

[On Applying Physical Pressure to Prisoners]

Written: 10 January 1939

First Published:

Source: RGASPI, f. 1, op. 58, d. 6, ll. 145-146.

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Transcription/Markup: B. Bagins

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To the Secretaries of oblast and regional party committees,
To the CCs of national Communist parties,
To the people's commissars of internal affairs,
and to the heads of NKVD directorates

It has become known to the VKP CC that the secretaries of oblast and regional party committees, in checking up on employees of NKVD directorates, have laid blame on them for the use of physical pressure against those who have been arrested, treating it as something criminal. The VKP CC affirms that the use of physical pressure in the work of the NKVD has been permitted since 1937 in accordance with a resolution of the VKP CC. This directive indicated that physical pressure was to be used in exceptional cases and only against blatant enemies of the people who, when interrogated by humane methods, defiantly refuse to turn over the names of co-conspirators, and who refuse for months on end to provide any evidence, and who try to thwart the unmasking of co-conspirators who are still at large, and who thereby continue even from prison to wage a struggle against the Soviet regime. Experience has shown that such an arrangement has produced good results and has greatly expedited the unmasking of enemies of the people. True, subsequently in practice the method of physical pressure was abused by Zakovsky, Litvin, Uspensky, and other scoundrels, converting it from an exception into a rule and beginning to apply it against honest people who had been arrested accidentally. For these abuses, they [the scoundrels] have been given due punishment. But this in no way detracts from the value of the method itself when it is properly used. It is known that all bourgeois secret services use physical pressure against representatives of the socialist proletariat and rely on especially savage methods of it. We might therefore ask why a socialist secret service should be

any more more humane in relation to inveterate agent of the bourgeoisie and sworn enemies of the working class and collectivized farmers. The VKP CC believes that the use of physical pressure must absolutely be continued from here on in exceptional cases and against blatant and invidious enemies of the people, and that this is a perfectly appropriate and desirable method. The VKP CC demands that the secretaries of oblast and regional party committees and the CCs of national party committees bear in mind this explanation when they check up on the employees of NKVD directorates.

Secretary of the VKP CC

J. Stalin

10.1.1939

* The veracity of this translation is disputed. An alternate translation is offered by Grover Furr and reproduced here with his permission:

BY CODE CC VKP(b)

TO THE SECRETARIES OF OBLAST AND REGIONAL PARTY COMMITTEES, CCS OF NATIONAL COMMUNIST PARTIES, PEOPLE'S COMMISSARS OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS, HEADS OF NKVD DIRECTORATES

The CC [Central Committee] of the VKP [All-Union Communist Party] has learned that in checking up on employees of NKVD directorates secretaries of oblast and regional party committees have blamed them for using physical pressure against persons who have been arrested, as something criminal. The CC of the VKP explains that use of physical pressure in the practice of the NKVD has been permitted since 1937 in accordance with permission of the CC of the VKP. At the same time it was stated that physical pressure is permitted as an exception and, in addition, only in relation to blatant enemies of the people who, taking advantage of the humane method of interrogation, stubbornly refuse to give up their co-conspirators; who refuse to confess for months; and who strive to slow down the discovery of conspirators who are still at large; and so continue their struggle against Soviet power even from prison. Experience has shown that this policy has produced results by greatly speeding up the exposure of enemies of the people. It is true that subsequently in practice the method of physical pressure was sullied by the scum Zakovsky,

Litvin, Uspensky, and others, because they turned it from an exception into a rule and employed it against honest people who had been accidentally arrested. For these abuses, they have been duly punished. But this does not invalidate the method itself, insofar as it is employed correctly in practice. It is well known that all bourgeois intelligence services use physical pressure against representatives of the socialist proletariat and in its most disgraceful forms at that. One wonders why a socialist intelligence service is obliged to be humane in relation to inveterate agents of the bourgeoisie and implacable enemies of the working class and collective farmers. The CC of the VKP considers that the method of physical pressure must necessarily be continued in future in exceptional cases in relation to manifest and unrepentant enemies of the people, as a completely correct and expedient method. The CC of the VKP demands that the secretaries of oblast and regional committees [and] of the CCs of national communist party [evidently a misprint for "parties" - GF] act in accordance with this clarification when checking up on employees of the NKVD.

SECRETARY OF THE CC VKP(b) I. STALIN [typed, not signed- GF]

[Dated by hand - GF] 10/I.-39 g. 15 hrs]

Additionally printed
two cop. 8.II.1956 g.

Dr. Furr expounds upon the controversy surrounding the authenticity of the so-called "torture telegram" in his 2011 book *Khrushchev Lied*,— pp. 79-83 and pp. 333-337.

—Mike B., *Stalin Archive Administrator*, 2013.

J. V. Stalin Archive