Darkness at Noon

INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF ARTHUR KOESTLER

Arthur Koestler was born to a family of Jewish Hungarians who were moderately well-off. He attended the University of Vienna and subsequently became a journalist, reporting in the Middle East, Paris, and Berlin, among other places. At the end of 1931, he applied for membership in the Communist Party of Germany. During the Spanish Civil War, when he went to Spain as a Soviet agent, Koestler was arrested and spent time in prison. He slowly became disillusioned with communism as a result of the Nazi-Soviet nonaggression pact of 1938 and the revelation of the Moscow show trials. The latter in particular led to his writing of *Darkness at Noon*. In 1939, while he was writing the novel and living in Paris with his lover Daphne Hardy, Koestler was arrested on suspicion of working for the Soviets and was sent to an internment camp. He fled to England, joining the French Foreign Legion to escape arrest, and eventually became a British citizen in 1948. For the rest of his life, he continued publishing novels, memoirs, and critical works. The essays collected in *The Yogi and the Commissar* (1945) and *The God that Failed* (1949) explore his disillusionment with Communism. Eventually, Koestler would become especially interested in creativity, mysticism, and their relationship with science. At the end of his life he was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease. He was a vocal supporter of voluntary euthanasia, and in 1983 he and his third wife Cynthia killed themselves by overdosing on pills.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

In 1917, the October Revolution in Russia overthrew the Russian monarchy and led to a civil war between the revolutionary "Reds" (or communists) under Vladimir Lenin, and the counter-revolutionary "Whites." The "Reds" (whose leaders came to be known as Bolsheviks) won and in 1922 the Soviet Union, or USSR, was established. In the 1920s, after Lenin's death, Joseph Stalin came to power and attempted to rapidly industrialize the largely rural nation through what he called a Five-Year Plan, in which the state also seized control of all businesses and farms. While the USSR did industrialize incredibly quickly, the policy also led to famines as well as to violent repression. This was the context for the Moscow show trials in 1936 to 1938. Stalin wanted to stamp out any remaining opposition among his leadership, especially among followers of Leon Trotsky, who hoped to keep spreading revolution abroad rather than focus on the homeland (a difference that can also be seen in the novel between the old guard and new guard). But Stalin also wanted to retain the support of the masses, rather than simply order a new wave of terror (which he'd done in earlier years). During the show trials, former Bolsheviks were required to state elaborately false confessions about their crimes in public trials and signal their contrition and willingness to be executed. Even after the famines and increasingly violence of the earlier years, many left-leaning people in the West, who were excited about the prospect of socialism finally being put into practice, still believed that the Soviet Union should continue to be supported. It was the shocking revelation of these show trials that, for many people—including Koestler—was the last straw, forcing them to withdraw their commitment to the USSR and, in some cases, to communism itself.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

Several years after *Darkness at Noon* was written, George Orwell published *Animal Farm* (1945), an allegorical novel that also refers to the Soviet Union, though it covers a different period of Soviet history than *Darkness at Noon*. Like *Darkness at Noon*, *Animal Farm* also refrained from naming Russia or Stalin explicitly; however, unlike Koestler's realist political novel, Orwell's is a full-fledged allegory. Its characters are animals on a farm that symbolically represent real people and historical events. In a different genre, Victor Kravchenko, a defector from the Soviet Union who fled to the United States during World War II, wrote a best-selling memoir entitled *I Chose Freedom* in 1946. Together with Orwell's and Koestler's novels, this book helped teach people in the West about the realities of violence and totalitarianism in the Soviet Union, which had been allied with the U.S. and other Western countries during World War II.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** *Darkness at Noon*
- **When Written:** 1938-1940
- **Where Written:** Provence and Paris, France
- **When Published:** 1941
- **Literary Period:** Modern (political/dystopian)
- **Genre:** Novel
- **Setting:** While the Fatherland of the Revolution, as it's called, is never named explicitly, it is an obvious stand-in for the Soviet Union (USSR) in the 1930s during the time of the Moscow show trials. The Moscow show trials were a series of public trials in which members of the "old guard" of the Bolsheviks, the ruling Communist Party, confessed to be traitors to the Party in dramatic public trials, before being executed. Rubashov's flashbacks also take us to another unnamed country where a fascist dictatorship has gained power—a clear representation of Nazi Germany—as well as

Belgium, which is named.

- **Antagonist:** While No. 1 is the haunting, menacing figure that affects all the characters in the novel, the leader himself never appears throughout the book. Instead, the interrogator Gletkin, a former peasant who robotically parrots the Party line, is the vehicle against whom Rubashov struggles as he slowly comes to accept that he will confess. Ivanov, the first interrogator, might seem to be another candidate for antagonist, but he, too, becomes a victim of the Party, or more precisely of the new guard of the Party that has no room for people like him or Rubashov. The rigid and contradictory Communist ideology might also be seen as the novel's antagonist, as it's the relentless and inhumane logic of Communism against which Rubashov struggles intellectually, and it is this ideology taken to its logical end that ensures Rubashov's death.
- **Point of View:** Most of the novel is told from a third-person limited omniscient perspective, restricted to the thoughts and viewpoint of Rubashov. This is interspersed, however, with excerpts from Rubashov's diary, which are in the first person.

EXTRA CREDIT

Lost in Translation It was Arthur Koestler's lover Delphine Hardy who rapidly translated *Darkness at Noon* into English before they fled France, and it was this (somewhat imperfect) English translation that reached readers: it wasn't until 2016 that the original German manuscript, long thought to be lost, was discovered in a European archive.

Delay tactics While *Darkness at Noon* has been translated into over thirty languages, it wasn't translated into Russian until 1989, two years before the fall of the Soviet Union.

PLOT SUMMARY

When *Darkness at Noon* begins, the protagonist, Nicholas Salmanovitch Rubashov, finds himself having been recently enclosed inside a prison cell, where it seems he knows what will happen to him next. The narration flashes back to a few hours earlier, when Rubashov was awakened from a **dream**—a recurring dream that he was being arrested—to find himself being arrested in real life by two officials. They arrive to the door of the porter Wassilij, who, having fought with Rubashov in the war, is fiercely loyal to him. Rubashov is to be arrested on the orders of No. 1, the leader of the unnamed (but recognizably Soviet Communist) Party. Rubashov accompanies the officials to the prison but, as a former Party bureaucrat himself, he is rather dismissive towards this younger generation, which seems to lack the subtlety and intellectual prowess of his own. When he arrives in prison, Rubashov claims to have a **toothache** (a pain that will recur every time he thinks about individuality), so he's left alone. He "talks to" one of the prisoners in a neighboring cell, whom he refers to only as No. 402, through a kind of Morse Code language conveyed by tapping against the wall. 402 is a counter-revolutionary who still supports the monarchy that was in power when the revolutionaries took over, but he's mostly interested in spreading prison gossip and talking about women.

Rubashov thinks back to a memory from years before, when he'd been a diplomat in Germany spreading the Party message abroad, and he'd had to meet with a regional leader of the Party named Richard. They'd met at a picture gallery, and while keeping himself focused on a *Pietà* painting of the Virgin Mary, Rubashov had told Richard that it was a mistake for Richard to have printed his own pamphlets for the cause rather than using the official Party message. Richard had felt like he could modify the Party message to best recruit new people, but Rubashov told him that the Party, since it represented the revolutionary idea in history, could never be mistaken and therefore its message shouldn't be modified. Richard grew increasingly desperate as he realized that Rubashov might be reporting him to the Central Committee, but Rubashov remained cold and featureless in response.

Back in the prison cell, Rubashov, who's feeling increasingly anxious without cigarettes, learns through No. 402 that there's a new political prisoner, who seems to keep looking up at Rubashov's cell from the prison courtyard: Rubashov doesn't recognize him and just thinks of him as Hare-lip. Rubashov muses about how he's gotten to this point and about why he's been arrested: it seems like somewhere, somehow, the Party has gone awry, though Rubashov struggles to understand how, given that the Party represents history itself. Rubashov thinks back to another case, when he had to go to Belgium and explain to a group of people—including Little Loewy, a fervent supporter of the Party who had risked his life multiple times for the cause—that the Party was going to renege on its pledge to boycott fascist countries. Little Loewy refused to accept this because he considered it to be a betrayal of the ideals of the revolution. When Little Loewy realized that the Party would accept no deviation from its official policy, he hanged himself. Rubashov starts thinking about specific details from his time with Little Loewy and Richard, and he is troubled by them.

Eventually Rubashov is taken to be interrogated by his old friend and fellow soldier, Ivanov. Ivanov seems to recognize that Rubashov isn't guilty of treason and plotting to kill No. 1, but Ivanov says that it's best for them to accept what's necessary for the Party, and for Rubashov to sign a statement saying he was a member of the opposition. This way the Party will get its public confession, and Rubashov won't have to be executed. Rubashov, though, suddenly wants to rebel against such pristine logic. He continues to think through his own understanding of the laws of history, and about whether his choices (or No. 1's choices) will be absolved over time or will have to be paid for. At the next interrogation, Ivanov is

accompanied by Gletkin, who's a member of the new generation and is far more humorless than Ivanov. Gletkin seems to genuinely believe that whatever the Party says is "truth," rather than simply understanding the Party logic as expedient. Gletkin thinks Rubashov will buckle under torture, though Ivanov is confident Rubashov just needs time to think through the logic of his predicament.

Rubashov has another flashback to an affair he had with Arlova, his secretary. Arlova was eventually appointed librarian at the office where he worked, but she was then accused of not replacing the books on the shelves with more adequate, "truer" versions of Party history. Rubashov stalled but ultimately did betray her, and she was executed. He thinks back now to the details of her body, and he grows increasingly troubled by them. Meanwhile, a new prisoner arrives, No. 406 or Rip Van Winkle, who had spent 20 years in solitary confinement in another country and is now in an entirely new world with entirely different ideological standards and claims to truth. That afternoon, Rubashov is taken to the barber, who shoves a note into his collar telling him to "die in silence." Rubashov thinks it might be possible that he will actually capitulate to Ivanov's offer. Rubashov is taken outside to exercise that afternoon—Ivanov has been improving Rubashov's standard of living while he deliberates—and he talks a little to Rip Van Winkle.

Almost two weeks after Ivanov's offer, the mood seems different in the prison, and 402 tells Rubashov that a political prisoner is being executed. The prisoner is Michael Bogrov, Rubashov's old friend and mentor. As he's led down the hall, Bogrov cries out Rubashov's name. Rubashov is stricken: suddenly the cold logic that has ruled his dealings with the Party his whole life is thrown into question. Rubashov returns to be interrogated by Ivanov and tries to explain this to him, but Ivanov dismisses him, saying that his moral scruples are relics from bourgeois, nineteenth-century ethics, which have no place in this revolutionary society. Rubashov does think that this society is exceptional, but now he argues that the exceptionalism lies in the death and destruction enacted by the Party. After a long intellectual conversation, Ivanov visits Gletkin and says that his own method works better than Gletkin's—Gletkin's the idiot who should be shot.

Rubashov continues to think through an intellectual theory of history that would account for his situation. After meeting another prisoner, a reactionary peasant, in the prison courtyard, Rubashov decides to capitulate. No. 402 thinks Rubashov is disgracing himself, but Rubashov seems unfazed. After waiting to be taken to Ivanov, Rubashov is eventually led into another office: this time it's Gletkin who's interrogating him, as Ivanov has been arrested for treason. Gletkin isn't interested in the kind of intellectual banter and argumentation that Ivanov was: he seriously, gravely lists the charges against Rubashov, who's incredulous that Gletkin actually seems to believe the charges rather than just act as though they are true. Gletkin brings in Hare-lip, who, it turns out, is the son of Rubashov's old friend Professor Kieffer. Kieffer was executed for refusing to rewrite the history books to align with the new Party narrative of history. Hare-lip describes a conversation between Rubashov and Kieffer in which Rubashov belittled No. 1's techniques and argued for pragmatism rather than earnest belief in the Party decisions. Hare-lip ends by claiming that Rubashov then wanted to hire Hare-lip to murder No. 1 with poison. Using the skills of logical reasoning, Rubashov proves that this charge is impossible, but he feels suddenly apathetic when he knows it won't make a difference. Gletkin, throughout the interrogations, keeps a harsh light on Rubashov and deprives him of sleep so that it seems like the world of dreams and that of reality melt into one. Rubashov could deny everything or admit to everything, but he feels a strange sense of individual honor that forces him to go through each charge one by one and take a brief sense of triumph in his small successes. Eventually Gletkin does go off the script a little, telling Rubashov about his childhood as a peasant and how he's convinced that the masses need straightforward doctrines and well-performed confessions in order to further the Party cause.

Finally, Rubashov does sign a document agreeing to the charges, and Gletkin tells his stenographer that his approach was right: physical deprivation is always the way to get people to buckle. The narration shifts to the porter Wassilij and his daughter, Vera, who is reading him the transcript of Rubashov's trial and remarking about how Rubashov must be guilty. Wassilij, though, thinks of Rubashov as a kind of Christ figure, sacrificed for others. Wassilij has to be careful to hide some of his Christian rituals (like praying) from his daughter, who he knows would love nothing more than to have him pushed out of the apartment they share so that she can move in with her fiancé. When the narration returns to Rubashov's point of view, he's still obsessed with thinking through his theories of history. He's certain now that there's no way of resolving the ideological contradictions in the Party between the individual and the collective, but he imagines that there might be a way of doing so in the future, in another society. Before he dies, he thinks of his dream of being arrested, and he wonders for one final time what his death might mean, if anything. A silence reigns after his death.

CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Nicholas Salmanovitch Rubashov – Rubashov was, before the time at which *Darkness at Noon* begins, a key player in the socialist revolution of the unnamed fatherland, and an important member of the "old guard" that became the leaders of the new regime. His official title was "Commissar of the People," the name of a bureaucratic leader (used in the Soviet

Union before 1946). His specific role as a diplomat involved traveling to foreign countries in order to support the development of revolutionary activities there. By the time the book begins, Rubashov's position of fomenting revolution abroad has fallen out of favor, leading to his imprisonment. Already, it appears, Rubashov has had doubts about the effectiveness and correctness of certain Party policies, and he hasn't been entirely discreet about vocalizing them to friends. But it is only over the course of the book that he comes to fundamentally question the entire philosophy upon which Party policy is based. Rubashov thinks of himself as an intellectual, part of the old guard that had managed to wed philosophy to political, social, and economic action in service of the people. He thinks of the French Revolution, and particularly of Danton, one of the early revolutionaries who was ultimately executed by the next wave of revolutionaries advocating for terror. He looks at the new generation with scorn, considering it to be made up of bureaucrats who are crude, unsubtle, and uninterested in the nuances of socialist philosophy. He comes to think of himself as a kind of Danton, sacrificed by a new, historically immature leadership. But, as Rubashov gradually realizes, he too has more or less unthinkingly followed official policy for years, with little concern for the individual lives that may get in the way. His love of and eagerness for intellectual musing and philosophizing ultimately leads him to radically alter his understanding of his own past as well as that of his country.

Ivanov – Rubashov's friend from university and former battalion commander, Ivanov is also Rubashov's first interrogator after his imprisonment. Ivanov is another member of the old guard, one who remembers the Civil War: during the fighting Ivanov was wounded and his leg had to be amputated. At that time he'd tried to convince Rubashov of his right to suicide, which Rubashov had told him was a romantic, bourgeois action. Ivanov is perfectly content with keeping Rubashov imprisoned on Party orders, but as an old-time Party member, he doesn't think he needs to play by all the rules. He doesn't really think that Rubashov is guilty of what he's accused of, but Ivanov knows that they both need to act the part, so he pressures Rubashov into confessing in public so that he stands a better chance of survival. For the first part of the novel, Ivanov seems cool-headed and in control. Only later does it become clear that Ivanov, too, doesn't fit into the new assumptions and standards of the Party. His frank cynicism costs him his position and, ultimately, his life.

Gletkin – In many ways Gletkin, who is first Ivanov's subordinate and then replaces him as Rubashov's interrogator, serves a foil to Ivanov. Where Ivanov is pragmatic and ironic, Gletkin is earnest and grave. For Gletkin, it's not enough to perform a confession: each party must fully believe it. There's also no difference to Gletkin between one's actions and one's thoughts, both of which make someone equally guilty. Gletkin is of peasant origin, and he didn't learn to read, write, or tell time until he was almost an adult. He bears the marks of this heritage in the difficulty he has reading, but he also possesses a unique glimpse into the psychology of the masses and how the Party can ensure their loyalty. Gletkin is the epitome of the new guard: around 37 years old, he is too young to remember the Revolution or to have fought in the Civil War, so he has little sense of the dramatic changes that have taken place, or of the irony that those now being tried and executed for treason were some of the nation's heroes.

Arlova – Rubashov's former secretary and lover, Arlova appears in the novel in flashback form, as Rubashov recalls his affair with her. She is large, womanly, and passive: she doesn't ask anything of Rubashov and she tells him he can do what he likes with her. Arlova was appointed librarian in the bureaucratic unit where they both worked, but soon suspicions arose about her loyalty. While Rubashov initially delayed participating in the accusations against her, once the Party gave him an ultimatum, he betrayed her, which led to her execution. During Rubashov's own trial, ironically, this fact is brought up as proof of Rubashov's moral bankruptcy, since he gave her up to save himself. Arlova is the first in a list of people whom Rubashov, without much compunction, sacrificed on behalf of the Party. Throughout his own imprisonment, he comes to equate her with his newly awakened sense of the sacredness of the individual.

Richard – Richard is the leader of the Communist Party in a region of the unnamed country (with all the characteristics of Germany) where Rubashov is fomenting revolutionary activity, and where he is later arrested. Richard is a loyal Party member, but after the dictatorship takes power in his country and begins to stamp out Communist activity, he tries to support the cause in his own way rather than through relying on Party pamphlets and directions. Richard thinks that the official Party line, emphasizing its strength even when everyone in Germany knows that the Party has been almost entirely quashed, will inevitably be unsuccessful. For Rubashov at the time, though, such a decision is little more than treason, and he denounces Richard. Richard, too, will become an example for Rubashov of a life that Rubashov sacrificed on behalf of the guiding Party logic, and thinking of Richard makes Rubashov begin to question whether it was worth it.

Little Loewy – The local leader of the dockworkers' section of the Party at a port in Belgium, Little Loewy is yet another former Party member that Rubashov sacrifices to the cause, though this time in a more indirect fashion. Little Loewy was born in Germany but he faced imprisonment or execution as a result of his involvement with the Party. While the Party promised to help him escape, he was ultimately left on his own, arrested and imprisoned various times, and handed back and forth between the authorities of Belgium and France. Little Loewy is a fervent believer in Communism, and yet he is also

principled: he cannot bring himself to accept the Party's betrayal of its own boycott of enemy countries, which he and the other dockworkers learn of as a result of their job unloading cargo. After expressing his opinions about the wrong-headedness of this new policy, Little Loewy hangs himself, another member of the old guard who is unable to adapt to the new expectations and compromises made by the Party.

Wassilij – Rubashov's porter and fellow soldier during the Civil War, Wassilij is an old man by the time *Darkness at Noon* opens. He is deeply loyal to Rubashov, and also is one of the few characters in the story to retain an older set of beliefs that the Party tried to stamp out. He still thinks of himself as a Christian and he takes solace in recalling verses from the Gospels, which to him form a resonant parallel with Rubashov's own betrayal and sacrifice. By the end, the scheming of Wassilij's daughter seems to suggest that his belief system and way of life will soon be stamped out.

Vera Wassiljovna – Wassilij's daughter, Vera works at the town factory, where she's become engaged to a young mechanic. She is a fervent believer in the Party and believes everything that she is told by the authorities. Vera represents the transition from the old to the new guard, not in the Party leadership but among ordinary people. By the end, she seems to be scheming for a way to get her father out of the home they share so that she can start a new life with her fiancé there—the epitome of the kind of instrumental logic promoted by the Party.

No. 402 – 402 is the prisoner occupying the cell next to Rubashov, whose name we never learn. 402 is, from what he says, a reactionary—that is, a supporter of the monarchy that the Revolution dismantled. He has been sentenced to 18 years in prison because of it. He has a crude sense of humor, often fantasizing about women and recruiting Rubashov to join in, but he is also idealistic and believes in honor and a commitment to one's own beliefs. Despite their wildly divergent politics, 402 and Rubashov become friends in prison, although Rubashov's decision to capitulate almost destroys their relationship.

Hare-lip (Young Kieffer) – Another fellow prisoner, who seems to be especially interested in Rubashov from the start, though Rubashov isn't certain why. Eventually, it becomes clear that Hare-lip is the son of Professor Kieffer, an old friend of Rubashov's, and Hare-lip is attempting to lighten his own sentence by accusing Rubashov of plotting to kill No. 1. Hare-lip is described as young, cowardly, and desperate to the extent that he is willing to do whatever he can to save is own life. In the end, his accusation ends up being insufficient to save him.

Professor Kieffer – A famous historian of the Revolution, and once No. 1's closest friend, Kieffer was also quite close to Rubashov. He works on No. 1's biography for ten years, but when certain changes are required and he's asked to change some of the facts, he refuses. Kieffer is an intellectual and, while he believes in the Party and the Revolution, he thinks that the cause is best served by truth—a belief that turns out to be woefully old-fashioned, as Kieffer too is imprisoned and executed.

No. 1 – The Party leader and a clear stand-in for Joseph Stalin, the leader of the Soviet Union. While No. 1 never appears in person in the novel, his portrait hangs over almost every room, implying his ubiquitous knowledge and power. No. 1 is simultaneously part of the old and new guards: during the Revolution, he was part of the intellectual group planning for a new society (together with Rubashov, Kieffer, and others). Now, though, No. 1 has created an entirely new set of policies, which require the liquidation of all who are unwilling to align themselves with these new expectations. For the younger generations, No. 1 is not just an intellectual model, but a kind of secular saint whose words are infallible rather than historical and contingent.

Michael Bogrov – A former army commander, Bogrov was Rubashov's roommate when they were in exile after 1905 (the year of the failed Russian Revolution against the monarchy). Bogrov served as Rubashov's intellectual mentor. Bogrov is imprisoned at the same place as Rubashov, and he is executed. As he is walking down the corridor to be killed, he calls out Rubashov's name. This call is perhaps the first major event that forces Rubashov to begin to reckon with his past choices and think through the consequences of his adherence to Party policy above all.

No. 406 (Rip Van Winkle) – A former sociology teacher in a country somewhere in southeastern Europe, this character was imprisoned there after participating in its own communist revolution and spent 20 years in prison. After being released, he came to Russia (or the unnamed country where the novel is set) but soon enough was arrested—No. 402 conjectures that things simply might have changed too much in so much time. No. 406 occupies the cell next to Rubashov and often seems distracted, even mad: he's also referred to as "Rip Van Winkle," referring to a Washington Irving short story about a man who falls asleep and wakes up decades later to discover an entirely new world.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Paul – A fellow dockworker at the Belgian port, Paul meets Little Loewy in prison and recruits him to the Party section at the port.

The warder – In charge of looking after Rubashov and the other prisoners, the warder doesn't have a personality of his own. His function is merely to carry out orders from above, and he does so willingly.

The doctor – Another bureaucrat with whom Rubashov interacts at the prison, the doctor is similarly unexceptional on a personal basis. He is significant only for the function he fulfills

on behalf of the Party.

The stenographer – Responsible for recording Rubashov's interrogations by Gletkin, the stenographer, who seems to believe fully in Rubashov's guilt, serves as an example of the way regular people have been indoctrinated into believing whatever the Party says.

THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.

