Screenplay for the film "1922 - Felix Dzerzhinsky. Historical Chronicles with Nikolai Svanidze" written by Marina Zhukova, translated by AI, and preceded by a summary also written by AI

Screenplay Summary:

The text portrays the year 1922 as a turning point in which the Soviet regime, amid catastrophic famine, launches a massive offensive against the Orthodox Church and the intelligentsia, driven by Lenin, the Cheka/GPU, and Felix Dzerzhinsky.

After several years of brutal violence against the clergy (torture, executions, desecration of churches), the 1921–1922 famine devastates tens of millions of people in the Volga region, southern Russia and Ukraine. Eyewitness accounts describe people eating the dead, then moving to active cannibalism. Lenin sees this as a "historic opportunity": in a secret letter of 19 March 1922 he demands the confiscation of church valuables with "frenzied and merciless energy," arguing that only the extreme misery of the peasant masses makes such an operation possible. He adds that the more "reactionary clergy" they manage to shoot, the better.

Under the slogan of "aid to the starving," the state systematically seizes gold, silver, jewels and all museum-quality items from churches and monasteries. In Moscow, special commissions backed by the army, the GPU and secret agents plunder hundreds of churches, monitor public mood and suppress any protest. Bell towers are placed under special guard to prevent alarm bells from ringing. Patriarch Tikhon, who had denounced the Bolshevik regime and organized large collections for the starving, is arrested, interrogated at Lubyanka, placed under house arrest and then imprisoned. He is eventually released in 1923 after formally "repenting," by which time the regime has already broken most church resistance and has put in place a strategy of internal schism, directed by Dzerzhinsky and his associate Tuchkov.

Felix Dzerzhinsky himself, from an old Polish noble family and depicted as a fanatic with a disturbing charisma, heads first the Cheka and then the GPU. The text juxtaposes the country's misery with the discreet affluence of his medical diet and multiple dachas, while recalling his public image as an "ascetic." He moves between Lubyanka, several Moscow apartments and three country houses where he hunts. Married and admired by some Western artists and intellectuals (such as sculptor Clare Sheridan), he is also the central organizer of state terror—sleeping practically in his office, personally interrogating prisoners and overseeing executions.

Alongside the assault on the Church, the regime turns on the intelligentsia. In 1922, around 217 prominent philosophers, scholars and professionals are expelled abroad on the so-called "philosophers' ships." Many others are internally exiled or arrested. "Bureaus for assisting the GPU" are set up in every institution to identify "unreliable" individuals. Monasteries are turned into concentration camps or children's colonies, with camp enterprises exempt from taxation. Dzerzhinsky is also put in charge of "improving children's lives" in a country where millions of minors wander as homeless waifs; the state seeks to control this potentially explosive mass, especially because a part of it gravitates toward a criminal world strengthened by former White officers.

Finally, in the context of the New Economic Policy (NEP), Dzerzhinsky becomes head of the Supreme Council of the National Economy (VSNKh). Here lies a major paradox: the chief of the political police begins to defend certain forms of private enterprise, advocate for rural prosperity, and fiercely attack bureaucratic mismanagement. His positions, close in some respects to what will later be branded the Party's "Right deviation," soon become capital offenses. On 20 June 1926, after a blistering speech against bureaucratism at a Central Committee plenum, he dies of a heart attack. At his funeral he is praised as both a "great terrorist" and a "great Chekist," while one episode from his childhood remains carefully hidden: as a boy, he accidentally shot and killed his younger sister with a gun.

Screenplay:

1922 – Felix Dzerzhinsky

The year 1922 AD is the year of the official and triumphant offensive of Soviet power against the Church. The decree of the Council of People's Commissars and the decisions on the confiscation of church valuables legalized in the mass consciousness what had already been done to the Church and the clergy during the first four years of Bolshevik rule.

In a brief gap without the Bolsheviks, in 1919, the Church of Ekaterinodar distributed an Appeal to the Christian Churches of the whole world. "Trampling everything that is dear to the people in the sphere of faith," the appeal said, "the Bolsheviks strive to ignite in them hatred and predatory instincts. The complete unbridling of passions and lusts is the main bait for the dark masses. Upon this, and upon terror, the Bolsheviks build their power."

It must be said that the Bolsheviks really did manage to mock everything that was dear to the people in the sphere of faith, and the temptation of total permissiveness quickly mixed with fear in the old Orthodox country.

Archbishop Andronik of Perm had his eyes gouged out, his cheeks cut off, his nose and ears sliced off, and, bleeding out, he was led around the town while people in the streets laughed. Then he was drowned. In the Kherson province a priest was crucified on a cross.

The priest of the village of Solomenskoye in the Stavropol province, Grigory Dmitriyevsky, 27 years old, asked to be allowed to pray before his death. He prayed aloud under the mocking jeers of Red Army soldiers. Then the soldiers grew tired of it; with their sabres they first cut off his ears, and then his head.

In the spring of 1918 in Tula, the Bolsheviks mowed down a religious procession with machine-gun fire. Priests were usually shot together with their families. Before that they would come with a search warrant. They demanded to be treated, and they brought the alcohol with them. Searches were carried out by Red Army units with the participation of the local population.

