labor camps around Kolyma and Elgen.

Each chapter of each part of the book focuses around a particular event or two, told in chronological order with asides by the author to further explain particular situations or to provide better context. While each chapter deals with a particular situation, sometimes hours, days, or weeks apart from one another (or, in later chapters, years apart), Ginzburg provides necessary narration to bridge the time span between chapters. This

allows a sense of continuity without having to go into minute details which would otherwise plague the pace of the account for readers.

Quotes

"I don't want to sound pretentious, but I must say in all honesty that, had I been ordered to die for the Party -not once but three times -that very night, in that snowy winter dawn, I would have obeyed without the slightest hesitation." (Part I, Chapter 1, A Telephone Call at Dawn, p. 3).

"I can't tell you how sorry I am that you may suffer because of your association with me... I would have had it happen for the world." (Part I, Chapter 2, The Red-Haired Professor, p. 7).

"Yes, Grandmother was right. I don't know how 'clever' I was, but my stupidity certainly exceeded all bounds." (Part I, Chapter 5, There's No One So Silly as a Clever Man, p. 24).

"Garey's brief messages opened a new world to me, a world of camps, deportations, prisons, tragic twists of fate -a world in which either the spirit was broken and degraded or true courage was born." (Part I, Chapter 15, The Walls Come to Life, p. 73).

"Somewhere in these pages I have said that my intense curiosity about life in all its manifestations -even in its debasement, cruelty, and madness -sometimes made me forget my troubles." (Part I, Chapter 20, New Encounters, p. 107).

"Now I fell sobbing into the arms of this strange woman from a world unknown to me. She stroked my hair and said again and again in German: 'God protects the fatherless. God is on their side.'" (Part I, Chapter 21, Orphans Twice Over, p. 119).

"It began all at once, not by degrees or with any sort of prelude. Not one, but a multitude of screams and groans from tortured human beings burst simultaneously through the open windows of our cell... Klara, the ex-victim of the Gestapo, assured us that the implements used here must have been imported from Hitler's Germany." (Part I, Chapter 27, Butyrki Nights, p. 159).

"There was once a little girl called Genia. Her mother used to braid her hair, and she grew up and fell in love and tried to discover what life was all about. And she lived as a grown-up woman for two whole years, till she was twenty-eight. And she had two sons, Aloysha and Vasya" (Part I, Chapter 28, In Accordance with the Law of December 1st, p. 167).

"The walk was the focal point of the day and was attended with as much ceremony as though Mary Queen of Scots, at the very least, were taking an outing."
(Part I, Chapter 33, Five Steps by Three, p. 195).

"Poetry is a common bond for everyone." (Part II, Chapter 2, All Sorts to Make a World, p. 282).

"How terrible to be a corpse among the living/ Pretending to be alive and full of feeling!" (Part II, Chapter 3, The Transit Camp, p. 341).

"During those years I experienced many conflicting feelings, but the dominant one was that of amazement. Was all this imaginable -was it really happening, could it be intended? Perhaps it was this very amazement which helped to keep me alive. I was not only a victim, but an observer also." (Part II, Epilogue, p. 417).

Topics for Discussion

Oppression was a key component of Communist power. Why did the Communists in power like Stalin go through such lengths to oppress their people? What tactics did they use? Were these tactics successful? Why or why not?

Discuss the concept of human spirit. Where in the book are instances of the triumph of human spirit found? In what ways does Ginzburg accede to the triumph of the human spirit?

Discuss the concept of consolation. What is consolation? In which ways did the women attempt to find consolation, and attempt to offer consolation to one another? Were their efforts successful? Why or why not?

At the beginning of the book, Grandmother attempts to get Ginzburg to leave. Why is this? What does Ginzburg end up doing? Why? Does she regret this choice later on? Why or why not?

Rarely, kindness prevails among the Soviet guards. What are some instances of the Soviet guards, doctors, and other officials demonstrating kindness toward Ginzburg? Why do they demonstrate kindness toward Ginzburg? Is this kindness sincere, or is it forced? Why?

Describe, compare, and contrast the living conditions at Butyrki Prison with those at Elgen. How were both places similar? How were they different? Why are the conditions as they are? Where does Ginzburg prefer to be? Why?

Much is made of Ginzburg's unwillingness to sign false confessionals. Why? What happened to other people who signed false confessionals? Did this influence Ginzburg's refusals? Do you think in the end that Ginzburg's refusals to sign false confessionals actually helped save her life? Why or why not?