Remembering the GULAG:

Community, Identity and Cultural Memory in Russia's Far North, 1987-2018

By

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A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

Approved March 2019 by the
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ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

May 2019

ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores how rank-and-file political prisoners navigated life after release and how they translated their experiences in the Gulag and after into memoirs, letters, and art. I argue that these autobiographical narratives formed the basis of an alternate history of the Soviet Union. This alternate history informed the cultural memory of the Gulag in the Komi Republic, which coalesced over the course of the late 1980s and 1990s into an infrastructure of memory. This alternate history was mobilized by the formation of the Soviet Union's first civic organizations, such as the Memorial Society, that emerged in the late 1980s. However, Gulag returnees not only joined post-Soviet civil society, they also formed a nascent civil society after their release in the 1950s. The social networks and informal associations that Gulag returnees relied upon to reintegrate back into Soviet society after release, also played an essential role in the memory project of coming to terms with the Stalinist past after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

As one of the first and most populous epicenters of the Gulag archipelago located in the Far North, from 1929-1958 Komi saw hundreds of thousands of prisoners, in addition to hundreds of thousands more who were exiled to the region from all over the Soviet Union. While some left the region after they were released, many were not able to leave or chose not to when given the choice. Regardless of where they lived when the Soviet Union collapsed, many former prisoners sent their autobiographies to branches of the Memorial Society and local history museums in Komi. For many, this was the very first time they had shared their stories with anyone. While Komi is unique in many ways, it is emblematic of processes that unfolded throughout the Soviet Union and Eastern

Europe at the end of the Twentieth Century. This project expands our understanding of how civil societies form under conditions of authoritarian rule and illuminates the ways in which survivors and societies come to terms with difficult pasts.

For Marina

Jeg elsker deg

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This dissertation would not have been possible without the generous help of numerous organizations and individuals. Firstly, I am deeply indebted to several organizations and institutions for their financial support. At Arizona State University, I received travel and preliminary research funding from the School of Historical Philosophical, and Religious Studies, the Center for Jewish Studies, the Melikian Center for Russian, Eurasian & East European Studies, the Graduate College, and the Graduate and Professional Students Association. Research for this dissertation was supported by a grant from the J. William Fulbright U.S. Student Research Program with funds provided by the United States Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. None of the above organizations is responsible for the views expressed herein.

I am equally grateful to professors, colleagues, and administrators who provided me with guidance and advice as I researched and wrote this dissertation. I am particularly grateful to my advisor, Laurie Manchester, who encouraged me to think outside the box and to pursue nontraditional sources wherever they may lead. I am also grateful to her for teaching me to be a better writer over the course of many drafts. I am grateful to my other advisor, Mark von Hagen, who always pushed me to think big while respecting the most minute detail. I also benefited greatly from the advice and encouragement that I received from Alan Barenberg and Anna Holian. While in Russia, I was greatly helped by dedicated and passionate researchers, historians, archivists, and teachers. My time in Komi would not have been a success without: Mikhail Rogachev, Marina Klimova, Nikolai Morozov, Liubov' Maksimova, Elena Morozova, Anatolii Popov, Svetlana Khudiaeva, Galina Khudiaeva, Nadezhda Bazhanova, Nadezhda

Beliaeva, Galina Trukhina, Tat'iana Zashikhina, Fedor Kolpakov, Evgeniia Zelenskaia, Oskana Gritsenko, Alena Kozlova, Tat'iana Goloven, and Natasha Chuprova. I also benefited from professors and colleagues who read chapter drafts and provided advice and feedback, including Philip Skorokhodov, Mikhail Nakonechnyi, Jeff Hardy, Golfo Alexopoulos, Steve Barnes, John Romero, Evgeny Dengub, Peter Winsky, Mehmet Volkan Kasikçki, the anonymous reviewers at *Kritika* who read a version of chapter 3 which is forthcoming as an article, and participants in the Second Annual Desert Russian Historians Workshop. The long winter months in Komi were made much more enjoyable by the friendships of Liza Kalinina, Lauren Woodard, Nicholas Levy, Christiana Bonin, Anton Vakhotin, Maegan Boutot whom I met in Syktyvkar, Moscow, and points in between. At Arizona State University I also benefited from guidance and instruction from Rachel Fuchs, Steve Batalden, Aaron Moore, and Hava Samuelson. I also wish to thank Lindsey Jones for her much appreciated and unwavering help navigating academic bureaucracy.

This journey took me far from home and I am forever grateful to my family, especially my parents, who were a constant source of encouragement and understanding. I'm also grateful to my brother, Caleb, whose companionship on rivers across the state of Maine enabled me to recharge my batteries on trips home. Finally, this dissertation would never have been possible without my wife Marina. She was a constant source of support, advice, and encouragement in Arizona and Syktyvkar. She never said no and her love kept me going through it all.

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INTRODUCTION

Following a brief exchange of letters, Gulag returnee Vitalii Ol'shevskii sent his memoir to the Syktyvkar Memorial Society from Kiev in 1991. Although Ol'shevskii no longer lived in the Far North, he felt that his memoir belonged in Syktyvkar Memorial's growing archive of survivor testimonies. While much had been written in the press in the few short years since Gorbachev decreed glasnost, Ol'shevskii, like many other victims of political repression who sent their autobiographical narratives to local history museums and branches of the Memorial Society throughout the Komi ASSR, sought to contribute his inside perspective to the reconstruction of a now permissible past. As he explained in the opening paragraphs of his memoir:

> I, like all of my countrymen, had to endure the terrible period in the history of our country, which the people have consequently named the '*Ezhovshchina*,' and twenty years later officially and publicly at the twentieth party congress, Khrushchev named it the 'period of Stalin's cult of personality.' And to not only experience, but to end up in the numbers of victims of that terror, which raged throughout the entire country of our vast motherland. There were very many of us, the victims (*postradavshii*), but neither the 20th congress, or later, down to today no one has named the true (*istinnyi*) number of victims. And now no one knows how many people were killed, how many were shot, tortured during interrogations, how many died in the camps from dystrophy, typhus, dysentery, pneumonia, how many were frost-bitten, went insane, killed in the mines and at work sites from all sorts of accidents?
>
> With certainty only one thing can be said: I don't know how it is in other cities, but in Kiev in almost every family, especially among the intelligentsia, no one was passed over. The total unpredictability and groundlessness of these arrests were especially frightening. More often than not it befell ordinary citizens who did not belong to the upper echelons of power, people who lived quietly, labored honestly, raised children. They suddenly came in the night and arrested [you]! And a person disappeared as if he never existed.

> Since it fell to me to go through all levels of this human meat grinder, to endure all humiliations, all the physical and moral torture, and after fifteen years to exit to freedom and wait for recognition from the organs that I am not guilty of anything, I want to tell the details about everything I experienced.[1]

Underscoring his authority to testify as one of the remaining survivors of Stalin's camps and the authenticity of his testimony as an ordinary political prisoner, Ol'shevskii presented his life as evidence of an unwritten, and actively forgotten, history of the Soviet Union:

> The only thing that I wish is that this cruel, terrible epoch not pass away in memory. It should enter into history, so that it is never again repeated. I also want to underscore that in these memoirs there is not one grain of fiction, slander, or malevolence. I write only the truth, only about that what I saw with my own eyes, what I experienced myself, or heard based on absolutely trusted sources. It is not my intention to take revenge on anyone. Those guilty of my tragedy left this life long ago. They got theirs without my intervention.[2]

In the opening pages of his memoir, Ol'shevskii described what drove so many former prisoners to reveal themselves as victims of Stalinist repression in the final years of Soviet power. They sought to write themselves and their camp comrades into Soviet history at its end.

This dissertation explores how ordinary political prisoners navigated life after release and how they translated their experiences in the Gulag and after into memoirs, letters, and art.[3] I argue that their autobiographical narratives informed the cultural

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[1] Arkhiv Fonda Pokaianie (AFP) (V. B. Ol'shevskii, "Vyzhit! Ot Bamlaga do Pechlaga," Kiev, 1991), 1.
[2] Ibid, 2.
[3] While the majority of prisoners in the Gulag were criminals sentenced for a variety of crimes, this dissertation is written on the basis of sources produced by "ordinary" political prisoners. These prisoners were not elites, members of the intelligentsia, dissidents, nor were the majority of them members of the Communist Party. From the 1940s until Stalin's death, "counter-revolutionary" offenders, or those

memory of the Gulag in the Komi Republic, a memory that crystallized in texts, ceremonies, monuments, and civil associations. As those who bore the brunt of Stalinist violence and survived, Gulag returnees' life stories served as the basis of a powerful, alternate version of Soviet history. It was an alternate history because it was based primarily on non-state archives. This is also what made it so powerful as an alternate history - it was based on the details of the individual lives of thousands of ordinary Soviet citizens. Previously, only artistic representations of the camps were presented in the works of repressed Soviet intelligentsia members during Khrushchev's Thaw.[4]

The mobilization of this new narrative was made possible by the formation of the Soviet Union's first civic organizations, which coalesced into a civil society in the late 1980s and early 1990s. These civic organizations, typified by the Memorial Society, which was established in 1987 to commemorate the victims of Stalinist repression, were composed in part by Gulag returnees and their families. Once Gorbachev relaxed the controls on state censorship, thousands of victims and their families came forward, enabled by Memorial, to present new evidence of past crimes. This quickly eroded the Party's ability to limit its focus on Stalin and victimized party members.[5] While

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sentenced under article 58, represented approximately 1/3 of the camp population. I refer to these survivors as Gulag returnees not because they returned home (although some did if they had a home to go back to when given the choice), but because they returned to Soviet society. On the camp population, see, Golfo Alexopoulos, *Illness and Inhumanity in Stalin's Gulag* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 46.

[4] While some non-elites wrote memoirs of their sojourn through the camps during the Thaw, the majority of these narratives were written by party members and those who sought reinstatement in the party. See, Polly Jones, "Memories of Terror or Terrorizing Memories? Terror, Trauma and Survival in Soviet Culture of the Thaw," *The Slavonic and East European Review* 86, no. 2, (Apr., 2008): 346-371; Nanci Adler, *Keeping Faith with the Party: Communist Believers Return from the Gulag* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012).

[5] On this period of intense confrontation and (re)negotiation of the past, see, Kathleen E. Smith, *Remembering Stalin's Victims: Popular Memory and the End of the USSR* (Ithaca: Cornell University

discussion of the past initiated from the top, the impetus for change was driven from below, much as it was in post-World War II Western Europe.[6] The rise of memory at the end of the twentieth century, Nikolay Koposov writes, was affected by the democratization of history and the rise of the subaltern, the end of utopian projects and the Cold War, and the triumph of human rights discourse.[7] Despite these universal trends, the production of cultural memory in Western and Eastern Europe was shaped by two radically different events: the Holocaust in the West and the collapse of communist rule in the East.[8] Thus, while the memory project of coming to terms with the Stalinist past was initiated by the Communist Party in Moscow, this dissertation shows how memory lives and dies in the provinces.

Numerous Gulag returnees not only joined post-Soviet civil society; they also formed a nascent civil society in the Soviet Union after their release in the 1950s. My use of this term is in keeping with recent scholarship that describes the development of civil societies under authoritarian regimes as the product of the discursive categories and socially directed actions of individuals who formed solidarities with others based on

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Press, 2009); R. W. Davies, *Soviet History in the Gorbachev Revolution* (London: Macmillan, 1989). For a broader consideration of restorative justice in Eastern Europe after 1989, see, Tzvetan Todorov, *Memory As A Remedy for Evil*, trans., Gila Walker (London: Seagull Books, 2010).

[6] Richard Lebow, Wulf Kansteiner, Claudio Fogu, eds., *The Politics of Memory in Postwar Europe* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 21.

[7] Nikolay Koposov, *Memory Laws, Memory Wars: The Politics of the Past in Europe and Russia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 25.

[8] See, Lebow, et al., *The Politics of Memory in Postwar*; Rubie S. Watson, ed., *Memory, History, and Opposition Under Socialism* (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 1994); Vladimir Tismaneanu, Bogdan C. Iacob, eds., *End and the Beginning: The Revolutions of 1989 and the Resurgence of History* (Central European University Press, 2012); Jerzy W. Borejsza and Klaus Ziemer, eds., *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes in Europe: Legacies and Lessons from the Twentieth Century* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2006). For a global perspective on the "memory boom" and transitional justice, see, Béatrice Pouligny, et al., eds., *After Mass Crime: Rebuilding States and Communities* (Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 2007).

shared values, concerns, and identities outside of, but not in opposition to, the state.[9] Beginning during glasnost' the actual founding of institutions such as Memorial marked the advent of an actual civil society in the collapsing Soviet Union, institutions which flourished in the 1990s, building on their nascent foundations in the post-Stalinist period.

The definition of civil society as the network of social relationships and voluntary associations distinct from the state draws in part on Jürgen Habermas's concept of the public sphere, which he defined as "the sphere of private people come together as a public," and Nancy Fraser's critique of this concept.[10] In her reconceptualization of Habermas's bourgeois public sphere, Fraser argued that "subaltern counterpublics" also contributed to the formation of the public sphere from which diverse civil societies emerge.[11] Like Habermas's bourgeois public sphere, these counterpublics developed out of the world of letters. However, as Fraser writes, these counterpublics played another important function in stratified societies such as the one found in the Soviet Union, "On the one hand, they function as spaces of withdrawal and regroupment; on the other hand,

[9] Vadim Volkov, "*Obshchestvennost'*: Russia's Lost Concept of Civil Society," in Norbert Götz and Jörg Hackmann, eds., *Civil Society in the Baltic Sea Region* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003), 63-72; Matsui Yasuhiro, ed., *Obshchestvennost' and Civic Agency in Late Imperial and Soviet Russia: Interface between State and Society* (Baskingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan 2015); Joseph Bradley, *Voluntary Associations in Tsarist Russia: Science, Patriotism, and Civil Society* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009); Ann Komaromi, "Samizdat and Soviet Dissident Publics," *Slavic Review* 71, no.1 (Spring 2012): 70-90.

[10] Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1991), 27. See also, Keith Tester, *Civil Society* (London: Routledge, 1992), 8. Tester writes, "The label of 'civil society can be applied to all those social relationships which involve the voluntary association and participation of individuals acting in their private capacities."

[11] Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," *Social Text* 25/26 (1990): 56-80.

they also function as bases and training grounds for agitational activities directed toward wider publics."[12]

While many prisoners left Komi after they were released, many more were not able to leave or chose not to when given the choice.[13] Originating in the camps as a means to survive, Gulag returnees formed a network of informal associations after release. These informal mutual aid societies enabled the most vulnerable members of Soviet society to protect one another — or at least try to — from the state. They also provided Gulag returnees with a community of their own and a much-needed source of moral support as they reintegrated back into a society that remained largely suspicious and hostile towards them. Gulag returnees who remained in Komi, and even those who left, continued to meet as friends, companions, and members of the so-called "camp brotherhood." As many former prisoners wrote, these informal gatherings frequently turned into "evenings of memory" where they remembered the camps and the comrades they lost to "that world." While it would be decades before many of them wrote memoirs, these informal gatherings formed the basis of a "community of memory"

[12] Ibid, 68.

[13] While we will probably never know the true number of returnees due to lacunae in the archival record and lack of access to other archives, such as the FSB and MVD archives, Nanci Adler estimates that around five million returned to Soviet society in the 1950s. However, it is important to note that she includes exiles and deportees in this figure. See, Adler, *Keeping Faith*, 4. To give an example of the social composition of a Komi city, Alan Barenberg estimates that that former prisoners and their families composed 1/3 of Vorkuta's population of approx. 175,000 by the end of the 1950s. See, Alan Barenberg, *Gulag Town, Company Town: Forced Labor and Its Legacy in Vorkuta* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 216-222.

through which Gulag returnees defined themselves and membership in their community.[14]

Komi has a long history as a region of exile. As a hinterland of the Russian Empire, located in the northeastern corner of European Russia adjacent to the polar Ural Mountains, Komi became a place of exile in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.[15] At the start of the twentieth century, the region was sparsely populated by the native Komi people and a mix of free and unfree Russian settlers.[16] Prior to 1905, there were approximately 200 exiles living within the contemporary borders of the Komi Republic; by 1909 there were approximately 1,800 exiles in Komi.[17] Following the October Revolution and the Civil War, the Bolsheviks continued to use the remote region as a dumping ground for undesirables.[18] However, it was not until an OGPU-NKVD expedition to survey the availability of natural resources in Komi disembarked at Chib'iu

[14] Iwona Irwin-Zarecka, *Frames of Remembrance: The Dynamics of Collective Memory* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1993), 47. Irwin-Zarecka defines as, "a community created by that very memory." See also, Aleida Assmann, "Transformations between History and Memory," *Social Research* 75, no 1 (Spring 2008): 52. Assmann writes of the construction of individual and group identity involved in the production of cultural memory: "Each 'we' is constructed through shared practices and discourses that mark certain boundaries and define the principles of inclusion and exclusion."

[15] In 1897 Komi's population was around 170,600. See, L. Prilutskaia, *Komi ASSR k 50-letiiu Sovetskoi vlasti: Statisticheskii sbornik* (Syktyvkar: Komi knizhnoe izd-vo, 1967), 8.

[16] Local police kept files on exiles in Syktyvkar during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. While these files are not regularly accessible to researchers, they were shown as part of a public exhibition at the National Archive of the Komi Republic on the region's "history of repression" during the week of commemorative events leading up to the October 30 Day of Memory of Victims of Political Repression. These files included fingerprints, letters, reports from parole officers, and mugshots when available.

[17] N. A. Morozov, "Istrebiteil'no-trudovye gody: Komi – krai politicheskoi ssylki," in *Pokaianie: Martirolog*, t. 1, ed., G. V. Nevskii (Syktyvkar: Fond Pokaianie, 1998), 15.