The desecration of churches has an absolutely corrupting effect on the broad masses of the population. Liturgical vestments are turned into trousers, skirts and dresses, or saddle blankets for horses. Lamps are smashed, oil is poured out, candles are trampled underfoot. In the lower tier of the iconostasis the icons are usually knocked out—obviously with feet. A special "chic" is to haul away the plunder on carts through the Holy Gates. Strictly speaking, this is inconvenient, since steps lead up to the gates. But madness does not tolerate practicality.

As a result of the Civil War and of the policy of War Communism, terrible famine began in the country. 1922 is the peak of the first Soviet famine. From the memoirs of a peasant from Ryazan, Morgachev: “Starving women with children walked from the Volga region toward Moscow. One woman told the story of her sister. She lived in a village near Samara, her husband died of hunger, she herself lay unconscious and constantly asked for food. The neighbors dragged the husband’s body into the cellar, began chopping meat off the corpse, boiling it and feeding it to his wife. She began to recover, to walk, and stumbled upon the remains of her husband, realized what she had been fed, and went mad.”

From the diary of the writer Yevgeny Zamyatin: “In one volost they ate flatbreads made of horse manure. In another village they steamed and ate a rubber galosh forgotten there by an American. A horse that had just fallen, still warm, they ate raw. Last year’s leaves were a delicacy.” In 1922 it was noted that earlier the starving had eaten their relatives who had died of hunger. Recently it had been observed that the stronger members of a family were killing and eating the weaker ones.

By 1922 the population starving included the provinces of Simbirsk, Saratov, Samara, Ufa, Nizhny Novgorod, Penza, Tsaritsyn, Astrakhan, Ural, Orenburg, Voronezh, Ryazan, Tambov, Stavropol, and the Tatar, Bashkir, Chuvash, Terek and Mountain Republics. The south of Ukraine was starving—the Ekaterinoslav, Poltava and Chernigov provinces.

This report is from a special Bolshevik front. Educational work by means of hunger is remembered for a long time, for several generations. And that means it is a great victory. From now on, a piece of bread will be perceived with gratitude, as a permission to live, granted from the hands of the state.

In 1922, the general population of the famine-stricken regions was about 32 million. Of them, more than 20 million were starving. That is, every seventh citizen of Soviet Russia in 1922 was in a state of hunger close to cannibalism.

It is at this moment, on March 19, 1922, that Lenin sends a secret letter to the members of the Politburo: “Precisely now and only now, when in the starving areas people are eating human flesh and the roads are littered with hundreds, if not thousands, of corpses, we can and therefore must carry through the confiscation of church valuables with the most frenzied and merciless energy, thereby securing for ourselves a fund of several hundred million gold rubles. Without this fund, no kind of state work is thinkable. And it can be done successfully only now, because no other moment than one of desperate famine will give us such a state of mind among the broad peasant masses.”

On the eve of the XI Party Congress, Lenin clarifies: “The more representatives of the reactionary clergy we succeed in shooting over this, the better.”

At this time Lenin is already seriously ill. Trotsky writes that his condition had worsened by the end of 1921. In December, Lenin informs the members of the Politburo with a note: “The insomnia has gotten devilishly worse. I’m afraid I will not be able to report either at the Party conference or at the Congress of Soviets.”

At the beginning of 1922, preparations are underway for the International Conference in Genoa. Lenin writes to the members of the Politburo: “I have just received two letters from Chicherin. He proposes, in exchange for decent compensation, that we agree to the representation of parasitic elements in the Soviets. To do this to please the Americans. This proposal by Chicherin shows that

he must immediately be sent to a sanatorium.” Lenin himself spends most of his time at the former Morozov estate—Gorki.

In 1922 the All-Russian Extraordinary Commission, the Cheka (VChK), is renamed the Main Political Administration, the GPU, under the NKVD. The chairman of the GPU, Felix Edmundovich Dzerzhinsky, had previously been, since December 1917, chairman of the Cheka.

Doctors recommend that Dzerzhinsky eat white meat—chicken, turkey, hazel grouse, veal, fish.

They categorically advise Dzerzhinsky to avoid red meat. Fruit, fruit and greens, and flour dishes.

The menu of the chairman of the GPU under the NKVD of the RSFSR, that is, of Russia, completely starving:
Monday: game consommé, fresh salmon, cauliflower “Polish-style” (Polish-style is appropriate: Dzerzhinsky is a Pole, born on the Dzerzhinovo estate in Oshmyany district, Vilna province).
Tuesday: mushroom solianka, veal cutlets, spinach with egg.
Wednesday: asparagus purée soup, boiled beef (with two “l”s in Russian), Brussels sprouts.
Thursday: boyar soup, steamed sterlet, greens, peas.
Friday: cauliflower purée, sturgeon “AM”, beans à la maître d’hôtel.
Saturday: sterlet fish soup, turkey with pickled apples, cherries and plums. Mushrooms in sour cream.
Sunday: fresh champignon soup, chicken Marengo, asparagus.

