

Do you imagine the camps as places where life and death depended on the whim of brutal guards? Dolgun shows that this was partially true, but he also demonstrates that the camps, too, went by the book—which allowed not only merciless barbarity but also, in the interstices of the regulations, respite and relief. For example, one rule was that persons with a fever of more than 38 degrees centigrade were to be hospitalized and, miraculously, they sometimes were—out of fear that “someday a bureaucrat who wants to find fault with another bureaucrat may investigate . . .” (p. 184).

After Stalin’s death, life in the camps eased to the point that everyone—guards as well as prisoners—practiced *tufta*. And the same pattern awaited Dolgun after liberation from the camps; for example, in Moscow he prepared for political education meetings by plagiarizing pages of Lenin or Brezhnev with only minor word changes—thereby satisfying instructors, who wanted only a prescribed amount of handwritten pages in order to satisfy regulations.

Saul Maloff (*New York Times Book Review*, May 25, 1975) concluded that “Dolgun has little to add to the historical record or to prison lore.” Apart from being downright inhospitable, this judgment is wrong. Dolgun is no Solzhenitsyn, nor even a Evgeniia Ginsburg. But we owe him both our admiration, and our appreciation for reminding us that Stalinism has been not only savage, but absurd.

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THE EDUCATION OF LEV NAVROZOV: A LIFE IN THE CLOSED WORLD ONCE CALLED RUSSIA. By *Lev Navrozov*. New York: Harper’s Magazine Press, Harper & Row, 1975. x, 628 pp. \$12.95.

Lev Navrozov was born in the Soviet Union in 1928 and followed a career as a translator of literature. He emigrated from Russia to the West, smuggling out, on microfilm, a cycle of works that he had been writing secretly for over twenty years.

This book purports to re-create the life of an individual in Soviet society. Unfortunately it does nothing of the sort. Even for experts on the Soviet Union it is difficult to follow the text, which is formless and jumps arbitrarily from one topic to another and from one period of Soviet history to another. The style does not help. Written like a chatty serial in a clever, superficial style, the book is full of allusions but lacks any depth. There may be a few interesting details concerning the personal life of Navrozov embedded in the marsh, but they appear as will-o’-the-wisps.

The book is dressed up with scholarly looking source notes and a full index, but even these cannot clarify the text—for example, the index ranges from *Capone, Alphonse* (“*Scarface Al*”) to *Shakespeare, William*. There is certainly a crying need for personal accounts of social and political life in the Soviet Union since the 1930s, and a book like Evgeniia Ginzburg’s *Into The Whirlwind* is invaluable in this way. Sadly, the work under review bears no comparison to Ginzburg’s account.

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