IDEOLOGY AND CONTRADICTION

In *Darkness at Noon*, the Soviet Union's Communist ideology is shown through the pervading assumption that, in the Fatherland of the Revolution, there is a "dictatorship of the proletariat" (that is, rule by the industrial workers that form the vast majority of the population). In theory, this means that the masses possess all state and national power, and any existing government apparatus is in place solely to promote its own gradual dissolution until there is no need for any state power (any Central Committee or national leader) at all. In some ways, this ideology was instilled in citizens of the Soviet Union through specific policies, such as collectivization of farms and businesses, as well as the complete state ownership of such institutions, but it's important to note that Communism was a general worldview that transcended any one policy. At the time of his arrest, Rubashov may harbor doubts about particular methods used by the Communist Party leadership, but he still believes fervently in the underlying ideology of Communism.

Only over the course of the novel do the contradictions of this ideology become clear to Rubashov. For the Party, the insistence that they are making everyone's life better by serving the ultimate goal of rule by and for the people justifies almost any action against citizens, no matter how brutal. This paradox is obscured by the Party's insistence that the idea of a unique, special individual is an utter illusion, thus actions against individuals for the good of the collective cannot be seen as violence or injustice at all. The novel argues that the major power of the Central Committee and the cult of personality around No. 1 are not just vestiges of an older system that will eventually wane away: these groups are, instead, insistent on retaining their own power. The very idea that they would work to undermine themselves and their own power is itself contradictory.

Not all of the characters in Koestler's book see these contradictions. Indeed, one of the defining characteristics of an ideology is that the ideas and assumptions on which it is based are so powerful, pervasive, and invisible that they become almost impossible for people to notice or understand on their own. Those in the novel who do recognize the ideological contradictions (and who are, therefore, not aligned perfectly with Communist ideology, like Rubashov, his friend Kieffer, No. 402, or the many other prisoners held with Rubashov) are hidden away so as to feign absolute harmony. Because of this, ideology does ultimately win out in the book—the Party is able to quash any dissident voices. Indeed, Rubashov's confession at the end stems from his pure exhaustion with the intellectual contradictions and paradoxes with which he has grappled throughout. But while there is no hope left for Rubashov, the novel does imply that, despite the inefficacy of dissidence, exposing the internal contradictions of an ideology might be the first step towards hastening its collapse. This gradual movement towards understanding is cut off *within* the novel itself by Rubashov's death, and by the suggestion that the alternative views held by Wassilij, for instance, are in the process of being quashed as well. But while the characters within the novel are overwhelmed by ideology, the *reader* of the novel remains to grapple with such contradictions, which—in a totalitarian society like the one depicted in *Darkness at Noon*—might help eventually bring about the end of such a regime.

THE INDIVIDUAL, OR THE "GRAMMATICAL FICTION, VS. THE COLLECTIVE

While Communist thought proposes that society's masses are not subject to any one person's power, the truth of this idea is challenged by, among other things, the cult around the leader "No. 1." His photograph adorns every room, even though those in charge insist that they and No. 1 are only working in the interests of the collective. Only gradually, over the course of the novel, does Rubashov come to question the validity of these assertions. At the beginning of the novel, Rubashov, steeped in Communist ideology, considers the collective to be inherently superior to the individual: in fact, the individual is no more than what he calls a "grammatical fiction," a reference to his idea that the grammatical "first-person singular" represents a notion of individuality that does not (and should not) exist in the world. Rubashov's conviction that the individual is irrelevant allows him to pursue Party goals with little thought of the destruction or suffering that the Party might cause along the way.

However, as Rubashov ruminates on his own past while locked inside his cell, he begins to wonder how much of a fiction the "grammatical fiction" truly is. He thinks back on the personal relationships he's had with unique, idiosyncratic individuals, including an affair with his secretary Arlova. His thoughts about Arlova, including his memories about his willingness (despite

her innocence) to have her executed "for the cause," begin to make Rubashov wonder if the promotion of an abstract ideal is worth the suffering of real people. The Party member named Richard (presumably part of the German Communist Party) whom Rubashov refused to protect while abroad is another example of Rubashov's initially unwavering commitment to the collective over the individual. This man may be a loyal member of the party, but his insistence on printing his own flyers rather than using those put out by the central committee was enough to make Rubashov consider him to be a traitor.

As Rubashov returns to these memories, the tension between the individual and the collective becomes increasingly clear to him. Ivanov is well aware of this tension himself: he deals with it ironically while interrogating Rubashov, suggesting that it doesn't matter what really goes on at the level of the individual, as long as the wishes of the Party are fulfilled on a superficial level. But Ivanov's ironic distance proves fatal, as he's executed and replaced with Gletkin, who seems to believe far more earnestly that the individual is nothing in the face of the collective. But even as Rubashov himself loses faith in the philosophy of collectivism, he never replaces his ideology with staunch individualism or any other guiding attitude. Ultimately, the novel indicates that the individual and the collective cannot in fact be reconciled in Party ideology, in Rubashov's own mind, or in the narrative he puts forward about his own life.

LOGICAL REASONING AND BUREAUCRACY

The interrogation tactics that Ivanov and Gletkin use on Rubashov and other inmates might seem senseless and cruel, but these two members of the Party bureaucracy—like all its members—pride themselves on their impeccable logic and rational thinking. To them, acknowledging one's individual opinion or moral intuition by questioning Party tactics or their role within the Party would be anathema to the values of the collective. An ideological commitment to logical reasoning, then, allows these characters to sidestep the question of moral values altogether: rather than decide what is right and wrong for themselves, what is right is defined only by what is most efficient and "reasonable" within the goals set out by No. 1.

Ivanov and Gletkin represent two distinct outlooks regarding the relationship between Party business and logic, outlooks that can be traced back to their experiences of history. Ivanov, the equivalent of an "Old Bolshevik," or a Party member who was present before and during the Revolution, is willing to simply separate his beliefs—for instance, his belief that Rubashov is innocent—from his commitment to party logic (his recognition of what must be done at Rubashov's hearing). This act of distinguishing between beliefs and reality is what Ivanov considers to be the epitome of logic.

Gletkin though, has grown up solely within a post-Revolution logic, and he lacks even the ability to separate his personal beliefs from collective necessity. When he replaces Ivanov as interrogator, it signals a shift in the way that the bureaucracy is run: there is no longer room for broader complexity or private belief systems at all. Instead, Gletkin acts robotically, paring down the interrogation process to a series of discrete, straightforward steps, each of which can be applied to an inmate in turn. Other citizens of this society also learn how to apply this utilitarian logic to their own lives. Wassilij's daughter, at the end of the novel, is on the verge of betraying her father to the Party so that she can move into his home with her fiancé, and she seems to feel no guilt or sense of responsibility for doing so. Within the book, then, a moral set of values has been replaced by a technocratic one: this is what the philosopher Hannah Arendt would, in the context of Nazi Germany, call the "banality of evil." What counts as right and good is simply the extent to which reasoning has been followed to its logical conclusion.

Rubashov, though, embodies the complexity and pitfalls of Soviet logic. At the beginning of the book, Rubashov, like a good Old Bolshevik, thinks he can simply reason his way out of his predicament. The novel uses flashbacks to illuminate Rubashov's attempts to determine, step by step and according to the rules of logic, what he has done to make things go awry. This process allows him to uncover contradictions within Party ideology and it foments his doubt about the predominance of the collective over the individual. His memories also lead him to recognize that he himself has always acted according to Party logic, so it's ironic that he now finds himself trapped within it. Ivanov knows that Rubashov possesses an exquisitely logical mind, and, as a result, he assumes from the start that Rubashov will ultimately confess even without being tortured: the compulsion toward Party logic is that powerful. Rubashov's tragic fate is to be condemned by an unjust system that he himself has espoused, one whose problems become apparent to him only after it is too late for him to resist them.

CHANGE AND THE LAWS OF HISTORY

Darkness at Noon is concerned with the laws by which history functions: it asks fundamental questions about whether historical laws should be considered scientific or social, whether historical laws can be used to predict or enforce change, and whether it's wise, in the first place, to reduce to a "law" the complex interplay of forces that shape a society over time. Each major character's actions and choices about his relationship to the Party and his use of power are shown to be predicated on his own ideas about the workings of historical laws.

Indeed, the major distinction between the "old" and the "new" guard of Party committee members may turn on the interest, or lack thereof, in history. The new guard is content to let the

central committee emit its decrees and its specific points of policy without questioning them. Gletkin and others like him are bureaucrats, rather than intellectuals: they have little concern for overarching laws or philosophies that may justify their actions. But the old guard, represented by Rubashov and Ivanov, was involved in shaping this very system and, as such, is still deeply invested in these laws. They have shepherded the country through the socialist revolution, one that was supposed to lead to greater happiness. In fact, for Karl Marx, the author of the *Communist Manifesto*, there was even more at stake: he thought it was inevitable for this revolution to eventually occur, at which point all the strife and conflict of history would end—meaning that, in some ways, the revolution would spell out the end of history itself. Indeed, the form of Bolshevik communism that this old guard espouses is directly tied up with a theory of history: it characterizes capitalist production as necessarily leading to failure, and the growing class consciousness that results from capitalism's failure as inevitably leading to a revolution that will do away with all material want and scarcity. What Rubashov calls the "laws of motion" are, therefore, not just political goals to strive after. To him, they are *inevitable* to the course of history, like the laws of physics are inevitable to motion. What distinguishes the Party, he argues at one point, is that it simply learned enough about human beings and history to understand these laws.

Nonetheless, as time goes on, Rubashov increasingly questions the confidence of those who presume to know how historical laws work. He begins to look at the arc of history on a longer scale, past the current-day political situation, and he realizes that he can't know what will happen in the future, and thus he can't know if the laws he believes to be true will actually be proved true in time. This realization troubles Rubashov; he has been acting all along on the assumption that he *is* right, which justified his own willingness to betray people to the Party. The climactic choice of the novel—Rubashov's decision about whether or not to confess—hinges on his understanding of historical laws. In his decision-making process, he asks himself whether he might be wrong about the inevitability of history, as well as what it might mean if history were to prove No. 1 and all of his violent tactics right. This uncertainty is part of what makes the book both a vivid novel of suspense and also a philosophical novel of ideas: these two genres are closely associated in *Darkness at Noon*, precisely because, in this society, ideas have taken on a deadly, world-historical force.

TRUTH, CONFESSION, AND PERFORMANCE

The histories of nations can be understood as stories that members of a society tell themselves about where they came from and where they are going. The defining characteristic of the history of a totalitarian state (like the one in *Darkness at Noon*) is the political necessity of unquestioned adherence to a singular narrative that benefits the Party. In other words, the Party gets to define the only story that citizens are permitted to tell about their society. When citizens stray from this narrative, they become political dissidents, as the Party's version of history is tantamount to law. It's not enough for the state, then, to merely to punish or torture dissidents: dissidents must openly and publicly proclaim their wrongs and, by doing so, confirm the only narrative about the Party that is permitted. In that sense, the forcibly extracted confessions of guilt—from Rubashov, Ivanov (though offstage), and others—are ways to reenact the historical arc of the society, smoothing out any wrinkles and conflicts so that a happy ending might be reached.

It's important to understand that, for the image of the Party, confessions must be enacted in the form of a public performance. Truth in this society is a function of what is best for the Party, rather than fundamental facts to be uncovered. As such, truth cannot simply emerge or exist: it must be told, retold, and performed on the stage of the court. This performance is then reenacted by everyone who reads the official Party account of public trials, including Vera Wassiljovna, who reads it aloud to her father. *Darkness at Noon* moves between metaphors of a story and metaphors of a stage. Though the stage metaphor is more apparently theatrical (meant to underline the inauthentic, constructed nature of truth in this society), both metaphors imply that confessions are less about revealing guilt than they are about enacting and preserving the very laws, narratives, and fictions by which this society is held together.

SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.

NO. 1'S PORTRAIT

In almost every room (besides the prison cells), the portrait of the Party leader No. 1 hangs from the wall. Rubashov tends to perceive the leader's facial expression differently depending on the circumstance. Sometimes, the portrait is described as staring at people with menacing "frozen eyes." At other times it's an expression of knowing irony that seems to characterize No. 1's face. Whatever the attitude or tone, though, the ubiquity of the portrait underlines the ubiquity of No. 1's orders throughout the society. In an environment in which people are encouraged to denounce others as traitors or counter-revolutionaries, it can indeed seem like No. 1's eyes and ears have extended everywhere, just as his portrait has been hung on every wall. Rubashov often has to pause and wonder how his interrogators have learned about trifling, off-the-cuff conversations he's had at cocktail parties,

for instance, years before. The portrait of No. 1 also serves as a reminder of the ultimate source of stability in the Fatherland: even if No. 1 claims to be no more than a representative of the people in general, all policy eventually can be traced back to his desires and beliefs. No. 1's portrait is not the only painting or even the only portrait to be found in the novel, but what distinguishes it is that, unlike the others, it never disappears or is altered. Portraits of other Party members and leaders are surreptitiously replaced or destroyed as their fortunes rise and fall. Rather than an equal, radical Communist society, the book seems to suggest that this world is the ultimate autocracy, one in which only one person can be considered safe.

CHRISTIAN SYMBOLISM

Before the 1917 Russian Revolution, Orthodox Christians were the majority religion in Russia. Subsequently, the Bolsheviks in power began a process of removing the power and authority of the Church, delegitimizing it through propaganda campaigns, and requiring all members of the Party to be atheists. *Darkness at Noon* testifies to the imperfect, partial nature of this campaign, which was unable to stamp out many ordinary people's attachment to their faith. Indeed, the Christian symbolism that is strewn throughout the novel underlines the irony of official atheism's comingling with images from other belief systems. In a society that has ostensibly driven God away, characters (like the porter Wassilij) do not just espouse Christian beliefs but they also contribute to a powerfully symbolic Christian atmosphere in general. Wassilij, for one, views Rubashov as a sacrificial lamb like Jesus Christ: near the end of the novel, he mutters Bible verses to himself that recount Jesus's final days on earth, his betrayal by his disciple Peter, and his crowning with thorns. Rubashov too comes to equate what he calls the "grammatical fiction" with a religious sensibility, as well as linking his own confinement to that of Christian monks. In arguing with Ivanov, he also talks of Dostoevsky, a famous and famously religious Russian writer, in order to propose an alternative morality to the one espoused by the Party. In general, Christian symbolism throughout the novel implies that, despite the all-powerful gaze of No. 1 and the omnipotence of the Communist Party in Russia, other ways of thinking and other belief systems still manage to evade the Party's grasp, even if only in the most subtle of ways. At the same time, there is a way in which No. 1 himself becomes imbued with the attributes of a god or god-like figure, suggesting the persistence of the human need to divinize and worship.

TOOTHACHE

Rubashov has been plagued by toothache for years, since well before his imprisonment: he's bothered by it during his travels as a diplomat in Germany, for instance. It's particularly bothersome to him when he arrives in prison, and it serves as an excuse for him to refuse to eat. Gradually, however, the pain that Rubashov feels in his tooth comes to be associated with a more intellectual and even emotional "ache" or sense of unease. It is when he begins to think of individuals—of what he dubs the "grammatical fiction"—that Rubashov inevitably begins to feel his tooth ache once again. Conversely, when he's concentrating on his physical needs or on the day-to-day life of the prison, without musing further on his own past and current condition, the problem fades away. The toothache thus represents Rubashov's gradual realization, over the course of the novel, that he has potentially been accounting for history and for individual lives according to a mathematical formula that simply doesn't work. At the same time, a toothache is dull and unpleasant without being overpowering. Rubashov's sense of unease, too, never bursts out into a dramatic scene of outrage, disavowal, or conflict: instead it festers within him, minor but persistent, and urging him to face his own past.

DREAMS

As *Darkness at Noon* opens, the protagonist, Rubashov, is having one of his recurring dreams: that the police have come to arrest him, but he is too paralyzed to move. This time, though, he awakens from his dream to find that he is, indeed, about to be arrested. Rubashov experiences his own imprisonment and interrogation as a dizzying slippage between dreams and reality. Dreams have their own logic, their own laws, just as totalitarianism does. Indeed, while Rubashov thinks he's lived long enough to understand how things work in his society, the new rules of the Party seem nonsensical to him, with no basis in reality. Throughout his time in prison, he's denied so much sleep that this dreamlike quality comes to characterize all his waking hours. But dreams are also a way for Rubashov to deal with his incarceration by refusing to acquiesce to this new reality: engrossed by his own thoughts, caught up in the workings of his own mind, he uses day-dreams in particular as way to imagine alternate possibilities and to work through his past. Was everything he experienced in the past no more than a dream, he begins to ask himself, and is this imprisonment reality—or is it the other way around? The dream-world of the novel forces Rubashov to come to terms with what he's done and the ramifications of everything he's believed in, consequences that take place in an all-too-violent reality.

QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Scribner edition of *Darkness at Noon* published in 2006.

The First Hearing: 6 Quotes

The horror which No. 1 emanated, above all consisted in the possibility that he was in the right, and that all those whom he killed had to admit, even with the bullet in the back of their necks, that he conceivably might be in the right. There was no certainty; only the appeal to that mocking oracle they called History, who gave her sentence only when the jaws of the appealer had long since fallen to dust.

Related Characters: No. 1

Related Themes:

Page Number: 13

Explanation and Analysis

Rubashov ruminates here on the power and allure—both impressive and fear-inspiring—of No. 1, whose portrait watches over nearly every room in the unnamed country. It is not simply, though, that No. 1 exerts a tyrannical power over everyone else through brute force and cruelty. There's also a powerful ideology behind his power. This ideology is bolstered by careful logical and intellectual reasoning that seeks to justify any actions taken by No. 1 or enacted in his name. As a result, anyone in opposition to the state cannot simply claim moral righteousness as a justification for their beliefs or actions. In addition, the all-encompassing ideology of totalitarianism makes it impossible not to question what counts as true and how history will portray the players involved. Even more chillingly, Rubashov recognizes here that he will either be judged or absolved long after his death: in the span of an individual life, in this framework, no one can tell what is right and wrong, true and false.

The First Hearing: 8 Quotes

The old disease, thought Rubashov. Revolutionaries should not think through other people's minds.
Or, perhaps they should? Or even ought to?
How can one change the world if one identifies oneself with everybody?
How else can one change it?

Related Characters: Nicholas Salmanovitch Rubashov (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 23

Explanation and Analysis

Rubashov is wondering what's going on in other people's minds, an activity in which he often engages and at which he is more or less talented. This skill has presumably served him well as a diplomat, when he was responsible for managing political affairs strategically and manipulating people abroad. At the same time, however, Rubashov regards this ability to imagine the situation of another person as a weakness, the "old disease" to which he is susceptible but thinks he must overcome. It's a disease, within the Party ideology, because imagining another person's thoughts puts an emphasis on an individual's particularity and inner life rather than denying the individual in order to focus on the collective.

Nevertheless, Rubashov begins to show some stirrings of uncertainty regarding whether or not it really is better to forget about the interiors of other people's minds. As a member of the Party leadership, Rubashov knows that he has power and responsibility that require him to distinguish himself from others, and, in particular, to often forget about the possibility that he might cause their suffering in return for a higher cause. At the same time, he wonders if there's an insoluble contradiction at play here: if the only way the Party can enact the changes it wants might be precisely to focus on individual thoughts and desires.

The First Hearing: 9 Quotes

"The Party can never be mistaken," said Rubashov. "You and I can make a mistake. Not the Party. The Party, comrade, is more than you and I and a thousand others like you and I. The Party is the embodiment of the revolutionary idea in history. History knows no scruples and no hesitation. Inert and unerring, she flows towards her goal. At every bend in her course she leaves the mud which she carries and the corpses of the drowned. History knows her way. She makes no mistakes. He who has not absolute faith in History does not belong in the Party's ranks."

Related Characters: Nicholas Salmanovitch Rubashov (speaker), Richard

Related Themes:

Page Number: 43-44

Explanation and Analysis

Rubashov is speaking to Richard at the gallery in Germany, criticizing Richard for having thought to follow his own path by printing his own pamphlets rather than following the Party's official message. Richard believes in the Party cause, but he also thinks that Party officials might make mistakes in

spreading their message to Germany—mistakes that Richard is uniquely qualified to correct since he's present on the ground. Here, Rubashov shows that the very idea that the Party can make a mistake is a contradiction in terms when one really subscribes to its own ideology. If the Party is the "embodiment of the revolutionary idea in history," and if revolution is the ultimate goal to strive for, then one must follow revolution, history, and—as a logical result—whatever the Party decides.

Here, Rubashov acknowledges some of the casualties of this insistence on history: he portrays it as intent and powerful but cold, with little concern for the "drowned" left in its wake. At the same time, his reasoning is both logical and circular: he seems to be implying that history's laws find their proper fulfillment the Party, which is proved by the fact that the Party follows history's laws. If there's complete overlap between the two, then there's no contradiction—but this circularity also makes it difficult, if not impossible, to disprove the Party's assumptions or to question anything that the Party does (indeed, this is precisely the point).

The First Hearing: 11 Quotes

❝ "Yet I would do it again," he said to himself. "It was necessary and right. But do I perhaps owe you the fare all the same? Must one also pay for deeds which were right and necessary?"

Related Characters: Nicholas Salmanovitch Rubashov (speaker), No. 402, Richard

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 56-57

Explanation and Analysis

Rubashov has been thinking of how he sacrificed Richard, and about the taxi driver who seemed loyal to Communism (but whose friendly offering Rubashov dismissed in order to stay discreet). These memories are also interspersed with Rubashov's conversation with No. 402, whom he asks for tobacco. Initially No. 402 says no, and Rubashov, irritated, decides that 402 owes him nothing. Then 402 does send Rubashov tobacco from the warder. Suddenly Rubashov is forced to question how easily he scorns and dismisses others who seem unable to serve his own needs.

This, in turn, causes Rubashov to reflect on how he acted with Richard. He doesn't, at this point, think that he had another option: he believes that the needs of the Party should come before any individual cause. At the same time, Rubashov starts to wonder if he still "owes the fare" to Richard—that is, if he is indebted to him in any way, or indebted in the broader (even theological) sense of the term, on a cosmic scale. This is a related question to the one Rubashov has asked about the laws of history; he won't know whether he must pay for wrongs, or even if he wronged anyone at all, until it's too late.

The First Hearing: 12 Quotes

❝ The Party's warm, breathing body appeared to him to be covered with sores—festering sores, bleeding stigmata. When and where in history had there even been such defective saints? Whenever had a good cause been worse represented? If the Party embodied the will of history, then history itself was defective.

Related Characters: Nicholas Salmanovitch Rubashov (speaker)

Related Themes:   

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 58

Explanation and Analysis

Rubashov is feeling desperate for a cigarette and, in his desperation, he begins to be overwhelmed by thoughts of the Party and of his own interrelationship with it. Indeed, even as Rubashov now begins to question his own role in asserting the dominance of communist ideology, he realizes that there's no way to separate himself out from any evils of the ideology, as his entire life has been tied up with Communism.

At this moment in particular, Rubashov uses a remarkable metaphor to think about the morally compromised nature of the Party. First of all, he compares it to a living body, which echoes the "social body" to which many political leaders often refer when they seek to get across the importance of collective interests and actions. But Rubashov also uses religious and, in particular, Christian imagery: the stigmata were originally the wounds on Jesus's body from being crucified, and it is said in Christianity that when a person begins to show similar wounds or wound-like marks, it's a sign that the person is a saint. Rubsahov links this notion to the idea of individual sacrifice for collective use—a central Party tenet—but he also suggests that such sacrifice has been deformed grotesquely, turned away from

its proper purposes.