[18] Skepticism notwithstanding, according to a 1967 collection of statistical surveys of the Komi ASSR, Komi's population grew from 224,900 in 1926 to 319,500 in 1939 and jumped again to 815,800 in 1959. In the year of publication, the collection estimated that 974,300 people lived in Komi. While these numbers do not account for the prisoner population, the growth in Komi's population of *vol'nonaemnye* largely follows that of the growth and spread of the Gulag throughout the region. See, L. Prilutskaia, 8.

in 1929, when the region embarked on a period of internal colonization with the growth of one of the largest networks of corrective-labor camps in the Soviet Union.[19]

The demographics of Komi's prisoner population generally reflects camps throughout the rest of the Soviet Union. On the basis of the available statistics compiled by the Gulag administration, Alan Barenberg's history of Vorkutlag provides insight into the demographic profile of one of Komi's largest camp complexes. From 1942-1958, the majority of prisoners in Vorkutlag were ethnic Russians (between 38 and 63 percent). However, they were joined representatives of other Soviet and foreign nationalities including Ukrainians (the second largest contingent – between approximately10 and 31 percent), Belorussians, Georgians, Armenians, Tatars, Latvians, Lithuanians, Estonians, Jews, Germans, Poles, Chinese, Koreans, and miscellaneous others.[20] In terms of gender, there were universally more men than women imprisoned in the Gulag.[21] The same is true of the prisoner population of Vorkutlag. For example, from 1939-1958 men represented between approximately 85 and 99 percent of the prisoner population in Vorkutlag.[22] Statistics on prisoners' class origins are more difficult to obtain. Whereas most prisoners in the Gulag were sentenced for non-political crimes frequently associated

[19] On internal colonization and the expansion of carceral networks in the Soviet Union, see, Judith Pallot, "Forced Labour for Forestry: The Twentieth-Century History of Colonisation and Settlement in the North of Perm' Oblast'," *Europe-Asia Studies* 54, no.7 (2002): 1055-84; Lynne Viola, *The Unknown Gulag: The Lost World of Stalin's Special Settlements* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); Alan Barenberg, "'Discovering' Vorkuta: Science and Colonization in the Early Gulag," *Gulag Studies* 4 (2011): 1-20; L. A. Maksimova, L. V. Liamtseva, *GULAG kak factor modernizatsii na Evropeiskoi Severo-Vostoke* (Moskva: Izd-vo MGOU, 2011).
[20] Barenberg, *Gulag Town, Company Town*, 267. See also, N. A. Morozov, "Mnogonatsional'nyi GULAG," in *Pokaianie*, t. 1, ed., Nevskii, 340-419.
[21] Oleg V. Khlevniuk, *The History of the Gulag: From Collectivization to the Great Terror*, trans., Vadim A Staklo (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 315.
[22] Barenberg, *Gulag Town, Company Town*, 252-254.

in the historiography with peasants, workers, thieves, and hardened criminals, the data on the convictions of Vorkutlag's prisoners complicates the general picture. From 1939-1955 between approximately 68 and 75 percent of the prisoner population in Vorkutlag consisted of prisoners sentenced for "counter-revolutionary," or political crimes.[23] This largely differs from the Gulag system as a whole and suggests that the state saw Komi, with its harsh climate, barren landscape, and great natural wealth to exploit, as the perfect place to send those it deemed the least redeemable.

Although there were no camps in the city itself, Syktyvkar, Komi's capital city, came to be known in the late 1980s as "the capital of the camp republic."[24] Six of Komi's seven cities were built by prisoners, who were imprisoned in one of Komi's nine major camp complexes. In addition to these sprawling camps, there were also villages for exiles scattered throughout the taiga and tundra known as special settlements.[25] Syktyvkar was linked to all points of Komi's carceral archipelago by an infrastructure built on the bones of an unknown number of prisoners.[26] Estimates calculated on the

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[23] Ibid, 254-259.

[24] GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 38, l. 3 (M. B. Rogachev to Evgeniia Petrovna, 8.04.1993). Today, there are 10 corrective colonies, 4 colony-settlements, and 3 investigative isolators, and 2 medical clinics in Syktyvkar, Verkhnii Chov, Mikun', Kniazhpogost', Ukhta, Pechora, and Vorkuta. See, "Istoriia UIS Komi," Upravlenie Federal'noi sluzhby ispoleneniia nakazaniia (UFSIN) Rossii po Respublike Komi, updated Dec. 12, 2017, http://www.11.fsin.su/istoriya-uis-komi/. According to a 2011 article in a Syktyvkar newspaper run by human rights activists, *7x7*, this is down from the 28 places of confinement in Komi (13 colonies, 12 colony-settlements, 3 isolators) of various regimes of detention. According to the same article 15,000 people were imprisoned in these places of confinement. See, Igor' Sazhin, "Kolonii Respubliki Komi," *7x7*, May 7, 2011, https://7x7-journal.ru/opinion/13939.

[25] On special settlements, see, N. M. Ignatova, *Spetspereselentsy v Respublike Komi v 1930-1950-e gg* (Syktyvkar: Institut iazyka, literatury i istorii Komi nauchnogo tsentra UrO RAN, 2009); Lynne Viola, *The Unknown Gulag: The Lost World of Stalin's Special Settlements* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). V. N. Zemskov, *Spetsposelentsy v SSSR, 1930-1960* (Moskva: "Nauka," 2003).

[26] Despite the slight opening of the archives in the 1990s and work done on the numbers and categories of prisoners, to this day we still do not have exact numbers of Komi's prisoners. Given the increasing difficulty of archival access to MVD archives, we should not expect this to change any time soon.

basis of the archives of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (NKVD-MVD), the institution responsible for the Gulag's operation, estimate that Komi's prisoner population grew from 10,000 in 1932 to 242,800 by 1950.[27] One of Komi's camp towns, Ukhta, for example, grew out of Komi's largest camp Ukhtpechlag, becoming a city of 16,000 (not including the prisoner population) in 1943.[28] Of these 16,000 civilians (*vol'nonaemnye*), 91.7% worked for Ukhtizhemstroi, a subsidiary of the corrective-labor camp Ukhtizhemlag.[29] Considering that a total of 18 million people went through the hundreds of camps throughout the Soviet Union from their establishment in 1929 through 1960, the presence of so many prisoners concentrated in one region makes Komi rather unique.[30] However, while Komi was more densely populated than most by institutions and people connected to the machinery of state repression, it is emblematic of other regions that underwent similar transformations into places of exile, imprisonment, and death.

For those who survived the Gulag, rehabilitation was significant not only because it restored their rights as Soviet citizens but also as a recognition of their innocence by the state.[31] Rehabilitation first emerged as a political category after Stalin's death in 1953,

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[27] E. P. Berezina, et. al., *Politicheskie repressii v Komi krae (20-50-e gody): Bibliograficheskii ukazatel'* (Syktyvkar: Fond Pokaianie, 2006), 3. Alan Barenberg notes that the number of prisoners in Komi's largest camp, Vorkutlag, grew from 16,096 in 1939 to 66,290 in 1949. See, Barenberg, *Gulag Town, Company Town*, 252-253. The population of the Gulag peaked in 1950 at 2.5 million. This puts the incarceration rate, as Jeff Hardy writes, at 1,440 per 100,000. For comparison, the U.S. incarcerated 109 per 100,000 in 1950 (166,165 inmates). See, Jeff Hardy, *The Gulag After Stalin: Redefining Punishment in Khrushchev's Soviet Union, 1953-1964* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016), 12.

[28] E. A. Zelenskaia-Zysman, *Lagernoe proshloe Komi kraia (1929-1955 gg.) v sud'bakh i vospominaniiakh sovremennikov* (Ukhta: 2016), 3.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Morozov estimates that a total of 3.5 million went through Komi's camps during their thirty-years of existence as part of the Gulag. See, N. A. Morozov, *Gulag v Komi krae, 1929-1956* (Syktyvkar: Syktyvkarskii Gosudarstvennyi Universitet, 1997), 181.

[31] Rehabilitation removed the restrictions on former prisoners' passports and eliminated the requirement that they check-in with local authorities twice monthly.

when the Party leadership initiated a limited de-Stalinization of Soviet society.[32] Between 1954 and 1961 approximately 800,000 Soviet citizens (both living and deceased) were rehabilitated by the state as victims of Stalinist repression.[33] While this may seem like a lot, this represents less than one third of the total of those who were sentenced for political crimes between the end of the Civil War and Stalin's death.[34] The majority of former prisoners who were rehabilitated after Stalin's death were amnestied first and then applied for rehabilitation.[35] These petitions were handled on a case-by-case basis by committees at the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Internal Affairs.[36] Despite Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin's "Cult of Personality" at the Twentieth Party Congress in 1956 and the removal of his body from Lenin's Mausoleum following the Twenty-Second Party Congress in 1961, the Party did little to streamline the process of rehabilitation to accommodate for twenty-five years of mass repression and terror.

As a result of the lack of institutional and legal support, as well as the subsequent freeze on the discussion of Stalin's crimes under Brezhnev, most Gulag returnees

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[32] A. L. Kononov, "K istorii priniatiia rossiiskogo Zakona 'O reabilitatsii zhertv politicheskikh repressii'," in Ian Rachinskii, ed., *Reabilitatsiia i pamiat': Otnoshenie k zhertvam sovetskikh politicheskikh repressii v stranakh byvshego SSSR* (Moskva: Memorial-Zven'ia, 2016): 5-28.

[33] Matthew Stibbe and Kevin McDermott, "De-Stalinising Eastern Europe: The Dilemmas of Rehabilitation," in Kevin McDermott, Matthew Stibbe, eds., *De-Stalinising Eastern Europe: The Rehabilitation of Stalin's Victims after 1953* (Baskingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 3. See also, Miriam Dobson, "POWs and Purge Victims: Attitudes Toward Party Rehabilitation, 1956-57," *The Slavonic and East European Review* 86, no. 2 (Apr., 2008): 328-345; Nanci Adler, *The Gulag Survivor: Beyond the Soviet System* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2002), 30-31. Adler points out the lack of consensus among historians over the numbers of those who were rehabilitated and the percentage of the repressed who remain unrehabilitated. The numbers she lists range from 258,322 to 737,182 rehabilitated between 1953-1961. In 1962, only 117 were rehabilitated. And in 1963 this number dropped to 55.

[34] Marc Elie, "Rehabilitation in the Soviet Union, 1953-1964: A Policy Unachieved," in McDermott, Stibbe, eds., *De-Stalinising Eastern Europe*, 32.

[35] Dobson, *Khrushchev's Cold Summer: Gulag Returnees, Crime, and the Fate of Reform After Stalin* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), 54, 59.

[36] Elie, "Rehabilitation in the Soviet Union," 30-33.

remained unrehabilitated until Gorbachev returned to the issue in the late 1980s.[37] Gorbachev's efforts to update the former decree on rehabilitation led to the cancelation of all sentences handed down by extra-judicial organs (the infamous "troikas" and special boards of the NKVD-MVD) in 1989. This resulted in the rehabilitation of 838,500 people and the reinstatement of 80,000 communists in the Party in one year alone.[38] The discourse on rehabilitation also shifted during this period to focus on restoring the "good name" of the repressed. However, despite improvements to the process of rehabilitation and the expansion of the definition of victim under Gorbachev, the single most important piece of legislation on rehabilitation was passed under Boris Yeltsin on the eve of the collapse of the Soviet Union. On October 18, 1991, the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR passed the law "On the Rehabilitation of Victims of Political Repression," which formed the basis of the rehabilitation of an additional 650,000 people.[39] Although the new law extended rehabilitation to new categories of victim, such as de-kulakized peasants, those subjected to deportation and forced internment in psychiatric facilities, it did not yet include children who were born in the camps, in exile, or otherwise suffered as victims of political repression.[40] Over the course of the 1990s, an increasing number of people

[37] Between 1962-1983 only 157,055 were rehabilitated. See, "Zapiska V. M. Chebrikova v TsK KPSS 'Ob ispol'zovanii arkhivov organov gosbezopasnosti,'" 3 June 1988, in A. Artizov, A. Kosakovskii, V. Naumov, I. Shevchuk, eds., *Reabilitatsiia: Kak eto bylo. Dokumenty Prezidiuma TsK KPSS i drugie materialy*, t. 3 Seredina 80-kh godov - 1991 Moskva: Mezhdunarodnyi Fond Demokratiia, 2004), 77.
[38] Adler, *Keeping Faith with the Party*, 184.
[39] Cathy A. Frierson, "Russia's Law 'On Rehabilitation of Victims of Political Repression': 1991-2011. An Enduring Artifact of Transitional Justice," working paper, National Council for Eurasian and East European Research, Feb. 28, 2014, https://scholars.unh.edu/history_facpub/342/.
[40] See, Zakon Rossiiskoi Sovetskoi Federativnoi Sotsialisticheskoi Respubliki, "O reabilitatsii zhertv politicheskoi repressii ot 18 oktiabria 1991 g." in V. Ia. Gribenko, ed., *Sbornik zakondatel'nykh i normativnykh aktov o repressiiakh i reabilitatsii zhertv politicheskikh repressii* (Moskva: Izd-vo Respublika, 1993), 194-204.

petitioned Memorial for help with obtaining rehabilitation, which contributed to the expansion of the definition of victim and the subsequent revision of the law on rehabilitation in 1993.[41] Although the data is incomplete, there were approximately 5,430 victims of political repression living in Komi as of 1998.[42]

This dissertation contributes to the growing historiography on Gulag returnees and the legacy of mass repression after Stalin.[43] Works by Alan Barenberg, Miriam Dobson, and Nanci Alder illuminate the liminal position Gulag returnees occupied in Soviet society and convincingly show that former prisoners were in fact able to reintegrate back into society after release.[44] While Barenberg's history of Vorkuta illustrates the porousness between the Gulag and the society that Gulag returnees re-entered upon release, my work presents new evidence that sheds new light not only on how Gulag returnees experienced life in Komi's towns but also how they laid the foundations for the future commemoration of its past. Dobson's work, which is limited to the years of Khrushchev's thaw, illuminates how Gulag returnees were perceived in the eyes of Soviet citizens who had not been imprisoned, as well as the ways in which

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[41] Frierson, 3. Frierson notes that the law on rehabilitation has been amended 16 times since its passage (1991-2011).

[42] This number is calculated on the basis of lists compiled using pension records and published by Fond Pokaianie in volume two of the Komi Republic book of memory, *Martirolog*. The lists are compiled by town and do not differentiate between categories of victim (prisoner, exile, special settler, child or family member of victims of repression), however, the biographical data accompanying each name enables us to identify Gulag returnees. See, G. V. Nevskii, ed., *Pokaianie: Martirolog*, t. 2, ch. 1 (Syktyvkar: Fond Pokaianie, 1999), 349-569.

[43] Adler, *The Gulag Survivor*; Amir Weiner, "The Empire Pays a Visit: Gulag Returnees, East European Rebellions, and Soviet Frontier Politics," *The Journal of Modern History* 78, no. 2 (June 2006): 333-376; Denis Kozlov, Eleonory Gilburd, eds., *The Thaw: Soviet Society and Culture in the 1950s and 1960s* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013); McDermott, Stibbe, eds., *De-Stalinising Eastern Europe*.

[44] Barenberg, *Gulag Town, Company Town*; Dobson, *Khrushchev's Cold Summer*; Adler, *Keeping Faith with the Party*.

former prisoners shaped the shifting political imaginary. Despite her illuminating examination of the petitions former prisoners wrote to Soviet authorities, these documents do not tell us much about how Gulag returnees felt about their experiences in the years after their release and how they incorporated their imprisonment into their life narratives. The autobiographical narratives presented in this dissertation defy Adler's contention that the "sentiments" of Gulag returnees who were not party members "require less complex explanation" because they did not need to justify their continuing faith in communism.[45] As we will see in the evidence I draw from in this dissertation, what ordinary Gulag returnees remembered, how they chose to represent it, and their motivations for doing so were no less complex.

The late 1980s was not the first time that the Party and Soviet society attempted to come to terms with the Stalinist past. Polly Jones's and Alexander Etkind's studies of Soviet cultural memory after Stalin's death show the diverse approaches that the state and society employed in coming to terms with the legacy of mass repression during the Soviet and post-Soviet periods.[46] While the individuals examined in this dissertation drew from previously established genres of cultural memory, their autobiographical narratives went far beyond those written during the Thaw of the late 1950s and 1960s and established a new baseline for understanding the full scale and legacy of Stalinist repression. Furthermore, those who wrote in the late-Soviet and post-Soviet periods were a more diverse group. And finally, when seen from the provinces rather than the center the past

[45] Adler, *Keeping Faith with the Party*, 5.
[46] Polly Jones, *Myth, Memory, Trauma: Rethinking the Stalinist Past in the Soviet Union, 1953-1970* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013). Alexander Etkind, *Warped Mourning: Stories of the Undead in the Land of the Unburied* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013).

looks somewhat different. The previously unavailable personal archives Gulag returnees donated to local history museums and branches of Memorial that form the basis of this work ask us to examine at a more local level how the so-called "victims of political repression" continued to shape the production of cultural memory in the provinces long after the national obsession with the past began to fade into the background following the collapse of the Soviet Union.[47]

Autobiographical narratives, such as memoirs, letters, memoir-letters, and questionnaires, were the predominant medium Gulag returnees used to communicate their life stories. Examining these texts requires us to consider the conventions of genre and the cultural contexts that informed their content. I define autobiography as a retrospective, first-person narrative of one's life.[48] While acknowledging the differences in form between autobiography and memoir, following the work of Leona Toker and Irina Paperno, I use the terms interchangeably to describe Gulag returnees' autobiographical narratives that combine elements of both forms to reconstruct the life of the individual and the community they formed.[49] I also use the term autobiographical

[47] Anatoly M. Khazanov, "Whom too Mourn and Whom to Forget? (Re)constructing Collective Memory in Contemporary Russia," *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 9, no. 2-3 (Jun.-Sept. 2008): 293-310. Khazanov links the decline in interest in coming to terms with the past to shifts in politics, which dramatically oversimplifies and overlooks much of the local production of cultural memory that influences and is influenced by central policies emanating from Moscow.

[48] This definition is inspired by the works of John Paul Eakin (discussed below) and James S. Amelang. See, James S. Amelang, *The Flight of Icarus: Artisan Autobiography in Early Modern Europe* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998).

[49] Leona Toker, *Return From the Archipelago: Narratives of Gulag Survivors* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000); Paperno, *Stories of the Soviet Experience*, xiii. Regarding the hybridity of the Gulag memoir genre, Toker explains, "autobiography emphasizes authorial identity and memoir focuses on the public-interest data that the author has been in a position to store" (82). Paperno writes: "Memoirs, like other autobiographical texts, are retrospective narratives of individual life. What distinguishes memoirs from autobiographies (scholars maintain) is their emphasis on the negotiation between the self and community. Memoirs define themselves as accounts of lives embedded in a social matrix" (xiii).

narrative to describe the primitive autobiographies Gulag returnees composed in the questionnaires they completed for Memorial. While these narratives were produced in response to set questions, Gulag returnees sometimes elaborated on their answers, going beyond what was asked of them. I likewise refer to the art that Gulag returnees created as a form of autobiographical testimony. My broad application of these terms is intended to include more texts in my analysis with the goal of illuminating the various autobiographical forms that Gulag returnees used to testify about the unwritten past.[50]

My dissertation builds on and complicates the work of several literary scholars who have written on the Gulag. In her literary analysis of the corpus of memoirs produced by several generations of survivors, Leona Toker describes Gulag memoirs as a genre-hybrid in which the camps occupy a central place with all other narrative details "leading down to that nadir."[51] Yet, I have found that many of these narratives—including those left unpublished—by ordinary political prisoners, the camps are but a chapter of the life story they tell. Another key feature of this genre that we will see is the tension between individual and collective concerns. In writing about their pasts, Gulag returnees felt it imperative to combat the oblivion imposed by the regime, which attempted to erase its victims from history and only decades later began to "rehabilitate" them on a limited basis.[52] In addition to bringing individual lives into the public sphere

[50] I am supported in my approach by others who have also adopted a broad definition of camp literature. See for example, Andrea Gullotta, *Intellectual Life and Literature at Solovki 1923-1930: The Paris of the Northern Concentration Camps* (Cambridge: Legenda, 2018).
[51] Toker, 73.
[52] Ibid, 77. On rehabilitation and the politics of memory in former-Soviet countries, see, Ian Rachinskii, ed., *Reabilitatsiia i pamiat': Otnoshenie k zhertvam sovetskikh politicheskikh repressii v stranakh byvshego SSSR* (Moskva: Memorial-Zven'ia, 2016).

and forming "textual communities," Irina Paperno argues that victims of repression who wrote memoirs in the late 1980s and 1990s claimed legitimacy as sources of historical testimony by placing "I" in a certain context (the Gulag) and tracing their origins to a formative moment in personal life and history.[53] While the personal testimonies examined in this dissertation include many of these motifs, they present us with something new: friendship, resistance, and the formation of the camp brotherhood.

