On the historic day of the 10th of May, 1906, that of the opening of the first Russian Parliament, when the elected representatives of the Russian nation passed through the streets towards the Tavrida Palace, from the dense throngs which lined their passage, one great cry arose—

"Amnesty! Amnesty! Amnesty first!"

And the first speech in the new-born Parliament was for amnesty. It was made by Petrunkévitch, the oldest leader of the Russian Liberals :--
"Our honor, our conscience," he said, "ordains that our first thought, our first free word should be dedicated to those who sacrificed their freedom to that of our beloved Fatherland" (storm of applause). "All the prisons in the country are overflowing" (cries of indignation). "Thousands of hands are stretched out to us with hope and beseeching. And conscience urges us to spare no possible effort to prevent the wasting of further lives in the victory so soon to be ours. . . ."

At the very next sitting of the first Duma the Liberal Deputy Rodicheff, in a speech of passionate eloquence, raised the question again:--

"Everywhere and always during the electoral campaign," he said, "one and the same cry was raised above all others--'Amnesty! We are witnesses that this is the demand of the whole nation, not only of those who suffer in the prisons or of their friends. Blood is not shed now so often as it was three months ago; but, gentlemen, this last month 99 persons were executed in Russia. . . . We, here in the Duma, cannot work; that feeling oppresses us. Those bloody specters are here--here in this very hall. They must be removed in order that we may do our work."

One after another member of the Duma, themselves recent sufferers from arbitrary imprisonment, told harassing tales of what they had witnessed.

"I, myself," said Father Krassoun from the rostrum, "was kept in a prison, packed with 400 people who were receiving a daily allowance of 6 kopecks (1 1/2d.), barely enough to escape starvation--not enough to escape perpetual hunger. I asked them, 'Why were you beaten with nagaikas? Why were you thrown into prison?' And the reply was always, 'The police arrested us because we refused to bribe them!'"

"You have heard here of the ghastly specters which soar above our land," said the Deputy Miklasheffsky; "I will remind you of two victims personally known to me—the student, Grigoriev, and the barrister, Tararykin. Grigoriev was shot because another man, to save his own life, declared that Grigoriev had spoken at a certain meeting; and this declaration was enough to condemn the boy. Tararykin, the barrister, tried in vain to convince the officer, who ordered the soldiers to shoot him, that he was acting illegally. He was nevertheless shot without trial or investigation."

General Kouzmin-Karaavaeff—himself a military procureur and a Deputy sitting on the Right of the Constitutional Democrats—appealed in the Duma against the horrors of official bloodshed.

"Over six hundred men,' he said, "were, during the last four months, hanged or
shot, or otherwise deprived of life by most horrible methods, without trial or after mock trials. This figure is appalling, and it shows us once more that the chief motive of capital punishment here, in Russia, is sanguinary vengeance."

Sitting after sitting of the Duma's first session was devoted to appeals to the Czar and the Government for amnesty. This subject also had the first place in the Duma's answer to the Crown Speech. It was an appeal to deaf ears. After a hopeless struggle, which lasted over a fortnight, the Duma gave way and began its legislative work. But complaints and petitions poured in upon the Deputies from every constituency, depriving them of the necessary calmness. Then the continuous interpellations to the Government began.

On May 21, 1906, the following interpellation was unanimously presented by the Duma to M. Stolypin:--

"Does the Minister know that the authorities have filled all prisons to overflowing? That among the prisoners are persons admitted to be innocent? That in contravention of even the exceptional and martial laws, prisoners are kept beyond the term legally ordained, no charge being brought against them, whereby they are driven to utter despair and voluntary starvation?"

The Cabinet waited a full month before answering this interpellation. On May 25th the Deputies of the Duma made another attempt to stay the hand of the executioners. A telegram was received by the Duma to the effect that eight men had been condemned to death in the Baltic provinces by a summary Court Martial, that they had wished to appeal to a higher Court on the grounds of complete neglect of procedure at their trial; but that the Governor-General had refused them the right of appeal and confirmed the sentence. The Duma begged the Government to postpone the execution and to allow the appeal of the condemned to be heard. Upon this, a hasty order was sent from St. Petersburg that the eight men were to be immediately executed; and when this was done the Government informed the Duma that, unfortunately, it was now too late to discuss the matter.

The numerous interpellations and requests put to the Government to postpone the executions always met with the answer--

"We cannot do that. So long as the law exists we are obliged to carry it out."

The Duma decided to remove this obstacle, and, on May 31, 1906, a Bill was
brought in, consisting of two paragraphs:--

(1) Capital punishment to be abolished, and (2) until the revision of the penal code is done, capital punishment to be replaced by the heaviest sentence immediately preceding it on the scale of punishments.

