

One day in the life of S.V. Krivov

21.10.2013

(In detention since 18 October of 2012)

I woke up from the sound of the cart the *balanda* [*thin gruel, a staple prison food.—Trans.*] banging its way through the cell-block corridor. The last two days were the weekend, and I had contrived not to hear the cart, since there was no need for this. I'm going hungry and am not taking food. Back when I was taking breakfast, I'd only take bread and sugar in the morning, and also millet porridge cooked with milk on Tuesdays. On the rest of the days it's "whiskas" (soy meat substitute) with a side (potato or chaff cooked in water), and it is not in demand, since it is unpleasant to the smell and the taste. Practically nobody takes it, because after 2-3 attempts you realize that it's impossible to eat and that it's better to go hungry than to eat it. I suspect that it's probably unhealthy on top of that.

But today is Monday and I needed to not sleep through breakfast, because only on weekday mornings at this time can you submit all written appeals to various instances and letters (electronic and ordinary). I had two applications prepared to various subdivisions of the RF Supreme Court and one letter. The letter, it is true, turned out to be not to format – that is, it wouldn't pass the SIZO censorship – and I didn't go submitting it; I decided to wait for a better opportunity to correspond.

The application I submitted into the feeding slot that had opened up, and I asked that the main light be turned on, not the night light. The food, naturally, I refused. I turned on the television and checked the time and temperature. Accuseds and defendants are prohibited from having clocks. Convicts are allowed. A nut-house; it's a good thing you can at least find out what time it is from the television. It turned out to be 7:50 in the morning; the temperature was + 2°C (in St. Pete).

I set water in a mug to boil, so as to flood my empty stomach right away. For the past few days I've been drinking practically nothing but hibiscus tea. It's slightly sour and you practically don't even notice that there's no sugar in it. Good thing there's still a lot left. As for coffee and even ordinary black tea, they've started to seem both too harsh and bitter. No sugar, after all.

I've forgotten to mention that today is the 32nd day of the hunger strike (the 33rd day will begin as of 15:00). Of these, the first 19 days I was in an "ordinary" crib [*cell—Trans.*] with a partner (in a double), and then they settled me out into a single. Although even this cell is for two (the bunk is a double-decker), but it's very narrow, approximately 180 cm [*less than 6 feet—Trans.*], it's just a bit wider than the span of my outstretched arms, and arm span is equal to a person's height, so even with two of us in here it would be something of a tight fit. The previous cell was some forty centimeters [*nearly 16 inches—Trans.*] wider. Everything is perceived in comparison. No doubt someone would find such "cramped quarters" positively extravagant, the lap of luxury, while someone else wouldn't.

At the end of the 26th day, I turned all of the [*food*] products I had in to storage, except for tea and the remaining coffee. I hadn't been consuming any of the food before this either, but I sometimes couldn't resist and would add sugar to what I was drinking, because without it your mind starts getting stupid, your tongue starts getting tied up in knots, and when you're writing you find yourself making more of the most ordinary kinds of slips of the pen – things like skipping a word or a letter and other such "glitches". In short, your mental activity is impaired and you become something like a person who's had a little bit to drink and shouldn't be allowed to get behind the wheel. Something on the order of 0.03-0.04 percent, if I had to guess. Your speech is impaired. When you're talking you feel like you're not in your body, but standing off to the side someplace listening to yourself.

They hadn't wanted to take the products from me before this; they'd said that they "hadn't gotten a command". Although I had proposed doing this at the time they'd moved me to the solitary cell and

had even packed them all up individually. If there hasn't been a command, naturally, who needs this anyway? The corridor guards don't want the extra hassle. And here the corridor guard came with the block chief, and I asked again whether it might not be time to turn in the products that have been all ready and waiting for so long. They say: "That's exactly why we're here". This means the command has come. Well good, maybe now there'll be fewer suspicions about me.

It is true that I had to take everything out of one box and two bags and draw up a list of the products together with the block chief. I'd take each item, show it to him, then put it back in, while he wrote everything down. That's the way it's supposed to be done. So nobody would "eat it on the way" and there wouldn't be any complaints. Then they took the products away.