Another important aspect of this dissertation highlights the identities that former prisoners constructed for themselves. While most did not identify themselves as being dissidents, they did construct an identity that was outside of the predominant ideological discourses of Soviet society and the state. In my examination of Gulag returnees' autobiographical texts, I draw from John Paul Eakin's conceptions of autobiographical selves as, "defined by and transacted in narrative process."[54] Such an approach highlights the intersection between memory and identity as it is reconstructed and enacted in the process of remembering. Although some wrote about their lives prior to arrest, the majority of subjects examined in this dissertation only wrote about their lives in the camps and after release. In attempting to bridge two chapters of their lives, life in the camps and life after release, my subjects often highlight the tension between the two parts of their lives, their two selves. While the idiosyncrasies of individual lives make

[53] Irina Paperno, *Stories of the Soviet Experience* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), 17, 25. On diaries, memoirs, autobiographical narratives and the formation of textual communities, see also, Barbara Walker, "On Reading Soviet Memoirs: A History of the 'Contemporaries' Genre as an Institution of Russian Intelligentsia Culture from the 1790s to the 1970s," *The Russian Review* 59 (July 2000): 327-352; Benjamin Nathans, "Talking Fish: On Soviet Dissident Memoirs," *The Journal of Modern History* 87 (Sept. 2015): 579-614.

[54] John Paul Eakin, *How Our Lives Become Stories: Making Selves* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999). See also, Jerome Bruner, *Acts of Meaning* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990).

generalization difficult, it can be said that every one of the former prisoners examined in this work connected their sense of self to the community of Gulag returnees they bonded with in, and after release from, the camps. The Gulag alone did not define them. Exploring the tensions, silences, and overlaps in the stories they tell about themselves and how they chose to represent their experiences is a part of the process of remembering that I illuminate in this dissertation.

Theories of collective and cultural memory inform my analysis. While these terms are sometimes used interchangeably, they represent two distinct approaches to the study of memory. I employ Maurice Halbwachs's theory of collective memory in reference to the socially constructed memory Gulag returnees produced in their autobiographical narratives, which informed cultural memory.[55] By contrast, the term cultural memory emphasizes the artifacts individuals, institutions, and societies use to reconstruct and represent the past in particular socio-cultural contexts.[56] Cultural memory, as Aleida Assmann writes, unites memory (the contemporized past), culture, and the group (society), which enables the past to be reconstructed and transmitted to future generations who are far removed from the event.[57] In other words, cultural

[55] Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, ed., trans., Lewis A Coser (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992).
[56] On cultural memory see, Jan Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian: The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism*, in *The Collective Memory Reader*, eds., Jeffrey K. Olick, Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi, Daniel Levy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 209-215. Assmann writes, "The concept of cultural memory comprises that body of reusable texts, images, and rituals specific to each society in each epoch, whose 'cultivation' serves to stabilize and convey that society's self-image." This is the stuff of which unity and identity are collectively constructed in a society's understanding of itself in the past. See also, Assmann, "Transformations between History and Memory," 55-56.
[57] Aleida Assmann, John Czaplicka, "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity," *New German Critique*, no. 65 (Spring/Summer 1995): 125-133.

memory expands the focus of inquiry from specific groups to larger communities of memory, including those who had not been repressed.[58]

Building on and moving beyond Alexander Etkind's conception of the "hardware" (monuments) and "software" (texts, memoirs, histories, literature) at work in the production of cultural memory, I highlight the infrastructure of memory in Komi, which links cultural memory to the lived environment. While Etkind's metaphor aptly describes the interdependency between software and hardware in the production of cultural memory, his analysis his definition of monument is too narrow.[59] Memory, identity, and place, as Luissa Passerini and others have written, are fundamentally interconnected.[60] The infrastructure of memory, as Iwona Zarecka-Irwin writes, is not only built on texts, artifacts, and monuments, but also encompasses the spaces people use to remember the past.[61] Taking this concept a step further, I argue that Gulag memoirs

[58] Astrid Erll, Ansgar Nünning, eds., *A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010), 5. Erll writes, "Just as socio-cultural contexts shape individual memories, a 'memory' which is represented by media and institutions must be actualized by individuals, by members of a community of remembrance, who may be conceived of as *points de vue* (Maurice Halbwachs) on shared notions of the past. Without such actualizations, monuments, rituals, and books are nothing but dead material, failing to have any impact in societies." See also, Adrian Forty, Susan Küchler, eds., *The Art of Forgetting* (Oxford: Berg, 1999).

[59] On the interplay between the two ideas and their usage in studies of Soviet and post-Soviet memory, see, Etkind, *Warped Mourning*, 40.

[60] Luisa Passerini, ed., *International Yearbook of Oral History and Life Stories* vol. 1, *Memory and Totalitarianism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 8; Pierre Nora, *Realms of Memory: The Construction of the French Past*, trans., Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992); Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

[61] Irwin-Zarecka, *Frames of Remembrance*, 13. Irwin-Zarecka describes the infrastructure of collective memory as, all the different spaces, objects, 'texts' that make an engagement with the past possible." While, Irwin-Zarecka was referencing Pierre Nora's "*les lieux de mémoire*," as I show in the final chapter this infrastructure includes the landscape of the lived environment, which was transformed by Gulag returnees' memoirs from monuments to Socialist labor to memorials to the Gulag.

transformed the buildings, railroads, and other infrastructures prisoners built in Komi from monuments to socialist labor into monuments to political repression.

In his analysis of the instability of post-Soviet memory of Stalinist repression, Etkind points to the lack of hardware anchoring the content of soft memory to the landscape. While this instability has created a space for more state-friendly agents of memory, such as the Russian Orthodox Church under Putin, which have attempted to co-opt commemoration of political repression, they have been less successful than scholars focusing on Moscow, St. Petersburg, and the Solovetsky Islands would make it seem.[62] Upon closer examination, we see a much more vibrant memory landscape in which the secular language of commemoration established by civil associations such as Memorial, Fond Pokaianie, and the Sakharov Center is the primary means through which the past is commemorated and understood twenty-seven years after the collapse of the Soviet Union.[63]

The archives this dissertation is based on are disperse. They can be found in local history museums, art galleries, libraries, and branches of Memorial throughout Komi.[64] Some of them are even kept in the National Archive of the Komi Republic (NARK).

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[62] For such works, see, Zuzanna Bogumił, Dominique Moran & Elly Harrowell, "Sacred or Secular? 'Memorial', the Russian Orthodox Church, and the Contested Commemoration of Soviet Repressions," *Europe-Asia Studies* 67, no. 9, (November 2015): 1416–1444; Zuzanna Bogumił, *Gulag Memories: The Rediscovery and Commemoration of Russia's Repressive Past* (New York: Berghahn, 2018); Karin Hyldal Christensen, *The Making of the New Martyrs of Russia: Soviet Repression in Orthodox Memory* (New York: Routledge, 2018).

[63] For works that examine memory in Russia's regions, see, Bogumił, *Gulag Memories*; Wilson T. Bell, "Tomsk regional identity and the legacy of the Gulag and Stalinist Repression," in *Russia's Regional Identities: The Power of the Provinces*, Edith W. Clowes, et. al., (London: Routledge, 2018): 206-225; Anne White, "The Memorial Society in the Russian Provinces," *Europe-Asia Studies* 47, no. 8, 1995: 1343-1366.

[64] Pieces of the Memorial archive can be found in local history museums and in the private collections of its founding members.

This reflects the very real way that the Soviet machinery of state repression scattered individuals throughout Komi's taiga and tundra. When we connect the dots representing these archives on the map, we draw the outline of Komi's camp infrastructure. Thus, to work in these archives is, in a sense, to return to the sites of memory and to see the remnants of these physical and representational spaces that former prisoners documented in their autobiographical narratives.

I sought out these non-state archives out of frustration with the restrictions I encountered at the National Archive of the Komi Republic. Although I found plenty of interesting documents, including the minutes of local party meetings, reports from the political departments of Komi's camps, camp newspapers, and even correspondence between local camp officials and party bosses in Syktyvkar, these sources told me very little about this history form the prisoner's perspective. When I discovered the richness of the archival holdings of Komi's local history museums, I began to realize that perhaps this was what the former prisoners I was trying to study had intended. After all, they did not send their precious documents, photographs, and manuscripts to state and party authorities who were the heirs to the system that they testified against, they sent them to branches of the Memorial Society and museums in Syktyvkar, Ukhta, Sosnogorsk, Pechora, Inta, and Vorkuta.

Far from every Gulag returnee wrote a memoir. The local, non-state archives I worked in attest to this. While some files include letters, memoirs, art, questionnaires, postcards, prisoner files, party cards, certificates of rehabilitation, and an array of other documents accrued over a lifetime, others contain only a page-length autobiography,

certificate of rehabilitation, and a photograph. Wherever possible, I included images of these documents as well as photographs of the former prisoners themselves to strengthen the connection between the people and the story they tell.

This dissertation is composed of five chapters and a conclusion. Chronologically, it takes us from the peak of glasnost in 1987 to 2018. Despite the more recent nature of this history, the story it tells sheds new light on earlier periods of Soviet history through the eyes of those the state repressed and then attempted to rehabilitate in its waning years. This dissertation is not a history of the Gulag in Komi, rather it aims to make the colossal nature of political repression accessible by grounding it in the complexities of individuals who survived it in order to better understand the legacy of this history in the places where it transpired. Although the research presented in this dissertation focuses on the Komi Republic, the story I tell is emblematic of processes and pasts that unfolded throughout the world's first socialist state as it came to an end.

Chapter one describes the emergence of the Memorial movement in Syktyvkar in 1987, which founded an institution that former prisoners could write to without fear of persecution. The flood of correspondence that Memorial received during the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s formed the basis of an archive that represented the perspectives of the survivors of Stalinist repression. Working with these never before examined letters to Syktyvkar Memorial, I explore the institutionalization of Gulag returnees' collective memory. I show how their first attempts at telling what happened to them shaped the knowledge that this civic organization was able to collect and produce. This chapter also explores how the "repressed" not only shaped the developing cultural memory of the

Gulag in Komi, but also the definitions of "victim" and "rehabilitated."

Chapter two examines the shared themes, concerns, and conflicts of the corpus of Gulag memoirs written by Gulag returnees from Komi, most of which remain unpublished. I argue that Gulag returnees responded to the collapse of the Soviet Union by writing memoirs about their lives in captivity and after release, in which they sought to write themselves into Soviet history at its end. During this revolutionary period, former prisoners traced themselves back to a formative moment in their personal lives and constructed their identities in autobiographical memoirs. "We" and "I" are frequently interchanged and interspersed throughout Gulag returnees' memoirs. Highlighting the connection between the individual and the collective, their autobiographical narratives illuminate their belonging to a "brotherhood of *zeks*," a collective of "our own" (*svoi*), which was a core component of their identities.

Chapter three transitions from the camp brotherhood to focus on an individual's testimony. It presents a case study of an ordinary political prisoner who never left Komi. On the basis of Konstantin Ivanov's personal archive, 154 letters he wrote to the Vorkuta Museum-Exhibition Center, and 53 artworks he created to represent his memories of the camp, I illustrate the process of remembering and address two major issues: how those who survived the brunt of Stalinist violence experienced life after release, and how they defined themselves when finally given the chance in the last years of the Soviet Union. Prior to glasnost, Ivanov never wrote about the camps, choosing to put that most painful chapter of his life behind him. However, during glasnost and after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Ivanov, an artist by training, drew those parts of his life which he could not

bear to write about in detail and wrote about his life after release in letters he sent to the Vorkuta Museum-Exhibition Center. Despite the relative openness of the post-Soviet period Ivanov struggled to write about the camps. In this way, Ivanov is an outlier. He serves as a counterexample to those former prisoners who were empowered by the collapse of the Soviet Union to write memoirs. Ivanov was driven by his attachment to the region where he was once imprisoned, and his desire to ensure that his fellow zeks and their contributions to the transformation of Vorkuta, from prison camp into a Soviet city, were commemorated in history.

Chapter four presents a very different case study of a Gulag returnee who left Komi for Moscow after serving more than fifteen years behind barbed wire and in exile. Elena Markova represented her past in a completely different way in her memoir, poetry, and the interviews I conducted with her in 2017. Markova explores what happens to one's sense of self in the camps and repeatedly asks, "How did I remain a human being?" In answering this question, Markova provides an example of a former prisoner who was at the same time a part of – and estranged from – Soviet society. Unlike other Gulag returnees who at least attempted to identify themselves as Soviet people after they were released, Markova rejected this label and explored the ways in which her Gulag experience shaped her and the community of *zeks* that she belonged to. Although she did not identify as a Soviet person, Markova was not anti-Soviet and was proud of her country. This chapter, like the previous one, analyzes unique features of Markova's testimony and explores themes raised in the corpus of Gulag returnees' memoirs examined in chapter two.

Chapter five examines the expansive coverage on political repression in Komi newspapers from the late 1980s to the early 2000s and illustrates the ways in which Gulag returnees and those who had not been repressed came to terms with the past. It tracks the development of an infrastructure of memory through Komi newspapers. What happened, who were the victims and the perpetrators, and how it all should be remembered posed intense dilemmas that played out in the local press. How were people supposed to view former "enemies of the people" who were now "victims of political repression?" Who was to blame for the mounting physical evidence of mass death that was literally being unearthed throughout Komi? Addressing these issues, how the public understood the past, remembered it, and commemorated it, tells us much about the legacy of the Gulag and Stalinist repression and its place in cultural memory during a revolutionary moment in Soviet and post-Soviet history.

The conclusion discusses the state of cultural memory in Komi today and new memory projects in Moscow developed by the Russian state, Memorial, and the State Museum of the Gulag History. As we will see, the process of remembering the Gulag is an ongoing one, which is influenced by the infrastructure of memory developed in the regions of the Soviet Union and the Russian Federation during the late 1980s and 1990s. However, the civil associations that previously played the predominate role in commemorating the past have faced serious challenges from the state since Putin's election to a third term as president in 2012. Despite these challenges, which have affected Fond Pokaianie as well, the project of remembering the past continues in Komi

with new museum exhibits, memorial markers, and research that sheds new light on the Gulag and its legacy.

CHAPTER ONE

Letters to Syktyvkar Memorial and the Making of a New Archive: "Who will remember if I forget?"

Introduction

A year after its establishment, Peter Kotov wrote to Syktyvkar Memorial in June 1990. In his first of several letters, Kotov identified himself as a former prisoner of Komi's camps and asked what he could do to help.[65] Kotov served nine-years (1942-1951) in several camps in Komi, followed by seven more years in exile in Krasnoyarsk before he was rehabilitated and returned to his native Poland in 1958.[66] After returning home, Kotov kept regular correspondence with his former campmates back in the Soviet Union and wrote a memoir, which he sent to Syktyvkar Memorial in 1991. A passage from his memoir perfectly encapsulates why Kotov, like so many other former prisoners, wrote autobiographical narratives about their experiences in the camps and shared them with Syktyvkar Memorial:

> It is remarkable that the caves and stands of the first people still remain, but there are not any traces of the former camps for prisoners. And the prisoners' cemetery was so [well] hidden that if you did not know, you would never guess that this was ALSO A BURIAL-GROUND… […] It is clear that after the liquidation of Stalin's camps for prisoners, their creators and their guards quite intentionally worked on the liquidation of their traces, completely understanding that they committed crimes. Moreover, our duty, the responsibility of former prisoners of the Gulag who remain alive, consists in, to the degree possible, trying to raise from the dead the memory of what we lived through, to revive the memory of those people who remain forever in the hidden graves. As much memory is in a person, is as much humanity is in him.[67]

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[65] GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 12, l. 13 (P. Kotov to R. I. Pimenov, 25.06.1990).
[66] M. B. Rogachev, ed., *Pokaianie: Martirolog* t. 12, ch. 1 (Syktyvkar: Fond Pokaianie, 2016), 323.
[67] GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 163 l. 33 (P. Kotov, "Vospominanie. Ch. 3: V Adake," Gdansk, Poland 20.09.1991 - 8.10.1991).

For many former prisoners who wrote to Syktyvkar Memorial, so long as they could, it was their duty to remember and to write it all down as evidence of a system of mass repression that once linked the Soviet Union. As another former prisoner wrote from a small village in Komi to Syktyvkar Memorial in a two-page letter from 1989: "My life is an entire book and it's a shame that no one is interested while witnesses are still alive, after all the dead don't speak."[68] As we will see in the extensive correspondence between Syktyvkar Memorial and Gulag returnees, there was no shortage of interest in preserving their memories as evidence of Komi's unwritten history as one of the largest islands of the Gulag archipelago.

The emergence of Syktyvkar Memorial and the flood of letters they received from former prisoners raises several important questions. What motivated Gulag returnees to write after decades of silence? What did Gulag returnees reveal about themselves once they opened the floodgates of memory? How did this information affect the memory project to commemorate the victims of political repression? And how did they define themselves when finally given the chance?

This chapter investigates the institutionalization of Gulag returnees' collective memory. The letters, questionnaires, and memoirs Gulag returnees sent to Syktyvkar Memorial formed the basis of an archive, which made it possible to write an alternate history of the Soviet Union. While this chapter illustrates the development of the Syktyvkar Memorial Society and its search for Komi's camp past, it also reveals the

[68] GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 13, l. 25-26 (A. M. Stetsko to M. B. Rogachev, 22.08.1989).

importance of the nascent civil society that Gulag returnees formed after release. From the beginning, Syktyvkar Memorial relied upon Gulag returnees' social networks to collect as much material as possible for the archive. Gulag returnees themselves were motivated to participate in this memory project by their desire to contribute to the commemoration of the victims of political repression. Thus, as we will see, Gulag returnees fulfilled the roles of "ethnographer," eyewitness, and source.[69]

The launch of glasnost unintentionally created a space for a diverse group of Soviet citizens to form the first Memorial Society in Moscow in January 1989.[70] As the Soviet Union's first civic organization, Memorial petitioned for the construction of a memorial complex to commemorate the so-called "victims of political repression." The movement it sparked coalesced in response to two decrees issued by the Presidium of the Central Committee aimed at completing the rehabilitation of "groundlessly repressed persons" as part of the "restoration of justice."[71] The decrees ordered the KGB,

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[69] Etkind, *Warped Mourning*. Etkind refers to the camp intellectuals who wrote memoirs as "lay ethnographers" (82). See also, Toker, *Return From The Archipelago*, 77. Toker describes the act of collecting data in the camps was an act of resistance to camp authorities control of information. However, we can take this a step further. Gulag returnees' long-term collection of data is indicative of their plans for a larger memory project beyond the scope of their individual autobiography.