The menu for the celebration of the 300th anniversary of the House of Romanov looks noticeably poorer than Dzerzhinsky’s menu.

From recollections: “Dzerzhinsky was an ascetic. Even in the Cheka he yelled at employees who tried to feed him better than the others.”

From recollections: “He had soft, dark golden hair and amazing eyes—gray-green, attentive and cheerful. No one ever noticed any expression of indifference in that gaze.”

Dzerzhinsky’s wife, Sofia Sigismundovna, writes: “He was very handsome. Eleven years of prisons, exile and hard labor had spared him. He remained handsome.”

Sofia Sigismundovna recalls how once, in the summer of 1918, late in the evening, she heard, under her window in Zurich, Switzerland, a melody from Gounod’s Faust. It was an old pre-arranged conspiratorial signal by which Dzerzhinsky would announce himself. In the summer of 1918 he had come to Zurich for a rest, incognito, under the name Felix Damansky.

On July 6, 1918, in Moscow, the German ambassador Mirbach was assassinated. The murderers, Cheka employees Blumkin and Andreyev, presented at the German embassy a document bearing number 1428 and the signature of Dzerzhinsky.

On July 8, Pravda published a statement by Dzerzhinsky: “In view of the fact that I am undoubtedly one of the main witnesses in the Mirbach case, I do not consider it possible for me to remain in the Cheka. I ask the Council of People’s Commissars to relieve me of my post as chairman of the Cheka.”

The Party Central Committee removes him from his post for a short time. On August 22 he again takes his seat. Until August 22, Dzerzhinsky spent his time with his wife in Switzerland. In Zurich, Dzerzhinsky was without his usual beard.

The cousin of the future British prime minister Winston Churchill, the sculptor Clare Sheridan, wrote: “Never have I had to model a more beautiful head than the head of Dzerzhinsky. And his hands! I shall never again believe a single word of what they write at home about Mr. Dzerzhinsky.” The trips to Soviet Russia that Lady Sheridan made are now called extreme tourism. She remembered the posing sessions: “Today Dzerzhinsky came. His eyes looked as if washed by the tears of eternal sorrow.”

One of the most celebrated Chekists, Martin Latsis, writes: “In the Cheka, Felix Edmundovich was eager to act personally everywhere. He personally interrogated those arrested. He personally rummaged through incriminating materials. He personally arranged confrontations between the arrested. And he even slept right there, at Lubyanka, in his office behind a screen, where a bed had been set up for him.”

Member of the OGPU collegium Yakov Peters picks up the theme: “He worked around the clock. He personally interrogated those arrested. Exhausted to the last degree. In an old, worn-out tunic, in big hunting boots.”

Incidentally, about the hunting boots. It is not entirely true that Dzerzhinsky worked without knowing rest. He did know rest. And regular rest at that. He liked resting at his dacha. He had three dachas. One in Sokolniki. A dacha settlement of the Cheka was formed there from expropriated houses. The second dacha was in Kuntsevo, where most members of the Central Committee had dachas. But Dzerzhinsky most loved his third dacha, in the settlement of Lyubinovo in the Naro-Fominsk district. He spent every Sunday at the dacha. His wife and son write about this. At the dacha, Dzerzhinsky went hunting. And it was precisely in those hunting boots, with which he strode through the forests near Moscow, that he came to Lubyanka. So as far as the boots go, we can quite trust the recollections of GPU collegium member Peters.

In addition, on vacation, Dzerzhinsky went south—to Odessa, Sukhumi, Kislovodsk, Crimea. He also visited the old pre-revolutionary resort of Sestroretsk on the Gulf of Finland. Practically two steps away from Sestroretsk lived Ilya Repin at that time. But Repin’s art was separated from Dzerzhinsky’s rest by the Finnish border.

Dzerzhinsky came from an old noble Polish family. Outwardly, especially in his youth, he was the very embodiment of an aristocrat. As a child, in the family, he was called “little Raphael.”

The Russian philosopher Nikolai Berdyaev, before being expelled from Russia in 1922, appeared for interrogation before Dzerzhinsky and recalled: “I think he was not a bad man, and by nature he was not a cruel man. He was a fanatic. He gave the impression of a possessed person. There was something eerie about him. In the past he had wanted to become a Catholic monk, and he transferred his fanatical faith to communism.”

In his youth he forced all the household to pray and flew into extreme irritation when they did not pray as fervently as he did. His confessor was horrified by this frenzied religiosity and began trying to dissuade him from becoming a priest.

In 1922, Dzerzhinsky was entrusted not only with ensuring the confiscation of church valuables, but also with the extremely delicate work of splitting and destroying the Orthodox Church from within. As far as the confiscation of church property was concerned, Dzerzhinsky had strong competitors. On Lenin’s proposal, Trotsky was appointed special plenipotentiary of the Council of People’s Commissars for the accounting and concentration of valuables. At the same time, Lenin, who

especially valued and protected Trotsky, ordered that Trotsky's name not be mentioned in connection with this. Formally, the anti-church campaign was headed by the chairman of the Committee for Aid to the Starving—the Pomgol—Kalinine.