The First Hearing: 13 Quotes

❝ For the movement was without scruples; she rolled towards her goal unconcernedly and deposed the corpses of the drowned in the windings of her course. Her course had many twists and windings; such was the law of her being. And whosoever could not follow her crooked course was washed on to the bank, for such was her law. The motives of the individual did not matter to her. His conscience did not matter to her, neither did she care what went on in his head and his heart. The Party knew only one crime: to swerve from the course laid out; and only one punishment: death.

Related Characters: Nicholas Salmanovitch Rubashov

Related Themes:

Page Number: 76

Explanation and Analysis

The narration steps back here from Rubashov's particular experience in order to make a broader and, in many ways, poetic comment on the workings of a totalitarian government, specifically in the post-revolutionary Russian context. The "movement" is described here just as History has been described earlier, as a powerful but impersonal force, unconcerned with the suffering of individuals and acting according to broad, collective laws. Then, the "movement" is equated to the "Party," in a slippage that suggests just how much the idealism of collective action has become an authoritarian regime of *certain* individuals. There's no room for subtlety in this framework, either—there's a foreshadowing here of Rubashov's ultimate fate, even though, at this point in the novel, it still seems as though he might be able to be saved by a confession.

The First Hearing: 14 Quotes

❝ "But we had descended into the depths, into the formless, anonymous masses, which at all times constituted the substance of history; and we were the first to discover her laws of motion. We had discovered the laws of inertia, of the slow changing of her molecular structure, and of her sudden eruptions. That was the greatness of our doctrine. The Jacobins were moralists; we were empirics. We dug in the primeval mud of history and there we found her laws. We knew more than ever men have known about mankind; that is why our revolution succeeded. And now you have buried it all again...."

Related Characters: Nicholas Salmanovitch Rubashov (speaker), Ivanov

Related Themes:

Page Number: 84

Explanation and Analysis

Ivanov is purportedly interrogating Rubashov, but the two seem to be having more of a two-way conversation than a one-way examination. This is perhaps due to their former friendship and their mutual respect for intellectual questions. Here Rubashov returns to a former time when he didn't question the Party, its historical laws, or his own position within them. The "we" to which Rubashov refers are the members of the Party leadership that sat around the table at the initial congress, immortalized in a photograph. While other revolutions have existed in the past, Rubashov argues that the exceptionalism of the Bolshevik revolution was that this group had not just acted according to desires or even morals, but had studied the laws of history and the workings of the masses.

Rubsahov talks about these laws as analogous to laws of physics: by stressing that the leaders were "empirics" rather than "moralists," he argues that they didn't try to determine what was right, but rather they sought to delve into the rules and laws of society just like physicists interrogate the laws of the universe. For this reason, the laws they uncovered should have been infallible. Now, Rubsahov seems to suggest, the new Party policies are doing away with all the knowledge and discovery that this logical process created.

The Second Hearing: 1 Quotes

❝ "Yet for the moment we are thinking and acting on credit. As we have thrown overboard all conventions and rules of cricket-morality, our sole guiding principle is that of consequent logic. We are under the terrible compulsion to follow our thought down to its final consequence and to act in accordance to it. We are sailing without ballast; therefore each touch on the helm is a matter of life or death."

Related Characters: Nicholas Salmanovitch Rubashov (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 98

Explanation and Analysis

This section of the novel begins with an extract from Rubashov's diary, as he tries to puzzle through the implications of his imprisonment, not just for himself, but also for what it says about how the Party has changed. He wonders whether that change is accidental or an inevitable result of internal contradictions of its ideology. "Cricket-morality" is Rubashov's term for the nineteenth-century liberal, bourgeois assumptions of individual sovereignty and consideration of various means and ends. Rubashov, like Ivanov, still at this point considers such morality to be weak, naïve, and passé: as long as a person or a state has proper goals, the means by which these goals are achieved must not be considered. In other words, one should rely on "consequent logic" alone.

Nevertheless, Rubsahov recognizes that the result of such logic is another kind of uncertainty. While the Party is, for him, too logical and even courageous to take refuge in facile moral precepts, that does mean that it's not clear how to judge whether or not an action is right. The responsibility this places on those in charge of the Party is, then, remarkably high.

The Second Hearing: 3 Quotes

❝ Its existence was limited to a grammatical abstraction called the "first person singular." Direct questions and logical meditations did not induce it to speak; its utterances occurred without visible cause and, strangely enough, always accompanied by a sharp attack of toothache. Its mental sphere seemed to be composed of such various and disconnected parts as the folded hands of the *Pietà*, Little Loewy's cats, the tune of the song with the refrain of "come to dust," or a particular sentence which Arlova had once spoken on an occasion.

Related Characters: Nicholas Salmanovitch Rubashov (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 111-112

Explanation and Analysis

Rubashov is once again trying to think through the implications of his interrogation, and here he is wondering to what extent Ivanov really wants to save him and whether or not his interrogator is as sincere (or cynical) as Rubashov had been with Richard or Little Loewy. This monologue takes place within Rubashov's own mind, but he's also aware of a "silent partner" that makes the monologue a kind of internal conversation—even if that partner is only rarely stirred.

Rubashov characterizes the silent partner as the "first person singular," that is, the individual with all his or her desires, fears, memories, idiosyncrasies, and capacity to love or suffer. Rubashov, having been schooled in the triumph of the collective and the dismissal of the individual, has no way to think about his own self other than as a question of grammar: the "I" that is part of language but has no life of its own. At the same time, Rubashov does, on some level, sense the vitality of such a "grammatical abstraction." Indeed, the "first person singular" is actually opposed to other kinds of abstraction in that it arises in such particular circumstances: when Rubashov thinks of particular memories of his own life, and when he thinks about certain personalities he's known in the past. Multi-sensory memories tend to accompany the intrusion of the "grammatical fiction," from smell to sight to touch. The list that Rubashov makes up will come to be a kind of refrain of individual characteristics for the rest of the novel.

The Second Hearing: 4 Quotes

❝ He had sacrificed Arlova because his own existence was more valuable to the Revolution. That was the decisive argument his friends had used to convince him; the duty to keep oneself in reserve for later on was more important than the commandments of petty bourgeois morality. For those who had changed the face of history, there was no other duty than to stay here and be ready. "You can do what you like with me," Arlova had said, and so he had done. Why should he treat himself with more consideration?

Related Characters: Nicholas Salmanovitch Rubashov (speaker), Arlova

Related Themes:

Page Number: 128-129

Explanation and Analysis

Rubashov continues to muse about the relationship between the status of individual people and the collective goals of the revolutionary society. He's beginning to sense, even if only implicitly, a contradiction in the Party's espousal of using any means necessary to achieve collective ends: these ends always include the safety and security of those individuals who happen to be in power. Arlova was not, then, just sacrificed on behalf of something greater than herself, but on behalf of one other person, Rubashov. The Party doesn't seem to have an answer to this contradiction, other than to continue to insist that the Party leadership perfectly

embodies the goals of the collective. Now, though, Rubashov is beginning to see that even this logic must ultimately apply to himself if he continues to insist on being consistent and intellectually rigorous. He too, perhaps, will have to face the laws of history and be judged according to them, even if those laws of history end up having particular faces, like that of No. 1.

The Second Hearing: 6 Quotes

"Up till now, he had never imagined Arlova's death in such detail. It had always been for him an abstract occurrence; it had left him with a feeling of strong uneasiness, but he had never doubted the logical rightness of his behavior. Now, in the nausea which turned his stomach and drove the wet perspiration from his forehead, his past mode of thought seemed lunacy. The whimpering of Bogrov unbalanced the logical equation.

Related Characters: Nicholas Salmanovitch Rubashov (speaker), Michael Bogrov, Arlova

Related Themes:

Page Number: 145

Explanation and Analysis

As Bogrov was led along the corridor on his way to be executed, he shouted out Rubashov's name. As a result, Rubashov—who is familiar with such executions from his own time as interrogator and dictator—is forced to face the material, physical, and sensory nature of being led to one's death. The notion of death as an abstract necessity in the interest of a larger, collective cause now gives way to the concrete horror of having to face one's death or having to face one's own responsibility for another's death. The fact that Rubashov does begin to feel responsible for Bogrov, who is one of the people he didn't actually betray personally, suggests that Rubashov is beginning to have a broader sense of his general role in perpetrating Party violence, even indirectly.

The "logical equation" of actions in pursuit of certain goals has always seemed airtight to Rubashov, but it no longer seems so. The public, performative nature of Bogrov's death that serves the Party (as a warning to others and example of its own power) also creates a kind of stage on which Rubashov can set his own changing theories.

The Second Hearing: 7 Quotes

"History is *a priori* amoral; it has no conscience. To want to conduct history according to the maxims of the Sunday school means to leave everything as it is. You know that as well as I do. You know the stakes in this game, and here you come talking about Bogrov's whimpering...."

Related Characters: Ivanov (speaker), Michael Bogrov, Nicholas Salmanovitch Rubashov

Related Themes:

Page Number: 156

Explanation and Analysis

Ivanov and Rubashov continue their interrogation-cum-intellectual conversation. While Rubashov has kept the details of his concerns about the "grammatical fiction" to himself until now, at this point he's just told Ivanov that Ivanov, having failed to hear Bogrov's cry, can't possibly understand that there may be limits to the Party's logical reasoning. Ivanov, here, sounds quite a bit like Rubashov himself at earlier moments: he once again underlines the shared intellectual heritage with which they both began their time as members of the Party leadership. Referring to Sunday school, Ivanov again brings up Christianity as an alternative moral system, one that the Party claims to have quashed entirely—though it's still present enough for the interrogator to have to point to it as a continuing danger, a weakness against which diligent Party members must militate. Indeed, Ivanov seems to chide Rubashov, reminding him that Ivanov is not saying anything Rubashov doesn't already know. For Ivanov, Rubashov's newfound humanitarian conscience is not the beginning of an alternately imagined society, but a passé weakness that he must conquer in order to remember what is most important, that is, the power of the revolutionary society (or at least its leaders).

"We whip the groaning masses of the country towards a theoretical future happiness, which only we can see. For the energies of this generation are exhausted; they were spent in the Revolution; for this generation is bled white and there is nothing left of it but a moaning, numbed, apathetic lump of sacrificial flesh....Those are the consequences of our consequentialness."

Related Characters: Nicholas Salmanovitch Rubashov (speaker), Ivanov

Related Themes:

Page Number: 162

Explanation and Analysis

Still enmeshed in a fervent intellectual conversation with his interrogator, Rubashov responds to Ivanov's points with a rousing performance, one in which he uses the rhetorical and strategic skills he's developed in service of the Party (as a diplomat abroad, for instance) to portray what he sees as the historical arc of the revolution. Rubashov refers to the revolution as the moment of greatest idealism, when it seemed like a happy future would come into being. But Rubashov refers to his and Ivanov's generation, the one that put the revolution into action, as a "lump of sacrificial flesh." Again employing religious imagery, Rubashov suggests that their sacrifices are no longer for the future happiness of the masses, but to preserve the numb stasis of the present, in which the many are "whipped" by the few. Rubashov does see the revolution as incredibly consequential, with sweeping effects throughout the country, if not the world, but he's begun to see such pervasive effects as devastating rather than productive.

"We all thought one could treat history like one experiments in physics. The difference is that in physics one can repeat the experiment a thousand times, but in history only once."

Related Characters: Nicholas Salmanovitch Rubashov (speaker), Ivanov

Related Themes:

Page Number: 164

Explanation and Analysis

In an earlier section of the book, Rubashov himself employed the language of science and experimentation in order to discuss how he, a loyal and powerful member of the Party leadership, ended up imprisoned. Now he shares with Ivanov some of the results of his theorizing: he's come to see that it's not necessarily that the Party's ideology and logic were ultimately correct but simply misapplied or mistakenly dealt with vis-à-vis Rubashov, but rather that there is a flaw within the ideological assumptions themselves. Rubashov has also previously taken pride in the impeccable logical reasoning that has enabled the Party to succeed in a communist revolution like no place else. Yet now he realizes that what the Party thinks of as the laws of history don't work just like the laws of physics: first, because history can't be repeated, and second, because human beings are involved. Of course, history can be treated like a physics experiment—and it has been, Rubashov argues—but the result is that individuals are manipulated or destroyed.

The Third Hearing: 1 Quotes

"In periods of maturity it is the duty and the function of the opposition to appeal to the masses. In periods of mental immaturity, only demagogues invoke the 'higher judgment of the people.' In such situations the opposition has two alternatives: to seize the power by a *coup d'état*, without being able to count on the support of the masses, or in mute despair to throw themselves out of the swing—'to die in silence.' There is a third choice which is no less consistent, and which in our country has been developed into a system: the denial and suppression of one's own conviction when there is no prospect of materializing it."

Related Characters: Nicholas Salmanovitch Rubashov (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 173-174

Explanation and Analysis

Once again, a section of the novel opens with an excerpt from Rubashov's diary, where he continues to attempt to work out the implications of his own position. Now, far more than earlier, he seems to consider his role as a member of the opposition (an identity that, after denying it as an accusation made by others, he has slowly started to claim as his own). Here he also continues to develop an intellectual theory, what he will call the "theory of relative maturity," that will help him account for what went awry between the idealistic days of the revolution and now. The country now finds itself, he argues, in a period of mental immaturity. This assertion shows Rubashov's continued elitism and sense of superiority with respect to the masses. Indeed, he thinks that by appealing to the masses—even if that's just a cover for its own power—the Party has lost the intellectual thrust that used to define it.

In listing the options available to the opposition, Rubashov first postulates a coup, which he knows to be impossible, given the fractured, exhausted state of the surviving old guard. Then he considers the injunction to "die in silence" given to him by the barber. Finally, he ponders the realization he's beginning to have about the way ideology permeates through all action and even thought. He

recognizes that he himself has internalized this ideology so much that it's grown almost impossible for him to know what he truly believes and what he's coached himself into saying and thinking. This is not just an individual choice, he concludes: it's one that has become a "system," one that fits exactly into the Party's own interests, but also profoundly complicates the ability to ever know what is true and what is false.

The Third Hearing: 3 Quotes

Instead of the old portraits, a light patch shone from Ivanov's wallpaper; philosophical incendiarism had given place to a period of wholesome sterility. Revolutionary theory had frozen to a dogmatic cult, with a simplified, easily graspable catechism, and with No. 1 as the high priest celebrating the Mass.

Related Characters: Nicholas Salmanovitch Rubashov (speaker), No. 1, Ivanov

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 179-180

Explanation and Analysis

Rubashov is waiting to be interrogated by Ivanov again, and as he waits he thinks again about the changes that have taken place between the time of the revolution and the time of his imprisonment. There is abundant visual and material evidence of these changes. The libraries, for instance, have been purged of the books that tell any story of the revolution other than what the Party wants to be the truth (and, in particular, what No. 1 wants to hear). In this quotation, the same is true for the replacement of certain portraits with others, or their removal entirely: this is a literal erasure of history. Rubashov is coming to terms here with the contradictions inherent to the ideology of a group that claims to represent and fulfill history, but then changes and tweaks the truth whenever historical reality doesn't fit its own purposes.

Rubashov also takes issue with the replacement of idealistic, intellectually driven leaders (ones steeped in political thought and communist theory) with a static, "sterile" set of doctrines that cannot be questioned or debated. Although Rubashov has tried to find in Christian symbolism a way out of the ideological dominance of the Party, here he thinks about Party doctrine as simply another kind of state religion. This sense of religion has to do less with the emphasis on individual sovereignty, as discussed elsewhere, and more with the powerful institution of the church (such as the Orthodox Church in Russia), which—like No. 1—speaks for all people through a powerful hierarchy and denies any ability to challenge this hierarchy.

If history were a matter of calculation, how much did the sum of two thousand nightmares weigh, the pressure of a two-thousandfold helpless craving? Now he really felt the sisterly scent of Arlova; his body under the woolen blanket was covered with sweat....

Related Characters: Nicholas Salmanovitch Rubashov (speaker), Arlova

Related Themes:

Page Number: 185

Explanation and Analysis

Rubashov's thoughts return to Arlova as he continues to grapple with the incommensurable ways of measuring individual suffering and collective striving. He himself has argued that history is a matter of calculation, a kind of science experiment, though he has also more recently challenged Ivanov's espousal of that very concept of history. Now he almost ironically tries to imagine what it would look like to think of history not as abstract cause and effect, not as a physics experiment with "x" and "y" variables, but as an actual calculation of human suffering and desire. This is what makes him think back to Arlova and the individual idiosyncrasies of her body and his memories from the affair he had with her before he betrayed her. Again, it is through senses like smell and touch that Rubashov is convinced that abstract reasoning can be dangerously incomplete.

Gletkin read straight on, stiffly and with deadly monotony. Did he really believe what he was reading? Was he not aware of the grotesque absurdity of the text?

Related Characters: Nicholas Salmanovitch Rubashov (speaker), Gletkin

Related Themes:

Page Number: 191-192

Explanation and Analysis

Gletkin is reading through the list of charges brought against Rubashov, which include the accusation that Rubashov plotted to have No. 1 murdered. Now that the interrogator is Gletkin instead of Ivanov, the tone of the examination has shifted. There's no sense of banter or intellectual conviviality between Gletkin and Rubashov, nor does it seem evident to both parties that this is a performance that needs to happen rather than a deadly serious accusation with a real, historical basis.

Rubashov is struck by this difference, especially given what he considers to be the absurd claims leveled against him. He finds it difficult to believe not so much that the Party would make dramatic accusations of his guilt and treason, but rather that someone could actually believe them. To Rubashov, these kinds of accusations make sense as a matter of expediency, as means enacted in order to further the Party cause: this is how Rubashov has used accusations in the past himself. But the framework seems to be shifting—now the Party line is not a convenient mask but an insisted-upon truth that holds no room for knowing irony or casual treatment.

❝ "Rubashov laughed at my father, and repeated that he was a fool and a Don Quixote. Then he declared that No. 1 was no accidental phenomenon, but the embodiment of a certain human characteristic—namely, of an absolute belief in the infallibility of one's own conviction, from which he drew the strength for his complete unscrupulousness."

Related Characters: Hare-lip (Young Kieffer) (speaker), Professor Kieffer, Nicholas Salmanovitch Rubashov

Related Themes:

Page Number: 208

Explanation and Analysis

Hare-lip has been brought in by Gletkin, presumably after having been tortured, in order to rehearse an accusation against Rubashov. Rubashov has been in something resembling Hare-lip's position before: Rubashov falsely betrayed Arlova, and now he himself has been falsely accused. As the center of his story, Hare-lip uses a meeting between Rubashov and Hare-lip's father, Profssor Kieffer, who was executed for refusing to change the history books in response to changing "necessities" of the Party.

Rubashov, in this anecdote, comes across as a pragmatist—he is willing to laugh and roll his eyes at No. 1, at least among friends, while also continuing to work in the service of the cause. That's why he calls Kieffer a "Don Quixote": he refers to the Cervantes character who pursues a hopeless quest because of his naïve idealism (this reference comes up, in fact, several times in the novel). The anecdote also serves as a reminder of Rubashov's insistence on thinking in logical, abstract terms, even as he's coming to question what the implications of this type of thinking are. He takes No. 1's attitude not just as a quirk, but as indicative of a broader trend, one that can perhaps define totalitarian dictators. It's uncertain how Hare-lip overheard this conversation, and it's clear that what Rubashov really meant is up for question, but, in this environment of constant surveillance, such critiques are all too dangerous.

The Third Hearing: 4 Quotes

❝ "If one told the people in my village," said Gletkin, "that they were still slow and backward in spite of the Revolution and the factories, it would have no effect on them. If one tells them that they are heroes of work, more efficient than the Americans, and that all evil only comes from devils and *saboteurs*, it has at least some effect. Truth is what is useful to humanity, falsehood what is harmful."

Related Characters: Gletkin (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 232

Explanation and Analysis

Here, Gletkin begins to speak more honestly to Rubashov, explaining his own theory of history and its relationship to Party ideology. Unlike Rubashov, Gletkin has grown up as a peasant, far from the intellectual life of the cities or the heady revolutionary times among the central committee. Now he tries to make the case for the kind of public trial into which he is attempting to coerce Rubashov. For him, the most important thing is to advance the interests of the Party; that can be done by improving morale among the people, though even that is only a means of increasing their efficiency and gaining greater wealth for the country. Gletkin employs the same kind of logical reasoning that Rubashov and Ivanov have in the past, though he, unlike Ivanov, for instance, has no sense of ironic detachment from such instrumental reason. As a result, he doesn't feel the need to conceal or make euphemisms about his conclusion, but instead states baldly his fully cold, instrumental view of the very definition of truth as "useful." The question of course, that arises is to whom it is useful—one to which the

answer, for Gletkin, will always be the Party.

The Third Hearing: 6 Quotes

"The policy of the opposition is wrong. Your task is therefore to make the opposition contemptible; to make the masses understand that opposition is a crime and that the leaders of the opposition are criminals. That is the simple language which the masses understand. If you begin to talk of your complicated motives, you will only create confusion amongst them."

Related Characters: Gletkin (speaker), Nicholas Salmanovitch Rubashov

Related Themes:

Page Number: 243

Explanation and Analysis

As Gletkin instructs Rubashov in the use Rubashov can play for the Party, Gletkin emphasizes direct, clear messages without ambiguity. Little could be further from the way Rubashov once thought about communist ideology, which was intellectually rich enough to foster debate and disagreement. Now logic continues to be considered the goal to strive for, but it's a kind of logic that pares down any complexity into discrete, replicable steps. Gletkin also emphasizes the importance of performance and rhetorical skill in convincing the masses of the truth. Indeed, it's not altogether clear whether Gletkin fervently believes that what Rubashov is being tried for is the truth or whether Gletkin really is simply pragmatic and means-focused, dedicated to considering truth as a function of Party necessity, just as Ivanov and Rubashov had been. The novel contains evidence for both notions; one way of reconciling them would be to say that in the framework in which Gletkin is working, there is no difference between truth as historical reality and truth as convenient fiction—the boundaries have blurred too much.

The Grammatical Fiction: 1 Quotes

"Covered with shame, trampled in the dust, about to die, I will describe to you the sad progress of a traitor, that it may serve as a lesson and terrifying example to the millions of our country..."

Related Characters: Nicholas Salmanovitch Rubashov

(speaker), Vera Wassiljovna

Related Themes:

Page Number: 249

Explanation and Analysis

While these are the words of Rubashov at his trial, it is Vera, Wassilij's daughter, who is speaking them to her father, since the transcript of Rubashov's trial has been printed in the newspaper for all to read and learn of his crimes. Indeed, this is the idea behind the very public nature of the confessions. It is not enough for the Party to simply root out examples of nonconforming thought and behavior among the citizens and to torture or imprison any dissidents. Dissidents cannot be shut away from society because the idea that the masses are a collective group that is unanimous in its thoughts and opinions is what justifies the fact that the masses are "led" by a small, powerful group. With the masses united, the leadership can claim to speak on behalf of everyone, but when one person dissents from the official line, this is not just an individual crime that needs to be prosecuted, but a threat to the entire system and to the ideological basis of the country. As a result, people like Rubashov need to perform their own guilt in front of everyone, repenting of their nonconforming ideas and allowing those ideas to be publicly quashed by the collective.

"...After a short deliberation, the President read the sentence. The Council of the Supreme Revolutionary Court of Justice sentenced the accused in every case to the maximum penalty: death by shooting and the confiscation of all their personal property."
The old man Wassilij stared at the rusty hook above his head. He murmured: "Thy will be done. Amen," and turned to the wall.