All in all life is grand, especially after drinking a mug of hot hibiscus tea (almost a stewed-fruit compote). It goes to my head ever so slightly and I feel a pleasant dizziness plus warmth in my stomach. This pleasant state of euphoria lasts some 5-10 minutes. Then it passes. Unfortunately. There is another way to achieve this – by squatting on your haunches for a few minutes and then standing up abruptly. Here it goes to your head a lot harder, you've even got to grab at the walls to keep from falling. Lately I've started getting a bit wary of practicing such a thing: the effect's too powerful. I mean, I might actually lose consciousness and fall and smash into something. That would be "not good". But if you just get up from a chair, then the effect is a lot weaker, you almost get no buzz at all. Evidently the reduced blood pressure is also having an effect. Without the hunger strike it was normal (120-130)/80; it's during the hunger strike that it's decreased (100-110)/(70-80), and it's even been 80/60 and 90/60 (one time each).

On average, they check my blood pressure and weigh me about 2 times per day, although it's supposed to be done on a daily basis. And they started doing these measurements only after three days had passed since the start of the hunger strike. But these three days are easy to extrapolate nevertheless. The dependence of weight on time turns out to be linear (for now), and in a month (31

days) I've lost exactly 10 kilos [22 *pounds—Trans.*]. This isn't much, they say that others lose more. Now I don't really know how to explain this, maybe it's the fact that they're holding me in a cell with the reduced energy expenditure this entails, or maybe it's just some individual quirk. I have, of course, begun to feel cold more often, and have to dress more warmly. The organism is cutting back on energy consumption and is turning down the furnace inside – it's no fool.

I get back to the hot tea. I try to drink on a regular basis, so my stomach wouldn't be empty, and this comes to one mug of hot tea (approximately 300 grams [*10 fluid ounces—Trans.*]) every 3 hours or so, at 8, 11, 2, 5, 8, and 8 o'clock. Some 6-7 mugs a day altogether, roughly 2 liters [*quarts—Trans.*]. On court days I take a bottle with hibiscus with me, because not to drink for a long time is dangerous and shouldn't be done, your mouth gets dry really fast and your stomach starts to hurt. I should know – there were times when I'd forget to bring the bottle.

And as concerns hunger, I've felt it continuously but only slightly over the course of the whole period of the hunger strike. It doesn't stress me out. I already know this from the last time around. I'd been a bit worried that it'd be different this time, but from the very first days I was already certain that it was all just the same as before. The organism works "like clockwork". It's gone into hiding, and it's just not there. Gone with the wind. Very humane of it, by the way, not to stress its master out with its problems.

The only thing is that over a lifetime, the actual process of ingesting food grows into a habit for a person. And he somehow doesn't notice this way of spending time because he's too busy thinking about the food itself, about its gustatory properties. But when all this isn't there any more, you feel like there's something missing. It's kind of like a constant feeling that you were supposed to have done something but you haven't done it and you're trying to remember just what it was.

I seem to have “gone off on a tangent” yet again, my fault. Let’s get back to the hot tea. While I was boiling the water, steeping the hibiscus, I watched the news on NTV at 8 o’clock, and then again on REN TV at 8:30. At the same time, I drank my tea, flipped the calendar (I made it myself), and remembered that today is the 21st of October and that my father would have turned 80 today if he hadn’t died in the summer of 1980 at the age of 46. Could he have imagined at that time (and he was even a communist at that) that the Soviet Union would fall apart, socialism would give way to capitalism, and his son would be sitting in jail as a political prisoner? I somehow doubt it. Such a thing would be simply impossible to imagine. The ways of the Lord, as is known, are inscrutable...

Uh-oh, it’s already 9 o’clock, and I’ve got court today, as a matter of fact – it’s been scheduled for 10:45 via television – and here I haven’t even started getting myself ready! I quickly found all the little papers, gave them a quick look-over, and put them in a separate section of my briefcase. The trial, in principle, is already a repeat, the first time was two weeks ago, but it was postponed for the reason of the absence of the defender. I declared then that I needed him “desperately”, although in actuality the whole mass of trials on appellate complaints in the order of article 125 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (against the action-inaction of the investigator) is examined identically, with a known result and there’s absolutely no reason for a defender to go to them. Everything that needs to be said I’ve already learned to the point where I could say it in my sleep. I likewise know that neither the court nor the prosecutor won’t be able to offer a single objection to me, besides the words that the previous instance’s decision being appealed was “reasoned and substantiated” [*the statutory legal test for a court decision to be valid; the document must spell out the reasoning and substantiation behind the judge’s decision—Trans.*], but in so doing not mentioning exactly what this reasoning and substantiation was. Well and naturally, the previous court’s refusal to examine my complaint about the investigative group remains in force. Who would have doubted. Because the investigator (just like the court) is right all the time and is right “by definition”, even if he

flagrantly violates several articles of the Code of Criminal Procedure in the process. The “presumption of the-cop-is-always-right”, as Akimenkov expressed it in court.