After having passed the usual legal stages, this Bill was unanimously adopted by the Duma on July 11, 1906, but it never received the Czar's sanction, and the executions have continued at the same rate.

During the debates upon the Bill the Deputy Nadvorsky told the Assembly that two hundred Warsaw barristers had sent a formal complaint to the Senate against the Governors-General of Lublin and Warsaw, by whose orders seventeen youths were shot without trial. The Senate divided in its resolution upon this remonstrance. Some Senators declared that as the Governors were acting under martial law, they had the right to adopt whatever measures they might find expedient. The minority found that martial law does not give the right of indiscriminate execution, but that nevertheless this complaint must be rejected because only those who were victims of illegal behavior on the part of Governors had the right to complain. Owing to this disagreement the Senate adjourned the examination of the case until unanimity be arrived at. Again and again this case was debated in the Senate, the last time in May, 1909, but the Senators remained firm in their disagreement, some maintaining that, under martial law, Section 12, the Governors-General have the right to execute at their own discretion, and are responsible only before the Czar, and others repeating that the act was no doubt illegal, but that only the victims had the right to complain. As the victims were already in their graves the Governors-General, till now, continue their rule unhindered.

Looking through the official shorthand reports Duma's session one meets upon every page interpellations to the Government concerning numberless illegal and arbitrary acts, such as the exile of thousands of village schoolmasters, peasants, workmen, and intellectuals. I give a few chance quotations.

The Deputies Rostovtseff and Khruscheff received the following telegram from the town Ostrogorsk, on June 1st:--

"After our husbands had remained four months in prison, they sent a telegram to M. Stolypin on April 28th, asking for release or trial. On May 2nd an answer was
received ordering their immediate deportation: nine to the Narym region (a desolate corner of Western Siberia) for four years, and one, a consumptive, to the Astrakhan province for three years. These prisoners were mostly members of the zemstvos, and arrested without reason, nothing suspicious being found upon them and no charge brought against them. They were not even interrogated. Signed--the wives of Dr. Shiriaeff, the engineer Andrianoff, &c.

At the same sitting another telegram was received from Voronesh, sent by the wife of Dr. Romanoffsky, who had just been sent for a three years' exile to the Narym region.

"I implore you to examine our case. My husband's banishment is through an entire misunderstanding. In the written order of exile my husband is described as 'teacher,' not 'doctor,' and the name is given as 'Romanoff,' not 'Romanoffsky.' He was deported without being once interrogated."

From the town Uman a telegram was received by the Duma on the same day, informing the Duma that 36 peasants, driven to despair by long imprisonment without trial or accusation, had refused food for six days, requesting trial, declaring their decision to die if it were further refused.

To finish with this one single sitting of the Duma, I will mention also an interpellation concerning the barbarous illegalities in the Baltic provinces, which are placed under several headings:--

1. Execution without trial or investigation. 2. Tortures, and flogging to the amount of 400 strokes from the nagaikas. 3. The burning of peasants' farms and property and public buildings by the military and officials, &c.

This sitting was not at all of an exceptional character. On the contrary, during almost every other sitting the quantity of interpellations with regard to various atrocities, illegal imprisonments and executions were much more numerous. The contents of those interpellations are painfully monotonous: "Prison overflowing." "Prisoners kept for months without trial or investigation, starving themselves." "Thirty-five prisoners in Riga threatened with execution. Immediate measures urgent." "The barrister Pukhtinsky, of Tchernigov, has been kept for three months in prison without charge, and is now in exile in Siberia. His wife and five children are utterly destitute. Pukhtinsky's only offense was that he, as a councilor of the Tchernigov Corporation, was disliked by the local authorities." "The engineer
Farmakovsky, of Minsk, is kept in prison in spite of his serious illness and the order of the magistrate for his release. In the same prison are Councilor Havansky, Dr. Kaminsky, the barrister Rogalevitch, many journalists, and others. They have been imprisoned for many months, and no reasons have been given for their detention."

"Two youths, aged 18 and 19, of the town of Warsaw are being court-martialed for having struck their schoolmaster. Execution threatens them."

That was on June 6th, when twenty-six interpellations concerning various atrocities and illegalities were submitted to the Duma. At the next sitting, June 9th, thirty-two interpellations of the same kind were made. This constantly increasing number made it impossible for the Duma even to debate the cases. They were simply handed over to a parliamentary Commission of 33, for transmission to the Ministry, which still remained silent upon the point. It was, however, a burning question demanding immediate and earnest attention, as may be seen from the following quotations:--

"On April 11th we were imprisoned in the Iljesk prison, by order of the district chief. The soldiers robbed us of all our money, and at the order of the policeman Volokhovsky they began to strike us with the butt-ends of their rifles and kick us until they were tired. We were wounded all over and blood ran from our mouths, noses, and ears. Some of us had broken ribs, legs, and arms. Vidhovsky, an old man and a cripple, was more brutally treated than any of the others. He was dragged by the hair into a cell and lost consciousness. When he regained it he asked for the priest, but the request was refused. For the six subsequent days we were kept without food, and only on the seventh day were given 10 kopecks (2 1/2d.) each for food. Up to now no charge has been brought against us, and we have not been interrogated. Only the chief of the district explained to our wives that we had been arrested because some man named Binegraet had sent a denunciation to the effect that we had taken part in the festivities at the granting of the Constitution."