Related Characters: Wassilij, Vera Wassiljovna (speaker), Nicholas Salmanovitch Rubashov

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 256

Explanation and Analysis

Vera continues reading the trial transcript to her father, concluding with the inevitable death sentence. While Vera's engrossment in the story makes it seem to be a tale of

powerful suspense, Wassilij understands the transcript for what it is—an inevitable rehearsal of a performance that is meant to bolster the power of No. 1. Wassilij is elderly and has lived through the Revolution, which means he was raised in a very different society, one in which Christianity was still a permitted (and even common) belief system. Wassilij has refused to let go of these beliefs. Indeed, when Wassilij thinks of Rubashov—whom Wassilij continues to admire and respect, even though Rubashov has now fallen from favor—he compares Rubashov to Jesus Christ.

In fact, the ritualistic quality of the confession and sentencing can be understood, from Wassilij's point of view, as a rewriting of the Passion of Christ, the final days and hours before Jesus was crucified as told in the Gospels. Christian doctrine states that Jesus had to be crucified in order to be sacrificed for humanity: Wassilij evidently understands Rubashov, too, as a sacrificial victim, even if he doesn't believe that collective good will result from Rubashov's death. While the book does show several cases (from Wassilij to the imprisoned peasant) of those who refuse to conform to Party ideology, these people are fractured and alone, largely condemned to silence in the face of an all-powerful totalitarianism.

The Grammatical Fiction: 2 Quotes

❝ They were too deeply entangled in their own past, caught in the web they had spun themselves, according to the laws of their own twisted ethics and twisted logic; they were all guilty, although not of those deeds of which they accused themselves.

Related Characters: Nicholas Salmanovitch Rubashov (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 258

Explanation and Analysis

As he prepares to die, Rubashov thinks of his comrades who also believed that they were acting in the service of a larger, collective cause, and who found themselves undone and betrayed by that very system. He has a sharp sense of the irony of his situation: not only does he, who once unthinkingly betrayed people in the service of the Party, now find himself condemned by that same logic, but he also recognizes that the historical laws which he considered so valuable and impervious are actually subject to individual, fallible interpretation. Here Rubashov even goes so far as to imply that these laws are not laws of history (as the comrades thought) but rather human laws, which explains why the laws can be massaged so easily depending on who is in power. Rubashov's thoughts about guilt also suggest a different kind of intellectual and ideological framework from communism, one in which personal and collective responsibility is far greater than in a logical, means-based system. Now Rubashov thinks that all people bear some responsibility for the crimes of some.

❝ The individual stood under the sign of economic fatality, a wheel in a clockwork which had been wound up for all eternity and could not be stopped or influenced—and the Party demanded that the wheel should revolt against the clockwork and change its course. There was somewhere an error in the calculation; the equation did not work out.

Related Characters: Nicholas Salmanovitch Rubashov (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 262-263

Explanation and Analysis

In the hours before his death, Rubashov returns to some of the tenets of communist ideology in order to, once again, try to see what went wrong and how he might account for the Party's fall from idealism into brutality. In fact, the suggestion here is that this fall was not a mistake but was rather an inevitable result of the internal contradictions of communist ideology, which saw no room for individual rights and yet relied on individual power and sacrifice.

Rubashov also refers to "economic fatality," which, in communist thought, refers to the idea that all cultural, social, and political affairs are ultimately determined by economics. He notes that there is also a contradiction here: while this framework of thought claims to unmask the inevitable, unshakeable laws behind history and politics via economic analysis, it simultaneously proposes to destroy economic concerns through revolution. Is history inevitably determined by collective economic relationships, or is its course subject to modification by individual actors? The Party has tried to have it both ways, Rubashov implies, and violence and destruction were the result.

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

THE FIRST HEARING: 1

A door slams behind the protagonist, Rubashov, and he's left in his prison cell. The cell has solid brick walls, a straw mattress, clean blankets, and a window looking down to the courtyard. Snow has been cleared around the courtyard track for prisoners' daily exercise, and a soldier is patrolling it.

The first pages of the novel plunge the reader in medias res (that is, into the middle of the action), as we that learn Rubashov has been imprisoned, but not yet why or even wo he is.

Rubashov stretches out on his mat, deciding that it will probably be a few days before he's interrogated. He takes off his pince-nez and feels at peace, failing for the first time to fear his **dreams**. Rubashov, the "ex-Commissar of the People," falls asleep.

Rubashov seems to understand how his imprisonment works: at the end of the chapter, we learn that he used to hold some kind of government position himself.

THE FIRST HEARING: 2

Rubashov had been arrested an hour earlier: the knock on his door woke him from his **dream**. He'd been dreaming—as he often did—that he was being arrested by three men hammering on the door dressed in the costume of the German Dictatorship. In the dream, they stood by his bed panting before someone upstairs pulled a plug and water whooshed through the pipes.

In this scene, the border between dreams and reality is entirely blurred. In many ways, Rubashov's repeated dreams suggest that, on some level, he expects or fears that these dreams will become reality, though the authorities involved are not the same.

The hammering had continued on the door but Rubashov couldn't wake up: in the **dream**, as usual, he tried to put on his clothes but was frozen. Finally he's awakened when he's slammed over the ear with a pistol butt. Usually, at this point, he'd wake up from the dream and feel dizzily that the real world was a dream. This time, though, awakened feeling free and safe, looking up at the print of the Party leader, No. 1, hanging over his bed. But now the hammering continued.

Rubashov awakens from his first dream feeling as though he's escaped from danger. However, just as we're introduced to the leader of the Party, Rubashov also recognizes that what he had thought he had left behind in his sleep isn't, in fact, only a dream.

THE FIRST HEARING: 3

The porter Wassilij, a thin old man with a scar on his neck from the Civil War, also stands fearfully at the door. He and Rubashov had been in the same regiment: now his daughter occasionally reads Rubashov's speeches to him from the newspaper, though Wassilj has struggled to picture Rubashov's character in them. He sometimes falls asleep during the speeches, but he wakes up at the ends, during cheers for the International, for the Revolution, and for No. 1. He always says "**Amen**" under his breath so his daughter doesn't hear, and then goes to bed, where a photo of Rubashov hangs by the **portrait** of No. 1, though he'd get in trouble if anyone knew that.

Wassilij and Rubashov are not members of the same social class, but their shared experience in the army has forged a sense of solidarity (one that, as we'll see, the Party strives to replace with a sense of the collective as more important than individual relationships). Here we also learn that while Rubashov is a loyal Party member, Wassilij clings to an older, Christian belief system, as well as a firm sense of loyalty to Rubashov, not just to No. 1.

The men continue pounding on the door, and a woman begins to scream, but one officer orders Wassilij to tell her to be quiet, which he does. The younger officer kicks open the door and stands by Rubashov's bed. Rubashov looks at them sleepily as they announce that they're arresting him, "Citizen Rubashov, Nicholas Salmanovitch." Rubashov dismissively tells them to put the gun away, then asks for a warrant and reads it.

The dreamlike mood of the last several pages yields suddenly to violence, as the officers make it into Rubashov's apartment. Rubashov, though, is more tired than frightened. He treats the officers with dismissive scorn, a function of his own powerful place in the government.

The young boy clearly revels in brutality: ironically, Rubashov thinks about the fine generation coming up behind him. He orders the boy to pass him his dressing-gown: he reddens, and the elder official does so. The house remains silent, until someone upstairs pulls a plug and water rushes through the pipes.

Although Rubashov is no stranger to bureaucratic power himself, he understands that his generation is slowly being replaced with a new, rude, uncultivated one. The chapter ends with a collapse between his earlier dream and reality.

THE FIRST HEARING: 4

The officials have arrived in a new American car, which jolts the three of them through the dark streets. Rubashov remarks that such foreign cars are so expensive, and the roads ruin them. The official asks if the roads are any better in capitalist states: Rubashov, grinning, asks if he was ever outside. The boy says he knows what it's like there anyway. Rubashov says quietly that he should study Party history a little.

The nation or city where this is taking place is never named, though it can be assumed to be the Soviet Union. America is the typical political and economic counterpoint, the embodiment of the capitalist system as opposed to the communist one. Again, Rubashov has little respect for the new generation.

THE FIRST HEARING: 5

The colorless electric light shines bleakly over the new prison. Rubashov tries to convince himself that this is all a **dream**: he tries so hard that he feels dizzy. As they reach cell No. 404, which has his name on it, he feels ashamed, realizing how well everything has been prepared and that he will have to endure what is to come.

While his earlier dream had a kind of vivid reality, Rubashov now wills his new reality to turn back into a dream. That he recognizes how well organized his arrest was probably indicates that he too has participated in others' arrests.

THE FIRST HEARING: 6

The warder regularly peers into Rubashov's room. At 7 a.m. the bugle sounds, then cedes to silence. He knows he's in an isolation cell, so he'll hear nothing of the other prisoners, and he will stay there until he gets shot. He keeps repeating this fact to himself, while still feeling warm and comfortable under his blanket.

Although he's been introduced to a new and unfamiliar environment, Rubashov's knowledge of Party bureaucracy gives him a sense of stability and comfort rather than fear of the unknown.

Rubashov says to himself that he's the last of the old guard, about to be destroyed. He tries to recall the faces of the Chairman of the International and the second Prime Minister, both already executed. Rubashov tells himself, without much conviction, that history will rehabilitate him.

Rubashov isn't the first of the old guard to fall out of favor—others, too, have apparently fallen to the new guard. It's unclear exactly what Rubashov's thoughts regarding the laws of history are at this point.

Rubashov can't bring himself to hate No. 1—the only name that's stuck for the leader—though he's often tried. No. 1's power lies in the possibility that he is right (which No. 1 has forced all those he has killed to affirm). These people can only place their hope in the "mocking oracle" of History, which may (though may not) eventualy absolve them long after their deat.

No. 1 has evidently ordered Rubashov's arrest, but Rubashov could only hate No. 1 in good conscience if he knew No. 1 was wrong. The workings of history, though, remain closed to them both.

Rubashov feels that he's being watched: a minute later the warder enters and asks why Rubashov hasn't gotten up. Rubashov says he's sick with a **toothache**, and he's left alone. He's bored and has a sudden craving for a newspaper, though he realizes his arrest won't be in it for a while, even if the sensational news leaks out abroad. He wonders what's going on in No. 1's mind, and then he realizes that he's been pacing up and down the cell without realizing it, thinking about No. 1 sitting and dictating at his desk.

Rubashov's feeling that he is being watched is indicative of a broader climate of surveillance, which pervades the society even outside of prison. But because he knows something of how imprisonment and interrogation works, he feels more in control than the typical arrestee. At the same time, questions about the inner, private thoughts of No. 1 are never far from his mind.

Rubashov tries to picture a cross-section of the leader's brain and can't manage it: this is why history is more an oracle than a science, he thinks. Perhaps in the future teachers will point to an algebraic function that connects the masses' life conditions to a diagram of No. 1's brain. Until then politics will remain mere superstition.

Rubashov understands that his own life, as well as much of the Party and nation, depend upon what No. 1 is thinking at any given moment: the leader directs history, and yet, because his mind can't be read, history remains opaque to others.

Rubashov hears marching steps outside, and he waits for the scream that will indicate torture. He knows that people all end up behaving the same way—the screams become whining and choking—and he tells himself that he won't scream. But instead of a scream, he hears a clanging and he sees, through a spy-hole, the men stop at No. 407 across from him, handing out bread. Rubashov continues pacing up and down, thinking of the man's thin arms and curved hands. The arms and hands were all he could see of the man and they seemed eerily familiar.

Rubasohv seems to expect that he will be tortured, a tactic with which he is familiar, evidently from his own time spent in the Party bureaucracy. Nevertheless, torture is not what he's confronted with, at least at this juncture. Once again, the book describes the action in a dreamlike way, melding reality with Rubashov's own imagination.

THE FIRST HEARING: 7

The warder is coming along the even-rowed cells now and Rubashov is looking forward to a cup of hot tea, but they skip his cell and go straight to 402. He drums on the door, then he takes a shoe off and bangs on the door with it. The warder and orderlies stand hesitantly; as they move back to his door, Rubashov suddenly feels total apathy.

Although Rubashov knows he's in a vulnerable position as a prisoner, he's not afraid to make a claim for himself or demand certain privileges. Perhaps this is a result of knowing how the prison works. But this sense of self-confidence soon yields to listlessness.

The warder tells Rubashov that he hasn't cleaned his cell, and Rubashov remains seated, saying he has no desire to argue or speak to him. The warder tells an orderly that the prisoner has no mop to clean the floor, and Rubashov adds that the prisoner has no eating bowl either—he admires the new tactics, saving him the trouble of a hunger strike. But the warder says Rubashov was left off at breakfast since he reported sick. Rubashov tells the men to leave him alone and stop the "comedy," but when they close the door he goes back to the key-hole and shouts for a paper and pencil. He can't tell if they've heard him; they continue on.

Rubashov continues to see the warder as beneath him. He also sees the warder as a member of the new guard (like the officer who arrested him), which is shown through his comment about the "new tactics." The warder, though, doesn't seem clever or conniving enough to be playing the game that Rubashov is implying—the warder has taken Rubashov's complaint of sickness at face value.

THE FIRST HEARING: 8

Rubashov tries to hate the warder, but finds himself imagining the scene (a prisoner once great and prestigious, now provocative and arrogant, his cell un-cleaned) from the officer's point of view. Rubashov reflects that if he really had some self-respect he'd clean the tiles, but instead he peers up and into the courtyard, where the sentinel is pacing.

Once again, Rubashov's desire for hatred is belied by his ability, or at least his attempt, to imagine his way into another individual's consciousness. As will become clear, it is this talent that will clash with the ideals he thinks he believes in.

Rubashov reminds himself that revolutionaries shouldn't imagine themselves into other people's minds, but then he asks himself how else one can change the world. Rubashov reminds himself that they'll shoot him without being interested in his motives. Then he begins to hear a tapping sound coming regularly from No. 402. He wonders if the prisoner knows the "quadratic alphabet." He tries to visualize the square of 25 compartments: 402 taps 5 times then twice: the fifth row of letters, then second letter of the row: W. Eventually he hears the prisoner tap out, "WHO?"

Here, Rubashov begins to acknowledge that his ability to imagine other people's points of view—that is, his capacity for empathy—is both a useful tool for "changing the world," but also, at the same time, a potentially counter-revolutionary tactic that won't win him any favors at trial. Next, Rubashov employs another useful tool, a way of communicating without speech or sight.

Rubashov taps out his name, and smiles at the long pause. He's probably afraid, Rubashov thinks: perhaps he's a non-political prisoner, still earnestly believing that his subjective guilt or innocence makes a difference, rather than the larger interests at hand. But then he hears, "SERVES YOU RIGHT."

Rubashov, as we've learned, has been an important figure in the Party leadership, probably more important than many of the other people imprisoned here. Rubashov finds this inequality amusing.

Now Rubashov realizes that No. 402 is a "conformist:" he believes in the infallibility of history and of No. 1, and that his own arrest is just a misunderstanding. Rubashov had imagined the man with a black Pushkin beard, grown in despair, but now Rubashov pictures him clean-shaven and fanatical, his room clean and strictly conforming to regulations. He asks who the prisoner is, but 402 responds that it's none of his business.

As usual, Rubashov enjoys trying to picture another person's mind and attitude, and here he pictures both physical and intellectual attributes to bolster the idea of the fellow prisoner. His imaginings are elaborate, though he has few details on which to base them.

Then 402 taps out "LONG LIVE H.M. THE EMPEROR," and Rubashov realizes that there are, in fact, real counter-revolutionaries in this society: they're not just scapegoats from No. 1's speeches. Now amused, Rubashov keeps sending messages until finally 402 requests details about the last time Rubashov slept with a woman. Rubashov tries to remember an old pre-war song, and he taps out a message about "snowy breasts" that fit into champagne glasses and other details.

The praise of "His Majesty" identifies No. 402 as someone who refused to align himself with the Revolution and instead remained loyal to the monarchy that was in power beforehand. 402 does, though, seem more concerned with sex than with politics, which Rubashov also finds vaguely amusing.

Rubashov wearies of the game, but he doesn't want to offend No. 402, who keeps tapping, begging him to continue. Rubashov tries to imagine the prisoner's body, then he thinks back to the hands and arms of No. 407. He realizes that they reminded him of the *Pietà*.

Rubashov recognizes that it may be useful for him to maintain a relationship to No. 402, now that he's found himself in a vulnerable position.

THE FIRST HEARING: 9

Rubashov thinks of a time, not long before his arrest, when he went to a picture gallery in a southern German town in order to meet a young man. It was 1933, and the Party had been outlawed there, its members hunted and killed. However, the Party continued to exist in small pockets of people who met in clubs, railway stations, and cellars to print pamphlets or write slogans on walls. Gradually these people started to put out feelers again: the Party was dead, but its hair and nails continued to grow.

The reference to the Pietà that ended the last chapter leads to Rubashov's first major flashback to the time before his arrest, when he was an important diplomat responsible for spreading the Party message and fomenting revolution abroad. It's around this time that Nazism is clamping down on opposition in Germany.

Rubashov paces up and down his cell as he remembers sitting on the plush sofa in the art gallery. The young man, Richard, the leader of the Party in the town, came a few minutes late and noticed Goethe's *Faust* on Rubashov's lap. He sat down and Rubashov asked him about the list of his people. Richard said that he has the list in his head but that he also gave a list to his wife Anny, who was arrested last night. Rubashov saw the dull hope in Richard's eyes that Rubashov might help him. Anny managed to pass the list to her sister-in-law in the flat, an ally, Richard said.

The descriptions of Rubashov's pacing throughout his prison cell will serve, throughout the book, as a periodic reminder that the subsequent scenes are located in his memory. Rubashov and Richard have met on Party business, and Rubashov seems slightly irritated by the fact that Richard is clinging to hope for an individual, personal favor that has no relevance to revolution.

Richard told Rubashov about Anny's arrest while Rubashov stared at a "Last Judgment" painting behind him. Then Rubashov had him recite the list of the Party's members: Rubashov wrote down several addresses, then asked for Richard's report on their activities, while a Virgin Mary stretched out her thin hands behind him. Of the 30 people, only 17 remained: two had killed themselves when the police came to get them, and some had left the Party in protest or had been arrested already. Richard didn't know then that the Central Committee had their own man in the group who had long since informed Rubashov of all of this, or that this man had been having an affair with Anny. Of course Rubashov would have all this information in advance: the Intelligence and Control Department was the only part of the Party that still functioned well, and Rubashov was at its head.

While Richard continues to relate his worries about his wife, Rubashov tunes out: he prefers to concentrate on the purely aesthetic enjoyment of the painting rather than deign to listen to one individual's sob story. At the same time, Richard is shown to be one of the few remaining people leading the Party in this part of the country. This information comes from Rubashov, though, not Richard: no one, even a Party member and organizer himself, can be fully exempt from the surveillance that embodies the Party's policy.

Steps are approaching in the prison corridor: Rubashov sees a peasant with a swollen eye being locked into a cell. Rubashov thinks himself back to the gallery, where he told Richard that the pamphlets Richard had made were known to the Central Committee and they contained unacceptable phrases. He asked why Richard hadn't distributed the Party's material.

Back in the prison, Rubashov does, for the first time, see evidence of some kind of torture. This scene is juxtaposed to another kind of condemnation, though this one enacted by Rubashov on Richard for his non-conformism.

Increasingly distressed and stammering, Richard said that the tone of the Party's propaganda material was wrong. Rubashov ordered him to calm down, as a uniformed man strutted in with his girlfriend. Rubashov instructed Richard to breathe slowly and deeply and told him that one must control oneself. Richard began frantically asking if Anny would be safe, as she was pregnant. Then the young officer turned to look at them, before turning back out, the girl giggling: Rubashov looked back to the Virgin painting, with her thin, meager arms raised.

While Rubashov remains calm, cool, and collected, Richard becomes more and more agitated, as he begins to realize that, although he thought he was working in service to the Party, its leaders may not think so. Rubashov has no pity for Richard or his pregnant wife, choosing again to concentrate on the beauty of the painting rather than on Richard's plight.

Rubashov said that certain consequences would come from Richard's decision. Reddening, Richard told Rubashov that he knew the material was full of nonsense, with its emphasis on the will to victory in a place where the Party was so beaten down. He must know that, Richard told Rubashov, but Rubashov drily told him not to ascribe to him an opinion not his own. Whoever is weak or spreads fear doesn't belong with them, he said: the pamphlets were defeatist and demoralizing. Richard said he only knows that people must be told the truth.

Richard wants to spread the Party's message in the way he thinks its best: Rubashov's point is that the Party knows what's best. The official line of optimism as opposed to defeatism is the only truth and it cannot be questioned. Here, Richard proposes a different understanding of "truth," one that is outside Party policy.

But Rubashov ignored Richard, saying that the last Party congress announced that the Party didn't suffer defeat, it merely retreated strategically. Richard exclaimed that this is rubbish, and then more calmly said that the Party leadership is simply mistaken. Rubashov replied that the Party can never be mistaken: it's the embodiment of the "revolutionary idea" in history, and history makes no mistakes.

What is announced at the Party congress must, ultimately, become the truth espoused by all its members. Rubashov equates the Party, truth, and the laws of history, none of which can be in tension with one another, and each of which is proven by the other.

Rubashov listed the various wrong-headed elements written in Richard's pamphlets, stating that one cannot lead politics in passion and despair, and that one false step would cause them to lose their way. Now tired, Richard said flatly that what he said is true, but he still knows that they're beaten. After a silence, Richard asked what would happen to them now. Rubashov told Richard that he was no longer a member of the Party. Richard asked nervously if he should no longer live with his friend (the Central Committee member) and Rubashov said he had better not, then bid him good-bye. On the way out he realized that he'd forgotten to look closely at the *Pietà*: now he'd only remember the detail of the arms.

After glossing some of the major points of Communist ideology and its peculiar definition of truth, Rubashov now demonstrates that view by parroting the party line as he details what exactly was wrong with Richard's pamphlets. Richard now recognizes that there's no room for his individual beliefs or alternate understanding of the facts. Although he continues to be upset, Rubashov seems unfazed by the conversation he's just had, as he is still focused on the art.

Richard raced outside as Rubashov was hailing a taxi, asking if that was a warning. Again beginning to stammer, Richard begged Rubashov not to denounce him to the Party. Rubashov didn't answer, but instead got into the taxi and drove off, knowing Richard was standing there staring after him. At the end, the driver said the cost was nothing for people like Rubashov: he bid him good luck, holding out his hand and smiling sheepishly. Rubashov saw a porter leaning against a post, watching them: rather than take the driver's hand, he put a coin into it and got out at the train station. During the trip he **dreamed** that Richard and the taxi-driver wanted to run him over: he'd cheated them of the fare. He woke up feeling nauseous, his **tooth** aching. He was arrested a week later.

Richard now realizes that he did not just make a minor mistake—it was one that may well cost him his Party membership or even his life. Still, Rubashov remains cold and unfazed by Richard's anxiety and confusion. Meanwhile, the taxi driver seems to recognize Rubashov's Communist affiliation, and tries to show his loyalty. But for Rubashov, security wins out over loyalty, and he prefers to dismiss the driver's show of commitment in order to make sure that the observer doesn't suspect anything.

THE FIRST HEARING: 10

Rubashov realizes that he's been pacing for four hours, but he knows the power of **day-dreams** during imprisonment well. But it was strange that he thought of the past, rather than the future (or else the past as it might have been). From experience, he knew that closeness to death tends to cause strange reactions. He looks into the courtyard, where one prisoner, emaciated with a hare-lip, glances up at his window: the news of his arrest must have spread.

Rubashov's nighttime dreams and his dream-like reality have now become actual day-dreams, though with their own kind of reality, the reality of his past experiences. Rubashov also seems to recognize that what awaits him is death, though this realization doesn't stir him from his apathy any more.