At 9:30 (they usually take you away an hour before) they led me into the investigative block, but strangely enough they placed me not in the assembly area, where you’ve usually got to sit for at least an hour, but right away on the 5th floor, where there are three rooms equipped for teleconferences, where they seated me and five more inmates in individual cages. It was only an hour later that the trial of the first one of us began. But it took another hour before my turn came – after they’d already finished everything with the rest. All of the verdicts remained in force, two accomplices were given time to familiarize themselves with the case file materials and they were all led downstairs.



They started the trial with me calling for the recusal of the judge. I had requested this two weeks earlier as well, but without adducing any proof then, just on the premise that I’d never yet in my practice met a federal judge appointed by Putin who complied with the country’s Constitution and the Code of Criminal

Procedure, and therefore I don’t trust any of them, and I mean the whole lot of them, across the board. But this time around I said that what was essentially only my assumption about the lawlessness of the judge’s conduct had now been confirmed by the fact that in the two weeks since the previous hearing I had not received the record of the past hearing in order to familiarize myself with it, and that my suspicions had thereby been confirmed, and I was once again calling for recusal, only now already on the basis of a violation by the judge of art. 259 of the RF Code of Criminal Procedure. But because non-compliance with laws is for some reason not a legal ground for a

judge's recusal in our country, judge Abazov, after retiring and consulting with himself in his chambers, issued a judgment refusing to recuse himself.

Then we haggled for a while with regard to the defender, who was once again absent. Naturally, I categorically demanded that he be summoned, but this play didn't work the second time around, and the hearing was continued on the grounds that the defender had been notified but had "evaded" appearing.

As the court secretary once again tried unsuccessfully to get in touch with my defender, I could hear a voice on the television in the other room starting to call Krivov to another teleconference, also to the Moscow City Court, only to a different courtroom. I yell out to them: "Come on, I can't split myself (like the monkey in the joke) into two court hearings at once." They don't believe me. But they managed to more or less settle the question somehow through an intermediary, in the person of a local employee, who walked back and forth and passed on my words. They realized that I wasn't kidding, and decided to finish up with one trial first.

Next I expressed everything necessary to Abazov about the four violations by the Basmany Court of the Code of Criminal Procedure, although I felt that I was already getting tongue-tied towards the end. The prosecutor said that everything was reasoned and substantiated, but neglected to mention what exactly the reasoning and substantiation was. I asked her to be more specific about what the substantiation was. She didn't answer. I would have been very surprised if she'd known the answer. In short, everything went like clockwork, strictly according to script. The appeal was denied, they got their portion of shame. In the judgment (the judge retired for 1 minute for this), the substantiation part was missing. I asked. The judge answered something like "Aw, relax, we'll do it all up tomorrow, I just can't plow through all that right now". I expressed interest on account of the hearing records and judgments. He said "write to the Basmany Court, you'll get everything from there".

The first trial had barely ended, and a minute later the second one began. I didn't even need to move to another room, they switched themselves over to "my" television all by themselves.

Technology!

The trial followed the same old tried-and-true patten, with an allowance for the fact that the judge had become a woman (Loktionova), and everything became even more cynical. I called for the judge's recusal, of course, because I don't trust any federal – that is Putinite – judge, I motioned about the hearing record, but as for dragging the hearing out until next time, that didn't work out.

The court, don't you see, doesn't have any information that Makarov is my defender, and that he has the necessary formal documents for defending me. He, they say, had come in a week ago, but didn't show the documents. They dismissed my protests. They examined everything. They issued a judgement. They'd done their work "according to plan". And most importantly – fast.

On the way back I sat just 15 minutes in the assembly area and at 1:30 I was already back in the crib. There's already even 3 newspapers here, thrown through the feeding slot lying around on the floor. *MK* [*Moskovsky komsomolets*] for Saturday-Sunday and Monday and *NG* [*either Novaya gazeta or Nezavisimaya gazeta—Trans.*] for Monday. I wet my whistle with some hot tea, "floated off", and studied the press. Just a quick scan at first. Is there anything about the Bolotnaya affair and something really and truly new. About Bolotnaya – nothing; new – a repeat hunger strike by Tolokonnikova. But this can wait, I suppose, I can hold off on reading until evening or even tomorrow. So many hunger strikes! Nobody wants to eat! Come now, citizens, you can't be like that! You've got to "force yourself")))).

