

Interrogation and the Statue Method

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1. Frelimo members have had much experience in Mozambique of police interrogation where solitary confinement and the so-called "statue" methods have been used. In this memorandum I shall endeavour to set out what general conclusions can be drawn from this experience.

2. First Reactions: The inexperienced and untrained prisoner who for the first time finds himself put into solitary confinement and expects to have to undergo brutal interrogation accompanied by many long hours of standing feels frightened and overawed. It seems to him that as far as he is concerned the struggle for freedom is over; there is nothing more that he can do; all the power now rests with the police and they will be able to do whatever they like with him. This for him is usually the worst period, or one of the worst.

He must immediately start to steel himself. He must realise that this first reaction is incorrect: The struggle for him is not over; it continues in prison. While his position of weakness may seem hopeless, this is not in fact so - he has certain assets. While the power of the police may seem unlimited, this also is not so - the interrogators too have their limitations.

The interrogator will naturally try to hide these facts. His task is to try to make the prisoner believe that no human power can withstand this interrogation and that police powers and their capacity for brutality are limitless.

But the situation remains a "two-way" situation, a contest, and it must be made by the prisoner to remain so. It must not be allowed to become a "one-way" situation in which all the initiative is with the interrogator. The aim of the prisoner must be to make the interrogator think that it is hopeless to try to extract information from him and compel him to break off the contact between the two of them

3. The Prisoner's Defences and Counter-attack:

(a) The prisoner must examine, try to find out and understand what his own weaknesses may be. He must constantly watch himself. On the one hand he must avoid being 'chatty' and thereby establishing a 'friendly' relationship between himself and the Interrogator. One of the effects of solitary confinement is to make the prisoner desire contact with other human beings, even the interrogator. This he must avoid at all costs. He must take his confinement seriously by organising his time and thoughts so that he does not develop this desire. He must do all he can to counteract weaknesses he personally may develop because of his solitary confinement. This is an individual matter and each man must study his own weaknesses. He must be on the look-out constantly.

(b) On the other hand, he must not become so angry and hostile that he becomes emotionally involved with his interrogator - that he embarks on long political discussions with the interrogator. Many facts and much information can be given away in such discussions. In fact one of the objects of the interrogation is to provoke the prisoner into this sort of discussion.

(c) The correct attitude therefore is one of cold, silent ~~ag~~ anger and hostility. The keynote is one of non-cooperation.

(d) The prisoner must not allow himself to be taken off his guard by 'suprise', e.g. at

*Connection if any between
Frelimo and Nat. Lib.*

the form which torture may take or at the knowledge which the interrogator may show that he has. The prisoner must expect every kind of torture and must expect that the interrogator has picked up all sorts of information that he, the prisoner, thought was absolutely secret. It makes no difference that the Interrogator knows more than you thought he did. You still must not confirm it or in any way add to it, even unwittingly

(e) The prisoner must all times remember that he is not in fact faced with 'absolute' powers. The interrogator is or may be subject to 'restrictions' either because his superiors have laid down certain limitations beyond which he may not go or because the particular interrogator has certain personal weaknesses which prevent him from going to the limit or the pretended limit. The prisoner should therefore be constantly testing the interrogator to find out how far he is prepared to go. If personal weaknesses can be found, the prisoner must play on these. As far as possible the interrogator must be made to understand the dirty game he is playing.

(f) There are other limitations to the 'absolute' power of the interrogator. The interrogator himself can get bored or think that some other line of investigation may prove more profitable. After all his reward is his promotion or the culmination of his investigation in a prosecution. It may well be that if the ~~prison~~ prisoner holds out for another hour or two, the interrogator will conclude that his time can be spent better elsewhere.

(g) It is important for the prisoner to realise that the human being is capable of adapting himself to incredible hardship. The poverty-stricken peoples of Africa and Asia demonstrate this through-out the years. He must therefore realise that he can 'habituate' himself to isolation, to interrogation and even to different forms of torture.

(h) DONT BE PASSIVE: The prisoner must above all not be passive. He must carry on the struggle actively at all times. He must not co-operate in any way, not in small ways e.g. by accepting tea and cake or a cigarette, nor in important matters, e.g. by standing when he is told to stand. He should rather provoke assault than agree to stand and thus become his own torturer. Where a 'two-way situation, a contest' is kept alive, non-cooperation exasperates the interrogator. He is also subject to strains and he also reacts. The prisoner must be on the lookout for signs of strain, e.g. shouting, loss of temper and assaults. An assault may very well be the prelude to the prisoner's victory.

4. Blanket Instructions:

I do not believe in a blanket instruction that prisoners should not answer any questions at all. I believe this to be unrealistic and I think that the U.S.A. army authorities have come to the same conclusion.

Here one must distinguish between (a) Cases where actual torture is used and when it is not used; (b) Cases where the prisoner is deeply involved and where he is merely peripherally involved.

As to (a): I assume that the prisoner is constantly testing his interrogator. If the interrogator is prepared to go to the limit in torture, there are very few human beings who can stand up to this. In these circumstances the prisoner is almost bound to give some information away. When this happens, and if the prisoner has been given a 'blanket' instruction, then he feels ashamed; he has broken a fundamental rule of his code, there is nothing more to hold on to, and he is thus more likely to give away everything he knows. If, however, he regards the interrogation as a perpetual contest,

and finds that the interrogator is prepared to go to the limit, then he will use all possible means to play for time: Go ~~him~~ to the lavatory, pretend to be ill or unconscious, agree to make a statement, and take hours doing so (e.g. because he is too weak to write and needs a rest) and give away as little as he possibly can. A 'blanket' instruction may lead to a total loss of morale.

As to (b), the man who is only peripherally involved and who can get away with a 'story', e.g., by lying or by putting the blame on those who are already out of danger, should be allowed to do so and should not be prevented from doing this by a 'blanket' instruction.

5. Training: One of the main ~~and~~ difficulties, of course, lies in getting across to any considerable body of men these somewhat complicated instructions and ideas. That is why training and discipline for those who are out of the country ~~and~~ and are waiting to come back, are of crucial importance.

Such men must in the first place, live under conditions where the strictest discipline is maintained at all times. This is necessary for two reasons: Without such discipline morale cannot be maintained and morale is important for the purposes of preparing for possible interrogation as well as for other purposes. Secondly, all persons are not suitable subjects for submission to possible interrogation. One method of weeding out the unsuitable people is by testing them by discipline. Those who cannot willingly apply discipline to themselves, should certainly not be chosen as candidates for possible interrogation.

But in addition to this there must be constant training and education in the ~~x~~ principles set out above. Classes and discussion must be held. Men must be taught to prepare themselves mentally and physically for the worst forms of interrogation. They should even, as the Americans sometimes do, submit each other to actual assault and torture. Before they return they must fully understand the nature of the contest which they will have to carry on with their interrogators should they be pulled in and how it should be carried on possibly to a final conclusion - suicide, but certainly to such aggressive methods of counter-attack as hunger-strikes, passive resistance, etc.

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