Using the code, Rubashov asks No. 402 who that prisoner and the older man next to him are. 402 says they're political, of Rubashov's kind, not his own. "Hare-lip" is No. 400 and was tortured yesterday through steambath: while Rubashov was beaten up during his last imprisonment, he's never experienced that. The worst part of torture, he knows, is not knowing what to expect: otherwise one can stand it like the extraction of a **tooth**.

Rubashov had sought to make use out of No. 402 early on: thinking about people instrumentally is a key aspect of Party ideology, and here No. 402 does, indeed, turn out to possess useful knowledge: the fact of another political prisoner's presence, not to mention the fact that torture is being performed.

Rubashov feels almost refreshed at knowing what is in store for him, calling to mind everything he knows about the steambath torture and picturing it so that he's not caught unaware. His memory of Richard and the taxi-driver comes to mind, and he smiles, thinking he'll pay his fare. He lets his cigarette drop and is about to stamp it out, but instead stubs it on the back of his hand, holding it for 30 seconds: he's pleased that his hand doesn't twitch at all. An eye observing him through the spy-hole withdraws.

The memory of Richard and the taxi driver underlines Rubashov's logical, rational mind, his insistence on keeping his cool in all kinds of situations. This ability to remain calm requires having a set of expectations about the future. Rubashov also takes pride in his grit and determination, believing that he'll last through torture.

THE FIRST HEARING: 11

Rubashov feels a strong desire for a cigarette, and he hammers on the door until the warder comes, who says he has to wait until the money taken from him on arrival is changed into prison vouchers. Rubashov wants to write a letter of complaint, but he must have vouchers to get a pen and paper, the warder says. Rubashov calls the warder a heap of dung, and the warder says he'll report him and withdraws. Rubashov thinks he won't last without cigarettes.

Rubashov still treats the warder dismissively, even though he recognizes that the warder does have power over him. Although Rubashov is confident that he will survive torture and interrogation without breaking, he knows that there are a few necessities he can't survive without.

Rubashov asks No. 402 for tobacco, but he says there's none for him. Rubashov thinks 402 is probably self-satisfied, while imagining how many of his people Rubashov has had shot. To him, Rubashov thinks, he owes no fare: there's no common currency or language between them. But then 402 taps that he's sending him tobacco: he hammers until the warder comes to his door, and Rubashov hears "against regulations," then that the warder will report him for his language. Pacing back and forth, Rubashov says that what he did was "necessary and right," but wonders if he must pay for those deeds all the same. 402 taps to him that Hare-lip sends him greetings.

Once again Rubashov, who's never seen No. 402 in the flesh, enjoys imagining what his fellow prisoner is thinking and how the prisoner feels about Rubashov. The idea of "paying one's fare," stemming from the taxi driver from Rubashov's memory, returns here as a metaphor for solidarity between two people. He's initially able to dismiss such an idea, but when 402 does try to give him tobacco, Rubashov suddenly has to wonder if there's more to this idea of individual kindness.

THE FIRST HEARING: 12

Rubashov feels sicker as the day goes on. He's overwhelmed by memories of the movement and the Party. He circles around his desperate desire for a cigarette, and the idea that he will pay. His past, present, and future belong to the Party, but this past is suddenly in question: the body of the Party suddenly seems to be covered in festering sores and stigmata. If the Party embodies history's will, he thinks, history is defective. He tells himself he must find the cause of this defectiveness: how wrong results could come from right principles. How could the people hate them, when they brought truth to their mouths?

Now that 402's act of kindness has undercut Rubashov's expectations, he begins to feel not just mentally but physically ill at ease. The idea of "paying one's fare" morphs, here, into the notion of moral payment for what one has done wrong. Rubashov begins to question the very basis of his prior actions, actions that he understood at the time as being necessary. What if, though, that very bedrock is not so stable?

Rubashov thinks of a photo of the first Party congress, where each delegate sat around a long wooden table (No. 1 at the lower end) looking like a provincial town council meeting, though they were preparing history's greatest revolution. All militant philosophers, the delegates dreamed of ruling over the people in order to wean them off from being ruled. Now only two or three survive, along with himself and No. 1.

This photo is another kind of memory, a visual one that Rubashov will come back to again and again throughout his imprisonment. The photo represented a moment of great hope and idealism, when Rubashov and others were confident that their ideology harbored no internal tensions.

Rubashov thinks of another person who died on his watch—Little Loewy in the old Belgian port, hunchbacked, smoking a pipe. It was two years after the affair with Richard and Rubashov's own arrest: Rubashov had kept silent through the torture, denying everything coldly. He'd never been surprised at the hatred of his torturers: the dictatorship could prove nothing against him, and finally he was released and sent home, where there were jubilant parades and receptions. Nonetheless, half the men in that photo were no longer alive: the others are no longer bearded, now melancholic rather than joyful.

Now Rubashov's thoughts turn to another memory and another location, this time Belgium. Rubashov has, we learn, been tortured in the past, though by foreign powers, not by his own Party. It seems that much of his success at resisting torture was due to his firm belief in the righteousness of his own cause. Now Rubashov contrasts that confidence to the purges that followed.


After two weeks, Rubashov, still on crutches, had asked for a new mission abroad. No. 1 had noticed he was eager to leave, but had sent him to Belgium, where he met Little Loewy, the local leader of the dockworkers' Party section. Rubashov took a liking to him, and was impressed by the organization of the group. At night they drank together with the other dockworkers. Little Loewy had introduced him only as a "comrade from Over there," but once someone remarked that he looked much like Rubashov.

Rubashov, upon returning home, had noticed that the leadership group he took for granted was now rent with suspicion and betrayal, and even though leaving so abruptly might prove suspicious—especially to No. 1—Rubashov chose to continue pushing the Party's message abroad rather than at home. "Over There" is how people abroad refer to the USSR.

Later, alone, Little Loewy had told Rubashov about his life, how he was born in southern Germany before the Dictatorship came to power. Once, when the Party was in need of weapons, he helped steal away arms from the police station, arms which were later found in another town during a search of another Party member. The next day Little Loewy vanished: the Party had promised him a passport and papers, but the messenger from higher up who was supposed to pass these things to him had never appeared.

Little Loewy, like Richard, is an example of a Party member whose fierce loyalty to the ideology will, ultimately, not be enough. His story reflects the ironic distance between fierce ideological commitment and the compromised techniques of actual Party politics—though at this point in the tale, Little Loewy remains committed.


Little Loewy managed to cross the border, but he was arrested in France. The Party there, unaware of his former role, told him he'd have to make inquiries in his native country. He kept wandering and was eventually arrested and sentenced to three months imprisonment. In prison he lectured his mate about the Party Congress. After the three months he was taken to the Belgian border and released, ordered never to return. The Belgian Party didn't want to help him either, so, in due course, he was arrested and imprisoned again. Over the next year he was passed back and forth between the French and Belgian authorities. He had begun to participate in the cat trade, selling their skins for bread and tobacco, but now he began to spit blood and have nightmares about cats. After another year, all Party members who could have vouched for him were dead, disappeared, or in prison. The Party said they could do nothing for him.

Although the Party presents itself as all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-righteous, Little Loewy's tale underlines the fact that, at least abroad, the Communist Party in the 1930s was scattered and often weak, without a guiding central leadership. At the same time, European governments treated Communism with positions ranging from skepticism to outright hostility. As a result, Little Loewy finds himself without a country as well as without any Party resources that he might rely on. Because of this, he is forced into difficult, unpleasant activities like selling the skins of cats in order to survive.

Rubashov asked why Little Loewy was telling him this; he said it's instructive—the Party is growing more fossilized. Rubashov thought about what he could add to that, but stayed silent. Little Loewy recalled that during one prison sentence he was given an ex-wrestler Paul, a dock worker, as cell mate: he was the Administrative Secretary of the Dockers' Section of the Party. When they were released, Paul got papers and worked to reintegrate Lowey. Afterwards, Loewy forgot his anger at the bureaucrats.

Like Richard, Little Loewy believes fervently in the Party cause, but his belief in the ideology makes him committed to improving it from within. In the story he tells to Rubashov, he's still willing to return to the Party and work for it at the Belgian docks, even though he's suffered from its incompetence and lack of concern for his own survival.

Rubashov wished he could believe that all would end well, but he knew why Little Loewy was sent to Belgium. He looked at him oddly, then felt ill and stood to go. A week later Little Loewy would hang himself.

Rubashov does seem more affected by this story than he was by that of Richard, and yet knows he can't do anything about it.

Two years earlier, the Party had ordered a political and economic boycott of the new dictatorship at the heart of Europe. The dock workers in the Belgian port, who were all loyal to the Party, joined in by striking, refusing to unload goods from the boycotted country. Then a fleet of five cargo boats arrived in port, each printed with the name of a Revolutionary leader in the alphabet from "over there." The dockworkers unloaded it, but then realized that the cargo held rare minerals for the war industry of the boycotted country. At a meeting, people began to fight, the police proclaimed neutrality to let them implode, and eventually the Party leadership ordered the end of the strike. While they gave explanations about the decision, few were convinced.

What happens next requires some explaining in the book regarding the historical context, which refers to international politics in the 1930s. Historically, the Soviet Union did announce boycotts of nations where fascism was developing, but then secretly continued trading with such countries. While the leadership could largely keep such moves a secret, here it becomes clear that the Party outpost of the dockworkers' union, of all places, will inevitably learn what's going on.

After two years, another dictatorship in southern Europe (presumably Italy) began imperial campaigns in Africa. The Party again called for trade sanctions, this time of raw materials, vital to the aggressor. Rubashov was sent to Belgium to prepare the dockworkers for the arrival of another Russian fleet, carrying petrol for the aggressor—another example of the Party acting contrary to its stated policy.

This country most likely refers to Italy under Mussolini, and the Soviet Union's commitment to undermining Italy's imperial tendencies. Now, Rubashov is meant to instill a sense of loyalty in the dockworkers, despite the Party having breached its own policy yet again.

On the second day Rubashov began a meeting in the Party offices, which were untidy and ugly, as they were all over the world. He spoke for a time about the hypocrisy and greed of European nations that had made the boycott fail: now they were willing to let the Revolutionary country go poor if they weren't able to sell petrol. Paul and the other hands nodded, not understanding the practical implications: Little Loewy exchanged a quick glance with another man.

Rubashov prepares the workers for the news by casting blame on other countries, and arguing that although the Fatherland tried its best to maintain its ideological purity, now it has become impossible to retain both its ideological commitment and its economic goals.

Then the man, a writer, asked if it always must be themselves, the lowly workers, who have to deal with "your little transactions." The dockhands are surprised, but Rubashov is ready and says it's politically and geographically useful. The dockhands slowly realize what's going on, and finally Rubashov says that the five cargo boats are arriving the next day. Everyone is silent: then Paul stands up, throws his hat down, and leaves. Rubashov says that the interests of industrial development Over There come before all else. A docker replies that they must give the example: the Party talks of solidarity, but then secretly breaks its own policy for its own benefit, while expecting the dockworkers to fall into line. Little Loewy, pale, salutes Rubashov and says quietly that this is also his opinion. He asks who else would like to speak, then closes the meeting. The events continue as expected: the cargo arrives, the leaders of the dockers' section are expelled from the Party and Little Loewy denounced; three days later Little Loewy kills himself.

Although the dockhands don't yet understand what Rubashov is implying, this man helps them recognize that, despite the grand ideological claims of the Party, ultimately economic goals—the desire for wealth—will triumph again. Rubashov is in the awkward position of having to justify this change in policy while insisting on the fact that the Party is still infallible and its policies incontestable. Little Loewy recognizes the tragic irony that his commitment to the cause will ultimately prevent him from agreeing to bolster the ideological contradictions that the Party is now embracing. There is no resolution to these contradictions for him, other than suicide.

THE FIRST HEARING: 13

Rubashov shivers, unable to sleep, thinking of Little Loewy asking at the meeting who else would wish to speak. There were many others who did, but, Rubashov thinks: just as the meeting rolled on, so did the movement, unconcerned about these desires or about people's ability to follow the Party's winding course. The only crime recognized by the Party was to swerve from the course; the only punishment, death.

Back in the present, confined in his prison cell, Rubashov thinks through the implications of the reactions to his message in Belgium. He acknowledges the distance between Party policy and individuals' desires and beliefs, a distance that he's just papered over before.

The next morning the bugle awakens Rubashov and he's led out of his cell to the doctor. They pass the barber's shop, where peasants are having their heads shorn, and come to the infirmary. The warder says the prisoner has a **toothache**. Rubashov looks at the doctor through the pince-nez as the doctor barks at him to open his mouth: he says he's a political prisoner and is entitled to correct treatment. Upon learning Rubashov's name, he looks at him closely. The doctor probes around his mouth, then says the root of one tooth is broken off: he can extract it, but there are no anaesthetics. Rubashov breaths deeply and declines, thinking of Hare-lip and the "steambath." Back in his cell, he immediately falls asleep. The toothache eases; three days later he's brought to be examined for the first time.

Although Rubashov recognizes that other people are being tortured in this prison, his own experience has been, up to now, eerily calm. Once again Rubashov makes a claim for proper treatment based on the significance of his status as political prisoner—again, it's ironic that in a society that purports to embrace absolute equality, certain names and faces, Rubashov among them, are expected to incur special treatment. Now, Rubashov prefers to put off his tolerance for pain until a point when he may actually need it, if he ends up being tortured.

THE FIRST HEARING: 14

The warder comes to take Rubashov out of his cell. They pass a spiral staircase, cross a narrow, windowless courtyard, and enter through a door. When they enter, Rubashov immediately recognizes his friend from college and former battalion commander, Ivanov, who looks at him, smiling. They sit down and Rubashov glances at Ivanov's right leg, an artificial leg. Ivanov offers Rubashov a cigarette, and Rubashov remembers his first visit to the military hospital after Ivanov's leg was amputated. That afternoon Ivanov had tried to prove that all have a right to suicide.

Like Wassilij, Ivanov knows Rubashov from a former time and place. He is even closer to Rubashov's position than Wassilij, however, as he too is a member of the old guard that is now giving way to a new generation of Party leadership. In those days, it was Rubashov who had convinced Ivanov of the importance of logical, calculated reasoning rather than ceding to one's own individual, emotional desires of the moment.

Ivanov asks how Rubashov's burn is, pointing at his hand, and Rubashov wonders how he knows that, feeling more ashamed than angry. Ivanov says slowly that he doesn't want Rubashov to be shot. Rubashov sarcastically says that's touching. After a few moments, Ivanov says he's been repeating "you," meaning State and Party, rather than "I." The public needs a trial, he adds. Everything he's ever believed in, the Party above all, washes over Rubashov. He looks at a faded white patch on the wall above Ivanov's head: he realizes that this is where the photograph from the Party meeting used to hang.

There had been someone peering into Rubashov's cell when he was testing his tolerance for pain through a cigarette burn, and now it becomes clear that this was another part of the surveillance on Rubashov. Ivanov notes that Rubashov already seems to be distancing himself from the Party, but what matters most to Ivanov is that each man performs his role, regardless whether he believes in it wholly.

Rubashov says that the "we" needs redefining today. Ivanov suggests that Rubashov believes that the Party, State, and masses no longer represent the interests of the Revolution (though Rubashov wants to leave the masses out). A spasm of pain goes through Rubashov's teeth, and he thinks he's now paying. To Ivanov, he says that neither of them understands the masses, though, formerly they had understood the masses better than anyone ever had. They were the first to discover the laws of history's motion, he says—empirics, unlike Jacobin moralists. Their revolution succeeded because they knew as much as was ever known about mankind: now that's all lost.

It is when Rubashov thinks about the tension between individual and collective truth that he's most likely to feel his toothache. Here, he wants to concentrate not on the evil acts the Party has done, but on the logical reasoning that has persuaded him of the intellectual errors that have recently been made. Rubashov returns to an earlier moment, when the old guard was without factions, and when intellectual activity defined their politics.

Rubashov says that "you" have killed the "We." He asks if Ivanov really thinks the masses are behind them. They've sunk back into the depths: while the Party used to make history, now it makes politics. Rubashov says that one mathematician once called algebra the science for the lazy, since one works with *x* without needing to know what it stands for. To Rubashov, this is like politics, whereas to make history means to grapple with what *x* stands for.

Rubashov notes that the Party has lost its sense of intellectual power and confidence in the laws of history. As a result it can't expect that the masses will inevitably fall in line with the goals of the Revolution. The mathematical analogy suggests that the Party has lost touch with the political and social reality it once sought to transform and achieve.

Ivanov wants to return to more concrete facts: that Rubashov thinks that the Party and State no longer represent the interests of the Revolution (that is, of the masses). He asks how long Rubashov has felt this way, but Rubashov calls this a stupid question—it was gradual. Ivanov asks how long he's belonged to the opposition: Rubashov says Ivanov knows well that Rubashov has never joined an oppositional organization.

Ivanov, too, can work and think logically, and he brings Rubashov back to the question at hand: when and to what extent he's come to believe that the Party and the Revolution are at odds. Rubashov scoffs at Ivanov's most pointed question about treason.

Ivanov takes out a folder and recalls the tale of Rubashov's foreign affairs projects in 1933. He asks why, after only a fortnight back home after his release, Rubashov wanted to leave again. Did he not appreciate the changes that had taken place? This was just after the first liquidation of the opposition, he says, which included intimate friends of Rubashov. Rubashov thinks back to the smell of the docks, and to the image of Little Loewy hanging and turning from an attic beam. Ivanov continues that six months after beginning to lead the Trade Delegation, two of Rubashov's collaborators, including his secretary Arlova, were suspected of conspiracy and condemned, but Rubashov remained silent.

Earlier, Rubashov had remembered No. 1's curious response to his desire to leave the country again, after only two weeks back home. It now appears that this move was, indeed, noticed, and is being used to suggest that Rubashov's thoughts have long been at odds with official Party policy (which, in this society, is enough of a crime already). It was at this time that Rubashov began to realize that those with whom he'd worked were no longer safe, though he'd never thought to protest.

Arlova, at her trial, referred to Rubashov in order to be cleared. It was only when the Party sent Rubashov an ultimatum that Rubashov declared his loyalty and acquiesced to Arlova's fate. Rubashov does know her fate, as well as Richard's, Little Loewy's, and his own. He wonders what the point of all this is. Flatly, he tells Ivanov to stop this comedy. But Ivanov says they're only two years from the present now, when Rubashov had been named head of the State Aluminum Trust. A year ago, at another trial, his name was brought up again by the accused, making the Party more suspicious. Six months ago he made another statement swearing his devotion to the Leadership, but this seems untrue as Rubashov now says that he's considered the Party's policies harmful for some time.

It appears, in this the first time that Arlova's name is mentioned, that Rubashov didn't want to either betray her or insist on her innocence. At this moment, Rubashov thinks about all the people he has betrayed, and yet he doesn't seem to feel any guilt, only unease. His impatience suggests that he believes he acted as he had to in order to fulfill his role within the Party. Still, as Ivanov notes, Rubashov has not exactly been a Party member whose thoughts never stray from official messages.

Ivanov says that he's not moralizing when he says Rubashov's statements were just means to an end: they grew up in the same tradition, and he understands why Rubashov acted the way he did. But he doesn't understand how Rubashov can now admit that he has been convinced for years that the Party was ruining the Revolution, while also denying that he is a member of the opposition— he really wouldn't have fought for what he thought was right? Rubashov shrugs and says he was probably too old and used up. Ivanov doesn't understand Rubashov: he just gave an impassioned speech against Party policy (treasonous in itself), but he denies the simple notion that he belonged to an oppositional group, especially since they have the proof. Rubashov asks why they need his confession, and what the proof is that Rubashov was, as Ivanov insists, involved in an attempt to kill No. 1. Rubashov asks Ivanov if he really believes such idiocy or if he only pretends to, but Ivanov repeats that they have proof (that is, confessions) from the man who was ordered by Rubashov to go through with the assassination.

Ivanov cannot fault Rubashov for making a statement as a means to an end because the entire ideology in which they've both been educated has instilled a commitment to that very viewpoint. Nonetheless, Ivanov concentrates on the logical gaps in Rubashov's defense, as he tries to get Rubashov to admit that he was a member of the opposition. Aiding the opposition is a crime that would be much clearer and much easier than thought crimes to prosecute in a public trial (even if thought crimes aren't less criminal than joing the opposition). Rubashov has little patience for the drama and theatrics of such accusations, which, for him, remain far away from the intellectual questions that continue to preoccupy him regarding the Party.

Ivanov reminds Rubashov that it was Rubashov who convinced him that suicide was a petty bourgeois, romantic idea. Now it's Ivanov's turn to see that Rubashov doesn't commit suicide himself. Rubashov is curious to know how Ivanov thinks he'll save Rubashov, given everything Rubashov has just said. Ivanov beams and says that he had to let Rubashov explode once, or he would have exploded at the wrong time: there's not even a stenographer here. They're going to concoct a confession together, and that will be it. He'll admit that he belonged to a certain opposition group but never organized an assassination—in fact, he left the group when they started planning such an attempt. Rubashov smiles and says if that's the idea, he wants the meeting to stop immediately.

Ivanov and Rubashov have both, at various times, been conflicted as to whether to follow Party ideology to its logical conclusion, or choose another path. Here Ivanov tries to persuade Rubashov that it makes the most sense to adhere to the Party and that it's important to go through the motions. Ivanov seems to understand that Rubashov hasn't done what he's being accused of doing but doesn't see any way out of it other working than within the system rather than trying to fix it. Rubashov, though, remains stubborn, at least for now.

Ivanov says that he knew Rubashov would stall and that he won't give away anyone from such a confession. Rubashov deduces from this that Ivanov must not believe the story of the assassination plot. Ivanov tells Rubashov to think his proposal over. It hasn't yet been decided if the case is category A (administrative) or P (public trial). In category A, Rubashov would be out of Ivanov's authority. Ivanov can help Rubashov if he's put in category P, which could be achieved by giving a partial confession—otherwise X's confession will finish him off. In category A, he'll get twenty years (which means two or three before amnesty), and he will be back out in no time. Rubashov says that Ivanov may be right logically, but he's sick of such logic. He asks to be taken back to his cell. Ivanov isn't surprised that Rubashov refuses his proposal, but he quotes Rubashov back to himself as he leaves, from something Rubashov wrote in his last article: that the next decade would decide the world's fate. Ivanov suggests that Rubashov should want to be present for that.

Ivanov seems to recognize something of himself in Rubashov, so he's willing to wait in order for Rubashov to think through the logic of situation, confident that Rubashov will realize there's no way out of the logic of the Party. There does seem to be some room to maneuver within this overarching system (in the differentiation between category A or category P punishment, for instance). Here, though, Rubashov makes his initial move against the logic that he himself has espoused for so long. It's not yet clear whether Rubashov will ultimately bow to the pressure of this logic, or if he'll find another intellectual system powerful enough to compel him.

THE SECOND HEARING: 1

This section is an extract from Rubashov's diary on the fifth day of his imprisonment. It says that the one who will be proved right in the end appears wrong just before that—but it's impossible to know who will be proved right: in the meantime one can only act on credit and hope for history's "absolution."

In these extracts, the first-person narration creates a more intimate tone. Rubashov, within the space of his own mind, begins to reexamine his assumptions about history's laws.

Since Machiavelli's *The Prince*, nothing vital has been said about political ethics. The Party replaced 19th-century liberal ethics of fairness with revolutionary ethics, dismissing the idea of conducting a revolution with the laws of cricket. They were "neo-Machiavellians," following universal reason, but now they're thinking and acting on credit, only following consequent logic. Recently No. 1 thought potash was better than artificial manure for agriculture; the leading agriculturist, B., was shot with 30 others because he thought the opposite. Will history prove B. right, or No. 1?

