

My father once alluded to his traumatic experience in a punishment cell when he told us the roof leaked and there was no way to avoid the cold water that dripped on his head. For how many days? He didn't say. Well, apparently, the roof did not leak. Solzhenitsyn explained that there was a fixture in the roof designed to drip cold water on the prisoner's scalp, a "classic" form of torture.³⁶

The maximum "sentence" given out by a barbaric warder or for a most serious infraction was ten days in an isolation cell. As Ivan Denisovich says:

Ten days! If you had ten days in the cells here and sat them out to the end, it meant you'd be a wreck for the rest of your life. You got TB and you'd never be out of hospitals [as] long as you lived. And the fellows who did fifteen days were dead and buried.³⁷

Suren Oganessian described similar conditions in the dark and humid special cells of Medekh Prison in Tbilisi: "Water dripped continually from the ceiling of these cells. The prisoner unfortunate enough to 'make' these cell complexes was totally without warm food and toilet facilities of any kind...."³⁸

Interestingly, my attention was drawn to this former Siberian exile by an article written by his daughter,

36 Ibid., p. 114. This is number twenty-five in Solzhenitsyn's enumeration and description of thirty-one methods of torture.

37 Solzhenitsyn, *Ivan Denisovich*, p. 194.

38 Suren Oganessian, *Under Stalin's Sun: Reflections 1920-1945*, tr. James Tashjian (Los Angeles, California: N.p., 1981), p. 23.