"Officially, only Comrade Kalinine must appear with any measures whatsoever. Comrade Trotsky must never, under any circumstances, appear before the public either in print or otherwise." Lenin is not humiliating Trotsky, but covering for him.

At the very beginning of 1922 a decree is issued on the seizure from churches and monasteries of all property of museum value without exception. After this, the Church is obliged to hand over all objects made of gold, silver and precious stones. The entire anti-church campaign is conducted under the slogan of helping the starving. Already in 1918, on the anniversary of the October coup, Patriarch Tikhon had sent a letter to the Council of People's Commissars with the words: "Seizing power, what promises did you make to the people and how have you fulfilled these promises? Truly, you have given him a stone instead of bread and a serpent instead of fish." At the call of Patriarch Tikhon, by February 1922, believers had collected more than 8,926,000 rubles for the starving, not counting jewelry and food.

At the height of the famine, the churches are overflowing with praying people. On September 11, 1921, during the all-night vigil, the people filled not only the Cathedral of Christ the Savior itself but the entire square around it. Under the open sky, three metropolitans simultaneously conducted services in different parts of the square.

A few days later Patriarch Tikhon serves a moleben (supplication service) at the Varvara Gates. Two Red Army soldiers push their way toward him through the crowd. The crowd will not let them pass, shouting: "Father, our dear father, free us. Our lord, lead us to the Kremlin."

For a long time there had not been so many people in churches as during the famine. The 56-year-old patriarch serves practically every day.

Let us take one week of the hungry December of 1921.
December 4 – liturgy in the Presentation Church at Lubyanka.
December 6 – liturgy in the Church of St. Sergius of Radonezh in Pushkari.
That same day – all-night vigil in the Church of St. Catherine the Martyr on Ordynka.
December 7 – liturgy in the Church of St. Irene the Martyr in Pokrovskoye.
December 8 – all-night vigil in the Church of St. George the Victor in Gruziny.
December 9 – liturgy in the Church of St. George the Victor on Little Nikitskaya.
December 10 – liturgy in the Church of the Trinity in Karacharovo.
December 11 – liturgy in the Church of Saints Peter and Paul on Preobrazhenskaya Square.

On May 5, 1922, Patriarch Tikhon receives a summons signed by the head of the 6th Section of the Secret Department of the GPU. The 6th Section is in charge of church affairs. The summons demands that he appear the same day at 7 p.m. at Lubyanka. The very next day Izvestia publishes an article reporting the interrogation. That day a detachment of Red Army soldiers comes to the Patriarch's apartment at the Trinity Compound. The Patriarch is placed under house arrest. The next day he serves the liturgy in the Church of the Transfiguration of the Savior in the village of Bogorodskoye.

May 9 – interrogation at Lubyanka.

By May 9, 1922, Lenin's sanctioned plundering and destruction of churches is already in full swing.

In Moscow, the measures to rob the Church began on March 31. Seven district commissions were created, which were to “process” 600 churches. The plan was to plunder 45 churches a day. Fourteen people from the commission were sent to each church, plus ten secret agents from Dzerzhinsky’s department. Among the duties of this group of ten was, among other things, writing reports on the mood at nearby enterprises and in residential buildings. In addition, within the Moscow Military District an operational headquarters was created; the district’s troops were placed on full alert in case of unrest among the population. In each district, detachments of “ChON”, special-purpose units of the NKVD, Dzerzhinsky’s department, were attached.

The campaign to confiscate church valuables started in Zamoskvorechye, Khamovniki and Krasnaya Presnya. These were the first test districts, where the maximum number of troops was thrown. All military units in the district were placed at the disposal of the commandant of Krasnaya Presnya. Situation reports from the scene were sent to the center four times a day, and in some cases every half hour. From the Novodevichy Convent came the report: “The area around the monastery is covered with frightened groups of believers, among whom the black veil of a nun can be seen. They are discussing the event, waiting for a miracle. Red Army soldiers with rifles guarantee that no miracle will occur.”

Father Makary from the Danilov Monastery ran to the Trinity Compound to Patriarch Tikhon with the words: “The robbers have taken everything.” Saying this, he stumbled upon the commission at work at the Patriarch’s place. Father Makary was immediately sent to Lubyanka.

The bell-towers were placed under special guard by NKVD employees. They were panically afraid of the tocsin bell. In the Church of the Epiphany in Dorogomilovka, the second largest church after the Cathedral of Christ the Savior, a boy managed to climb the bell-tower and strike the bell. With cries of “Beat the Communists!”, a crowd of three thousand gathered. The crowd could only be dispersed when cavalry arrived. All this time the commission continued confiscating valuables in the church. In the 1930s the Church of the Epiphany was demolished.

Workers from the nearby “Bogatyr” factory tried to resist the plunder of the Church of the Transfiguration of the Savior.

The plundering of churches and the violation of human rights in Russia are being discussed at the same time at the International Conference in Genoa. People’s Commissar for Foreign Affairs Chicherin raises before his superiors the question of normalizing relations with the Church. The head of the GPU, Dzerzhinsky, is categorically opposed. In May 1922, the Vatican offers to buy back the confiscated relics for any price. The All-Russian Central Executive Committee rejects the offer. The confiscated valuables go to be melted down. A special staff of employees is engaged in taking precious stones and pearls out of icon frames and church books. These pearls were called “spits.” The income from selling them could be laughable: river pearls are very cheap.