"We, peasants of the village Kitoff, beg you to protect us the police. On June 5th they killed three men and wounded three others without cause. For God's sake investigate the case protect us!"

During the debates of the 9th of June, the Deputy Rosenbaum told the Duma of the imprisonment of many innocent people in the town of Minsk.
"When," he said, "we told our Governor, M. Kurloff, about it, he answered, 'Perhaps there are innocent people in prison. But when once they are in prison they must not be let out.'"

This governor, Kurloff, is a celebrity in Russia. He it was who, after the granting of the October Manifesto, surrounded a meeting of citizens with troops, and ordered them to shoot down the people as they left the hall. Hundreds were shot. After that exploit Kurloff was promoted to the chief directorship of all prisons in Russia. During his two years' tenure of that office, Schlüsselburg, the famous fortress, emptied during the amnesty of 1905, was refilled tenfold, and chains, flogging, and other barbarities were introduced.

The sanitary condition of the Russian prisons was brought to such a pitch that typhus and scurvy began to decimate the prison population. Yet, as we shall see from official figures, the number of prisoners is always on the increase.

A few months ago Kurloff received a further promotion to that of Assistant Minister of the Interior, assistant of Stolypin.

On the above-mentioned day (June 9, 1906) the Duma learned that eleven persons had been condemned to death in Riga, the accusation being exclusively based upon their own depositions, extorted from them by terrible tortures. They were flogged, the wounds being subsequently filled with salt, their hair was pulled out, and loaded revolvers were held against their foreheads.

According to the Russian law, the Government has the right to adjourn its answer to interpellations of the Duma for one month, and in this case it fully availed itself of this privilege, in spite of the fact that the interpellations were of the most urgent character. But at last this month came to an end, and the members of the Government began to answer a few of the interpellations. The answers, however, completely disappointed the Duma. On the 14th of June the chief military procureur, Pavloff, while fully admitting the facts about the lawless executions and death sentences mentioned in the interpellations, contented himself with the declaration that the Governors-General received the powers to act under martial law according to their own lights; that, when they forbid persons condemned to death by Court Martial to appeal, and order their immediate execution, they act within their rights, and that the Central Government has therefore no power to interfere (Report of the nineteenth sitting of the First Session).
On the 21st of June the Minister of Justice, Scheglovitoff, answering an interpellation concerning the two Warsaw youths court-martialed for having struck their teacher, declared that the central authorities were unable to interfere because it lay within the powers of the Governors-General to deliver any offender they chose to a Court Martial instead of to a civil magistrate. Thus a possible punishment of a short term of imprisonment may be replaced by capital punishment at the discretion of a Governor-General.

On the same day, however, M. Stolypin, answering interpellations in the Duma, while admitting the guilt of some officials, declared that he was not responsible for the illegalities of the previous Government, and promised to prevent their recurrence during his tenure of office.

"I repeat," he said, "that the most sacred duty of the Government is to protect peace and law, the freedom, not only of labor, but also of life. And all measures of pacification which I take do not signify the coming of reaction, but that of order, which is necessary for the introduction of the most important reforms."

More than three years have passed since that time. Not even the first step has been taken for the introduction of the reforms foreshadowed by Stolypin, while the number of prisoners and exiles kept without trial is ever increasing, according even to the official figures.

The number of interpellations continued to increase, and the Ministry began to answer them wholesale.

On July 16th the Assistant Minister of the Interior, Makarof, answered 33 interpellations at once. His answer was purely formal. He admitted a few cases in which persons had been imprisoned without an order even having been signed, but in the majority of cases he satisfied himself that such a had been issued; and as the Governors-General had been given the right to imprison people according to their own discretion, everything was done in observance of the law.

The next sitting, July 17th, a further batch of interpellations brought their number up to 370--hardly one in ten receiving an answer. The Duma was, after that, dissolved.

When, eight months later, the Second Duma came together, M. Stolypin, on March 19th, read his Ministerial Declaration, in which he stated that a special Bill would be introduced by the Ministry to the Duma, by which arrest, searching, and
the opening of private correspondence would be allowed only at the written order of the judicial authorities, whose duty it would be also to verify, within twenty-four hours, the legality of any arrest ordered by the police. This was to become the immutable ordinary law, which would always be enforced, except during times of war or revolution.