In these pages of Rubashov's diary, his erudition and powers of reasoning become evident, as he places the Revolution and Party ideology within a larger history of thinking about politics and ethics. For the Party, "fairness" is a naïve way of thinking, but now Rubashov recognizes that the Party leaders lack any monopoly on truth. Only history will reveal what was the right decision.


The "cricket-moralists" worry about whether B. was advising No. 1 in good faith, but the Party understands that this doesn't matter: the person in the wrong must pay, while the person in the right will be forgiven. "We" have learned history better than others, have followed logical consistency better than others, he writes. Every wrong idea they have will send shock waves into future generations, so wrong ideas, as well as wrong crimes, must be punished by death. There is no private sphere, not even within one's mind. Rubashov too was part of this process: but he and the others are doing the work of prophets and yet reaching blindly in the dark. Now, he no longer believes that he's infallible.

Rubashov suggests a distinction between "subjective" judgment (trying to determine whether a person meant to do the right or wrong thing), with the pragmatic logic of the Party, which judges ends alone and isn't afraid of using possibly horrifying means to achieve their goals. Rubashov also describes the justification for treating thought crimes like crimes of action, even though this logic is what got him imprisoned: it's this irony that makes him begin to question himself.


THE SECOND HEARING: 2

The day after the first hearing, Ivanov and his colleague Gletkin are resting in the canteen. Ivanov is tired and he slouches; Gletkin is formal and serious in his starched uniform. Ivanov says that Rubashov is as logical as ever, so he'll eventually capitulate. They need to leave him in peace so that he can think it out. Ivanov wants Rubashov to have pencil, paper, and cigarettes, although Gletkin thinks that's wrong. While Ivanov thinks Rubashov will capitulate out of logic rather than cowardice, Gletkin argues that, in the end, everyone cedes to physical pressure.

The different postures of Ivanov and Gletkin reflect their different backgrounds, levels of comfort, and institutional statuses. Gletkin is a relative newcomer, part of the new guard, who has his own views about capitulation. Unlike Ivanov, he has little faith or interest in the intellectual, logical problems that Rubashov is working through.

During the Civil War, Gletkin had been taken prisoner, and they'd tied a lighted candlewick to his skull to make him talk. A few hours later his people had found him unconscious. He'd kept silent, but he tells Ivanov that he only did because he'd fainted: he would have spoken up if he'd been conscious a minute longer, and it's only a question of constitution. Especially now, when the Party doesn't have the luxury to get what it wants by appealing to the criminal's reason, they must crush him.

Gletkin too had been a political prisoner, although he hadn't participated in the initial Party leadership like Ivanov and Rubashov had. Whereas some might take his toughness as evidence of his loyalty to the Party, Gletkin has a more matter-of-fact view of the success of physical torture, which he's all too willing to use himself.

Gletkin recalls a peasant that he cross-examined a few years ago. The Revolution, Gletkins says, is being lost because of these stubborn, stupid peasants. At that time, Gletkin began to reason with the peasant rather than beat him, and the peasant lost all respect for him. Finally, the peasant was shaken awake at 2 a.m. one night and, sleepy and scared: he gave himself up. Gletkin and his colleagues began using physical pressure rather than reasoning (while still following orders not to physically torture people) and they all had positive results. It's important to keep in mind the logical necessity of it, Gletkin tells Ivanov: otherwise one becomes a cynic. Now Rubashov is as harmful as that fat peasant. Ivanov says in his official tone that he's given Rubashov a fortnight: Gletkin is his subordinate, and so he salutes Ivanov.

Technically, according to Party philosophy, the masses are meant to be given the greatest respect, as they have a privileged role in this revolutionary society. Gletkin's story, however, shows how much scorn the leaders have towards peasants who don't immediately bow to the new ideology. This shows the paradox of disrespecting peasants in order to create a future society that will actually be ruled by the masses. Gletkin also stresses that logic is important to him, too: but he means that it's vital to actually believe unquestioningly in the Party's logic.

THE SECOND HEARING: 3

Rubashov now has paper, pencil, soap and a towel, and he can order cigarettes and food from the canteen. The snow has been cleared from the courtyard for the prisoners to exercise: Hare-lip always looks up at Rubashov's window. Rubashov often looks down at them, relieved not to recognize anyone.

Since his first interrogation, Rubashov's lifestyle has gradually improved. This is a sign that Ivanov's strategy of allowing Rubashov to logically work through his situation is currently prevailing over Gletkin's.

Rubashov has always prided himself on his self-awareness, harboring no illusions about what he calls the "first person singular" and its impulses. Now, however, he begins to learn more about this phenomenon—about how monologues are actually dialogues between two elements of his own mind, including one speaking partner who's entirely unfamiliar to him. He knows he won't agree to Ivanov's proposal, so he wants to spend the little time he has left alive thinking through other problems. He's interested, for instance, in Ivanov's personality. They were both molded by the beliefs and trajectory of the Party: they both thought the same way. He puts himself in Ivanov's position and sees that his old friend is just as sincere, or as little sincere, with him as Rubashov himself was towards Richard or Little Loewy.

Rubashov uses his time alone to think through one of the major tensions plaguing his thoughts: the relationship between the individual and the collective, and the very nature of the individual. According to Party ideology, the individual is an illusion, valuable only to the extent that he or she submits to the will of the group (that is, the Party leadership). Again, Rubashov also tries to imagine his way into Ivanov's mind, realizing that Rubashov too was perhaps earnest, but perhaps equally cynical, regarding Little Loewy.

Meanwhile, Rubashov's "first-person singular" remains silent, composed of disconnected parts: the hands of the *Pietà*, Little Loewy's cats, something Arlova had once said, and so on. He dubs this half of his interior dialogue the "grammatical fiction," which seems to begin just where logical thinking ends. Indeed, even though he has only a few weeks left to live, he's ambushed by it and spends an entire day in a **day-dream** about Arlova, who, he knows, was shot.

What Rubasohv calls his "first-person singular" has to do with his thoughts and memories that don't seem to fit into an overarching ideology or collective goal. These thoughts also have nothing to do with the logical thinking on which he prides himself. Rubashov can't stop himself from dwelling on these idiosyncratic details.

Rubashov remembers breathing in the smell of his Trade Delegation office, along with that of Arlova's large, well-formed body, curved over her notebook as he dictated. She was slow and passive, and had a calming effect on Rubashov. No. 1 had taken the rare step of giving him, an International man, this bureaucratic job. He felt initially out of touch: he knew how to play the game of the bourgeois world, but at the Trade Delegation he had trouble understanding what was expected of him. He felt like all his underlings treated him with exaggerated, indulgent tolerance. Arlova was least irritating to him.

Another memory transports Rubsahov back to the time before his arrest, and, once again, what is at stake is Rubashov's initially unwavering commitment to Party ideology regardless of how he must act. Rubashov lingers over the details of Arlova's body: indeed, throughout the book, private, erotic details seem to suggest an oblique refutation to official ways of seeing the world.

One day Rubashov asked, while dictating, why Arlova never said anything. She sleepily replied that she would henceforth repeat the last word of each sentence. Rubashov pictures the curve of her neck, which was what he usually saw in the office. When he was young, women had always been comrades for Rubashov, intellectual partners. One day Rubashov, surprising himself, put his hands on Arlova's shoulders and asked her to go out with him. She nodded silently. Later that night, she told him that he'd always be able to do what he liked with her: when he asked why, astonished, she didn't answer.

Arlova is the first woman toward whom Rubashov feels drawn sexually, which contrasts to his prior experience of women as comrades in pursuit of revolutionary goals. This is not entirely a romantic story: it's clear that Rubashov's important position in the Party creates a difference of power between him and Arlova, such that she wouldn't be able to deny him even if she wanted to.

From then on, during the day Arlova would sit bent over the desk, and at night would lie silhouetted against Rubashov's bedroom curtain. Once in awhile he would add sarcastic asides and jokes to his dictation: she never smiled, and once she said he shouldn't say such things in front of other people. This was during the second great opposition trial, when photographs and portraits were again disappearing. The staff all spoke to each other stiffly, politely, using stock phrases. The libraries were thinned out, and the works on foreign trade and currency were disappearing from the office shelves, as well as contemporary philosophy, pamphlets about birth control, treatises on trade unionism, and so on. Old histories and memoirs were replaced with new.

These initial scenes are portrayed as part of Rubashov's one great love affair, even though it's easy for a reader to see that, for Arlova, the situation may not have been as straightforward. At the same time, the purges are beginning (a reference to Stalin's dismantling of his opposition and the beginnings of the famous show trials), such that no one knows whom to trust and who might betray them. The very history of the country, as well as what passes for truth, was being dismantled as well.

An order also came from "above" to appoint a librarian, and Arlova was chosen. Then, at one meeting, she was attacked: someone complained that No. 1's most important speeches couldn't be found at the library, which still contained oppositional works. These speeches all concluded that the Party's biggest duty was to be watchful. Arlova said calmly that she'd followed every instruction, and had no evil intent: the meeting ended with the decision to give her a "serious warning." Rubashov began to feel uneasy, and he stopped making snide comments while dictating, or putting his hands on her shoulders at work.

Throughout this reminiscence, Arlova is portrayed as cool-headed and calm: unlike Richard, for instance, she doesn't grow hysterical and she seems to accept the situation that, through no fault of her own, has condemned her. Now Rubashov, sensing that Arlova may be falling out of favor, chooses the pragmatic approach, slowly distancing himself so as not to be associated with her.

After a week, Arlova stopped coming to Rubashov's apartment, saying that she had a migraine. He didn't press her further. She only came one more time: all night he had the feeling that she was waiting for him to say something—she kept lying awake, eyes open, in the dark. The next day the Secretary told him that Arlova's brother and sister-and-law were arrested "over there." A few minutes later she arrived to work: Rubashov kept thinking uneasily that "over there" the condemned were shot through the neck. At the next meeting of the Party cell Arlova was dismissed from her librarian post, then, a little later, recalled.

While "Over There" usually refers to the Soviet Union for those who are abroad, here it seems to refer to a more remote area of the country, perhaps Siberia. Although Rubashov does feel uneasy about Arlova's predicament (not completely cold and unfeeling, as he was with Richard), he can't say anything or to try to lobby for Arlova's innocence, because he knows it wouldn't help his own case.

THE SECOND HEARING: 4

No. 406, Rubashov's new neighbor, keeps tapping a note with the same spelling mistake, "ARIE, YE WRETCHED OF THE EARTH," over and over again. Rubashov assumes he's insane. No. 402, meanwhile, periodically asks Rubashov to talk to him, and he relates dusty old anecdotes of officer's talk. Out of sympathy, Rubashov sometimes taps out "ha-ha," to which 402 responds with peals of laughter. He's exasperating but also useful, having been there for several years: he knows how things work. Rubashov asks if he knows the new neighbor: RIP VAN WINKLE, he taps.

The message that No. 406 taps out again and again (with the same typo in "arise" each time) is an excerpt from the song of the Communist First and Second International, which also became the first national anthem of the Soviet Union. Rubashov has little patience for the prisoner's fanaticism (unless it's insanity unrelated to any ideological thrust), since it has so little to do with his own cool, logical attitude towards the ideology.

No. 402 taps that No. 406 had been a sociology teacher in a southeastern European state, and had participated in that country's revolution after the last war. 406 was condemned to death in the repression that followed, but the sentence was commuted to life, and he served 20 years, mostly in solitary confinement, where he was largely forgotten. A month ago he was suddenly released through amnesty. He took the first train to this country, where two weeks later he was arrested—perhaps for talking too much, perhaps for asking for the addresses of old friends, now traitors. Now he's back in a cell.

No. 406 is dubbed Rip Van Winkle, a character from an 1819 Washington Irving short story who fell asleep and woke up twenty years later. Like the character in the story, this prisoner has been released to find the world entirely turned upside down. Even Rubashov, when he was imprisoned for less than a year, had struggled to adapt to a new reality and a new set of prescribed truths upon his release.

Rubashov is taken that afternoon to be shaved. The barber works quickly, and Rubashov feels happy, finding the barber's demeanor pleasant. As he gets ready to leave, the barber pushes two fingers under his collar, and Rubashov feels a ball of paper. Back in his cell, he reads, "Die in silence." The messages smuggled to him in enemy country prisons had told him to protest: he wonders now if there are moments in history when the revolutionaries must keep silent.

Like the taxi driver, the barber is another example of someone who attempts to obliquely challenge the guiding authority through small, secret acts. But the barber considers that the greatest act Rubashov could do would be not to say anything outright. To simply keep silent is to refuse to bow to Party ideology.

Rubashov knows that he sacrificed Arlova because he himself was more valuable to the Revolution: a more convincing argument than "petty bourgeois morality." Ivanov had quoted Rubashov saying that the next decade would decide the era's fate: could Rubashov really bow out of it out of disgust and exhaustion? Wasn't history always inhumane and cold? He begins to realize that his refusal of Ivanov's offer is perhaps less unshakable than he thought.

Petty bourgeois morality is the way that the Party can dismiss arguments that seem to put the individual ahead of the group, or people who cede to feelings of pity that are assumed to be naïve vestiges of the past. Now Rubashov begins to wonder if history will perhaps conquer him after all.

THE SECOND HEARING: 5

On the 11th day Rubashov is first taken to the yard to exercise. The warder tells him the regulations, including the prohibition on conversation. Then he opens the door of No. 406: Rip Van Winkle is wearing black boots and frayed (but neat) trousers, his face covered with gray stubble. He gives Rubashov a friendly nod, and Rubashov realizes the man may not be entirely mad. They go outside, where the sky is pale blue. Rubashov realizes that he can't see through his own window, nor that of No. 402 (whom he'd never heard being taken out of his cell). The old man is humming "Arise, ye wretched of the earth." Rubashov tries to imagine what it would be like to be cut off from the world for 20 years. Despite all his practice in thinking through others' minds, here he cannot.

Rubashov's day-to-day situation continues to improve in material terms, as he's allowed out of his cell and into the fresh air. For the first time he meets one of his companion prisoners (not No. 402, who will remain a mystery), the Rip Van Winkle character, who still seems obsessed with the First International anthem. Rubashov finds himself fascinated by this man's long imprisonment, but even his penchant for imagining other minds and situations fails him, as he himself has been saturated in present-day politics for so long.

Back in the building, the old man looks back at Rubashov with a hopeless look. Rubashov tries to tap at him in the cell, but he doesn't answer. No. 402, meanwhile, wants every detail about outside. Each day they're taken outside, and Rubashov starts to notice that the guards don't enforce the rule about no talking. He brings his notebook to the courtyard, and gives it to No. 406, who eagerly draws a sketch of their country, with remarkable accuracy. He looks for Rubashov's approval, but Rubashov is slightly embarrassed. The man claims he can do this with his eyes shut—he has been able to for 20 years—and he does so.

No. 406 seems to fixate on silly, obsessive projects rather than, like Rubashov, concentrating on the intellectual implications of his imprisonment. His situation reveals another way that totalitarianism can work on people, depriving them of their ability to think for themselves, and locking them within the space of their own mind. Rubashov is a different kind of prisoner, though he is, in another sense, captive to ideology.

As they move back inside, the expression of fear returns to No. 406, and he whispers to Rubashov that he was put in the wrong train, and they thought he didn't notice. He tells Rubashov not to tell anyone he knows. One day they'll get there all the same, he says.

No. 406's whispers may sound like conspiracy theories, and yet Rubashov knows all too well that they are both inhabiting a space of constant surveillance and intrigue.

THE SECOND HEARING: 6

Two weeks minus a day after Ivanov's proposal, Rubashov senses a tense atmosphere, despite the routine daily events. He strikes up a conversation with 402, who asks if he feels it too. 402 says that this is the night when political differences are being settled: Hare-lip has told him that executions are happening for political prisoners. Rubashov knows that executions happen in cellar basements with a bullet through the neck, though he's never witnessed one himself. It's not romantic, but rather a logical consequence. The phrase "Physical liquidation" is used instead of "execution," making dying a merely technical detail.

Rubashov, too, is a political prisoner, but he knows that he's being given a grace period in order to decide whether or not to accept Ivanov's proposals. Rubashov takes a strange kind of comfort in his knowledge of how executions work, especially as he has great apprehension for the unknown. He also acknowledges the role of euphemisms in totalitarian ideology, to patch over the violence enacted.

The silence grows more unnatural. Rubashov stares at his feet and moves his toes, which seem uncanny: he's suddenly aware of his own body. He wonders about the details of the execution as he smokes a cigarette. He senses the smell of Arlova. Then No. 402 taps to him that No. 380 is to be shot, and to pass it on: Rubashov does so. Rubashov asks who 380 is, but 402 doesn't answer. He's shouting for help, 402 relays for him to pass on. Finally 402 says it's Michael Bogrov, former commander. Bogrov had been Rubashov's roommate in exile after 1905, and he'd taught him reading, writing, and historical thought: since then he'd received a hand-written letter from him twice a year.

Rubashov's heightened awareness of his own body, like his periodically recurring toothache, serves to anchor him in individual, material circumstances, as opposed to the abstract logic he's used to employing elsewhere. The acute sense of particularity and uniqueness is only increased when Rubashov realizes that the faceless, nameless "No. 380" is none other than his old friend and mentor from the past.

No. 402 relays, "NOW," and along the corridor comes a low drumming, which Rubashov joins. The sound rises, and he loses the sense of time and space. Figures enter his field of vision through the spy-hole, two in uniform dragging a third, his legs trailing and shoes squeaking on the ground, his face turned toward the tiles and mouth hanging open, whimpering. Bogrov suddenly shouts, "Rubashov!" Silence falls.

The prisoners, knowing that they too may soon face what Bogrov is facing now, accompany him in spirit through his final march through the hallways. If Rubashov was ever able to think of punishment and execution abstractly, he's no longer able to now.

Rubashov lies in bed, thinking about that last cry. He asks himself what they did to Bogrov to make the strong sailor whimper in such a way. He wonders if Arlova too whimpered. He sits up: he's never imagined her death in such a way. Bogrov's whimpering has changed the logical equation, which no longer seems to function.

The cry of Bogrov is another acutely physical, resonant reminder of the increasing impossibility for Rubashov to compartmentalize personal and collective meaning. The very bounds of logical reasoning seem to be coming undone.

THE SECOND HEARING: 7

Rubashov wakes up from a **dream** of his first arrest in enemy country to find a figure next to him and the electric light turned on. He realizes he's in a cell, but the enemy country part was dreamed. Ivanov is standing there over him, a friend who is now an enemy. Rubashov thinks of Bogrov and Arlova, and Ivanov asks if he feels ill. Rubashov asks for a cigarette and he feels his head clear: Ivanov gives him brandy, as well. Rubashov asks what Ivanov is doing there, and then says that he thinks Ivanov is a swine.

Once again, the border between dreams and reality dissolves for Rubsahov, for whom the various arrests, apprehensions, and current experiences begin to be inextricably linked to one another. Rubashov recognizes that Ivanov is playing with him, acting like his friend and confidant when he's really trying to get information out of him.

When Ivanov asks why, Rubashov says that Ivanov made sure that Bogrov, whom Ivanov knew was Rubashov's friend, would be dragged in front of Rubashov, with Bogrov's execution revealed by the tapping of Rubashov's neighbors. It's all calculated to depress him: and at this dark hour, Ivanov arrives, a savior, with brandy. Rubashov orders Ivanov out. Ivanov asks if Rubashov really thinks Ivanov is such a bad psychologist. Rubashov shrugs, and Ivanov asks for five minutes. Ivanov says that Bogrov has been shot: he was in prison for a few months, and he was tortured in the last days. If Rubashov reveals this at trial, Ivanov is done for. Ivanov never would have done what Rubashov accuses him of doing, since Ivanov knows Rubashov has been recently subject to humanitarian scruples, ones that the scene with Bogrov only intensified. Ivanov wants Rubashov sober and logical, not moral. Only when Rubashov thinks everything through logically will he capitulate.

Rubashov recognizes that the dramatic scene with Bogrov was, in fact, staged—part of an obsession in totalitarianism with performance in order to extract knowledge and confession out of people. But Ivanov never fully shows himself as vulnerable to Rubashov: he may believe in his old friend's innocence, but he has to maintain a certain level of power above him. Ivanov has noticed Rubashov's newfound emphasis on the "first-person singular," which he calls "humanitarian scruples," and tries to remind Rubashov of the alternate, logical viewpoint that he argues will save him.

Ivanov asks if Rubashov would capitulate if he became convinced of the logical necessity of doing so. When Rubashov refuses to answer, Ivanov says that it's because Rubashov is afraid of him—afraid because they share the same way of thinking.

Again, having been raised and educated in the same intellectual Party tradition, Ivanov and Rubashov have been loyal adherents to the logical, old guard mentality.

Rubashov paces back and forth, feeling helpless. He knows that what Ivanov calls his "moral exaltation" can't be expressed logically, but only through the "grammatical fiction." Now, Ivanov says, temptation—once carnal—takes the form of reason. Rubashov should write a Passion play in which God and the Devil fight for the soul of Rubashov, Ivanov says, for morality against logic. Rubashov has discovered a conscience, Ivanov cries, saying *Apage Satanas*, or "begone Satan!"

Rubashov has felt stirrings of what he calls the "grammatical fiction" before, but now he finally forces himself to confront the contradictions of the distinction between the old guard's logical, instrumental mentality, and the respect for the unique and non-instrumental individual that he now has. Ivanov belittles this notion by comparing it to Christan notions of sin and salvation.

After a while, Rubashov asks Ivanov why he executed Bogrov. Ivanov says it's because of the submarine question. Bogrov wanted submarines of large tonnage and large range to be constructed, while the Party was in favor of the opposite. Bogrov, though, had some support among the old guard, so he had to be completely discredited. But Bogrov wouldn't play along: in a public trial he would only have created confusion, so he had to be liquidated administratively. Rubashov looks at Ivanov with haunted eyes and says that Ivanov didn't hear Bogrov whimpering.

Rubashov seems to ask Ivanov "why" in a more existential sense, but Ivanov responds with purely mechanistic, means-driven reasons. In the framework he embodies, there is no room for variation from the norm, regardless of who is correct. Public trials are only useful to prove the "truth" of the Party when the performers play along, which Bogrov wasn't willing to do.

Ivanov is unaffected, but the cries continue to echo in Rubashov's head, along with the image of the curve of Arlova's breast. It's no use weeping over humanity like their country's greatest poets, Ivanov says. He warns Rubashov to be aware of such pity and ecstasies. Sympathy, conscience, despair, and atonement are all to be fought against. Most great revolutionaries, from Spartacus to Danton to Dostoevsky, renounced violence and repented: Rubashov must resist such temptation. Gandhi and Tolstoy, with their inner conscience, are history's greatest criminals, Ivanov continues. History has no conscience.

While Ivanov keeps calm, employing the emotion-less, surgical language of bureaucracy to describe killing Bogrov, Rubashov lingers over memories that are multi-sensory and human. Meanwhile, Ivanov contrasts the "weakness" of the capitulation of past revolutionaries with himself and the Party: by resisting pity, Ivanov and Rubashov will ensure that history will prove them right.

Rubashov watches Ivanov drink and notes how much he can handle: Ivanov does need consolation, Rubashov thinks. Ivanov has heard all this before: now, though, he recognizes the "inner processes" not as abstractions but as a physical reality. When Ivanov sent Arlova to die, he hadn't had the imagination to picture the details of the execution. Now he can, though it was either right, or wrong, and he cannot know which.

Although Ivanov seems to have reasoned his way into an airtight justification of Party policy, Rubashov is now looking for evidence that Ivanov, too, struggles with the same things that he does—questions that for Rubashov center on his ability to imagine another's mind.