From an intercepted private letter from Russia to Belgrade: “My dear friend, they robbed all the churches in our city and said that the money from the sale of the church objects would go to buy food for the city. But all this is a lie, because after the robbery drunkenness increased, and the communists’ kept women began to wear the pearls and diamonds taken from the icons.”

From the Cathedral of Christ the Savior, 34 poods of silver were confiscated; from the Yelokhovsky Church—more than 50 poods; from St. Basil’s Cathedral—24 poods of silver and 6 pounds of gold; from the Kremlin churches—290 poods of silver, more than a pood of gold, 259 diamonds, 672

brilliants. From the Iveron Chapel were taken 5 poods of silver, a pood of gold, about 100 diamonds.

Near the Iveron Chapel on the building of the City Duma—later the Lenin Museum—the image of St. Alexander Nevsky was torn out already in 1919, and in its place a large star was embedded with the inscription around it: “Religion is the opium of the people.”

In that same 1919, in the Trinity-Sergius Lavra, in a fit of sacrilegious curiosity, the shrine with the relics of St. Sergius of Radonezh was opened. A special technical commission for the opening of relics was created.

The opening of relics was accompanied by film shooting. In 1922 such films were widely shown in cinemas.

Long before these films, in January 1899, Felix Edmundovich Dzerzhinsky, writing from exile in Nolinsk, Viatka province, corresponded with his fiancée and never-to-be wife, Margarita Fyodorovna Nikeleva, who was also in exile in the same province.

In January he writes to her: “You see me as a fanatic of the cause. And that pleases you. And yet I am just a miserable little boy. I can completely wreck your life, and thereby finally wreck my own. I myself was the first to suggest that we be married in church, but now this thought frightens me. We can simply arrange a meeting, simply live together for a month or two.”

Then another letter: “I am not fit to be a scribbler or a scholar, I can’t even talk about this and that with peasants, nor with workers. I am only an agitator of my idea.”

On November 4, 1922, the Politburo of the Central Committee of the RCP(b) received the final statement on the confiscation of church wealth.

In total, valuables were seized to the amount of 4,650,000 rubles.

Of this sum, only 1 million rubles was spent on buying bread for the starving, and the starving people received nothing more.

The rest of the money went to the campaign against the Church itself. In April 1922 alone, expenditures for confiscation amounted to 1,559,592 gold rubles. All the pogrom participants were supplied with food rations amid the famine. In addition, from these same funds money gifts were made to the 1st Cavalry Army and the members of the confiscation commissions. Salaries for the staff of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee for March were also paid from this.

On May 16, at the Politburo, Trotsky demanded that 5 percent of the confiscated valuables be allocated in kind for independent sale by the Military Department. This is exactly what Patriarch Tikhon had warned about back in 1918. The Patriarch had said that all the money would go to defend a government which dreams of world revolution. From May 19, 1922, the Patriarch was held under arrest in the Donskoy Monastery. From April to June 1923, the Patriarch was kept in Dzerzhinsky’s internal prison at the GPU.

Dzerzhinsky’s deputy in the Cheka, member of the GPU collegium Yakov Peters, at one time in 1920 worked in the Cheka in Rostov-on-Don. People were shot to the sound of two running engines. Peters often personally attended executions. Red Army soldiers recounted that some boy always ran after Peters shouting: “Let me do it!”

The sculptor Clare Sheridan, who admired Dzerzhinsky's hands, fell in love in 1911 in London with Peters during his trial and that of his associates. Peters and company were suspected of preparing a robbery of a jewelry shop in London. Peters was then acquitted. At the moment of his release he met Churchill's cousin and began to see her. Winston Churchill said then to his relative about the 25-year-old Peters: "People like him won't be corrected even by the grave."

In 1921 Dzerzhinsky became head of the Commission for the Improvement of Children's Lives.

In fact, a system of child welfare had begun to be built in Russia already under Catherine II. At that time the first foundling homes appeared for children "born in misfortune and brutally rejected by their parents." It was also then that the state began paying money to foster parents for creating family children's homes: for a two-year-old child—10 rubles, for a three-year-old—17 rubles, for a five-year-old—30 rubles. Large sums for that time.

Among the reforms of Alexander II, killed by terrorists, the least known is the reform of places of detention, especially juvenile correctional institutions. From 1866 special shelters for children were created to prevent them from being corrupted in prison. In Moscow there was the famous shelter of the merchants Rukavishnikov.

The system developed under Nicholas II. Among the pupils of the shelters were children of all estates, including nobles. In 1895 an all-Russian system of "Olga's children's shelters of diligence" was created, in honor of Grand Duchess Olga Nikolaevna. Special shelters were under the patronage of the empress. All this was before Dzerzhinsky.

The Civil War produced a record number of homeless children—7 million. Of these, about 5 million were orphans.

In Pravda of February 14, 1926, an article titled "Homeless Children" states that in 1922, 600,000 homeless children were under state control. The author did not trace the fate of the rest.