[70] Although Memorial Moscow emerged in 1987, it was not registered as an "informal" organization until 1989. GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3797, op. 1, d. 57, ll. 3 ("K uchreditel'noi konferentsii," *Vedomosti Memoriala*, Jan. 28, 1989); Natal'ia Baryshnikova, Sergei Bondarenko, Kiril Kozhanov, Nikita Lomakin, Aleksei Makarov, "Pamiat' v proekte" http://project.memo.ru [re-accessed 9.12.17]; Stephen Kotkin, "Terror, Rehabilitation, and Historical Memory: An Interview with Dimitrii Iurasov," *Russian Review*, Vol. 51, No. 2, April 1992: 238-262.

[71] The decrees were issued on July 11, 1988 and January 5, 1989. For the text of these decrees, see, Artizov, Kosakovskii, Naumov, Shevchuk, eds., *Reabilitatsiia: Kak eto bylo*, t. 3, http://www.alexanderyakovlev.org/fond/issues/62100. On the history of the development of the Soviet and Russian legal category of "Rehabilitation" see, A. L. Konov, "K istorii priniatiia rossiiskogo Zakona 'O reabilitatsii zhertv politicheskikh repressii'" in *Reabilitatsiia i pamiat': Otnoshenie k zhertvam sovetskikh politicheskikh repressii v stranakh byvshevgo SSSR,* ed., Ian Rachinskii, (Moskva: Memorial-Zven'ia, 2016), 5-28. Eventually the flood of those in need of rehabilitation grew to such proportions by 1989 that the KGB and MVD recommended to the Procuracy and the Supreme Soviet the cancellation of all

Procuracy, and regional party committees to review the cases of repressed persons who were subject to rehabilitation.[72] As the public response to glasnost grew, Soviet citizens founded branches of Memorial in other parts of the country.[73]

By 1990, there were five branches of the Memorial Society in Komi. All but one, Syktyvkar, were located in cities that were founded by forced labor: Vorkuta, Inta, Sosnogorsk, and Ukhta.[74] These regional branches were organized by coalitions of activists, former prisoners, and their relatives who seized the moment to investigate Stalin's crimes and commemorate the victims of political repression. On April 20, 1989, the Syktyvkar Executive Committee (Gorispolkom) registered the "Syktyvkar volunteer historical-enlightenment Memorial Society," granting the organization permission to meet and to begin collecting information, funds, and signatures for the construction of a memorial complex to the victims of political repression in Syktyvkar, which was realized in 2000.[75] Throughout the 1990s, Syktyvkar Memorial's team of historians,

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sentences issued by extra-judicial organs regardless of whether one submitted an application for rehabilitation or not (8-9).

[72] Smith, *Remembering Stalin's Victims*, 143. Smith writes, "By the spring of 1991, a representative of the Moscow Procuracy claimed that it had resolved 90 percent of its cases that involved sentences by nonjudicial bodies – a large share of its 100,000 cases subject to review" (142). Ultimately, this would turn out to be a fraction of those eligible for rehabilitation after the law was expanded in 1993.

[73] On the spread of Memorial to Russia's regions, see, Anne White, "The Memorial Society in the Russian Provinces," *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 47, No. 8, 1995, 1343-1366; Nanci Adler, *Victims of Soviet Terror: The Story of the Memorial Movement* (Westport, Conn: Praeger, 1993); Margarita Masliukova Ekaterina Mel'nikova, Ekaterina Pavlenko, "Memorial: Epizod I," International Memorial Society [accessed Feb. 12, 2019] http://prequel.memo.ru/about.

[74] Unfortunately, not all of the archives for these local branches of Memorial have survived and most are scattered throughout Komi, making a systematic study of the Memorial movement throughout all of Komi very difficult.

[75] GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3797, op. 1, d. 24, l. 5-6 (R. I. Pimenov to O. A. Gorlanov, 1.07.1989). I analyze this monument in chapter five.

anthropologists, archaeologists, and archivists worked with other branches in Komi to build a people's archive on the history of the Gulag and political repression.[76]

The establishment of Syktyvkar Memorial created a place where former prisoners could write to about their pasts without fear. Gulag returnees trusted Memorial with their stories and their requests for rehabilitation because it was independent of the state. They also trusted Memorial because former prisoners were among its most prominent members. Over the course of 1989-2002 Syktyvkar Memorial met with thousands of people at public receptions held twice weekly at the city's administration building and received hundreds of letters from a diverse array of former prisoners, special settlers, family members of purge victims, as well as children who were born in labor camps and on special settlements – all victims of political repression under the law.[77] Due to the incomplete archival record, it is difficult to say exactly how many letters Syktyvkar Memorial received. However, it is likely the number of letters they received is in the thousands.[78] The letters range in length from a single paragraph to multiple letters of 5-10 pages. The majority of them were written from 1989-1994 by former prisoners.

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[76] Archival collections do not exist for the other Memorial branches. Many of their documents were divided among various, local history museums in Komi or lost.

[77] M. B. Rogachev (Chairman of Fond Pokaianie), interview with the author, Dec. 7, 2017, Syktyvkar, Russia. The group kept no running total of rehabilitated persons, making the exact number difficult to estimate with the exception of estimations documented in in Komi newspapers. The number of letters is likely significantly higher. However, due to the constraints and limited resources of the time, Syktyvkar Memorial's archive of these letters is incomplete. See, Arkhiv Fonda Pokaianie (AFP) (K. Markizov, "Minui nas chasha sia," *Panorama stolitsy*, Sept. 23, 1999). This article reports that the Syktyvkar Commission for the Restoration of the Rights of Victims of Political Repression organized by the Governor of Komi rehabilitated 1,594 people in 1996 and 1884 in 1999.

[78] I have collected every file of correspondence available in the Syktyvkar Memorial/Fond Pokaianie archive. The files contain 790 pages of letters over 10 files spanning 1989-1997. This does not include the memoirs of various lengths and archival documents, including certificates of rehabilitation, questionnaires, and other documents of a personal nature that were sent to Syktyvkar Memorial's archive, which is now in part in the holdings of the National Archive of the Komi Republic.

Although many of these people left the region after they were rehabilitated in the 1950s, many Gulag returnees wrote to Syktyvkar Memorial from towns and villages in Komi where they were once prisoners. Interestingly, all of their letters exhibit a keen sense of place that illuminates an attachment to the region which was once a place of imprisonment for them.

For many former prisoners, writing letters to Syktyvkar Memorial was the first time they wrote about their pasts and shared it with anyone.[79] As a result, some former prisoners wrote only a few lines in the genre of the "file autobiography," a document that Soviet people periodically wrote over the course of their lives for promotions, changes of employment, or entrance into the Party.[80] When they finally revealed who they were, they addressed their prior silence as a matter of fact; the past was simply too dangerous to discuss before glasnost. Since this was a relatively new activity for many, some

[79] While Gulag prisoners did write letters to family and to Soviet authorities for release, there are many silences in these letters. When they finally wrote full accounts of their lives in the camps and after release in the late 1980s and 1990s, many emphasized that they had not told anyone about the camps, except for fragments they shared with their families. For a discussion of letters from the camp as a potentially misleading source, see former prisoner E. V. Markova's memoir, *Vorkutinskye zametki katorzhanki "E-105"* (Syktyvkar, Fond Pokaianie, 2005), 70-71. On reading between the lines of camp letters, see Arsenii Formakov, *Gulag Letters*, ed., trans., Emily D. Johnson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017).

[80] For an example of this type of autobiographical document written by a Gulag returnee who remained in Ukhta after she was released, see, Personal archive of Kaleria Anatol'evna Savel'eva, l. 33 (Moia avtobiografiia, 1953-4), l. 99-100 (Avtobiografiia, 1965). For instance, Savel'eva wrote in 1965: "As a fourth-year student, I was repressed in 1937 and sent to Ukhtizhemlag where I worked as a medic. I was released in 1945. From 1945 to 1946, I worked as a nurse at the clinic administered by the camp administration in Vetlosian. I left to finish my medical training. From 1946 to 1948, I studied at the Arkhangel'sk Medical Institute. From there, I was sent to Nar'ian-Mar in Arkhangel'sk province where I was contracted to work as the head of the hospital until 1951. In 1951, I returned to Ukhta to work at the Ukhta Central Hospital, where I work at the present. I was rehabilitated on November 4, 1955 by the Military Tribunal of the Moscow Military District (No. N-3555/os). In 1936, my husband, Shmatov E. L., born 1905, was repressed and sent to Magadan where he died in 1938. He was rehabilitated posthumously on August 16, 1957 by decree of the Military Collegium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR (No. 001504/37)." For an analysis of these documents from the 1950s-1970s, see, Yury Zaretskiy, "Confessing to Leviathan: The Mass Practice of Writing Autobiographies in the USSR," *Slavic Review*, Vol. 76, No. 4 (Winter 2017): 1027-1047.

struggled to find the words to describe their experiences, while others did not know what to write or how much to write about their lives in the Gulag and after release. Regardless of their ability or where they lived when the Soviet Union collapsed, Gulag returnees from Komi wrote to Syktyvkar Memorial to contribute their personal testimonies to the archive, to be rehabilitated, or simply to be heard.

This chapter contains three sections. Section one describes the development of Syktyvkar Memorial. Very quickly after it was founded, Syktyvkar Memorial became *the* organization that former prisoners trusted with their life stories. The information these autobiographical narratives provided fundamentally shaped Syktyvkar Memorial's investigation into the past. Section two examines the correspondence between Gulag returnees and Syktyvkar Memorial from 1989-1992. These letters illustrate the process of remembering that informed Gulag returnees' autobiographical narratives, which was shaped by a dialogue between former prisoners and Syktyvkar Memorial. Through an examination of these brief autobiographical narratives we see what Gulag returnees felt was most important to know about their experiences and how they defined themselves. Section three examines the letters Syktyvkar Memorial received from 1993-1997. During this period, special settlers and the so-called "children of the Gulag" began to write as well. While these letters primarily consisted of requests for rehabilitation, they illustrate the challenges victims faced as they found themselves under the jurisdiction of newly independent states following the collapse of the Soviet Union.

The Founding of Syktyvkar Memorial

Just days prior to the Syktyvkar Executive Committee's decision, Syktyvkar Memorial held its founding conference on April 16, 1989. The conference was the subject of a long article in the central Komi newspaper, *Molodezh' Severa*, which reported that 100 of the 170 people in attendance voted to adopt the organization's charter. As *Molodezh' Severa* informed its readers, Syktyvkar Memorial planned to erect a monument to the victims of repression and to build an archive of survivors' testimonies.[81] In addition to these long-term goals, the organization called upon party officials to adopt a more comprehensive definition of victim that included non-party members and other categories of repressed, such as former prisoners, kulaks, exiles, children born in camps, and "family members of enemies of the people." The article read, "having paid for [our] freedom, they should not fall out of history."[82] Since one of the most important goals of Syktyvkar Memorial was the "education of the young generation," the program also called for the involvement of Komsomol activists who were noticeably absent from the conference.[83] The article concluded by underscoring the necessity of Memorial's historic mission for the future health of Soviet society: "Comprehending that our country was fraught with spy-mania, we must never allow this again. Having united people of various ages and professions, those who suffered from

[81] A. Nikolaeva, "Memorial: Sleduiushchii shag," *Molodezh' Severa*, Apr. 19, 1989. The newspaper underscored the popular support behind Syktyvkar Memorial: "On the popularity of Memorial, the numerous participants at the conference speaks for itself, those who consider it their duty to come up to the microphone and add their tasks… There was no shortage of suggestions." For the charter adopted by the All-Union Memorial Society in Moscow (Jan. 28, 1989), see, Adler, *Victims of Soviet Terror*, 141-150.
[82] Ibid. I examine the evolution of this category in chapter five, which provides an in-depth analysis of Komi newspapers.
[83] Ibid.

Stalinist tyranny, and members of their family at its founding conference, Memorial's main tasks are the preservation of the memory of the victims of Stalinism and the restoration of historical justice."[84]

Despite all its enthusiasm about the founding of Syktyvkar Memorial, the article did not elaborate on the local origins of the organization. However, as we learn from a letter from its first chairman, mathematician and former prisoner Revol't Pimenov, Syktyvkar Memorial's origins directly linked to the past they sought to uncover.[85] In a letter to a colleague dated June 12, 1989, Pimenov described the origins of Syktyvkar Memorial as a unification of Komi's past and future: "When did the groups arise…? One group, not open to the public, was virtually born from the date I was exiled here, reasonably considered sometime in the mid-1970s. The other, composed of youth, arose independently in the spring-summer of 1988."[86]

Despite the fact that Syktyvkar Memorial's mission seemed to contribute to glasnost's aim of overcoming the Stalinist past, not everyone was pleased with the movement's arrival in Syktyvkar. As Pimenov noted in his letter, the central Komi newspaper, *Krasnoe znamia*, received letters of protest which accused Memorial of "attempts to honor Banderites and Vlasovites" and demanded "that not one stone be laid

[84] A. Nikolaeva, "Memorial: Sleduiushchii shag," *Molodezh' Severa*, Apr. 19, 1989.
[85] Pimenov was arrested for organizing an illegal "anti-Soviet organization" that protested Stalinist repression and the Soviet Union's actions in Hungary in 1956. He was arrested in 1957 and sentenced to 10 years imprisonment under article 58-11. He spent five years in various camps before he was released form Vladimir Prison No.2 in 1963. He returned to Leningrad, where he was re-arrested and sentenced to five years of exile in Komi in 1970. He was rehabilitated posthumously in 1991. For his biography, see, Rogachev, ed., *Pokaianie: Martirolog*, t. 12, ch. 2, 119.
[86] GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3797, op. 1, d. 24, ll. 4-5 (R. I. Pimenov to O. Gorlanov, 12.06.1989).

in their honor."[87] Despite this conservative backlash in the press, Pimenov noted that local authorities – namely the KGB – exhibited a cautious tolerance of Memorial: "The authorities' attitude [toward us] is determined, firstly, by their firm conviction that Bobrakov and Zil'berg (members of the board of Memorial) are actually secret members of the "Democratic Union," and that Pimenov is a "an anti-Soviet twice over."[88] However, Pimenov continued, "information coming from the central press has convinced me that the Memorial movement is legal, or at least looks legal."[89] This uncertainty, which ultimately created a window of opportunity for Syktyvkar Memorial, was also felt by former prisoners who were initially hesitant about actively participating in Memorial. Pimenov wrote, "[We are] almost a nonentity. Very few people are interested, even fewer people actively participate. Former repressed persons are afraid, and the only thing that entices them is hope of material help from Memorial."[90] As we will see, Pimenov's first impressions of Gulag returnees' willingness to participate in Memorial were incorrect.

While Syktyvkar Memorial met, concerned citizens of Vorkuta and Ukhta were at work organizing independent branches in April 1989. In Ukhta, approximately 150 people gathered at founding conference of the Ukhta-Pechora Memorial Society. In

[87] Ibid, 4. This was a shared concern among conservative members of Soviet society who saw attempts to come to terms with the past as "blackening" the patriotic history of the country and saw mass rehabilitation of victims and the erection of monuments to all victims of political repression as seditious. For other examples of such letters to the editor, see, GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 12, l. 1-2 ("Vse li zhertvy?" *Sovetskaia Chuvashiia*, June 18, 1989); f. GU RK NARK 2 P-3800, op. 1, d. 13, l. 6-12. (Mikhail Egorovich Khudoev, "I palach i zhertva," *Molodezh' Severa,* March 27, 1989). The terms "Banderites" and "Vlasovites" were the pejorative names given to followers of Stepan Bandera and Andrei Vlasov who led bands of local troops against the Red Army during the Second World War. In the postwar year these names became shorthand for fascists and traitors.
[88] GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3797, op. 1, d. 24, l. 5 (R. I. Pimenov to O. Gorlanov, 12.06.1989).
[89] Ibid.
[90] Ibid.

addition to collecting materials on the history of Ukhtpechlag and Ukhtizhemlag, Ukhta-Pechora Memorial sought to "reveal the location and contents of the nameless graves, in which thousands of innocent people are buried."[91] As we will see, naming victims and marking sites of memory was an impetus to write for former prisoners who weren't interested in writing a memoir to finally break their silence. Yet, the opening of new branches was not the only sign that Memorial movement had arrived in Komi. As *Molodezh' Severa* enthusiastically reported, Memorial's ideas spread to "the most remote corners of the republic" where "evenings of memory" dedicated to the "victims of Stalin's repressions" were held, which included singing songs from the 1930s-40s, reciting poems, and sharing memories of those killed in the camps.[92]

As the movement gained traction, word spread outside the borders of the Soviet Union to countries of the Warsaw Pact. Having read about Memorial and Pimenov's election to the Congress of People's Deputies, former prisoner Petr Kotov wrote to Syktyvkar Memorial from Gdansk, Poland. In his letter from June 1990, Kotov wrote to Pimenov, "The fact of your election as a deputy is very reassuring news, which is indicative of the change in the relationship to people of your fate on the part of the electorate of the Soviet Union."[93] On July 31, 1990, the deputy chairman of Syktyvkar Memorial, Mikhail Rogachev, replied to Kotov, "Revol't Ivanovich Pimenov was indeed elected as a Peoples' Deputy of Russia. Moreover, he beat his opponent with a great

[91] A. Nikolaeva, "Memorial: Sleduiushchii shag," *Molodezh' Severa*, Apr. 19, 1989. See also, A. I. Terent'ev, V. Bulychev, "Khotelos' by vsekh poimenno nazvat'," *Ukhta*, Feb. 22, 1989; V. Bulychev, ed., *V nedrakh Ukhtpechlaga* (Ukhta: Ukhtinskaia tipografiia "Memorial," 1989).
[92] Ibid. It is unclear whether they sang songs from the camps. Although it is doubtful that they did since many political prisoners saw the course language of these songs as "uncultured."
[93] GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 12, l. 13 (Petr Kotov to R. I. Pimenov, 25.06.1990).

majority. It is especially significant, that the very people who voted for him, were those who did not give him their vote in the [previous] election for Peoples' Deputy of the USSR out of fear of voting for a former prisoner. Pimenov is not the only former political prisoner, who has become a Peoples' Deputy of the RSFSR. Indeed, the times are changing."[94] The times were indeed changing. Not only was Pimenov elected as a People's Deputy, he was elected despite his candidate's biography, which listed his arrest and status as former political prisoner.[95]

As Syktyvkar Memorial began to receive letters from former prisoners from all over Komi and the Soviet Union over the course of 1989-1990, its archive grew and its mission came into focus. Many of these letters illustrate the uncertainty among former prisoners about what Memorial did. The letters Syktyvkar Memorial sent in response to these inquiries enable us to see the development of the memory project that Syktyvkar Memorial was engaged in. For instance, in a letter to a former prisoners in Kiev dated June 27, 1990, Rogachev explained Syktyvkar Memorial's work: "I consider our main task the collection of evidence of all the repressed from the Komi ASSR and to compile an all-encompassing martryology [*martirolog*], in order to preserve the memory of these people. We conduct research, collecting general facts regarding certain events and people."[96] In response to yet another inquiry about whom Memorial's members were and what they did, Rogachev explained that the society was made up of a group of 15

[94] GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 12, l. 15 (M. B. Rogachev to P. Kotov, 31.07.1990).
[95] GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 7, l. 3 (Biography of Candidate for People's Deputy R. I. Pimenov, 3.05.1989)
[96] GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 12, ll. 8-9 (M. B. Rogachev to L. M. Gorodin, 27.06.1990).

concerned citizens who, in addition to conducting research, helped relatives "looking for the graves of their loved ones who died in our camps."[97]

УХТО-ПЕЧОРСКОЕ ОБЩЕСТВО
«МЕМОРИАЛ»

ЗА
ИСТОРИЧЕСКУЮ ПРАВДУ И СПРАВЕДЛИВОСТЬ
МНОГОУКЛАДНУЮ ЭКОНОМИКУ,
ПОДЛИННУЮ ДЕМОКРАТИЮ,
МНОГОПАРТИЙНУЮ СИСТЕМУ,
ГРАЖДАНСКИЙ МИР,
ДИСЦИПЛИНУ И ПОРЯДОК В СТРАНЕ.