Rubashov takes a swig of brandy and Ivanov smiles, saying he's content to take one of the roles in Rubashov's mental dialogue. Moralism always attacks a person in his most defenseless moment, he says: it's unfair and theatrical. Then Rubashov asks if Ivanov remembers Raskolnikov, the protagonist of *Crime and Punishment* (by Dostoevsky). Rubashov recalls that the problem was whether Raskolnikov had the right to kill the old woman: he thinks it through logically, but then recognizes that two and two are not four when human beings are being counted.

It's ironic that Ivanov dismisses Rubashov's "moralism" as theatrical, given totalitarianism's own obsession with performance and theater. Meanwhile, Rubashov returns to a classic work of literature in which a young man reasons his way through the question of whether he is justified in killing a woman who's done nothing wrong to him.

Ivanov says that book should be burned: it puts people into a humanitarian fog. To treat individual lives as sacred would prevent all kinds of useful political and social action, like sacrificing a patrolling party to save a regiment at war, for instance. Rubashov says that examples of war are of abnormal circumstances, but Ivanov says that since the invention of the steam engine the world has been perpetually in an abnormal state. Raskolnikov is a fool because he's acting in his personal interest, not in the interest of a greater good. Rubashov is still wondering if he would have sent Arlova to her death today: he doesn't know, even though logically, he knows Ivanov to be right.

Ivanov continues to scorn "humanitarianism," considering it a relic from the past. Although Rubashov seems now to take the side of individual sovereignty over the needs of the collective, it's still clear how much he's been influenced by the intellectual tools of logical reasoning given to him by the Party, tools he now uses to an entirely different end (even as he's not sure he actually believes what he's saying).

Ivanov says that there's a **Christian**, humane ethics, which bars arithmetic from being used for human lives, which are sacred. This is in opposition to the principle that a collective aim justifies all means, and that individuals should be sacrificed to the community. Anti-vivisection morality, and vivisection morality, that is. Dilettantes have tried to mix them, but in practice that's impossible—besides, no state has ever followed a truly Christian politics. Rubashov, shrugging, says that humanism and politics are incompatible, to be sure, but where does the alternative lead us? He says that they, the original leaders, have made a mess of their golden age.

Ivanov continues to characterize Rubashov's newfound moral qualms as elements of an older Christian set of ethics. The logical intellectual reasoning of the old guard can be opposed to the emptied-out mechanistic policies of the new guard, but it can also be opposed to another ideology, one that privileges the individual over the masses and, to Ivanov, is the relic of a religion that has no place in their country.

Ivanov says that they're the first to make a revolution in a consequent way, not as dilettantes. Rubashov agrees, saying that as a result of such consequence they've let 5 million farmers die in a year, sent 10 million to forced labor in the North or East, and settled difference of opinion by death. In the interests of the future, they've lowered the average length of life and standard of living. Rubashov continues to list all the privations, hardship, and evils of the present state of things, concluding that these are the "consequences of our consequentialness."

Ivanov and Rubashov have shown themselves to be obsessed with comparing their revolution to political revolutions in other times and places. Now Rubashov adds a level of irony to their exceptionalism, detailing precisely what has been the cost of such "consequentialness"—a list of all the individuals harmed or killed by the radical ideology of communism.

Ivanov responds that such a project is not for the weak at heart, but it once excited Rubashov: what changed? Rubsahov wants to respond that Bogrov called out his name, but, since he knows that doesn't make logical sense, he knows, he says that they thought they could treat history like a physics experiment. Such experiments can be repeated many times, but historical events only happen once—people don't become alive again. Ivanov continues to remark at Rubashov's newfound naiveté: he says that a few hundred thousand may well be sacrificed for history's most promising experiment. Besides, hundreds of thousands die in poverty and from hard labor, and no one objects to that.

For Ivanov, recounting the suffering of individuals is irrelevant and useless: what matters are the laws of history and the ways in which they can be put into practice on a massive scale. But it is precisely this scientific application of history that Rubashov takes issue with, arguing that history isn't like science both because it isn't replicable, and because it plays with human lives. Ivanov is ready with another pristinely logical counterpoint.

Ivanov yawns, stretches, and limps over to Rubashov, where he tries to tell Rubashov that he's not telling him anything he doesn't know. Sleep it off, Ivanov says: tomorrow they'll make up his deposition. Rubashov says he'll think it over. Alone, Rubashov feels both hollowed out and somehow relieved, Bogrov's final call seeming to recede into painless memory.

Ivanov and Rubashov have long been accustomed to abstract philosophical debates, though now it's a question of Rubashov's own life. The all-powering logic of Ivanov's arguments, arguments Rubashov has long espoused himself, seem now to conquer individualism.

Ivanov, meanwhile, visits Gletkin, who is working through the night. He's had to undo Gletkin's damage, but Rubashov will bend, Ivanov says. When Gletkin says he, unlike Rubashov, has a backbone, Ivanov calls him an idiot, saying he's the one who should be shot. Going back to work, Gletkin wonders what Ivanov could have meant.

Rubashov may be the one under interrogation, but Ivanov clearly has far more respect for Rubashov than for Gletkin, who cares little for the intellectual side of interrogation. Gletkin also is shown to be literal-minded in response to Ivanov's brusque mocking.

THE THIRD HEARING: 1

In an extract from Rubashov's diary, on the 20th day of his imprisonment, he writes that Bogrov has fallen off the swing that began on the day of the storming of the Bastille—the swing that has now swung back from freedom to tyranny. We must find out the swing's law of motion between dictatorship and democracy, he writes: the masses can only function democratically if they understand how the whole social body works.

Back in Rubashov's diary, the prisoner begins to sketch out a theory of history that will account both for his personal saga and for the predicament into which he believes the Party has fallen. He refers to the fall of the Bastille, which is often considered the start of the French Revolution but also of an age of many revolutions.

Rubashov writes that at every step of technical progress the masses need to be re-educated: at times this process of political maturity takes generations, but democracy ensues once the masses catch up. The discovery of the steam engine, for instance, led to dramatic material progress, but also to political steps backward. Socialist theory was mistaken in thinking that the masses' consciousness would rise continually and unshakably: instead, capitalism itself will collapse before the masses fully understand it. Here in the Fatherland of the Revolution, it will be a long time before people understand what has happened—in the meantime, democracy is impossible.

Returning to nineteenth-century history, Rubashov thinks about the relationship between material and political progress, arguing that they can actually work in opposition to one another rather than in tandem. He shows a certain paternalism with regard to the "masses," whom he considers to be not "ready" for democracy, since they can be overwhelmed by material improvements and are always a few steps behind the truly creative leaders who purport to represent them.

Rubashov writes that in mature periods, the opposition has the duty to appeal to the masses, while in immature ones, only demagogues do so. The opposition in this case can only seize power by a coup, to slip into silence, or to deny its own beliefs: this final choice has been theirs, here. This is more honorable than continuing a hopeless struggle alone.

Rubashov, if only implicitly, sides with the opposition here. Even if he doesn't distance himself entirely from Party ideology, he realizes that there are only a few options available to those who disagree with the official Party line.

THE THIRD HEARING: 2

Rubashov continues to write, his handwriting becoming disciplined again after growing wild and unsteady over the last few days. At eleven in the morning he's brought out to exercise, though Rip Van Winkle isn't in the yard. Instead there's a peasant beside him, who says he comes from the province D and asks if Rubashov has ever been there. When Rubashov says no, the peasant asks if he's a political gentleman: Rubashov says that he is. The peasant is a reactionary, he says, and he's heard he'll be imprisoned for 10 years. He was unmasked when the Government sent its yearly commission to the village, this time in the form of glass pipes with needles to prick the children. He and his wife barred the official from entering their home. Rubashov is silent: the peasant thinks Rubashov must disapprove, and he says no more.

Rubashov's theoretical writing is portrayed partly as the obsessive work of someone who no longer harbors much of a link to reality, but also as the work of an intellectual, even a genius, who possesses a privileged relationship to truth in an oppressive society. Upon going out to the yard, Rubashov meets someone who is struggling with the regime from another perspective, that of the counter-revolutionaries who never agreed with Party ideology in the first place: nonetheless, all kinds of opposition ultimately prove intolerable to the Party.

Rubashov takes a nap. When he wakes up, No. 402 is tapping eagerly at him. Smiling, Rubashov taps that he is capitulating. After a long silence, 402 taps that he'd rather hang. 402 asks if Rubashov has no honor, to which he answers that they have different ideas of honor. For Rubashov honor is to be useful rather than vain, whereas 402 thinks honor is about decency and living and dying for one's beliefs. After Rubashov says that they've replaced decency with reason, 402 no longer answers.

Rubashov's decision to capitulate reveals his acknowledgment that there is no way out of the contradictions of his position: he too has considered alternate ways of thinking about power and individual honor, but, unlike No. 402, he thinks these methods are doomed to failure in their society.

Rubashov reads over the letter to the Public Prosecutor of the Republic that he's written, vowing to renounce his oppositional attitude in public.

It's vital that Rubashov perform the speech in public, enacting the Party's form of truth as confession.

THE THIRD HEARING: 3

Rubashov wonders why it's taking so long to be taken to Ivanov. He smiles at the trouble his letter must have caused the "theorists" of the central committee, a separate group from "politicians," though this distinction is relatively recent. During the war their discussions had been both theoretical and applied: now the days of philosophizing have ceded to an insistence on simple, graspable dogma, a catechism with No. 1 as **priest**.

A distinction between "theorists" and "politicians" didn't make sense when Rubashov and the others fervently believed that their intellectual opinions and the ideology that they were developing were of vital practical importance to creating an ideal society: Rubashov contrasts that idealism with the current state.

Rubashov knows that today's "theorists" would find his letter to be heresy: he criticized the doctrine's father, treated No. 1 historically rather than reverentially, and flouted the dogma that they're trained to instill in everyone. No. 1 asks them to do things like prove that America is in a depression when it's experiencing an economic boom: a "grotesque comedy," Rubashov thinks, all meant to strengthen the dictatorship. Open congresses have become secret, behind-the-scenes decisions. Rubashov yearns to be back in a library embarking on revolutionary philosophy: he reflects that No. 402's understanding of honor belongs to another time, and he longs to write a massive book on the history of democracy and develop his theories.

Now, Rubashov thinks, theorists are responsible not for developing an ideology that is consistent from theory to practice, but for justifying whatever No. 1 does and maintaining a kind of cult of the leader. Indeed, this section and others emphasize the extent to which No. 1 is not too different from the religion that the Party finds so anathema to its own beliefs—he has become an object of worship rather than the vessel for the power of the masses, which is what he theoretically was.

Rubashov's **toothache** is gone and he feels nervously impatient. He continues to work, but has to stop short when he lacks documents. He wonders why Ivanov hasn't fetched him like he promised. Late that night, Rubashov taps against the wall and, when No. 402 doesn't respond, he feels humiliated. Time slows almost to a still: he shuts his eyes and imagines Arlova lying next to him. He wonders about the 2,000 men in the cells of this prison: if history is calculation how much does the sum of their nightmares weigh?

The fact that Rubashov's toothache has disappeared speaks to the fact that, even as he continues to think about how the Party has sacrificed its once noble intentions, he no longer believes that it's of any use to privilege the individual over the collective—the all-powerful Party ideology will absorb his objections into its policy and crush any opposition in its wake.

Then two uniformed officials enter Rubashov's cell and order him to follow them. He's taken the same way as Bogrov had been, and Rubashov wonders uneasily (though without fear) where they're going. He decides that if they beat him he'll sign anything, and simply recall it the next day. He thinks again of his "theory of relative maturity" and feels relieved. Then he's marched into a room like Ivanov's office, but behind the desk is Gletkin.

At first it seems as if Rubashov, like Bogrov at an earlier moment, is being led to execution or torture. At these moments, Rubashov focuses on the theory that he's developed to explain his own situation and that of his country, which comforts him even though he knows it won't save him.

In a monotone, Gletkin tells Rubashov to sit down and then says that he will examine Rubashov in Ivanov's absence. Rubashov says that he would rather be interviewed by Ivanov, but Gletkin tells him that the authorities appoint the examiner. Thinking quickly, Rubashov decides that something must have gone wrong with Ivanov. The new school is embodied by the brute force of Gletkin, not the mental agility and wit of someone like Ivanov. Rubashov knows he can't stay silent: the old group has to come to terms with the new, and Rubashov does, now, feel old.

In this third set of hearings, Gletkin replaces Ivanov in a way that underlines the transition of Party leadership from the old guard to the new guard. Now Rubashov recognizes that his strategies will have to be different: he can't count on Gletkin being familiar with the intellectual and logical debates he's had with Ivanov.

Rubashov says he's ready to make a statement, but only if Gletkin stops the tricks and turns down the harsh light. Gletkin reminds Rubashov of the gravity of the charges, and says he doesn't realize the vulnerability of his position. This generation has no traditions, Rubashov thinks: it started to think only after the Revolution and Civil War.

Gletkin has confidence in the power of physical torture (or even just discomfort) in gaining what he wants out of prisoners, while Rubasohv, like Ivanov, considers this strategy with little more than scorn.

Rubashov says he'll do anything to serve the Party, but he wants to know what the accusation is. He suddenly realizes that he has as much power over Gletkin as Gletkin has over him, even if Gletkin thinks it's his own tricks, not Ivanov's arguments, that have made Rubashov capitulate. Rubashov once again thinks angrily of the barbarism of the new leaders—even if a generation of brutes is now needed. As Gletkin reads out the plots in a monotone, Rubashov is incredulous, thinking Gletkin can't possibly think they're real. He listens to the accusations about consorting with a foreign power, sabotaging materials, and others.

Rubashov recognizes that Gletkin, too, is under pressure from the all-encompassing directives of the Party. He goes back and forth, though, between understanding the new guard as an inevitable result of ideological contradiction—part of the theory he's now developing—and a barbaric, twisted deformation of the ideals with which the revolution and its leaders began.

Rubashov looks at the small, thin stenographer in the corner, clearly convinced by the accusations. The crowning one is about the plot for an attempt on No. 1's life. The X mentioned by Ivanov comes up again: he's the assistant manager of the restaurant where No. 1 often has lunch, and Rubashov was to poison No. 1's lunch. At the end, Rubashov says he pleads guilty to everything. He acknowledges that his opposition would have become a mortal danger to the Revolution, that humanitarian weakness is suicide for the Revolution. He admits that his desires were for liberal reform, but were ultimately counter-revolutionary. But he also says he had nothing to do with the criminal charges.

For Rubashov, the stenographer reflects the success that the Party has had in convincing people not to think for themselves, but rather to align with whatever they are told by those above them about the guilt or innocence of others. While Rubashov recognizes that there is no way to be exonerated of the thought crimes with which he's charged, his stubborn, logical streak prevents him from admitting to something he didn't actually do.

Gletkin says that this is nothing new: Rubashov has made similar statements two years ago, then twelve months ago. Rubashov says he made those declarations for tactical purposes, like everyone who had to do so to remain in the party: this time he's sincere. When Gletkin asks if he lied before to save his neck, Rubashov assents. Gletkin asks if the same was true for his betrayal of Arlova, which led to her death: Rubashov says he's aware of this, and, sensing the irony, that it's possible she was innocent. He feels a powerless rage and wonders if he or Gletkin is the bigger scoundrel.

Here the interrogation begins to lay clear another problem with insisting that all actions, including vows and confessions, are only means to an end: anyone can use that reasoning to retract something said at an earlier time, just as one can accuse another of lying in one's own interests. Rubashov now feels the irony that it was his betrayal of Arlova, which he thought would save him, that is now condemning him.

Rubashov recognizes that Gletkin is right not to believe him: he himself is now lost in a labyrinth of lies and illusions. He says that he only asks now to prove his devotion to the Party. Gletkin says he needs a complete, public confession of *all* his criminal activities. His nerves throbbing, he says he can't confess to crimes he hasn't committed. Gletkin concurs, with a slight hint of mockery in his voice.

Now it becomes clear to Rubashov that he can't be expected to be believed, given that he himself is having trouble remembering what is true and what is false. He tries to set a boundary between actions he's actually done and those he hasn't, but it's difficult.

Rubashov's memory flags: later he thinks he may have fallen asleep, **dreaming** of luminous landscapes and the poplars of his father's estate. Then Gletkin's voice booms over him, asking if he recognizes a third person now in the room: it's Hare-lip. When Gletkin asks if Rubashov has seen this man before, a faint memory seizes Rubashov and he says he may have. Gletkin says that Rubashov's memory is known in the Party to be excellent, but Rubashov can't place the man.

Here, dreams represent a means of escape for Rubashov, as well as a different order of reality, as he recalls his childhood as a time when he lacked this web of lies and confessions. His inability to remember Hare-lip suggests that the dream-world may be pervading his interrogation while he's awake.

Gletkin turns to Hare-lip, who says in a deep, resounding voice, that Citizen Rubashov ordered him to poison the Party's leader. Rubashov met him after a reception in the Trade Delegation at B, Hare-lip says. Now the mists clear and Rubashov says that he initially didn't recognize Professor Kieffer's son. Rubashov thinks of his friend Kieffer, the great historian of the Revolution who was in the famous congress photograph. Kieffer was perhaps No. 1's sole personal friend, along with his chess partner and collaborator. Kieffer was commissioned to write No. 1's biography, but after ten years it remained unpublished: now certain changes had to be made, but Kieffer was stubborn, failing to understand the new expectations.

It turns out that Rubashov knew Hare-lip from his days as a foreign diplomat, when he was still high up in the Party command, along with Kieffer. Once again, the famous congress photo serves as a visual reminder of the old guard, once idealistically tied to their intellectual theories and to the revolution, but now riven with mutual suspicion and betrayal. While Kieffer continued to believe in the cause, he refused to change the truth of history to bend to the narrative that No. 1 wanted to force through.


Hare-lip continues, saying that his father and he had made a detour to B to visit Rubashov: Rubashov remembers that this was correct. That evening they all met at Rubashov's house, where he served alcohol. Gletkin interrupts to prod Hare-lip to say that Rubashov intended to intoxicate him. The two older men reminisced for a while, Hare-lip says: he'd never seen his father in such a good mood. Gletkin reminds Hare-lip that three months later, his father's crimes would be discovered, and Kieffer would be executed three months after that. Gletkin asks Hare-lip if, at that time, Kieffer was involved in such criminal activities, and if Rubashov shared Kieffer's opinions: the answer is yes to both.

Rather than dismissing all that Hare-lip says out of hand, Rubashov makes a great effort to separate what is true and false about Hare-lip's account. Clearly, however, Gletkin has his own narrative of the events that he insists on, jumping in at various points in order to stress evidence of Rubashov's guilt through a received interpretation of Rubashov's actions, one that proceeds from the assumption of guilt rather than of innocence.

Hare-lip says that the two men talked scornfully about the present state of affairs of the party. Kieffer had laughed at Rubashov's decision to make a declaration of loyalty to No. 1, and Rubashov had called him an old fool and Don Quixote: they must hold out the longest and "wait for the hour" when the leader would be removed. No. 1 was the embodiment of a certain characteristic, the belief in the infallibility of one's own beliefs, so he'd never resign, but could only be removed by force. To Gletkin's question, Hare-lip responds that Rubashov did stress the necessity to use violence. It strikes Rubashov that, while he can't remember the conversation accurately, he has no doubt that Hare-lip can remember it. Then Rubashov wonders if Hare-lip had, in fact, gathered the conclusion from Rubashov's words that he wanted to assassinate No.1.

Again, Rubashov acknowledges much of what Hare-lip says to be true. Indeed, part of the confidence of the old guard—confidence that now looks more like arrogant folly—was to believe that they could joke about and critique various aspects of Party policy, without putting into doubt their loyalty to the cause or belief in the revolution. And Rubashov does begin to wonder if there's another interpretation of the events possible, one in which he did indeed "incite" Hare-lip to violence through his careless statements.


Then Gletkin asks Hare-lip if what followed was Rubashov's direct instigation to violence. After a silence, Gletkin asks if Hare-lip needs his memory jogged. Hare-lip, licking his lips in fear, says that the next morning, while he was alone with Rubashov, the instigation took place. Rubashov smiles, realizing that the idea that Kieffer would have been present for such a plot was too absurd even for this group.

Here, it becomes clear that Hare-lip is no longer following his own script, but that of Gletkin: the cleverness of this totalitarian interrogation framework is that it works out of facts and true events to construct a narrative that serves its own purpose.

Rubashov, after confirming that he has the right to ask questions, asks Hare-lip if he'd just finished his university studies when he and his father came to visit. Rubashov says that he remembers the boy was meant to start working under his father at the Institute of Historical Research, at least up until his father's arrest. That meant that Hare-lip had to find another way of earning his living—such that at the time of the meeting, neither of them could have foreseen his future job at the restaurant. The alleged instigation to murder would have been impossible.

While Rubashov probably recognizes that a logical refutation of the accusation won't do him much good (logic, as Ivanov had shown him, can cut both ways in this system), he cannot help but point out the contradictions in the argument, contradictions that speak to larger tensions in the very ideological framework from which Gletkin is working.

Hare-lip looks at Gletkin in fear and astonishment. Rubashov feels fleetingly triumphant, but the feeling vanishes. Quietly, Gletkin says no one asserted that the instructions restricted the murderer to poison: Rubashov gave the order, then left the means up to the murderer. This contradicts his earlier statement, but Rubashov suddenly feels indifferent: none of this makes any difference to his guilt. He does feel vaguely that an injustice is being done, but he cannot rouse himself to indignation. Hare-lip leaves, and Gletkin asks if the confession is true in the essential points: Rubashov recognizes the slippage, and he agrees that "in the essential points" it is. Suddenly, Gletkin asks if the harsh light disturbs him. The crudeness makes Rubashov smile, but the milder light is in fact better. But then Rubashov adds, that it's true except for one essential point alone. At the time, he meant political action, not individual terrorism: mass action. Gletkin says that would have led to civil war all the same—he really puts that much value on the distinction?

Although Rubashov has treated Gletkin scornfully, as an intellectual inferior, Gletkin too knows how to twist the rules of narrative and truth to fit what he knows needs to be heard and said. Rubashov's indifference is a sign of just how much he is beginning to realize the insoluble contradictions within Party ideology. He may be able to expose such contradictions on a small scale, but it doesn't matter, he realizes, how much he points them out: the violence of the Party justice system will quash contradictions rather than resolving them. Even so, Rubashov continues, in his last show of defiance and belief in truth, to insist that he did not incite anyone to individual terrorism.

Now Rubashov feels indifferent about this too. Whoever opposes a dictatorship must accept civil war, and vice versa. Years ago he'd written a polemic against the moderates: now he too is condemned. He feels like he sees No. 1, not Gletkin, in front of him, and he thinks of the cemetery at Errancis that holds Saint-Just, Robespierre, and their fellow executed comrades. The gateway bore the inscription "Dormir," to sleep.

Rubashov's feelings of indifference arise at the moments when he feels like his rational, intellectual mind is no match for the oppressive, bureaucratic logic of the Party. Rubashov also recognizes the irony of having been an interrogator himself, now that his is subject to the same techniques he once used.

Feeling sleepy himself, Rubashov reads through his statement, feels a sudden desire to tear it up, then returns it to Gletkin intact. The next he can remember, he's walking through the hallway to his cell, and he falls asleep immediately. When he wakes up, the official is back: the examination is to continue.

As the book goes on, the border between dreams and reality blurs even more as a result of what amounts to physical torture: deprivation of sleep.

THE THIRD HEARING: 4

Rubashov can only recall fragments of his dialogue with Gletkin. He's reminded that he has heard that the accused can be physically crushed through continuous cross-examination. He loses his sense of day and night and his appetite: he finds it humiliating to ask for food in front of Gletkin, who never seems tired or hungry himself. Rubashov toggles between apathy and unnatural alertness. He's surprised at his ability to go on but also knows that people generally set a low limit on man's capacity for physical resistance.