Dzerzhinsky did trace the fate of adolescents in the criminal world. There were purely pragmatic reasons for this. In the early 1920s, after the end of the Civil War, the criminal world acquired a new tint. Former officers who had not joined the Reds and had not left Russia entered this world. Combat officers, able to plan operations, superbly skilled with weapons, experienced and strong-willed, trod the criminal path with all their hatred for the regime. In ordinary life they could expect only a firing squad. The old criminal elite sensed the competition, survived it, and did not yield place. Homeless children, a new generation in the criminal world, gravitated toward the former officers. The officers, as a matter of principle, did not engage in politics. Nevertheless, the regime regarded them as a special, ideologically dangerous part of the criminal world. The million-strong army of homeless children, if it came under their leadership, became a visible threat. From that time on, a distinction was introduced: criminals from the workers' and peasants' milieu, and those who had committed a crime as a result of their class habits, views or interests.

Dzerzhinsky's deputy on the Commission for the Improvement of Children's Lives was Alexander Beloborodov. It was he who in 1918, on Lenin's orders, signed the order to shoot the Tsar's children. In 1918, Beloborodov was head of the Ural Soviet.

In the 1924 Corrective Labor Code of the RSFSR, the class principle in dealing with criminals is clearly visible. For example, in Section 3, Chapter 3, Article 97 it says: "Attendance at theatrical performances in the place of detention must be free for inmates from the ranks of the working people." Natives of the worker-peasant milieu appear in the code as "those who have committed a

crime accidentally.” The code does not mention places of detention belonging to the GPU system. Which is natural. In Dzerzhinsky’s order of January 8, 1921, in point 5, it is prescribed to create concentration camps for the bourgeoisie. With this order, Dzerzhinsky formalizes an already existing system and places it under the wing of the Cheka-GPU. Monasteries are a favorite place for concentration camps, as well as for children’s colonies. Monastic lands, taken from church property, pass under the management of the GPU. All types of camp activity and the income from them are exempt from taxes. In this respect, everything is ready for Stalin’s arrival: on April 3, 1922, Stalin is elected General Secretary of the Central Committee of the RCP(b).

During the anti-church campaign of 1921–1923, 2,691 priests and 5,410 monks and nuns were sentenced and destroyed; about 15,000 clergy died without trial. On June 16, 1923, after 13 months in custody, Patriarch Tikhon writes a statement to the Supreme Court of the RSFSR: “Recognizing the correctness of the court’s decision to bring me to account for anti-Soviet activity, I repent of these offenses against the state order. I hereby declare that henceforth I am not an enemy of Soviet power.” On June 27 the Patriarch was released. This miraculous release has two purely practical explanations. All the time the Patriarch was imprisoned, Western religious circles and public opinion, through the heads of their states, exerted constant pressure on the Soviet party leadership. A death sentence for the Patriarch would have meant a worsening of the Soviet government’s international position. But much more significant was another, deeply internal circumstance. Lenin had suffered his third stroke. In this connection, the Politburo was in an extremely strained state. The primary tasks of its members were the urgent strengthening of their own security and the purge of the Red Army from old “military specialists.” The shooting of the Patriarch could complicate the situation.

As for Dzerzhinsky’s department, by that time it had already carried out work that essentially removed the necessity of executing the Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church.

In December 1921, implementing Lenin’s instruction, Dzerzhinsky had set the task of splitting the Orthodox Church: “The Church policy of destruction must be conducted by the Cheka and by no one else.” Dzerzhinsky entrusted this work to Yevgeny Tuchkov, who became head of the 6th, “church”, section of the GPU’s Secret Department.

It is hardly surprising that the 6th, “church” section of the GPU Secret Department is headed by a person without education or work record. This is normal. Dzerzhinsky’s own work record before the Cheka consisted of three weeks of work as a block printer at a shag-tobacco plant in exile. In addition, on May 30, 1923, Dzerzhinsky was accepted into the ranks of workers of the 18th section of the traction service of the Moscow-3 station. There he was elected “honorary locksmith” of the freight yard. He was placed in the 7th, highest grade of railway workers, with a salary of 355 rubles. At this time, Dzerzhinsky used three apartments in Moscow. His family lived in the Kremlin, on the second floor of the Armoury building. He was registered in Uspensky Lane, between Petrovka and Bolshaya Dmitrovka. Another apartment was on Petrovka, in a building confiscated by the NKVD for its needs.

From a note by Dzerzhinsky to his secretary: “All the little windows must be fixed so there’s no draft. The doors must be lined so that conversations can’t be heard. The dirty curtains must be replaced.”

From another note: “I need a bookcase. Get one. Either from our GPU or from the Supreme Council of the National Economy. I will not be able to pay, so put it on the state account.”

In a certain sense, the year 1922 turned out to be a lucky one for 217 representatives of the Russian intelligentsia. In a certain sense, because they were expelled from Russia but not killed. Much the same luck befell ancient church treasures which were not sent to be melted down but sold abroad in intact museum condition. The Soviet state spent money to rid itself of the intelligentsia.