In spite of this promise, exceptional laws are in force now all over the country, and exiles and imprisonments by administrative order are more numerous than ever.

The Second Duma understood from its first sitting that it would be a hopeless task to try to curb the Governmental innumerable abuses. The scope of interpellations was narrowed to that of the most crying cases, or to questions of self-defense, \textit{i.e.}, when the personal inviolability of the Deputies was infringed.

Here are a few instances of such cases. On April 12, 1907, the following interpellation was made:--

"On December 11, 1906, the Court Martial in Moscow, having tried the case of two brothers Kabloff and two brothers Karakanikoff, on the charge of having wounded a policeman, condemned them to penal servitude for life. On the same day the Governor-General of Moscow, Hershelmann, in spite of the law and the special circulars sent to him by the Premier, quashed this sentence and ordered the four men to be tried by another Court Martial. The second trial was held at once, and the four prisoners were condemned to death and executed immediately" (Official report of Session II., Sitting 19th).

On April 15, 1907, several interpellations were read in the Duma with regard to the regular practice of tortures in the various prisons of Riga, Astrakhan, Algachinsk, Akatuy, &c.

The interpellation concerning the system of torture practiced regularly in the Riga and other Baltic provinces prisons became notorious all over Europe (thanks to the revelations made by the British newspaper, the \textit{Tribune}). This interpellation was answered in the Duma by the Assistant Minister of the Interior, Makaroff, who, while admitting that the ill-treatment of prisoners had occurred in the Riga prisons, refused to apply to it the name "torture." He said that the officials guilty of the established offenses had been already dismissed, and judicial proceedings taken against them. "At present," he said, "we must wait to see what the law courts will say. I consider debates upon this question to be premature."
This declaration was made on April 23, 1907. On May 30th M. Makarof spoke again about the tortures in the Baltic provinces in these words:

"I am far from the desire to maintain that the police, during interrogations in the Baltic provinces, did not, in some cases, beat the prisoners. I must tell you that last year already, and partly this year, forty-two prosecutions were started against the agents of police for the use of violence. One of these cases was stopped for want of proof; in another the accused was condemned to one year's penal servitude. The remaining cases are still under examination."

As a matter of fact, however, the Russian newspapers affirm that all the principal organizers of torture in Riga and other Baltic towns continue in their posts. The police official Gregus, who, according to the declaration of Makaroff, was dismissed more than two years ago, is at the head of the same secret police in the same town of Riga.

The Second Duma soon met the fate of the First. Thereupon the franchise was curtailed, and in the Third Duma, which was convoked in March, 1908, the majority consisted of the nominees of the Government. This majority naturally put a stop to every interpellation that might be embarrassing to the Government, and the terrible state of the prisons was touched upon only occasionally during the debates upon the budget of the Prison Department and of the Ministry of Interior, while the increasing number of executions came to light during the debates upon the Bill for the Abolition of Capital Punishment.

As to the interpellations concerning the prisons which were made in the Third Duma, some of them have already been mentioned in the preceding chapters. It must only be said that the interpellations in the Third Duma, restricted as they are, and submitted to a preliminary debate, have a character of gravity which the "questions" addressed to the Ministers had not in the First and Second Dumas. The interpellations are now made in the name of whole parties, instead individual members, and before being accepted the questions asked are the subject of a preliminary discussion in the Duma, after which they are usually sent before a Commission, which sees whether there are in these questions the elements of an interpellation. Only when the Commission has accepted the interpellation is it submitted to the Duma, and then the respective Ministers are at liberty of either accepting the debate at once or answering it in the course of one month.
Footnotes
1This chapter has been compiled for this statement by the kindness of a friend. 2Every quotation and every figure in this and in the following pages is taken from the official shorthand reports of the sittings of the Duma. 3The Warsaw lawyers mentioned the following cases:--On January 2, 1906, in Lublin, a boy of 17, Markovsky, was shot without any form of trial. On January 3rd, 4th, and 18th (O.S.) 16 young men—one of 15 years, two of 17, three of 18, and three of 19—were shot without judgment at Warsaw (after having been tortured). They also pointed out that the Governor-General of Kielce had issued, on January 13-26, 1906, an order according to which every one found in possession of arms should be executed; and if children under 14 years should be found possessing arms, the death penalty should be applied to their parents. The head of the Polish provinces stopped the application of that order, because
it was rendered public. But how many Governors-General acted on such principles without giving them publicity? The memoir of the Warsaw lawyers was published in all leading dailies. Also in the work of V. Vladimiroff, "Sketch of Present Executions," Moscow, 1906 (Russian). From : Anarchy Archives.

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