ПРОТИВ
ЛЮБЫХ ФОРМ ТОТАЛИТАРНОГО РЕЖИМА
НАЦИОНАЛЬНОЙ НЕТЕРПИМОСТИ,
ШОВИНИЗМА,
МОНОПОЛИЙ ВО ВСЕХ СФЕРАХ ЖИЗНИ,
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A leaflet distributed by the Ukhta-Pechora Memorial Society in 1989 explains its mission and platform, lists its contact information and, most importantly, its status as a legally registered social organization. The leaflet reads in part: "The Ukhta-Pechora Memorial Society is for: truth about the past and justice, a mixed economy, genuine democracy, a multi-party system, civil society, discipline and order in the country. The Ukhta-Pechora Memorial Society is against: any form of totalitarian regime, ethnic intolerance, chauvinism, monopolies in all spheres of life, a disdainful attitude toward the law, and permissiveness. Yes, to Democracy! No to Totalitarianism!"[98]

The expansion of the Syktyvkar Memorial archive was not only the result of cooperation with other branches, but also a partnership with Gulag returnees in Komi and throughout the former Soviet Union.[99] This partnership was vital since Memorial still did not have state support or direct access to state archives six years after the collapse of the

[97] GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 12, l. 31 (M. B. Rogachev to V. G. Lipilin, 31.07.1990).
[98] AM UGTU f. Bulychev (listok Ukhto-Pechorskogo obshchestva 'Memorial', 1989-1990).
[99] GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 12, l. 4 (V. B. Ol'shevskii to M. B. Rogachev, 16.06.1990); Ibid,5 (M. B. Rogachev to V. B. Ol'shevskii, 29.06.1990); Ibid, 22-22a (V. Z. Siderskii to M. B. Rogachev, 5.07.1990); Ibid, 6-7 (L. M. Gorodin to M. B. Rogachev, 19.06.19900.

Soviet Union. In a letter to a former prisoner in Kiev, Rogachev asked for help collecting data for a Komi "Book of Memory":

> We finally intend to get down to work on the huge task of compiling the book of memory of information about all political prisoners and exiles, and those killed in the Komi ASSR from 1930 to 1950. But without state support we will not manage this work, because we don't have direct access to the camp archives. And we still haven't received any help from the state. We decided that we've waited long enough. Although it will be amateurish, we need to begin, otherwise we will never finish. As you will understand, I write to you with a purpose and I count on your help. Could you conduct surveys among the former prisoners and exiles you know in Kiev? Collect data, on who remembers what about those who died in prison. The minimum data we need for the index – full name, year and place of birth, who they were before arrest, where they were arrested, when, by which organ, by which article they were sentenced, sentence, which camp they were in, where and when they died. The more detailed, the better. Even if the information is incomplete, we still need it – we can always specify later. I am writing to everyone I know to help. And we must do this, it is our duty. Do you agree?[100]

As Rogachev's letter indicates, Gulag returnees were not only sources of information, but also partners in the project of recovering the past. Gulag returnees used their networks of camp comrades to gather testimonies for the Memorial archive, which enabled Syktyvkar Memorial to offset their lack of access to state archives.

The questionnaires that Gulag returnees completed were another important source of information. The questionnaire was designed to guide former prisoners who were uncertain about what they should write. In the Syktyvkar Memorial/Fond Pokaianie archive there are a total of 224 questionnaires that were collected over the course of 1991-92.[101] These questionnaires were used as both a self-interview that former

[100] GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 78, ll. 7-7a (M. B. Rogachev to V. Z. Siderskii, 24.02.1997)
[101] The breakdown of these questionnaires by category is: 69 prisoners, 133 special settlers, 24 unknowns – people who did not completely fill out the questionnaire. The collection of questionnaires is incomplete.

prisoners could complete on their own, as well as a template for interviews. The questionnaire asked for the details of one's arrest, investigation, sentencing, where one served their sentence and when, what they did in the camps, when they were released, whether or not they had been rehabilitated and when, as well as where they lived and worked after release.[102] This form became the standard for later books of memory and databases that compile lists of former prisoners as evidence of actual lives touched by Soviet repression.[103]

This important tool for collecting information was also the product of collaboration between Syktyvkar and Moscow Memorial. In June 1990, Syktyvkar Memorial received a letter from Moscow underscoring the difficulty former prisoners reported completing the questionnaire. In a letter dated June 26, 1990, a historian at Moscow Memorial reported that it was "impossible" for former prisoners to complete the questionnaire on their own: "I've had to use the questionnaire [as the basis] of interview questions, asking the questions myself and filling in the answers with their words."[104] In his response, Rogachev stated that Memorial's researchers needed to adapt their methods to suit the "repressed": "I totally agree with you (my experience as an ethnographer speaks to this) that [subjects] filling out the questionnaire themselves will yield little. We

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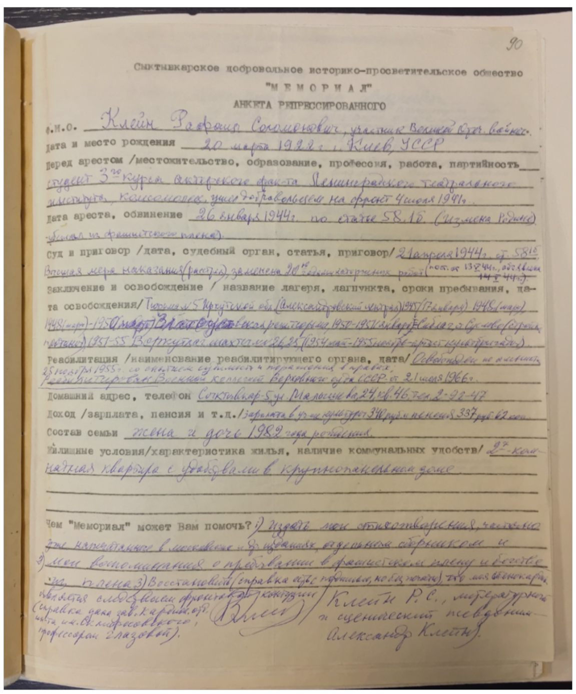
Despite the best efforts of Memorial activists to preserve every document, they failed to do so as a result of limited resources, manpower, and the overwhelming wave of people coming forward to tell their stories.

[102] For an example of these forms see, Arkhiv Fonda Pokaianiia (AFP), Ankety repressirovannykh, vol. 1, A-K, ll. 109; AFP, Ankety repressirovannykh, vol. 2, K-Ia, ll.119.

[103] See for example, the International Memorial Society, "Zhertvy politicheskogo terrora v SSSR," https://www.memo.ru/ru-ru/collections/databases/modal_repression/ [updated 12.07.17].

[104] GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 12, l. 16-18 (M. B. Smirnov to M. B. Rogachev, 26.06.1990).

should work using the interview method."[105] Despite their uncertainty about former prisoners' ability to complete the questionnaire, the Syktyvkar Memorial archive contains hundreds of these questionnaires. Clearly they worked.[106] The information Memorial gathered from these simple forms enabled Syktyvkar Memorial to begin to grasp the immensity of the history that they were dealing with. As Rogachev concluded his letter: "Now the most complicated question is about the camps. In fact, we ourselves still have not completely figured out this eternally entangled system. On that score, we had more than seven camps."[107]



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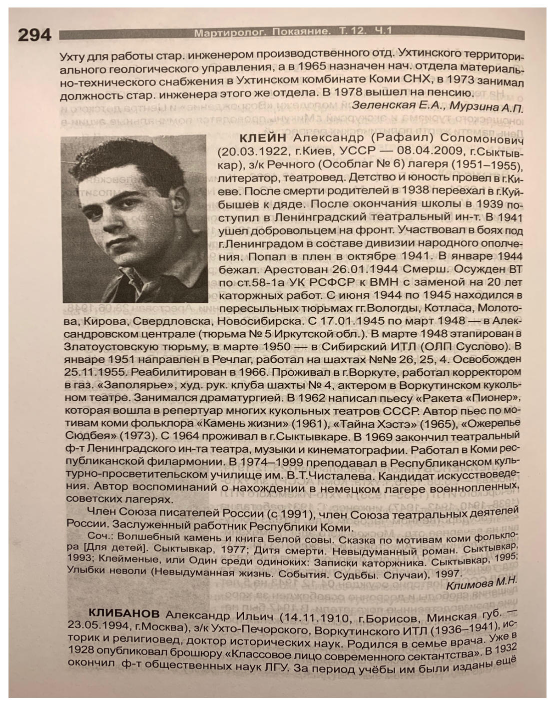
Сыктывкарское добровольное историко-просветительское общество
"М Е М О Р И А Л"
АНКЕТА РЕПРЕССИРОВАННОГО

Ф.И.О. Клейн Рафаил Соломонович, участник Великой Отеч. войны.
Дата и место рождения 20 марта 1922 г. г. Киев, УССР
Перед арестом /местожительство, образование, профессия, работа, партийность студент 3^го^ курса актерского фак-та Ленинградского театрального института, комсомолец, ушел добровольцем на фронт 4 июля 1941 г.
Дата ареста, обвинение 26 января 1944 г. по статье 58.1б. (Измена Родине) - бежал из фашистского плена).
Суд и приговор /дата, судебный орган, статья, приговор/ 21 апреля 1944 г. ст. 58.1б Высшая мера наказания (расстрел), заменена 20^ти^ годами каторжных работ [illegible]
Заключение и освобождение / название лагеря, лагпункта, сроки пребывания, дата освобождения/ Тюрьма № 5 Иркутской обл. (Александровский централ) 1945 (17 января) - 1948 (март) [illegible] 1951-55 Воркутлаг, шахты № 26, 25 [illegible]
Реабилитация /наименование реабилитирующего органа, дата/ Освобожден [illegible] 25 ноября 1955 г. [illegible] Реабилитирован Военной коллегией Верховного суда СССР от 21 июля 1966 г.
Домашний адрес, телефон Сыктывкар-5, ул. Малышева, 24, кв. 46, тел. 2-22-47
Доход /зарплата, пенсия и т.д./ зарплата [illegible] 340 руб. и пенсия 337 руб. 62 коп.
Состав семьи жена и дочь 1982 года рождения.
Жилищные условия/характеристика жилья, наличие коммунальных удобств/ 2^х^-комнатная квартира с удобствами в крупнопанельном доме
Чем "Мемориал" может Вам помочь? 1) Издать мои стихотворения, частично уже напечатанные в московских и др. изданиях, отдельным сборником и 2) мои воспоминания о пребывании в фашистском плену и бегстве из плена 3) Восстановить [illegible]
[illegible] / Клейн Р. С., литературный и сценический псевдоним Александр Клейн).



294 Мартиролог. Покаяние. Т. 12. Ч.1

Ухту для работы стар. инженером производственного отд. Ухтинского территориального геологического управления, а в 1965 назначен нач. отдела материально-технического снабжения в Ухтинском комбинате Коми СНХ, в 1973 занимал должность стар. инженера этого же отдела. В 1978 вышел на пенсию.

Зеленская Е.А., Мурзина А.П.

КЛЕЙН Александр (Рафаил) Соломонович (20.03.1922, г.Киев, УССР — 08.04.2009, г.Сыктывкар), з/к Речного (Особлаг № 6) лагеря (1951–1955), литератор, театровед. Детство и юность провел в г.Киеве. После смерти родителей в 1938 переехал в г.Куйбышев к дяде. После окончания школы в 1939 поступил в Ленинградский театральный ин-т. В 1941 ушел добровольцем на фронт. Участвовал в боях под г.Ленинградом в составе дивизии народного ополчения. Попал в плен в октябре 1941. В январе 1944 бежал. Арестован 26.01.1944 Смерш. Осужден ВТ по ст.58-1а УК РСФСР к ВМН с заменой на 20 лет каторжных работ. С июня 1944 по 1945 находился в пересыльных тюрьмах гг.Вологды, Котласа, Молотова, Кирова, Свердловска, Новосибирска. С 17.01.1945 по март 1948 — в Александровском централе (тюрьма № 5 Иркутской обл.). В марте 1948 этапирован в Златоустовскую тюрьму, в марте 1950 — в Сибирский ИТЛ (ОЛП Суслово). В январе 1951 направлен в Речлаг, работал на шахтах №№ 26, 25, 4. Освобожден 25.11.1955. Реабилитирован в 1966. Проживал в г.Воркуте, работал корректором в газ. «Заполярье», худ. рук. клуба шахты № 4, актером в Воркутинском кукольном театре. Занимался драматургией. В 1962 написал пьесу «Ракета «Пионер», которая вошла в репертуар многих кукольных театров СССР. Автор пьес по мотивам коми фольклора «Камень жизни» (1961), «Тайна Хэстэ» (1965), «Ожерелье Сюдбея» (1973). С 1964 проживал в г.Сыктывкаре. В 1969 закончил театральный ф-т Ленинградского ин-та театра, музыки и кинематографии. Работал в Коми республиканской филармонии. В 1974–1999 преподавал в Республиканском культурно-просветительском училище им. В.Т.Чисталева. Кандидат искусствоведения. Автор воспоминаний о нахождении в немецком лагере военнопленных, советских лагерях.

Член Союза писателей России (с 1991), член Союза театральных деятелей России. Заслуженный работник Республики Коми.

Соч.: Волшебный камень и книга Белой совы. Сказка по мотивам коми фольклора [Для детей]. Сыктывкар, 1977; Дитя смерти. Невыдуманный роман. Сыктывкар, 1993; Клейменые, или Один среди одиноких: Записки каторжника. Сыктывкар, 1995; Улыбки неволи (Невыдуманная жизнь. События. Судьбы. Случаи), 1997.

Климова М.Н.

КЛИБАНОВ Александр Ильич (14.11.1910, г.Борисов, Минская губ. — 23.05.1994, г.Москва), з/к Ухто-Печорского, Воркутинского ИТЛ (1936–1941), историк и религиовед, доктор исторических наук. Родился в семье врача. Уже в 1928 опубликовал брошюру «Классовое лицо современного сектантства». В 1932 окончил ф-т общественных наук ЛГУ. За период учёбы им были изданы ещё

Example of Syktyvkar Memorial's questionnaire filed by former prisoner Aleksandr Klein in 1991 next to an excerpt from his biography in Fond Pokaianie's Gulag encyclopedia. The questionnaire became the basis for prisoner biographies in Fond Pokaianie's *Martirolog*.[108]

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[105] Ibid, l. 19-21 (M. B. Rogachev to M. B. Smirnov, 7.09.1990).
[106] M. B. Rogachev, interview with the author, March 3, 2017, Syktyvkar, Russia. This is also evident by the varied handwriting on these forms, which differs entirely from form to form.
[107] Ibid.
[108] AFP, Questionnaire of R. S. (Aleksandr) Klein, 1991, l. 90; Rogachev, ed., *Pokaianie: Martirolog*, t. 12, ch. 1, 294.

In completing and filing questionnaires, Gulag returnees transformed the dates and events of their lives into primitive autobiographies that made the system of mass repression comprehensible on a human scale. The pictured questionnaire filed by former prisoner of Vorkutlag, Aleksandr Klein, offers an example of a Gulag returnee who used the form as a template for his autobiography. In the process of answering the questions, Klein constructed a narrative of his life that begins with his military service during the Second World War, takes through the camps, and ends with his life after release as a newspaper editor and educator. While the questionnaire offers a limited view, it presents the life of a former prisoner who survived the camps and returned to Soviet society. It represents his effort to translate the details of his life into a publicly accessible document as part of an alternate history of the Soviet Union. It is also important to note that the form provided room for Gulag returnees to elaborate and emphasize chapters of their life that they felt were most important. While not all Gulag returnees did so, we can see by his inclusion of the details of his life after release that the Gulag was an important chapter of his life, but it did not totally define him.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Syktyvkar Memorial continued its mission to uncover the past and to assist "victims of political repression" with rehabilitation, which greatly expanded in the years after 1991. In 1991 Syktyvkar Memorial began to hold public office hours in the city administration building.[109] This program began as a service to victims of political repression who otherwise might not have written to

[109] GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 13, l. 3 (M. B. Rogachev to E. Petrovna, 8.04.1993).

Syktyvkar Memorial and provided a means of gathering their testimonies while assisting them with the complicated process of rehabilitation. The process of obtaining the necessary documents created an inordinately difficult hurdle to overcome for those who spent most of their lives in Komi after their release and no longer knew anyone in their hometowns.[110] In a letter from 1993, Rogachev described the immensity of the problem, which had only intensified after the collapse of the Soviet Union:

> I thought that maybe we'd manage to finish up in a year – after all our city is not very big, and already 40-50 years have passed. Not likely! Every reception day new people / they're elderly, naturally, but they don't forget. I've already registered more than 600 people. Of course, it's indicative of the fact that Syktyvkar was the capital of the "camp republic," even though there were no camps in the city itself.[111]

The correspondence that Syktyvkar Memorial and the Syktyvkar Department of Social Security grew to such an extent that the May 15, 1992 issue of *Krasnoe znamia* published a long interview with the Minister of Social Security addressed to the former prisoners and special settlers in Komi, in which the minister answered their questions about the process of rehabilitation and what they were entitled to under the law.[112] Similar articles about rehabilitation and where one could go for help appeared in the local

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[110] GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op.1, d. 38, l. 40-40a (E. D. Meshcheriakova to M. B. Rogachev, 11.03.1993); Ibid, 70 (I. P. Stasiuk to the Head of the MVD archive of the Komi Republic, 5.05.1993). The burden of rehabilitation was on prisoners to obtain documents from the authorities of the regions where they were sentenced. This often slowed down the process greatly as documents were constantly lost and letters were misplaced or ignored. As Rogachev said in an interview with *Krasnoe znamia* in 1992: "More frequently than all, elderly people come here [to Syktyvkar Memorial's office hours], having fallen into despair of getting help and support from other organizations." See, GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 102, l. 36 (M. Moiseeva, "Khotia rublem sud'bu ne ispravish', no…" *Krasnoe znamia*, May 15, 1992).
[111] GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 13, l. 3 (M. B. Rogachev to E. Petrovna, 8.04.1993).
[112] GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, d. 102, l. 36 (M. Moiseeva, "Khotia rublem sud'bu ne ispravish', no…" *Krasnoe znamia*, 15.05.1992). The minister noted, "In Syktyvkar, there are more former repressed who are supposed to be paid compensation than in other districts. The department of Social Security is overloaded with work, which is why its staff turned to the Memorial society for help, so that they collect the documents there and then send them to us."

newspaper in Ukhta.[113] A year later, Rogachev wrote to a former prisoner about the slow pace of change and the inadequate government response to the needs of the repressed, "We finally started to give out identifications for the right to use privileges as victims of repression.[114] […] They sent 400 to our city from Moscow. Can it be true that the bureaucrats can't surmise that Syktyvkar is a special city, the center of the land of camps? We have more than 1,000 people who are eligible for this certification. I still don't know the exact number, because new people come every day."[115] By 1994, the number had doubled. As Rogachev wrote in a letter to a former prisoner who inquired about rehabilitation, "After all, the Komi Republic was a dreadful place. There were more camps here [than anywhere]. More than 2,000 former political prisoners and exiles live in our small city (of 250,000 people)."[116] However, the number of rehabilitated victims continued to grow, by 1997 it had risen to over 3,000.[117]

The idea that the Komi Republic was the center of the camp world was reinforced not only by the large number of victims who came to office hours, but also by the flood of correspondence that Syktyvkar Memorial received almost immediately after it was established. As we will see, Gulag returnees' letters were one of the primary sources of Komi's camp past, which also contributed to the transformation of the entire region into a site of memory.