From a note by GPU vice-chairman Unshlikht to General Secretary Stalin dated August 22, 1922: “Personal. Top secret. I am forwarding the cost estimate for expelling the anti-Soviet intelligentsia abroad. I request the allocation of a special fund of 50 billion rubles.” At that time a pood of flour cost 14 million. A simple calculation shows that the expulsion of the intelligentsia cost the state half a wagon of flour.

In the following year, 1923, after the expulsion, a monetary reform was carried out in Soviet Russia and the gold ruble, or chervonets, was introduced. Letters survive from Dzerzhinsky to his niece. He helped her with money. On January 23, 1924, he sends her two chervonets. On February 7—two chervonets. On July 7—two chervonets. Converted into chervonets, the whole story of expelling 217 members of the Russian intelligentsia cost a total of just one chervonets.

The 4th Section of the GPU Secret Department was responsible for work with the intelligentsia. By August 23, 1922, all 217 persons were either under house arrest or in GPU prisons. They were released from custody only after a statement, first, of consent to departure, and second, of consent to depart at their own expense. Two parties were sent from Petrograd on steamers chartered from Germany. One steamer was called Oberbürgermeister Haken, the other Prussia. But they entered history not under their German names, but under a single, figurative one—the “philosophers’ ship.” On this ship were Berdyaev, Frank, Trubetskoy, Ilyin, Karsavin, Osorgin, Vysheslavtsev, Sorokin, Shestov, Aikhenvald—many and many philosophers, economists, philologists. Others were sent by train. The expulsion continued in 1923.

Return to the homeland was punishable by the supreme measure—shooting. This was prescribed by Article 7 of the RSFSR Criminal Code. This clarification was inserted personally by Lenin in May 1922, two weeks before his stroke.

Those expelled were allowed to take with them one winter coat, one summer coat, one suit, two pairs of long underwear, two shirts, and two pairs of stockings. As for jewelry, only wedding rings were permitted. Crosses worn on the chest were removed.

To identify dissenters, a Bureau for Assistance to GPU Organs in the Localities was created already in April 1922.

From the instruction of the GPU Secret Department on organizing the Bureaus, signed by Genrikh Yagoda. The future head of the NKVD, Yagoda, in 1922 held the post of deputy head of the GPU Secret-Operational Directorate. In early Soviet language that means he was deputy head of the GPU Secret-Operational Directorate. In the instruction he writes: “Members of the Bureau for Assistance to GPU Organs attend general meetings where the ‘physiognomy’ of an institution’s staff is most clearly revealed; they take note of those suspected of unreliability, fill out a secret questionnaire on each of them, and assist in getting secret GPU collaborators onto the staff and embedding them in the collective.”

A Bureau for Assistance to GPU Organs is organized in every state, public, cooperative and private institution, and also in higher educational establishments.

Strictly speaking, the formal pretext for expelling the intelligentsia was the first “Doctors’ Case” in Soviet history. People’s Commissar of Health Semashko had attended the All-Russian Congress of Physicians. After the congress he wrote a letter to the Politburo. In this letter the People’s Commissar accused his colleagues, no more and no less, of organizing a campaign against Soviet medicine, of praising zemstvo insurance medicine and of attempting to create their own professional printed organ. Doctor Semashko recommends that any mention of famous Russian zemstvo medicine be cauterized with a hot iron.

On the back of Semashko’s letter Lenin writes to Stalin: “I think we must show this strictly secretly to Dzerzhinsky and issue a directive. Dzerzhinsky is entrusted together with Semashko to work out a plan of measures. Report to the Politburo. May 22, 1922.”

The next day Lenin has a stroke.

A month later the delegates to the Physicians’ Congress are sent into exile with the wording: “For using their position for anti-Soviet agitation.”

As soon as Lenin regains his speech, he dictates a letter to Stalin about speeding up the expulsion of dissenting intellectuals: “We should expel several hundred of such gentlemen abroad without pity. We shall cleanse Russia for a long time. Arrest them without stating the reasons. Off you go, gentlemen.”

The brain drain from Russia began with the expulsion of brains.

Thus, the NEP, the New Economic Policy, began with the defeat of the Church and repressions against the intelligentsia and specialists.

On Dzerzhinsky’s instructions, an analytical memorandum is prepared within the GPU: “The New Economic Policy of Soviet power has created the danger of uniting the forces of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois groups, which find support in the conditions of NEP development.”

And it so happened that the client of this analytical memo, Felix Dzerzhinsky, died after a speech in defense of an economic policy that was absolutely liberal for those times. In 1924, GPU chief Dzerzhinsky also became chairman of the Supreme Council of the National Economy (VSNKh). In Moscow the rumor immediately spread that Dzerzhinsky would bring with him to the VSNKh a large group of Chekists. This rumor was fully borne out. The group of comrades who came to work in the VSNKh from the Cheka was headed by Mantsev, previously known as head of the Moscow, and then the All-Ukrainian, Cheka.