For starters I wrote applications to the Basmanny and Zamoskvoretsky Courts, I requested everything I could about today's two trials for myself, and then (with great difficulty) I turned to writing this text. You've asked me to describe one day. Which one – my choice. At first I thought I'd describe a court day with the ride in the *avtozak* [*prisoner transport truck—Trans.*] but the days

with some kind of substance were a long time ago already. The most recent days – nothing but postponements of hearings, not interesting. About something that happened long ago – all the emotions have already faded, and to make them up is complicated, I'm no Solzhenitsyn after all. It's easier to write "what you see" in the "slice-of-life" style. I decided to describe the first trial day that's going to be, that is 22 October, but sitting in the assembly area after the teleconference I changed my mind. I decided that today would be just fine too, because there are plenty of people besides me who can write about trips to the Nikulinsky Court, why repeat myself? And so I'm writing. I'd expected that it would be tough going, but it ended up being rather easy, without stressing me out. There was just about enough work to last me until 7 o'clock, but here I had to take a break. *Novosti 24* [a news show—*Trans.*] at 7:00 on REN TV – that's "sacred", there's no point in missing it for no reason, even if there's some work that's not finished all the way. It's never finished all the way after all, so what are you going to do? I'm an "early bird", after 7 o'clock it's hard for me to work at something complicated. I leave this time for watching TV, or reading newspapers.

The nurse-practitioner came in the middle of the news. We went to the fifth floor to get weighed. Kind of late today, I wasn't expecting it already. While we were walking, she was cussing me out saying it was high time to end the hunger strike already, because look at how she's got to walk up and down from one floor to another here, weighing me all the time. It's a good thing that at least we've got a scale – an electronic one – in the "sports hall" of our block, on the fifth floor. Other blocks don't have a scale at all, besides the clinic. There's also one in the medical dispensary at the entrance – the exit where they receive the newcomers, but it's a mechanical one there and the pointer is a little sticky. As a result, the accuracy is plus or minus 2 kilos [4½ pounds—*Trans.*], while the smallest tick mark on the scale is 1 kilo. What's the point of getting weighed on a scale like that? It's just a simulation of monitoring. We got weighed. It read 70.900 kilos. I've lost only

200 grams [*less than half a pound—Trans.*] in 24 hours, but even that's good: there were days when I didn't lose anything at all, and sometimes I even gained a bit (if you drink some tea first). But on the whole, I'm losing an average of 320 grams [*0.7 pounds—Trans.*] a day, which is apparently the norm for me. We checked the blood pressure standing, which really isn't how you're supposed to do it. She does it like that every time. I keep thinking that I should say something to her about it, but... I put it off until next time. It read 120/80. How about that: it's actually normal today.

A new serial started after *Novosti – Bez sroka давности* [*No Statute of Limitations*]. It's more or less watchable. It's a "ripoff" of an American serial, using their storylines, but adapted. To us it just doesn't feel plausible. Where have you ever seen in our country that someone all of a sudden decides to start investigating a fifty year old unsolved crime (a cold case), and not only that, they actually succeed in solving it? All you can do is laugh. What, all the more recent crimes have been solved already? But compared to everything else out there, this too is watchable. At least there's some variety.

Because I wanted to watch Karaulov's *Moment istiny* [*Moment of Truth*] one more time, I stayed up until 11:20 reading newspapers. *Moment* turned out to be not interesting. At midnight I decided it was time for lights out, all the more so because the day was "successfully" over and I needed to get some sleep before tomorrow's heavy court day. Nobody, by the way, had warned me that there's court tomorrow, although strictly speaking they were supposed to do that if they're going to summon you in the morning and you need to get up before breakfast. But this sort of thing happens with them. The main thing is not to oversleep, or else they'll wake you up 5 minutes before the summons and you won't have time for anything. That's why in between doing all the other things this evening, I also shaved and brewed up three mugs of hibiscus tea and poured them into the bottle for the court day, just in case.

They forgot to turn the light off for the night again. It looks like I'll have to fall asleep with bright lighting. For some reason, this seems to happen quite often here on this floor, in quarantine – practically every other day. Sometimes they remember in the middle of the night and turn it off, but often it stays on until morning. This is not very pleasant.

So that's how an "average" day in prison turned out. It was indeed an average day, because it wasn't a full-blown court, it was the travel-banned variety. That "party" lasted 4 hours including wait time. And don't forget I was writing "to order" and after a month on a hunger strike my mind isn't as sharp as it could be. So don't judge me harshly. I did the best I could...

Sergei Krivov