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[113] "Gorispolkom i obshchestvo 'Memorial' provodiat registratsiiu lits bezvinno repressirovannykh," *Ukhta*, Aug. 9, 1989.
[114] These privileges included monetary compensation, free city transportation (excluding taxis), reduced taxes, and an elimination of payments for communal utilities.
[115] GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 38, l. 59 (M. B. Rogachev to V. G. Lipilin, 1993).
[116] GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 105, l. 9 (M. B. Rogachev to Aleksandr Konstantinovich, 13.03.1994).
[117] GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 78, l. 9 (M. B. Rogachev to Iu. P. Grushin, 25.03.1997).

Letters to Syktyvkar Memorial: **Re-Constructing the Past, 1989-1992**

The reconstruction of Komi's camp past during the late 1980s and early 1990s depended on Gulag returnees telling their life stories.[118] Former prisoners' autobiographical narratives were not only important because Syktyvkar Memorial did not have direct access to camp archives, they were essential to the commemoration of the victims of political repression. However, it is important to note that these narratives were shaped by a dialogue. Thus, taken as a whole, Gulag returnees' correspondence with Syktyvkar Memorial illustrates the process of remembering that informed their autobiographical narratives. As Elizabeth Tonkin writes, "Memory makes us" and "we make memory."[119]

Many of the letters that flooded Syktyvkar Memorial's office read: "We are no strangers to Komi."[120] As this statement suggests, Gulag returnees' letters exhibit a strong sense of place. While former prisoners shared a connection to Komi, as the previous letter demonstrated, their letters often highlighted a connection to a particular place, such as the camp where they served their time or the town in Komi where they lived after release. This underscores the local aspect of their identities, which they often

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[118] Andrew Lass, "From Memory to History: The Events of November 17 Dis/membered" in *Memory, History, and Opposition Under Socialism,* ed., Rubie S. Watson (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 1994), 91. Lass asks, "What happens to memories when they go on public display?" His answer underscores the role of eyewitnesses and memory as the sources for emerging identities and history in the Czech Republic after the Velvet Revolution of 1989.

[119] Elizabeth Tonkin, *Narrating Our Pasts: The Social Construction of Oral History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 97. On the importance of memory and autobiography, see also, Luisa Passerini, ed., *International Yearbook of Oral History and Life Stories* vol. 1, *Memory and Totalitarianism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 1-19.

[120] I. L. Kuznetsov, ed., *Pechal'naia pristan'* (Syktyvkar: Komi knizhnoe izd-vo, 1991), 3. This volume was the first published collection of memoirs written by prisoners of Komi's camps. It was the direct product of the letters and manuscripts that Gulag returnees sent to Syktyvkar Memorial.

expressed in the sense of pride they felt about what they had built during their years of their forced labor. However, Gulag returnees' letters also reveal another important aspect of space, which we also see in their memoirs. By setting their autobiographical narratives in Komi, Gulag returnees transformed the Far North into a site of memory. As we will see, by underscoring their contributions to the development of the Far North, Gulag returnees' letters began the process of connecting the memory of the victims of political repression to the Komi landscape.

Memory as a source of the past is an important concept in Gulag returnees' letters. Former prisoners often described their autobiographical narratives as a source of historical truth. This claim was principally based on their status as survivors and as eyewitnesses, as they sometimes referred to themselves. As a repressed and marginalized population, authenticity was particularly important since Gulag returnees were ultimately countering the state narrative of the past without any documentation.[121] Vitalii Ol'shevskii's letter to Syktyvkar Memorial dated June 26, 1990 provides us with an emblematic example of how former prisoners framed their memories as a source of historical truth:

> Dear Mikhail Borisovich!
> During your stay in Moscow at the congress of Memorial in May of this year, you spoke with comrade Siderskii, the chairman of Memorial Kiev.

[121] While Gulag returnees did face an uphill battle, the use of memory as a source of the past was not new. After the October Revolution, Bolsheviks elites were obsessed with gathering oral histories and translating the experience of 1917 into cultural memory. Even the OGPU-NKVD held evenings of memory (vecher pamiati) to collect the accounts of those who participated in the 1929 expedition to Ukhta that founded the Gulag in Komi. For this collection of oral histories, see, Arkhiv Memoriala "Kollektsiia memuarov i literaturnykh proizvedenii" (AM) f. 2, op. 3, d. 38, ll. 60 (V. Nadezhdin, ed., "Stenogramma vecherov vospominanii ob Ukhtinskoi ekspeditsii USEVLON-OGPU. Pos. Chib'iu, dekabr' 1932. Rukopis'). On mythmaking and the October Revolution, see, the Frederick C. Corney, *Telling October: Memory and the Making of the Bolshevik Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004).

> You told him about your interest in the history of the construction of the Northern-Pechora Railroad. It seems that he told you about me. In the memorable year of 1937, I fell into the clutches of the NKVD and was sent to a far-off region. I served three years at BAM [Baikal-Amur Railway] at construction site no. 202, and then I was on the Northern-Pechora Railroad in Sevzheldorlag from 1940 to 1952. In Sevzheldorlag, I stayed alive because I worked as a surveyor. I worked on different parts of the railroad from Izhma to Vorkuta. I met many members of the [camp] leadership. I wrote a memoir about my life. My main goal was to depict the way of life of this kingdom. *I described only what I saw myself, without any fabrication* [emphasis added]. If my work interests you, I can send you a copy of the manuscript. I served a sentence under the KRD [counter-revolutionary activities] article. I've lived in Kiev, since [my] rehabilitation in 1955.[122]

Remembering, however, was not an uncomplicated path that led directly to a lost past. Gulag returnees grappled with the problems of remembering in their letters to Syktyvkar Memorial. While all former prisoners thought that their stories ought to become part of a new narrative of Soviet history, they struggled with the silences or "blank spots" in their memories of the camps.[123] Some of these silences were a result of lingering fear about committing one's life to paper. In a letter from July 1990, former prisoner Vladimir Siderskii reflected on his memory and why it was difficult for other former prisoners to open-up about their pasts, "Memory is not a very reliable custodian. After all, forty years have passed, plus age. Yes, for 40 years I did not think about what I

[122] GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 12, l. 4 (V. B. Ol'shevskii to M. B. Rogachev, 16.06.1990). See also, GU RK NARK 2 f. P3800, op. 1, d. 18, l. 1 (V. G. Lipilin to M. B. Rogachev, 16.09.1991); AM f. 2, op. 2, d. 112, l. 243 (V. E. Sollertinskii to Moscow Memorial, 20.11.1988). Sollertinskii wrote: "I send you the manuscript of my memoirs about the years of my life and the times, which fell to me. The memoirs are very personal, they are about only the events, which became my life and the lives of circle of people [who were] close to me. As a spontaneous positivist, I did not attempt to evaluate the quality of events, the manuscript is completely absent of exclamatory notes, although, of course, my relationship to the events examined is absolutely exact. There are several chapters pertaining to the times of Stalinist repressions, and sketches from nature from 20 years ago, clearly showing that the roots of repression essentially lay before Stalin."

[123] GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 38, l. 101-103a (L. K. Shlezhkova-Vselova to M. B. Rogachev, 2.09.1993); f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 156, l. 2-17 (E. K. Makarova to M. B. Rogachev, 2.04.2000).

needed to remember, [or] that it would ever be of use. It was very dangerous to write, and even to think of this."[124] While Siderskii cast doubt on the reliability of memory due to the passage of time, his comment about the danger of writing about the past illuminates the lingering fear that prevented many Gulag returnees from writing about the past prior to glasnost. As another victim of political repression, L. Veselova, wrote to her local Memorial in Ukhta, "I was born in a camp, behind the barbed wire in 1941. A few years ago, I would not have told anyone about this. It was my terrifying secret. But now I speak about that which tortured me for years without shame. After all, it's also a crime of Stalinism, when children were born in the camps and then suffered from a consciousness of inferiority. Deliverance from this feeling is a great blessing."[125]

While some Gulag returnees remained hesitant to write about their lives in the camps, they were sometimes motivated to do so by what they read in the press. In these instances, the principal aim of their letters was setting the record straight while they still could. However, an additional motivating factor for these people was the sense of duty

[124] GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 12, l. 22-22a (V. Z. Siderskii to M. B. Rogachev, 5.07.1990). GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 78, l. 1-2 (Babushka Anastasiia to M. B. Rogachev, 10.01.1997). The same sentiment is also expressed in many letters. See for example, GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 13, l. 27-28a (Ivan Mikhailovich to the "Comrades of Memorial," 23.06.1989). This sentiment is also repeated in the oral history interviews collected by journalists from *Novaya Gazeta* in Komi and other former Gulag republics in the Russian Federation, see, Anna Artem'eva and Elena Rachina, eds., *58-ia. Neiz"iatoe: Istorii liudei, kotorye perezhili to, chego my bol'she vsego boimsia* (Moskva: Izd-vo ACT, 2016).

[125] Letter printed in, V. Bulychev, red., *V nedrakh Ukhtpechlaga* (Ukhta: Ukhtinskaia tipografiia Memorial, 1989), 17-18. Another letter from this booklet published by Memorial Ukhta read, "They rehabilitated me. I received a document from the Ministry of Internal Affairs in Vilnius that I am not guilty. Yeah, how could a girl be guilty at 16!?"

they felt to honor the dead.[126] This is what motivated two reluctant former prisoners from the Chuvash ASSR to send a letter to Syktyvkar Memorial on January 31, 1989:

> Having read an article in the journal *Sobesednik* no. 46, 1988, I was compelled to write to you about what happened in [our] camp, where almost everyone was repressed in 1937. Our camp Lokchimlag was located on the territory of the Komi ASSR. Our camp section was located in Ust'kulomskii district close to the village Ust'nem across the river Vychegda. […] Every night from the end of October to the beginning of November 1938, the third division of the NKVD took several people out of the zone after work. No one ever returned. […] five or six of us were taken one night. They took them away to the forest in a covered truck and shot them. Everyone in the camp saw the lights. We did not know for sure where they took them, but we could hear the shots. This was carried out in about a month. They began to dig graves when the earth was no longer frozen, so that digging was easier.[127]

Although the primary aim of such letters was to correct the record with their own testimony, it is clear that the need for authenticity compelled former prisoners to construct a brief autobiographical narrative demonstrating their authority to testify. The second half of the two prisoners' letter provides an emblematic example of the ways in which former prisoners achieved this through their autobiographical narratives:

> Briefly about myself and my comrade: In August 1937, my comrade-neighbor, Spiridonov Sergei Nikoforovich (born 1918), and I, Arkhipov Ivan Andreevich (also born 1918), were repressed. We were held in preliminary detention at the Krasnochetaiskii house NKVD of the Chuvash ASSR. Without trial or investigation, I was sentenced to ten years by decree of a troika under the article "socially-harmful element." My comrade was also sentenced to ten years under the article "Socially-dangerous element." Fourteen of us set out from prison together. Only the

[126] GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 12, l. 10 (L. M. Gorodin to M. B. Rogachev, 2.07.1990); Ibid, 29 (L. S. Safronov to M. B. Rogachev, not dated); GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 13, ll. 22-23a (A. M. Stetsko to M. B. Rogachev, 22.06.1989).

[127] GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 12, l. 1-3 (I. A. Arkhipov and S. N. Spiridonov to Syktyvkar Memorial, 31.01.1989). These two also published a letter about what they witnessed in Lokchimlag in the newspaper *Sovetskaia Chuvashiia* entitled, "In the forests of Komi." See, Ibid, 3 ("V lesakh Komi," *Sovetskaia Chuvashiia,* Jun. 14, 1989).

> two of us returned. […] We were considered enemies of the people, they treated us like animals. I can't find the words to describe what happened there. The prisoners who did not fulfill the norm received a punishment ration of 300 grams of bread and boiled water. Dysentery set in. Ten to fifteen people died in one day. We were released in 1947, since then more than fifty years have passed, but we still know where the graves of those executed are. We can show you the place and help dig them up, there are about 1,500 people there.[128]

In addition to their autobiographical narratives, Gulag returnees also wrote to Syktyvkar Memorial to contribute to an effort to comprehensively document life behind barbed wire. While these projects typically took the form of memoirs, others included artworks depicting landscapes and scenes from the camp, collections of poems composed in the camp and preserved in memory, as well as archives correspondence with friends from the camps. However, in June 1990 former prisoner Leonid Gorodin wrote to Syktyvkar Memorial about his unique project to document the camps – an encyclopedic dictionary of the Gulag.[129] Over the course of several letters, Gorodin identified himself as "*Vorkutinets*" (a veteran of Vorkuta) and a "victim of Stalin's repressions" and described his project, which includes more than 17,000 entries, as a "Museum for friends."[130] In a letter from August 3, 1990, Gorodin explained the significance of his encyclopedic dictionary:

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[128] Ibid.

[129] Jacques' Rossi also compiled a Gulag dictionary, which was published in Russian (1991) and English (1989). Although Gorodin's was never published, it seems that he created his first. For Rossi's dictionary, see, Jacques Rossi, *The Gulag Handbook: An Encyclopedia Dictionary of Soviet Penitentiary Institutions and Terms Related to the Forced Labor Camps*, trans., William A. Burhans (New York: Paragon House, 1989).

[130] GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 12, ll. 6-7 (L. M. Gorodin to M. B. Rogachev, 19.06.1990); Ibid, l. 10 (L. M. Gorodin to M. B. Rogachev, 2.07.1990); Ibid, l. 37-40, L. M. Gorodin to M. B. Rogachev, 3.08.1990). Gorodin included a letter from one of his friends in the dictionary: "Any dictionary, especially one of a particular epoch, reflects real life and over the years it becomes more and more valuable. […] A dictionary is an entire world of its own type a sort of spiritual cosmos. And a dictionary of 'Russian slang'

> For many years I have collected and studied the language founded by the most fascinating and numerous group of people – prisoners. 'Criminal music' is only a part of the prisoner language. Many words and expressions come from political *katorga*, or Tsarist Russia. But prisoners in prisons, [and] *zeks* from the camps and colonies [also] made significant contributions to the language during the post-revolutionary period.[131]

Such letters reveal that, for some, the process of remembering the Gulag began immediately after release. However, like others who wrote memoirs prior to glasnost, Gorodin did not take his dictionary out of his desk drawer until the late 1980s. The lifetime Gorodin spent documenting the language of the camps illuminates not only that his experience as a prisoner was an essential part of his identity, but also his desire to contribute something more to the reconstruction of that world, which no longer existed. When Gorodin's project eventually made it out of the desk drawer and into the archive at Syktyvkar Memorial, Mikhail Rogachev wrote to Gorodin: "Every testimony about the participants of the events in Ust'-Usa is very important and enables us to understand the essence of this drama."[132]

Gulag returnees frequently identified themselves as one of the group ("*odnoetapniki*").[133] They identified themselves as one of the collective through

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is also a cosmos, a unique world of the language of outcasts, which is also a part of the society that gave birth to it." See, GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 17, l. 133 (Letter to L. M. Gorodin, 27.05.1985).

[131] Ibid, 40. Gorodin saw his dictionary not only as a source of history and illuminative of the meaning behind Gulag returnees' writings, but also as a source to be used by criminologists, writers, historians, students, researchers, and translators. He truly wanted to share his work with the world. In this way, Gorodin joins the likes of repressed scholars and intelligentsia who used their camp experiences as the basis of some of their academic work. On writing history after the Gulag and the repressed intelligentsia see, Etkind, 60-82. Etkind highlights Bakhtin, Likhachev, and others whose academic work was shaped by their camp experience.

[132] GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 12, l. 12 (M. B. Rogachev to L. M. Gorodin, 30.07.1990). See also, GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 12, l. 36 (M. B. Rogachev to L. M. Gorodin, 12.09.1990).

[133] Rossi, 262. This word is commonly found in Gulag memoirs. An *odnoetapnik* is a "fellow prisoner from the same transport, each of the individuals travelling or who travelled in the same transport" – *etap*.

descriptions of their collective suffering.[134] As one former prisoner from Kiev, Lev Safronov, wrote in a two-page letter to Syktyvkar Memorial on July 16, 1990:

> It is possible that my memories about the days and years of my time in the Komi Republic will be interesting to you. I was one of the first to arrive at the construction of the railroad Kniazh-Pogost', Kozhva, Pechora, and onward to the North. I was a prisoner at the time, and what's more an '*enemy of the people*.' From the beginning, we cut logging roads along the future railroad and laid the wooden bed [for the rails] along these tracts. We were divided into columns of 300-500 prisoners, or 'zeks,' only civilians were the bosses of the colony and the upper echelon of the site. Although I was a *zek* and an 'enemy of the people', fate made me a superintendent.
>
> […] The living conditions, or more precisely living death, were severe. Half of my comrades were buried along the [railroad] tracks. […] I don't think it would be an exaggeration if I said that one of my comrades lies under each tie of the Pechora railroad. I survived because I was an exceptionally physically strong person, a Siberian hardened by the Siberian countryside, but southerners died like flies.[135]

Intrigued by Safronov's knowledge of where prisoners' bodies may lie, Rogachev encouraged Safronov to write as much as he could remember: "This is very important: more and more people come to us with requests, including people from Poland – people who are searching for the graves of their loved ones, and there is very little information saved in the archives. I think it's understandable how important it is to collect as much evidence of the participants of these tragic events as possible, and to restore the names and the graves of the victims of Stalinism."[136]

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[134] GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 12, l. 30 (V. G. Lipilin to M. B. Rogachev, letter not dated [presumably 1990, judging by Rogachev's response]); Ibid, l. 43-44 (B. S. Siniavskii to M. B. Rogachev, not dated); f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 105, l. 10-1-a (A. Stroikovskii to M. B. Rogachev, 7.02.1994).

[135] GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 12, l. 25-25a (L. S. Safronov to M. B. Rogachev, 16.07.1990). In addition to his long letter, Safronov sent a handwritten copy of his certificate of rehabilitation he wished to be added to the collections of the nascent Syktyvkar Memorial archive. See, GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 12, l. 26 (Certificate of Rehabilitation given to L. S. Safronov 5.05.1981 by the Ministry of Justice Kazakh SSR).

[136] GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 12, l. 27 (M. B. Rogachev to L. S. Safronov, 29.07.1990).