Although Ivanov had been confident that Rubashov wouldn't succumb to techniques of physical deprivation, these techniques do seem to be having a profound effect on Rubashov, who has to focus more and more on his purely physical state of being, rather than on the intellectual questions he was focused on earlier.

Rubashov realizes that he's meant to confess to seven points: he's confessed so far to only one. He could sign everything at once, or deny all at once: but a sense of duty bars him from giving in to this. The temptation that continues is that of sleep, that of the barber's command to "die in silence," even though all the logical arguments are on Gletkin's side.

No. 402 may have scorned Rubashov for capitulating, but Rubashov does align with his fellow prisoner in retaining some sense of honor, even if that is only temporary resistance against both silence and sleep, and capitulation.

Once, for instance, Gletkin questions Rubashov about negotiating with a foreign power for the opposition, to overthrow the regime, and Rubashov contests this story, remembering a trivial, unimportant meeting with the foreign diplomat in question. He knows it's useless to try to explain that to Gletkin, about how he and a certain Herr von Z. were joking about breeding guinea pigs in their respective lands, teasing about the rules and regulations of bureaucracy, all with certain political innuendo.

Another difference between the old guard and the new, according to Rubashov, is the latter's inability to understand subtlety and wit of the intellectual professions. This is a snobbish and elitist viewpoint, to be sure, though one that invites a greater possibility of obliquely contesting totalitarianism through irony and humor.

Rubashov recognizes that Gletkin is a proletarian by origin, since Gletkin's halting style shows that he learned to read and write as an adult: Gletkin would never understand the witty banter of intellectuals. Rubashov begins to wonder if such conversations were, in fact, as harmless as he believed. The banter was, indeed, part of what they called in diplomacy "taking soundings," but that was once an accepted part of Party traditions. He wonders how Gletkin knew of the conversation, and realizes he walked right into a trap.

Here Rubashov recognizes the intersection between totalitarian ideology and class: in some ways, Rubashov and the other old guard intellectuals underestimated those with less education than themselves, who perhaps do recognize the potential subversive danger inherent to casual conversations like those Rubashov had with Kieffer.

Rubashov thinks about how the whole activity of the opposition had been "senile chatter" and no more, because the old guard was so worn out, like himself, by years of exile, factions, and the demoralizing trends after victory: all that was left to them was to sleep. Now Rubashov asks about Ivanov. Gletkin tells him that he's been arrested for his negligent management of Rubashov's case, and his cynical doubts regarding Rubashov's guilt.

Another irony that arises for Rubashov has to do with the fact that, if any "opposition" did exist, it was a motley crew of former Party stars, now worn down and exhausted. The opposition is not a powerful, threatening group. Ivanov, it turns out, can probably be considered to be part of such a group too.

Rubashov then asks Gletkin why, since he's been known to use harsh physical methods, he didn't use them on Rubashov. Gletkin says coolly that torture is forbidden; besides, Rubashov is the type who would confess under pressure but recant at the public trial: his confession will be useful because it'll be voluntary. Against his will, Rubashov feels pleasure at being called tenacious by Gletkin.

Gletkin seems not only to pretend that the false things he says are true, but to actually believe fervently in those falsehoods, unwilling or unable to see the contradictions inherent to what he's saying—including the forced nature of Rubashov's "voluntary" confession.

Rubashov has only one other desire, that Gletkin let him sleep and come to his senses. Why does he continue on? he asks himself. Death now seems warm and inviting, like sleep: but a strange sense of duty compels him to continue to the end, even if it's a battle with windmills.

The "battle with windmills" refers to the story of Don Quixote, a man on a hopeless quest. Rubashov recognizes that he cannot win, but sleep has not conquered him quite yet.

As time goes on, Gletkin, too, seems to change, his voice losing its former brutality. Once, when Rubashov's cigarettes ran out after a few hours, Gletkin (who doesn't smoke) passed a packet to him. And once Rubashov even had a victory, concerning a false accusation of sabotaging an aluminum trust, after a whole night of interrogation. They've both come to accept rules of the game, by which there's no difference between what Rubashov did and what his opinions were: logical fiction and fact meld into one. In rare clear-headed moments Rubashov becomes aware of this, though Gletkin doesn't. This time, though, after the whole night, Gletkin tells the stenographer to remove this charge: Rubashov feels triumphant, though he knows it means little.

In some ways, the long length of time that Rubashov and Gletkin spend with each other begins to dismantle the border between interrogator and prisoner—perhaps another example of the way in which the ideology of instrumental reason and collectivity can never quite get away from the power of individual relationships. At the same time, the two do exist in a dizzying reality in which truth is only what the Party, via Gletkin, says that it is. Rubashov still wavers between apathy and insistence on his own mind.


After the stenographer leaves, Gletkin asks why Rubashov is so stubbornly denying that he used industrial sabotage, one of the opposition's most effective means. He asks why the industries' performances are actually so unsatisfactory, in Rubashov's opinion, and Rubashov says too-low tariffs and too-harsh disciplining of workers. He's heard that workers have been shot as saboteurs because they're two minutes late clocking in.

Here, Rubashov reveals some of the specific critiques that he has of policies dictated by the Party leadership. Of course, Rubashov, too, had once considered such critiques, coming from Richard or Little Loewy, as enough for them to be considered traitors to the communist cause.


Gletkin asks if Rubashov was given a watch as a boy: astonished, he says yes. Gletkin says he never knew how one worked until he was sixteen: in the village peasants would go to the railway station at sunrise when they had to get somewhere and wait all day until the train arrived. In other countries peasants had a century to get used to machine life: here, they had a decade. If the Party isn't harsh, the country will come to a stop. A woman's delegation from Manchester recently came and was scandalized by the harshness, but Gletkin argues that things were the same two hundred years ago in Manchester. Rubashov is like these women.

At first, Rubashov has little idea what Gletkin is talking about. But Gletkin's story is meant to impart a lesson that's not too far off from Rubashov's own "theory of relative maturity." Gletkin, who still appears to believe fervently in communist ideology, recognizes that in order for the country to compete with other powerful nations, it needs to industrialize fast, no matter how much destruction and pain that might cause.


Rubashov admits that Gletkin may be right, but he asks what use it is to invent scapegoats. Gletkin responds that the masses need simple, clear explanations. As a child Gletkin was taught about voluntary scapegoats, such as Jesus Christ, who took on the sin of all. Rubashov wonders where Gletkin is going with this. Gletkin continues that truth is what is useful and falsehood is harmful to humanity. The Party holds evening classes for adults where they stress that the early **Christian church** led to progress because of the usefulness of Jesus' teaching: the Party, too, can invent useful symbols to be taken literally. When Rubashov says this reasoning reminds him of Ivanov, Gletkin says that Rubashov and Ivanov both have certain knowledge that can be useful, but it needs to be adapted to the Party's interest.

Gletkin, once a member of the peasantry himself, has internalized the logic of the Party leadership with all its ideological contradictions: he simultaneously claims that they are working for a society in which the masses hold all the power, while regarding this group with elitist paternalism. There's also another suggestion here that communist ideology is, in many ways, just another form of religious adherence to rules and doctrines, though one in which the apparent believers can be easily manipulated into acting in certain ways.

Ivanov, Gletkin says, was shot in an administrative decision last night. Gletkin lets Rubashov sleep for two full hours. The news of Ivanov's death has only made Rubashov tired again, losing his small sense of triumph. Rubashov repeats to himself that the new Neanderthals, as he calls them, are completing the work of his generation, but without knowledge of where they've come from. They don't have to deny their past, since they have none: they have no sense of melancholy.

This sudden shift in Gletkin's soliloquy is, perhaps, an all-too-logical conclusion of what he's said: Ivanov was unwilling to adapt to the Party's interest when that interest shifted. Rubashov once again expresses a respect and fascination for history and its laws, which he thinks have become irrelevant for the new guard.

THE THIRD HEARING: 5

In another fragment from Rubashov's diary, he compares his generation to the apes that looked mockingly on the first Neanderthals and their barbaric ways, a relapse of history.

Rubashov imagines a comparable historical irony, in which one group is destroyed because of its complacent mockery of a new generation.

THE THIRD HEARING: 6

After five or six days Rubashov faints during an accusation as they're talking about his motives. A few minutes later he comes to as the doctor is pouring water on his face, recommending that he be taken outside. Expressionless, Gletkin orders Rubashov back to his cell, and then he's taken to the yard to exercise. Rubashov feels intoxicated by the fresh air, and he marvels at how he'd taken this for granted before.

Rubashov hasn't yet fallen as a result of his low-level physical torture, but here his body itself gives out, regardless of Rubashov's attempts to conquer it. Gletkin recognizes that if Rubashov is to be useful to the Party, he has to remain alive long enough for a public trial.

Rubashov walks next to the peasant again, who says he hasn't seen Rubashov for a while. He muses on memories of his village, and how happy he once was there. Then, Rubashov asks if the peasant remembers the story in the **Bible** about the tribes in the desert crying that they should return to Egypt. The peasant nods eagerly, but then they're brought back inside.

Rubashov has grown increasingly interested in relating the current-day situation to an earlier Biblical framework: here, he implicitly suggests that he wishes the Party could turn back the clock, and that the revolution perhaps wasn't worth it.

Rubashov is taken back to Gletkin's room, and he realizes it's only been an hour. This question of motive is the final one, Gletkin says: afterward Rubashov will be able to rest. Rubashov, though, says that Gletkin knows his motives. Rubashov wasn't in the service of a foreign power or subject to a "counter-revolutionary mentality." He acted according to his own conscience. Gletkin pulls out Rubashov's diary from his drawer, reading what he wrote about how the person in the wrong must pay, and the person in the right will be absolved. Rubashov asks why everything he's signed and said isn't enough: after all, he himself is a piece of Party history that Gletkin is now defiling.

Rubashov makes a final case for himself, admitting that he was part of the opposition in terms of his thoughts and ideas, but that this very independence of conscience should convince Gletkin of his innocence with regard to the charge against him. Rubashov also brings up the importance that he places in history. Like Kieffer, he still cares about the trajectory of the Party over time, so much so that he still finds it difficult to believe that the new leadership is willing to simply wipe out this history.

Gletkin again cites from Rubashov's diary, saying that repetition and simplification is necessary for the masses. Gletkin tells him that his trial testimony will be his last service to the Party. For the first time in history, a revolution will keep, not just conquer power. They thought that the rest of the world would follow them, Gletkin says, but a wave of reaction ensued: they've had to liquidate the adventurers who wanted to risk everything to promote the revolution abroad, like Rubashov. For now, the leader recognizes that the Party's only duty is to preserve itself. They've had to betray friends and compromise with enemies to do so: only aesthetes and moralists fail to understand this.

Rubashov, unlike Gletkin, is able to hold contradictions and tensions within his mind without driving towards crushing them under the foot of power: Rubashov has indeed written some things with which Gletkin would agree, but he's also strayed far from the official Party line. Gletkin's next words recall in some ways Ivanov's statements about this revolution's staying power, and all the sacrifices that must be made in order to ensure that it does survive.

Gletkin continues that Rubashov's faction is destroyed, and now the Party can continue united. Rubashov's task is to avoid awakening sympathy for the opposition, and to make himself seem contemptible with the Party, rather than to try to explain his complicated motives. Rubashov says he understands. Gletkin reads from Rubashov's diary that if he is right, he has nothing to repent of, and if he is wrong, he'd pay: he's wrong and must pay, Gletkin says. The Party only promises that one day, long after the victory, the secret archives will be published, and sympathy will be granted to the old guard.

Now Gletkin begins to coach Rubashov on how he should act during his trial, what precisely his role should be in serving the Party even up to his execution. Ironically, Gletkin claims to know that Rubashov was "wrong and must pay," when the very conclusion of Rubashov's notes were that only the arc of history, beyond any one person's life, will be able to reveal that.

Rubashov signs the statement, and looks up to the **portrait** of No. 1, remembering the look of knowing irony he'd given him the last time they'd met. Gletkin says Rubashov won't be bothered until the trial, and asks if there's anything else he wants: just sleep, Rubashov answers. When Rubashov leaves, the stenographer congratulates Gletkin. Gletkin says that the lamp, plus lack of sleep and exhaustion, is all that was necessary.

Rubashov finally capitulates. Fittingly, this happens under the watching eyes of No. 1, whose portrait's pervasive presence underlines the leader's grip on total power. It does seem that the new tactics have succeeded, though Gletkin and the stenographer pay no attention to Rubashov's own intellectual basis for his decision.

THE GRAMMATICAL FICTION: 1

The porter Wassilij's daughter reads to her father about Rubashov's trial and his public confession. She reads that he's guilty as a counter-revolutionary and member of the opposition, who confessed of his own free will. Wassilij doesn't move: over his head is the **portrait** of No. 1 next to a rusty nail where, until recently, the photo of Rubashov had hung. Wassilij used to hide a **Bible** under the mattress where he now lies, but after Rubashov's arrest his daughter had found it, and for "educational reasons" had thrown it away.

Back outside the prison, Wassilij's daughter is another example of a member of the masses who has been totally convinced by the official Party line and has lost all ability to think for herself. Wassilij, meanwhile, continues to cling to unpopular and dangerous opinions, from his loyalty to Rubashov to his continued faith in the Bible and in Christianity.

The daughter reads that Rubashov had described how his story proves that the slightest bend from the Party line inevitably leads to counter-revolutionary crime. He described the "sad progress of a traitor" as a lesson to others. She reads that, at this point, the Public Prosecutor asked about Citizen Arlova, Rubashov's former secretary, and it was revealed that Rubashov had accused her to save himself. In response to the Prosecutor's remark that he lacked any moral sense, Rubashov responded sarcastically, leading to outrage from the audience.

Rubashov evidently learned his lines well, as, following his capitulation, he finally agreed to say whatever was necessary in order that people be shocked into submission. He cannot, though, quite keep himself from drawing attention to the irony of the Prosecutor's outrage at Rubashov's lack of moral sense, when the entire interrogation belittled this very notion of individual morality.

Recalling Rubashov's former life, being carried through the streets triumphantly, Wassilij mumbles a **Bible** verse about Jesus being mocked and given a crown of thorns. He hadn't protested when his daughter had taken Rubashov's portrait from the wall: he's too old to stand prison. Vera Wassiljovna, his daughter, says that Rubashov must be a traitor: if it weren't true, he wouldn't say it—at her factory they've all signed a resolution against him. Wassilij sighs that there's much she doesn't know about it.

Wassilij compares Rubashov's trial to the final days of the life of Jesus Christ, called the Passion, in which he was scorned and mocked less than a week after having ridden into Jerusalem triumphantly. Vera's sincere conviction, meanwhile, underlines the success of the Party leadership in forcing their own narrative and version of the truth.

Wassilij is reminded that his daughter wants the porter's lodge for herself: she wants to marry a junior mechanic from her factory, but they have as yet no home. Vera says the resolution demands that traitors be executed mercilessly, and that anyone who shows pity to them be renounced. They're now collecting signatures: she takes a sheet of paper out of her blouse and puts it on the table. Glancing at it from his bed, Wassilij mumbles another **Bible** verse about Peter's denial that he knows Jesus.

Vera has been taught that one need not feel guilty for sacrificing individuals to a collective cause: the contradiction in this ideology is that "collective cause" so often comes to mean benefits for a particular person claiming to espouse that cause. Wassilij continues to think of Rubashov as a Christ figure, sacrificed for others' sins.

Wassilij asks if those who were in the Civil War must also sign, and Vera, looking at him again peculiarly, says that no one has to. She adds that the cell secretary has asked how long he and Rubashov were friends. Wassilij asks her to give him the damn paper, and he writes his name on it. She continues reading from the newspaper, and remarks that Rubashov makes her sick. Wassilij angrily tells her that the Party has taught them all to be cunning, and whoever becomes too cunning loses decency.

Vera seems to realize that her father is not as enthusiastic as she is about participating in Party activity. Wassilij is aware that she may well be storing up evidence with which to betray him later, but he can't manage either to stand up for Rubashov explicitly or to feign conviction and enthusiasm for Rubashov's trial.

As Vera concludes by reading the Prosecutor's speech, Wassilij turns to the wall and dozes, waking up as she reads about Kieffer's stammering attempt to throw guilt onto Rubashov entirely. Then she reads Rubashov's final speech, which says that he bows to the masses and to his country, and that the time of conspiracy is over. He's overcome the temptation to die in silence: he's paid, and has settled his account with history. She reads the sentence: death by shooting. Wassilij murmurs, "Thy will be done. Amen," and turns to the wall.

Like Rubashov, Wassilij uses sleep as a refuge from the pervasive totalitarian ideology. Rubashov's final speech does seem to reflect many of the intellectual questions that he's worked through throughout his time in prison, but now used in service of an official message.

THE GRAMMATICAL FICTION: 2

Rubashov paces his cell, knowing that before midnight he'll be dead. During the trial, he'd been seized by one final moment of self-pity. He had been tempted to shout at his accusers like Danton before the Revolutionary Tribunal, a speech he'd learned by heart as a boy. But he'd recognized that it was too late, too late for them all: no one could unveil the truth to the world like Danton. Some like Hare-lip were silenced by fear, others by cowardice, others by the hope to save their families, or even to do a final service to the Party by being cast as scapegoats.

The story returns to Rubashov's point of view and revisits the trial from his perspective. Again, Rubashov sees himself within a long line of revolutionaries, including Danton, one of the initial leaders of the French revolution who ultimately was executed by other revolutionaries. Silence, Rubashov realizes now, has conquered grand historical gestures.

Rubashov thinks that they were all guilty, though not of the deeds they were accused of. They had to act in a certain way, and now, for him, the performance is over. Now, his last few hours on earth belong to the silent partner, the "grammatical fiction," which starts where logical thought ends. He taps 2—4 on the wall, the word "I," for the first time. There's no answer.

The collapse of boundaries between truth and fiction is such that it's no longer possible to separate out either truth from falsehood or guilt from innocence. The grammatical fiction hasn't prevented Rubashov from execution, but he's come to embrace it in his final hours.

Rubashov has been thinking over certain puzzles, the meaning of suffering, and the difference between meaningful and meaningless suffering. Revolution could only try to remove senseless suffering by radically increasing meaningful suffering. Was this justified? It was justified in abstraction, he thinks, but in the concrete it no longer applies. Neither the Party nor the silent partner has an answer for him.

Now relieved of the constant physical discomfort imposed on him by Gletkin, Rubashov can return to the intellectual theories he's been debating with himself: it's more clear to him than ever that there's no way out of the contradiction between individual sovereignty and collective action.

At times Rubashov remembers a tune, or the folded hands of the *Pietà*, or certain childhood memories, and he reaches what the religious call "ecstasy" or "contemplation," or what modern psychologists call the "oceanic sense." His personality does seem to dissolve into the infinite sea, but the whole sea also seems contained in one grain of salt. No longer is Rubashov ashamed at this kind of metaphysical musing. He looks out the window, and the patch of blue sky reminds him of one he saw as a boy lying in the grass at his father's park.

Rubashov's childhood, the part of the painting, and other memories that are multi-sensory in nature bolster his sense that there is something to an individual's experience that cannot be simply absorbed into or appropriated by the masses. Rubashov attempts to make sense of this idea through a mystical metaphor, once again finding in religion an alternative set of theories to those of the Party.

Rubashov recalls astrophysics research arguing that the world's volume is finite, even if space has no boundaries. He remembers that he read about this during his first arrest in Germany, when an illegal Party organ had been smuggled into his cell, sandwiched between a story about a mill strike, and an article about the discovery that the universe was finite, though the page was torn off halfway through.

Even this abstract philosophical notion is, for Rubashov, anchored in a concrete, individual memory, which includes frustrated expectations from the torn-off page—another example of the inability of the tension between abstraction and reality to be resolved.

Rubashov recognizes that the Party considers the infinite suspect, and even fails to recognize its existence. The Party denies individual free will even while requiring individual self-sacrifice. For 40 years Rubashov has fought against economic fatality, the main sickness of humanity, but wherever he's applied the surgeon's knife, a new wound has appeared, and the equation continues to fail. He's buried the old, illogical morality, fought against the "oceanic sense," but has been led straight into the absurd.

Rubashov moves through the internal contradictions of Party ideology, which continues to rely on individual sacrifices while insisting that they don't exist. He thought he was being perfectly logical by obeying the dictates of this ideology, but he now realizes that even impeccable logical reasoning, if based on contradictory bases, can lead to absurdity.

Rubashov thinks that for 40 years he's been led astray by pure reason. Perhaps men should not be ripped away from older traditions, he thinks. No. 1 had ruined the ideal of the Social state like medieval Popes had ruined the ideal of a **Christian** empire. It was the story of Richard and the *Pietà* that had prompted him to begin to realize this, but he'd never admitted fully that there was an error in the whole mathematical system of thought. When he asks himself why he's dying he has no answer: it's a mistake in the system, he thinks.

Part of the idea behind the revolution was to break entirely with old systems and traditions, including the state but also religious institutions, and start anew. Rubashov has always held history in high esteem, but now he sees another flaw in Party ideology in that it played too casually with history by wanting to dismiss it. His death is meant to be "meaningful," but the system's own logical flaws make it senseless.

Rubashov thinks that perhaps later a new movement will arise with a sense both of economic fatality and the "oceanic sense." Perhaps these people will teach that a man is not just the quotient of one million divided by one million, and that only pure means can justify ends. Rubashov stops pacing, and hears muffled drumming from down the corridor.

Before he dies, Rubashov doesn't fall into full-throated apathy or despair: instead he posits a future society that could potentially find a way to resolve the contradictions he's discovered, or find a way around them.

THE GRAMMATICAL FICTION: 3

A tapping from No. 402, who's been silent since Rubashov said he was capitulating, tells him that they're fetching Hare-lip, who sends Rubashov his greetings. Peering through the spy-hole, Rubashov sees Hare-lip standing there, trembling, then accompanied by officers down the corridor. 402 taps that he behaved well. Rubashov taps that he wishes it were all over. 402 asks what he'd do if he could live: Rubashov says he'd study astronomy. 402 says he has 18 years more, over 6,000 days without a woman. Rubashov says he can read or study, but 402 says he doesn't have the head for it. As the officers enter the cell, 402 taps hurriedly that he envies him.

Hare-lip betrayed Rubashov, apparently with the notion that he'd save himself, but Rubashov has always been aware that such thoughts are far too optimistic for the policy of the Party. Rubashov's final conversation with 402 reveals that in his last moments, he finds himself thinking of something broader than the individual, but not a formless, faceless collective—instead the study of something greater than either.

Rubashov walks with the officers down the cellar stairs in a spiral, into the darkness. He thinks that it's strange how his **toothache** had stopped in the moment of the trial before he said that he bowed before the country and the masses. He wonders where the Promised Land is for these masses, if any such land exists. Moses hadn't been allowed to enter this, but he'd been allowed to see it: he, Rubashov, cannot.

The toothache tends to plague Rubashov when he thinks of the "grammatical fiction" and the knotty problems and contradictions that ensue from it—as he performed his confession and pledged a loyalty he didn't believe, those difficult problems receded, at least for a moment.

A dull blow strikes the back of Rubashov's head, and he thinks how theatrical it is, as he falls. Memories pass through him: he **dreams** they're coming to arrest him, and tries to get into his dressing gown. A figure bends over him and he smells the leather of the revolver belt. He wonders what insignia the man wears, and in whose name he lifts the pistol. Another blow hits him on his ear: all is quiet, except for the sounds of the sea and a wave coming from afar.

Just before he dies, Rubashov recognizes how much of his interrogation, trial, and execution has been a performance meant to enact and confirm a totalitarian view of reality and its own notion of truth. Although Rubashov had felt hope before his death, the novel ends in chilling silence.


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