But the air of a slightly freed-up NEP economy played a cruel joke on the GPU chief. Dzerzhinsky began to speak of the need to strengthen private capital. Then he spoke in support of the welfare of the countryside, which had begun to outpace industry in its development. He uttered sacrilegious words that one must not fear the petty-bourgeois countryside. Dzerzhinsky shouted that wholesale prices must not be driven up and funds pumped into industry’s fixed capital. That industrialization at any cost was anti-Soviet nonsense. He became obsessed with the idea of the labor productivity of 1913. He wanted to raise productivity in 1924 to that level immediately. A complete dilettante in economics, GPU chief Dzerzhinsky devoutly believed that economic questions could be solved by crash campaigns. A campaign, for example, to raise labor productivity.

Workers at that time, after the lifting of the ban on vodka sales, drank fearlessly. After payday and holidays they did not show up for work. Dzerzhinsky naively assumed at first that the party-

economists running enterprises would deal with the workers. They did not want to get involved in conflict with them. They thought they had tame factory-committee and trade-union leaders to do that. But among trade-union leaders there was at that time a great fashion for embezzling public funds. It did not matter what funds—library funds, club funds, or union dues. Even at the XIV Party Congress, it was said that "a wave of embezzlements has rolled through the grassroots trade-union organizations."

So trade-union leaders were no good. Workers did not give a damn for them. As a result, GPU chief and VSNKh chairman Dzerzhinsky could rely only on non-party engineers, technicians and foremen. At factories and plants, these people of the "old regime" were beaten, doused with water, stones were thrown at the windows of their apartments. And they, in spite of everything, continued to set production norms, wage rates, and assign workers according to their abilities and qualifications. Dzerzhinsky defended his only non-party support. He shouted at a plant director: "In the fable, it is the ox that ploughs, pulls the plow, and the fly on the ox's neck shouts: we are ploughing. You, plant director, are that fly. I declare that I will dismiss you and bring you to account."

Under Dzerzhinsky, five non-party people, five former Mensheviks—Ginzburg, Sokolovsky, Stern, Kafengauz, Valentinov—occupied influential posts in the VSNKh. None of them joined the Party, although they were invited. In 1931 they would be sentenced. In 1925, Dzerzhinsky said: "They say that there is Menshevik domination in the VSNKh. I wish there were such domination in other commissariats, too. This is the domination of excellent workers. They work not out of fear, but in good conscience." To this remark by Dzerzhinsky one must add one clarification—regarding fear.

In 1924 and 1925, arrests were taking place all over the country. There were almost none in the VSNKh. That is why many engineers said that for a year and a half under Dzerzhinsky they were able to sleep peacefully.

In April 1925, Dzerzhinsky decided to find a job in the VSNKh for Boris Savinkov. Formerly a leader of the SRs, a major terrorist and a minister in the Provisional Government, Savinkov at the time was in the GPU internal prison. Dzerzhinsky wanted to make him an accountant. The Politburo forbade it. Savinkov was thrown down a stairwell in the prison.

Dzerzhinsky's speeches on economic, organizational and personnel issues were published in the secular press in a heavily watered-down form.

On June 20, 1926, at a Central Committee plenum, Dzerzhinsky burst out fully. He defended private entrepreneurs; he said that socialism had never studied trade. Then he turned on the People's Commissar of Internal Trade, Kamenev: "I am horrified by our system of management, this unheard-of fuss with all sorts of approvals and unheard-of bureaucratism." He gasped at the rostrum, could barely stand and swayed. Three hours later he was dead.

In Pravda the next day his words about bureaucratism were softened.

Trotsky shouted to Dzerzhinsky at the plenum: "Be careful, pointing to the bureaucratism that is decomposing the Party! You risk, with all the consequences that follow, being recorded in the opposition camp." Here Trotsky hit the nail on the head. In 1927 the position which Dzerzhinsky had, to his own surprise, come to support, would be called the "Right deviation" and would become a capital offense.

Strictly speaking, the “Right deviation” is originally Lenin’s position. At the same time, Lenin did not like Dzerzhinsky personally, and Dzerzhinsky avoided quoting Lenin.

Soviet business in the NEP era treated Dzerzhinsky’s economic speeches with extreme distrust. It could not have been otherwise. The GPU system built by Dzerzhinsky in Moscow and in the provinces worked without failures: blackmail of entrepreneurs, arrests, expulsions. In parallel with his enthusiasm for economics, Dzerzhinsky managed to raise a successor in the person of his deputy at the GPU, Menzhinsky, and GPU collegium member Yagoda. Dzerzhinsky was a workaholic; he managed everything. He said: “I do not spare myself, I never spare myself.”

After Dzerzhinsky’s death, the new GPU chief, Menzhinsky, said: “He was not only a great terrorist, but a great Chekist. He operated not only through terror but through a deep understanding of the zigzags of the human soul.”

At the funeral, the Tula GPU sent a wreath made of Mausers, bayonets and sabers. The sabers like ears of grain on the Soviet coat of arms. Gorky wept. It was recalled that the only cultural event Dzerzhinsky had attended during the years of Soviet power was the film The Funeral of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin.

Both during Dzerzhinsky’s life and after his death one episode of his early childhood was carefully concealed. As a boy he killed his younger sister Wanda. Accidentally. With a gun.