In his undated response to Rogachev's letter, Safronov included even more details in his narrative. Focusing on the relations between *zeks* and civilians, Safronov detailed the fine, but distinct, border between freedom and unfreedom:

> Years have passed, many memories have been blotted out, but I will try [to tell you] everything that I remember. […] I often remember these first [months] now.
>
> Our crew boss in Kozhva was Boris Petrovich Podval'nyi – a very decent person, which was a rare quality among civilians in camp. […]
>
> I especially remember one boss of the camp-section. Although I remember his build and face, I'm sorry I don't remember his name. He was a son of the Komi people, the kindest person, he often used the word 'Poshto' in conversation and we called him citizen 'POSHTO' behind his back, but this was without malicious intent or mockery, all of us *zeks* were grateful to him for his fairness and humaneness.
>
> There were many bosses, militarized guards, villains, scoundrels, and hangmen, but I'm sorry that I cannot name them. On the whole, prisoners were approximately 90% politicals, including Poles after we annexed western Ukraine. The Poles' camp was on the northern bank of the Synia River close to the railroad tract.
>
> I wrote to you [last time] that the remains of a prisoner lie under every tie. This is figuratively speaking. The dead were kept close to the infirmary and camp sections. However, if you counted up the number of dead, I'm certain that it would come to more than one person [under each tie].[137]

Both of Safonov's letters describe Komi's northern railroad as a burial ground. This recurring metaphor highlights an important function of Gulag returnees' letters. By describing the railroad as a graveyard for prisoners, Safronov transformed the railroad from an infrastructural monument to Socialist achievement into monument to Stalinist repression.[138] In other words, Gulag returnees created sites of memory out of the

[137] GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 12, l. 29 (L. S. Safronov to M. B. Rogachev, not dated).
[138] On the "infrastructural monuments" of Stalinism, see, Anna Neimark, "The Infrastructural Monument: Stalin's Water Works under Construction and in Representation," *Future Anterior: Journal of Historic Preservation, History, Theory, and Criticism* 9, no. 2 (Winter 2012): 1-14. Neimark argues that Stalinist infrastructure was meant to be monumental and thus served as the task of "representing memory,

products of their forced labor, which anchored the memory of the Gulag to the landscape of the Komi Republic. As former prisoner Konstantin Flug wrote in his memoir in 1986:

> Well, what is left of their labor? Vorkuta, Ukhta, Noril'sk, Magadan, Inta, Amdera, Kolymsk, Bratsk, Medvezhegorsk – the islands of Solzhenitsyn's archipelago - remain. The mining-metallurgical industry of the Soviet North remains, the Vorkuta-Pechora railroad remains, the Kolyma highway. Every one of the millions of toilers of the Gulag left their own mark, everyone has their own monument of labor.[139]

Although the infrastructure prisoners built and some traces of the once vast network of camps could still be found throughout Komi, former prisoners were one of the last direct links to this vanishing world. The inclusion of this information in their letters and autobiographies initiated a search for the unmarked graves of prisoners, which, as we will see in chapter five, produced sites of memory where members of the public commemorated the victims of political repression.[140] Even when no graves were found, Gulag returnees' testimonies attached meaning to the small clearings in the taiga where the ruins of former camp buildings stood as sacred spaces. For instance, after an unsuccessful expedition to Lokchim, where he had not stepped foot since 1945, Georgii

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sovereignty, and history." See also, Cynthia Ruder, *Building Stalinism: The Moscow Canal and the Creation of Soviet Space* (I. B. Taurus, 2018).

[139] Arkhiv Vorkutinskogo Muzeiia Geologii (VMG) (K. Flug, "Chernyi ostrov GULAGa," 1986), 8. See also, GU RK NARK 2 f. P3800, op. 1, d. 18, ll. 50 (V. G. Lipilin, "Vospominaniia," 1991); AFP (G. I. Ustilovskii, "Gor'kaia zhizn'," Sosnogorsk, 2000). Lipilin also used the imagery of a graveyard to describe Komi as a monument to the victims of political repression: "O, ancient, fragile Komi land, the most disfigured, you laid to rest under your soil hundreds of thousands, millions of innocently murdered! Almost 1,500 versts [994 miles], you bear the most extensive monument to the buried – the railroad from Kotlas to Vorkuta. A prisoner is buried under each tie. This is a figure of speech, there are actually two prisoners under each tie" (2). This idea frequently appears in the oral histories of former prisoners and guards who remained in Komi, see also, Anna Artem'eva, Elena Racheva, *58-Ia. Neiz"iatoe: Istorii liudei, kotorye perezhili to, chego my bol'she vsego boimsia* (Moskva: Izd-vo ACT, 2016).

[140] GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 159, l. 9 (E. A. Griaznova, "Vospominanie," Syktyvkar, undated); GU RK NARK 2 f. P3800, op. 1, d. 18, l. 2 (V. G. Lipilin, "Vospominaniia," 1991); I. L. Kuznetsov, ed., *Pechal'naia pristan'* (Syktyvkar: Komi knizhnoe izd-vo, 1991).

Ustilovskii proclaimed his memoir the only evidence of the mass death that he saw while imprisoned there:

> What did we see there? Signs that there had been zones there. Pine trees still hadn't managed to grow up in these places, but we saw the rotting barracks of the camp section. We could not find, discover the places were the large majority of people were buried there. The evidence that many people were killed there is only my testimony. I know, I saw the destruction of people. Why didn't we find the grave site? I contend for the following reason: they died, primarily, in the winter of 1937-1938, November, December, January, February, March. […] The bodies were buried, if you can call it a burial, by weakened prisoners. They buried the bodies in the snow, not in the earth. In the spring, the snow melted, there was a very strong stench of [rotting] flesh. They closed camp sections 98, 100, 102. I think that large animals and birds dragged the bodies away. That is why there are no graves there and nothing dug into the ground. Personally, when we arrived at the place of the former camp section, I felt heartache. It was painful and bitter to look at the rotting barracks, to remember that bitter, hard life of dead campmates, comrades and friends.[141]

The creation of these sites of memory became increasingly important after the collapse of the Soviet Union, when the difficulty of the transition to capitalism stimulated nostalgia for the stability of days past.[142] As Safronov wrote in a two-page letter to Syktyvkar Memorial dated October 1996: "I'll try to expand on my memories about past tragedies, especially since many make it seem as if in Stalin's time everything was just GREAT. This is on our bones!!!"[143]

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[141] AFP (G. I. Ustilovskii, "Gor'kaia zhizn'," Sosnogorsk, 2000), 6. See also, AM UGTU (Kotvitskii, "O chem molchit istoriia"), 77. Kotvitskii is one of many other prisoners who wrote about camp authorities' uncouth burial practices and disrespect for dead prisoners: "They dumped them with a tag on their foot in a grave somewhere under a fir or a pine tree and carelessly sprinkled it with some earth. And who can say how they died and where their nameless grave is? The taiga devoured many of them, but she – fierce and silent – can keep her secret" (77).

[142] On this topic see, Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001); Serguei Oushakine, "'We're Nostalgic, But We're Not Crazy': Retrofitting the Past in Russia," *The Russian Review* 66 (July 2007): 451-482.

[143] GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 78, l. 78, p. 28-28a (L. S. Safronov to M. B. Rogachev, 8.10.1996).

Left to right: Unmarked prisoner graves, Pezmog, 1992; Remnants of Ust'vymlag after it was closed in 1962.[144]

Remnants of Ust'vymlag after it was closed in 1962. Photo taken 1964.[145]

[144] AFP (Collection of photographs, ll. 1, 2).
[145] Ibid, 6.

"I want to die rehabilitated": Post-Soviet Letters, 1993-1997

In February 1992, the Komi newspapers *Molodezh' Severa* and *Krasnoe znamia* published two op-eds highlighting the difficulties local victims of political repression experienced when they applied for rehabilitation.[146] Both articles served as publicity for the bi-weekly public office hours. The articles are noteworthy for the stories they include of those who came to Memorial seeking help and answers. One elderly woman, who served a sentence in the camps as a "family member of a traitor to the Motherland" and remained in Komi after release, frankly told the reporter: "I don't need any privileges. I want to die rehabilitated, nothing more."[147] However, as the second op-ed reported, despite the proclaimed importance of rehabilitation as "the restoration of justice," local authorities management of the process was totally inept: "The daughter of A. K. Murav'eva, who was sentenced under the infamous article 58, said that her mother applied for rehabilitation to the Procurator of the Komi SSR more than six months ago, and to this day there has still been no answer."[148]

While Gulag returnees continued to write to Syktyvkar Memorial following the collapse of the Soviet Union to share their personal testimonies of repression, their letters increasingly focused on obtaining rehabilitation. During this period, Syktyvkar Memorial also received an increasing amount of correspondence from special settlers and children who were born in the camps. Although they focused on rehabilitation and the privileges

[146] GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 102, l. 28 (E. Oteva, "Chotb ne propast' poodinochke," *Krasnoe znamia*, Feb. 4, 1992); Ibid, l. 29 (K. Markizov, "Khochu umeret' reabilitirovannoi" *Vechernii Syktyvkar*, Feb. 22, 1992).
[147] Ibid, 29.
[148] GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 102, l. 28 (E. Oteva, "Chotb ne propast' poodinochke," *Krasnoe znamia*, Feb. 4, 1992).

that came with it, these letters offer insight into how a growing array of diverse people came to understand the definition of victim and how they altered it as they applied the term to themselves.

Gulag returnees appreciated the meagre material aide they received. However, perhaps more importantly, their letters indicate that they saw rehabilitation as a correction to the great moral, physical, and social injury they suffered at the hands of the Soviet regime. Even if one was rehabilitated in the 1950s or 1960s, privileges and a certificate of rehabilitation were especially meaningful as an acknowledgment of their innocence and a public symbol of their restored honor. As one Gulag returnee from Ukhta who was imprisoned for having been taken prisoner of war during WWII wrote to Syktyvkar Memorial in a two-page letter in 1994: "Allow me to express my sincere gratitude for your help in the cause of the restoration of justice in my old case. Yes, thanks to your help, I, Soobtskov Madinat Garunovich, am finally rehabilitated. I did just as you advised me and everything turned out well. Now, I receive privileges as a veteran of the war as I ought to according to the law."[149]

[149] GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 105, l. 4-4a (M. G. Soobtskov to M. B. Rogachev, 10.02.1994). See also, Ibid, l. 5 (M. B. Rogachev to M. G. Soobtskov, 28.02.1994). Gulag returnees underscore the importance of rehabilitation to them but also its effect on their loved ones. Former prisoner Boris Serov described how he was initially denied rehabilitation because his sentence had been rescinded sometime after his release, presumably in the 1950s. As Serov wrote in the introduction to his 1989 memoir: "I applied for rehabilitation and they answered that my conviction was rescinded, which made it impossible to rehabilitate me. And to this day, I live with the weight of being an unrehabilitated former prisoner. My daughters write in questionnaires: 'My father was sentenced, article 58…' Well, let this weigh on the conscience of those who created such a life, who were indifferent to human lives. For them people are a grey faceless mass. They will be swept away and we will endure. There, I cast off this old injustice. What are you going to do about it!" See, GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 156, ll. 25-26 (B. D. Serov, "Piat' let i vsia zhizn'," Pechora, 1989).

Not all of the requests for rehabilitation turned out well. While these letters shed light on the general difficulty of obtaining rehabilitation, they also illustrate the difficult financial situation many elderly former prisoners found themselves in after the collapse of the Soviet Union. For instance, on March 11, 1993, 95-year-old Evdokiia Meshcheriakova petitioned Syktyvkar Memorial to help her obtain privileges as a "victim of political repression." Explaining the difficulties that she encountered, which led to several failed petitions, Meshcheriakova pleaded:

> I write to you with a big request. […] I have already written three times requesting them to send me a certificate [of release], but I have not yet received any reply. The first time I wrote to the head of special collections at the Komi MVD information center, A. A. Mikhail'chenkov, he wrote back on November 21, 1991 that my application was forwarded to Ukhta to the archive of the Administration of Internal Affairs of the Komi ASSR. I waited almost a year for an answer and was forced to write again on Sept. 22, 1992 to the MVD archive of the Komi Republic, but there was no answer. I wrote once again on February 27, 1993 to the MVD archive in Ukhta. However, I am now uncertain that I will not receive the certificate I need. I am a very old person. I am 95 years-old. I ought to be preparing for death. I need more money for a funeral. I urge you, Mikhail Borisovich, to help get this certificate of my release.[150]

While the ineptitude and understaffing of local agencies was a major problem that hindered the efficient processing of petitions for rehabilitation, letters from Gulag returnees and special settlers shed light on another major problem created by the collapse of the Soviet Union. Some victims of political repression wrote to Syktyvkar Memorial about the rejection of their petitions for rehabilitation on the basis of their citizenship.

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[150] GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 38, l. 40-40a (E. D. Meshcheriakova to M. B. Rogachev, 11.03.1993). In June 1993, Meshcheriakova wrote again to thank Rogachev for his help. "Thank you for your care and attention, which you showed having sent an archival certificate about my stay in places of confinement. I can imagine how much time you spent on the search for the necessary information." See, Ibid, 42 (E. D. Meshcheriakova to M. B. Rogachev, 6.06.1993).

Regardless of where they lived when the Soviet Union collapsed, if a victim had been arrested and sentenced by a court or extra-judicial organ in any of the former union republics, which were now independent states, they were rejected and told to apply for rehabilitation in those states. Since many former prisoners who remained in Komi no longer had any ties in the places where they were arrested, this created an inordinately large obstacle to achieving rehabilitation.[151] However, the complications did not end there. As one former prisoner who remained in Inta after release wrote to Syktyvkar Memorial: "I've written to the Inta city council more than once requesting them to accept my certificate of rehabilitation to amend my length of service (*stazh*) to include the time that I spent in places of confinement. But they refuse me every time, citing the fact that I was rehabilitated by Ukrainian organs [of state security]. They will not accept certificates that were issued after 1985 by other republics. All together I earned 30 years toward my pension, and they do not pay out my pension in full."[152]

Children born in the camps and those who were children when their parents were repressed also identified themselves as victims of political repression. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the so-called "Children of the Gulag" consistently wrote to Syktyvkar Memorial. They primarily wanted to learn more about their parents who had shared very little about their lives in the camps.[153] However, those who remained in

[151] GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 102, l. 28 (E. Oteva, "Chotb ne propast' poodinochke," *Krasnoe znamia*, Feb. 4, 1992). The article cites the cases of repressed Ukrainians, Belorussians, Lithuanians, Latvians who settled in Komi after release.
[152] GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 38, l. 85-85 (A. K. Sysak to M. B. Rogachev, 1993).
[153] GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 102, l. 41 (K. Markizov "Deti GULAGa" *Vechernii Syktyvkar*, Oct. 30, 1992); N. A. Morozov, interview with the author, May 19, 2017, Moscow, Russia. The majority of Gulag children were eventually taken from their parents, especially when they were political prisoners, and

Komi with their parents after release also sought rehabilitation. They based their claim to the status of victim of political repression on the basis of their connection to the Gulag. In doing so, they cited their time in the system in the camps and in the children's homes for children of enemies of the people.[154] Although most of these children did not serve sentences alongside their parents, as Iwona Irwin-Zarecka writes, "the personal relevance of the traumatic memory, and not personal witness to the trauma" defines their status as part of the community.[155] For instance, Liubov' Shlezhkova, a child of a former prisoner living in Komi, wrote a letter to editor of the newspaper *Molodezh' Severa* in September 1993, which made its way to Syktyvkar Memorial. In addition to inquiring about the possibility of rehabilitation, her letter provides a detailed account of her family's repression:

> Since the publication of the article "Uprising of the doomed" about Vorkutlag, I have [regularly] read your newspaper. I very much regret that for unknown reasons I did not save the precious newspaper with that article. You know, my father was also there; he was arrested in 1937 and sentenced to 10 years plus another 5 years deprivation of rights under article 58-10. But I did not mean to talk about that now. Enough has already been written about these prisoners of Stalin's concentration camps and moreover I myself learn from Solzhenitsyn's books. This is the truth of life, that is the destruction of the country, of its dignity. I am the

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taken either to children's camp section attached to the camp or a regional orphanage for children of "enemies of the people." On Children born in the camps and children's homes for enemies of the people, see, Cathy A. Frierson and Semyon S. Vilensky, eds., *Children of the Gulag* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010).

[154] Syktyvkar Memorial received many of letters from children of Gulag returnees. See for example, GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 105, l. 23-23a (A. V. Vladimirovich to M. B. Rogachev, 20.02.1994). f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 105, l. 20-20a (E. V. Mikhaileva to M. B. Rogachev, 18.02.1994). f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 105, l. 15-15a (N. A. Babkina to M. Rogachev, 18.02.1994).

[155] Iwona Irwin-Zarecka, *Frames of Remembrance: The Dynamics of Collective Memory* (New Brunswick, USA: Transaction Publishers, 1993), 49. In her analysis communities of memory, Irwin-Zarecka points out that the boundaries of these communities shift over time, expanding beyond the group of original eyewitnesses, as events of the past enter into public discourse and other memory actors participate in the commemoration of the past in question (48).

> daughter of a repressed person, now posthumously rehabilitated, and my mother was also repressed and rehabilitated. I was the daughter of an "enemy of the people," but I didn't know it for many years. I was born in the Vorkuta camps. I know that privileges for the victims of political repression of the 1930s-1950s have been introduced. I know that the children of fascist concentration camps have privileges and compensation for the starvation, freezing, degrading work and much more they suffered. Now it's become know that Stalin's concentration camps surpassed the fascist camps. For some reason, the topic of Soviet children of the Gulag is not in the archives. Apparently, the documents were not preserved. […] There were so many children born in the camps who were tortured, repressed, destroyed, dispersed, but you read almost nothing about them.

Underscoring the importance of the accounts of Gulag survivors, Shlezhkova thanked the newspaper and the Syktyvkar publishing house for publishing A. Voitalovskaia's memoir, *In the steps of the fate of my generation*:

> Only from this book was I able to establish the life-path of my father and mother in 1937-1938 (this was the beginning of the arrests). My mother did not tell me all of the terrible truth. Even though she told me some of her sorrowful confessions and stories with tears in her eyes, I could not believe all of it. It was unimaginable to me that this could be true. Dear editorial board of *Molodezh severa*, have there been any decrees about the restoration of privileges for us children of the Gulag? After all, we children also suffered and bore the burden of the false guilt of our parents. The Stalinist saying that children do not bear responsibility for the guilt of their parents turned out to be an absurdity. I experienced this and was silent about it, but I remember all of it from an early age. I think that such people don't approach you that often. Once again, I wanted to ask if there is any kind of compensation for years spent in the camps for parents and their children? Parents have already died, but their children are still alive. Just ask us and we will respond, we are still alive and so is our memory of poverty, hunger, degradation, indifference, exile, and many years of silence. I received a birth certificate from the archives only a short while ago in 1992, and out of fear my mother didn't take my father's family name. I can't make sense of it. An entire book needs to be written on this topic. Please write to me. I await your response.[156]

[156] GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 38, l. 101-103a (L. K. Shlezhkova-Vselova to the editor of *Molodezh' Severa*, Sept. 2, 1993). The article Shlezhkova cited was about a prisoner uprising that occurred 1942.

Shlezhkova's letter is illuminating for several reasons. It reveals that newspapers and locally published Gulag memoirs were sources of information about the camps that made it possible for others to understand what their repressed family could not tell them. Like the others who wrote to Syktyvkar Memorial, Shlezhkova cited her personal testimony as an important piece of a developing, but still incomplete narrative of the past. Shlezhkova's letter also illustrates how the children of Gulag returnees did not always know everything about their parents until much later in life. It also reveals that children also lived with a certain stigma attached to them as the children of the Gulag. Similar to the criticisms voiced by living Gulag returnees who thought commemoration of the past was great but felt that the state was not doing enough to help these people who were elderly and in need of material aid, Shlezhkova's letter also argued that if children were born in the camps aren't provided for under the law, then the law needed to be changed.[157] As one former prisoner wrote in a series of memoir letters about a debate he had in the camp with other prisoners: "One person said: 'they will write a history of us', and others rejoined: 'What do I care about history? I want to live!"[158]

After the collapse of the Soviet Union entire villages of former special settlers in Komi wrote to Syktyvkar Memorial seeking rehabilitation. The autobiographical narratives they composed as part of their petitions read like the brief file autobiographies.

[157] It is unclear whether children of victims of former prisoners were provided for under the October 1991 version of the law. However, they were included in later re-definitions of victim and repression.
[158] GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 156, l. 57 (P. I. Siamtomov, "Ispoved," memoir based on letters received from P. I. Siamtomov Oct. 1990-Jan. 1991). See also, GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 12, l. 43-44 (B. S. Siniavskii to M. B. Rogachev, not dated). Siniavksii wrote critically, "You write that your society Memorial helps in the search of graves and information about relatives – this is great, but there are no aid societies for those alive, they're not needed by anyone."

In writing these file autobiographies, former special settlers offered little information about life in exile. For instance, a letter for rehabilitation dated October 16, 1993 from the Komi village Aikino reads, "In 1934, I was sent to a special settlement in the Komi ASSR, to the village Vet'iu in the Ustvymskii district. Since then I have lived in the Komi Republic. I am 86 years old. I was born in 1907. With this application, I ask you to help with rehabilitation. I was sent from the BSSR [Belarus]."[159] It is unclear why they wrote so little about life on the special settlement, however, it seems possible that they did not disclose much because they simply did not know what to write about those years.

Despite the differences between their letters, both Gulag returnees and former special settlers expressed their sublime joy when they were finally rehabilitated. For example, a special settler from the village Vet'iu wrote to Syktyvkar Memorial on August 18, 1993 to express her gratitude: "I thank you with all my heart for your care and goodness toward us. I received all the documents. […] It seems that they came very quickly. and on my 65th birthday. No one has ever given me such a priceless gift."[160] Another former special settler residing in Komi described the feeling of rehabilitation as having a "stigma removed," she wrote,

> On October 18, 1991, the law on the rehabilitation of victims of repression came out. In order to get this certificate, I needed an archival certificate from the special collection of the MVD of the city of Syktyvkar. After

[159] GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 38, l. 98 (L. M. Kovelenko to M. B. Rogachev, 16.10.1993); Ibid, l. 21-22 (K. A. Krauze-Gladchenko "citizen of the Komi ASSR" to M. B. Rogachev, 11.02.1993); Ibid, 27-28 (S. A. Gubert-Konovalovaia to M. B. Rogachev, 1.03.1993); Ibid, l. 43 (L. Fedorovna Shrainer to M. B. Rogachev, 1.03.1991). See also, Ibid, l. 29-31a (A. A. Krail' to M. B. Rogachev, 1.03.1993). This former special settler wrote from the village Vet'iu. It seems from the amount of correspondence received that the entire village wrote to Syktyvkar Memorial for rehabilitation once the word got out. Ibid, 38 (Erna B. Arnold-Miuller, application for rehabilitation, 10.03.1993). This former special settler returned to Komi when she married and found work as a guard at a near-by corrective labor colony in Komi.

[160] Ibid, 94 (L. K. to M. B. Rogachev, 18.08.1993).

> receiving the archival certificate, I lost [my] composure and sleep. In the certificate [my] entire family is listed, of 11 people, after each name is written the terrible word: 'dead, dead' and so on 9 times more, of them 2 are not buried in Ichet-di. After prolonged correspondence, I received the long-awaited certificate of rehabilitation. Justice triumphed. The shameful brand of special settler, daughter of a kulak, was removed.[161]

Although the coverage of the archive is incomplete from 1994-1996, in 1997 Syktyvkar Memorial continued to receive letters from Gulag returnees, special settlers, their children, and relatives looking for their lost loved ones. The majority of these letters were written by repressed persons seeking help with rehabilitation or obtaining information about a repressed parent. In a few instances, Gulag returnees who had not yet written to Syktyvkar Memorial wrote, but they did not do so with the same frequency as they had in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The slowing of the influx of letters from former prisoners can be explained by several factors. First, many of those who wrote memoirs and actively corresponded with Memorial in the late 1980s and early 1990s had passed away by the late 1990s. Second, while researching the history of the Gulag and commemorating the victims of political repression remained important in Komi, interest in the dark chapters of the Stalinist past declined nationally due to the economic crisis of the 1990s, which made everyday survival a more pressing issue. [162]

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[161] GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 156, l. 97 (Klavdiia Petrovna Chudinova "Vospominaniia o perezhitom proizvole podvergshimsia repressiiam po politicheskim motivam pri raskulachivaniimore," not dated).

[162] On the national decline of anti-Stalinism, see, Smith, 174-193. On the collapse of the Soviet Union and everyday survival during the financial crisis that ensued, see, Olga Shevchenko, *Crisis and Everyday life in Postsocialist Moscow* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009).

From the start, Syktyvkar Memorial was *the* institution that former prisoners and other "victims of political repression" turned to. As one Gulag returnee said to a reporter at Syktyvkar Memorial's office hours: "It's easier to speak with a civilian, than to go to the organs of power, who in my time treated us harshly and unfairly."[163] From 1989-1997 Gulag returnees actively corresponded with the Syktyvkar Memorial Society to tell their stories and to seek help obtaining rehabilitation. In the process, they formed a people's archive, which preserved their autobiographical narratives as a part of an alternate history of the Komi Republic and the Soviet Union. As the product of a nascent civil society, Syktyvkar Memorial played an essential role in institutionalization of Gulag returnees' collective memory. While Gulag returnees were initially motivated by anti-Stalinism, they continued to write to contribute to Syktyvkar Memorial's ongoing memory project of commemorating the victims of political repression. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, former special settlers and children of Gulag returnees expanded this project when they wrote to Syktyvkar Memorial seeking rehabilitation as victims of political repression. Taken as a whole, this correspondence illustrates the ways in which victims of political repression identified themselves and were identified by the state.

The letters to Syktyvkar Memorial are important for what they tell us about former prisoners, as well as and their silences. With few exceptions, former prisoners did not detail their lives after release in their letters. This large lacunae in their epistolary narratives illuminates that these narratives were part of a dialogue with Syktyvkar

[163] GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 38, l. 29 (K. Markizov, "Khochu umeret' reabilitirovannoi," *Vechernii Syktyvkar*, Feb. 22, 1992).

Memorial, which was focused on documenting the system of political repression in the Komi Republic. However, as we will see in the next chapter, Gulag returnees did in fact write about their lives after release in the memoirs they sent to Syktyvkar Memorial and to local history museums throughout Komi.

CHAPTER TWO

The "Brotherhood of *Zeks*:" Community, Identity, and *Svoi* in Gulag Returnees' Memoirs

"Life defines consciousness.
- Marx
Beatings define consciousness.
- Prisoners"[164]

"Oblivion is worse than sacrilege,
Friends I cannot forget.
Love and the camp brotherhood,
I've kept in my heart ever since."
- Anna Bokal[165]

Introduction

In 1989, Gulag returnee Boris Serov wrote a memoir and sent it to the newly formed Syktyvkar Memorial Society from the northern city of Pechora, where he once served a five-year sentence.[166] After describing the first years after his release in 1946, when he continued to gather with his friends from the camps to remember those they lost to its darkest depths, Serov's thoughts turned toward recent efforts to come to terms with the Stalinist past:

> We remembered our comrades in misfortune and laughed and cried. Memory did not always give us joy. Remembering those times, we cried more often than we laughed! […] This is a small piece of my life. At times life spoiled me, but often repressed and scoffed at me. Although that's life

[164] GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op.1, d. 17, l. 20 (L. M. Gorodin, "Slovar' Russkikh argotizmov," 1984-1985).
[165] Quoted in GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 163, l. 131 (Petr Kotov, "Vospominanie," Gdansk, Poland, 1991). Bokal was a prisoner of Vorkutlag 1936-1945. For her biographical information see, the Memorial Society's database of "Victims of political terror in the USSR," http://base.memo.ru/person/show/372910 [accessed 1/22/18].
[166] Serov was sentenced on Nov. 19, 1937 by an NKVD troika under article 58.11 (Organization of anti-Soviet group/activities) and sentenced to five years imprisonment followed by three years deprivation of rights. For his biographical information, see, "Victims of political terror in the USSR," The International Memorial Society, [accessed 1.04.18] http://lists.memo.ru/index18.htm.

> isn't it? People oppressed me, jeered at me out of envy, career goals, or just out of spite. And then they repeated over and again: forget! Everything was good, there was no fear, no degradation. You were always happy! But how is it possible to forget the way it was with us, with the whole country? If we forget everything that happened to us, we will not know our history. And after all, the history of the Motherland is the history of our mother. Since you can't remember your mother, you don't think of her? If a child loses his mother, is he really alone? No. Kind people will take him in, or the children's home will shelter the unfortunate one, and he will be full and warmly dressed. But he will nonetheless long for and dream about meeting his mother. One would think that he has everything, what doesn't he have? He doesn't have a mother! Not knowing what a mother is, can you live for her? That is what the motherland is. Our collective mother. Not knowing her, is it possible to love her unconditionally? And love helps us forgive her mistakes and correct them, rebuilding her life and the life of all society.[167]

Like many Gulag returnees who wrote memoirs in the late 1980s, Serov understood the necessity of Gorbachev's glasnost. If Soviet society was to be rebuilt, the crimes of Stalinism had to be confronted. However, without the perspective of ordinary citizens whom Stalin repressed, was such a reckoning even possible?

This chapter argues that Gulag returnees responded to glasnost and the collapse of the Soviet Union by writing autobiographical narratives in which they wrote themselves as a community into Soviet history at its end. As those who bore the brunt of Stalinist repression and survived, it was important to them to contribute their life stories as evidence of Stalin's crimes. However, due to the fact that more than forty years had passed since many of them were released, Gulag returnees had to trace their lives back from the present to this formative moment. In doing so, they formulated an identity in which the individual and the collective were intertwined. Interchanging and interspersing

[167] GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 156, ll. 27-28 (B. D. Serov, "Piat' let i vsia zhizn'," Pechora, 1989).

"We" and "I" throughout their autobiographies, Gulag returnees referred to themselves as a "brotherhood of zeks."[168] To identify themselves as a community, they used words such as "*svoi*" (us/ours), "*nashi*" (ours), "*my*" (we), as well as camp slang such as, "*byvshie*" (formers), "*lagerniki*" (camp inmates), "*kontriki*" (counter-revolutionaries/politicals), "*bratia 58*" (brother 58-ers), and "zek" (short for Z/K – prisoner).

Jochen Hellbeck and others have argued that one of the primary aims of the Soviet experiment was the unification of the individual and the collective embodied by the state.[169] These scholars have used diaries, autobiographies, and correspondence from the 1930s and 1940s to illustrate how ideology shaped the efforts of Soviet people to construct selves that joined them with the collective, and that they achieved this without a loss of individuality but an integration of the two. Others, such as Alexander Etkind and Sarah J. Young, point to the shattering of the New Soviet Man in the camps as evidence of the failure of this project.[170] Autobiographical narratives written by Gulag returnees during the twilight of the Soviet experiment appear to illustrate this same process of

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[168] Alexei Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 131-32. Yurchak identifies "publics of *svoi*" among members of the last Soviet generation who had not been in the camps. Although he describes this as a feature of late-Socialism, it seems that the experience of being "within" but invisible to the system also applies to Gulag returnees.

[169] Jochen Hellbeck, *Revolution On My Mind: Writing A Diary Under Stalin* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006). See also, Igal Halfin, *Terror in My Soul: Communist Autobiographies on Trial* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003); Thomas Lahusen, *How Life Writes the Book: Real Socialism and Socialist Realism in Stalin's Russia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997). Oleg Kharkhordin, *The Collective and the Individual in Russia: A Study of Practices* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

[170] Alexander Etkind, "Soviet Subjectivity: Torture for the Sake of Salvation?" *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 6, no. 1 (Winter 2005): 171–86; Sarah J. Young, "Recalling the Dead: Repetition, Identity, and the Witness in Varlam Shalamov's *Kolymskie rassazy*," *Slavic Review* 70, no. 2 (Summer 2011): 353-372.

attempting to merge the individual and the collective, albeit in a different context and with a radically different intent. Unlike diarists from the 1930s who attempted to join the collective embodied by the state, Gulag returnees wrote autobiographies in the late 1980s and 1990s in order to join a collective of former enemies of the state. Despite the fact that Gulag returnees also identified themselves by the subgroups they belonged to in the camps – which were divided by ethnicity, criminal caste, and class – they underscored the brotherhood of zeks as the important part of their identity when they reconstructed their lives.[171] Thus, membership in this community formed the basis of a collective identity, which was a function of identifying themselves as survivors of political repression in order to bring the past to light.[172]

This chapter also engages the work of historians and literary scholars who study the cultural history of autobiographical writing in Russia and the Soviet Union. In particular, I engage works by Irina Paperno, Barbara Walker, and Benjamin Nathans, which examine the autobiographical writing of intellectuals and dissidents and the use of this form in constructing a virtual community. Although the memoirs examined in this chapter were shaped by the same culture of autobiographical writing that informed the memoirs of intellectuals and dissidents, Gulag returnees' texts describe a totally different

[171] On these prisoner subcategories in the Gulag, see, Barenberg, *Gulag Town, Company Town*, 206; Steven Barnes, *Death and Redemption: The Gulag and the Shaping of Soviet Society* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 185-197; Federico Varese, "The Society of the *vory-v-*zakone, 1930-1950s," *Cahiers du Monde russe* 39, no. 4 (1998): 515-38; Toker, *Return From The Archipelago*, 15-24.
[172] Iwona Irwin-Zarecka, *Frames of Remembrance: The Dynamics of Collective Memory* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1993), 47-52. Irwin-Zarecka writes about the dynamics of collective memory and the formation of "communities of memory," which are formed when groups engage in the work of remembrance." I see the community that Gulag returnees formed in their memoirs and autobiographies as such a community. Irwin-Zarecka writes: "A community of memory is created by that very memory" (47-48).

set of concerns, conflicts, and qualities, which they used to represent and define their community.[173] In other words, while the form may look the same, the communities they constructed were anything but.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, hundreds of Gulag returnees sent autobiographies to local history museums and branches of Memorial in towns throughout Komi where they had once been prisoners. This chapter examines approximately 100 of these texts, which were mainly written between 1988 and the late 1990s. Although a few of these texts were written prior to glasnost, as Paperno writes, they "belong to the present moment, when they are assembled, framed, and put into the public domain for everybody to see."[174] The authors of these texts were not intellectuals from Moscow and Leningrad; they were peasants, workers, engineers, builders, doctors, party members, artists, and teachers from all over the Soviet Union who served time for (mostly) imagined political crimes in Stalin's Gulag.[175] While some left the region after their rights as Soviet citizens were restored, many of them remained in Komi for the rest of their lives. Regardless of where they lived when they wrote their memoirs, survivors of Komi's camps underscored their connection to the region decades after release. As former prisoner Leonid Safronov wrote in his 1993 memoir: "Years pass and fewer and

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[173] For these studies of autobiographies written by the Soviet intelligentsia and dissidents, see, Barbara Walker, "On Reading Soviet Memoirs: A History of the 'Contemporaries' Genre as an Institution of Russian Intelligentsia Culture from the 1790s to the 1970s," *The Russian Review*, 59 (July 2000): 327-52; Irina Paperno, "What Can Be Done with Diaries?" *Russian Review*, 63 (Oct. 2004): 561-573; Benjamin Nathans, "Talking Fish: On Soviet Dissident Memoirs," *The Journal of Modern History*, 87 (September 2015): 579-614.

[174] Paperno, *Stories of the Soviet Experience*, xii.

[175] Although some did transgress the law, it is difficult to consider their actions a crime. I focus on ordinary politicals because those sentenced for "everyday life crimes" (*bytoviki*) and criminals (*blatnye*/*urki*) typically did not write memoirs.

fewer of us former prisoners of Ukhtpechlag remain. There are a handful of us in Kiev. Sometimes we meet, we remember the camps [and] the guards with hate, but the Pechora land is our second motherland and the Komi people – our brothers."[176]

This chapter is composed of three sections. In each section, I draw from texts that belong to the corpus of memoirs written by the survivors of Komi's camps. Each section explores the various characteristics that Gulag returnees used to define themselves and the community they formed. Section one explores the camp origins of the brotherhood of zeks. While some briefly touched upon their lives before arrest, the majority of their autobiographical narratives begin with life in the camp. These narratives overwhelmingly emphasize the importance of friendship to their survival and the preservation of their humanity. Section two examines life after release. In this chapter of their autobiographies, Gulag returnees underscored the continued importance of the camp brotherhood, which enabled them to reintegrate back into Soviet society. Their inclusion of this chapter of their lives, as well as their emphasis on *life* after release, illustrates that the Gulag alone did not define them. Section three examines the various statements they made about why they wrote memoirs when they did. Given the fact that many of them wrote after the publication of *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* and the samizdat publication of his *The Gulag Archipelago*, Solzhenitsyn was an important figure that factored into their reasons for writing. Thus, this section also explores some of their

[176] GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 40, l. 31-32 (L. S. Safronov, "Doroga vo mrake bez nadezhdy na prosvet," 1993).

responses to Solzhenitsyn's writings about the Gulag, which they highly praised and sharply criticized.

Writing After the Return: The Origins of the Brotherhood of Zeks

By offering their life stories as evidence of Stalinist repression, Gulag returnees sought to fill the silences of state archives, which did not capture their experiences. While the details of individual accounts vary, their descriptions of life in the camps reveal the origins of the brotherhood of zeks. Set among the taiga forests and arctic tundra of Komi, Gulag returnees described the topography of the camps as part of the natural landscape, as well as the setting where they formed the camp brotherhood. They illustrated their depictions of this environment with details about the violence they suffered at the hands of camp authorities and hardened criminals, the deplorable conditions of camp barracks, dangerous working conditions, and the physical toll that insufficient rations and hard labor and exacted on their bodies. Thus, the details of their lives in the camps assigned meaning to the carceral spaces they described throughout the Komi landscape. Furthermore, as Leona Toker writes, gathering this information was a form of prisoner resistance against Gulag officials who attempted to keep uncensored information about the camps from reaching the Soviet public.[177]

[177] Ibid, 77. Toker writes, "On arrival at each penal facility, most prisoners investigated the lay of the land: collecting facts was necessary for practical adaptation. Yet collecting *maximum* data, in excess of what was needed for daily survival, was also a form of resistance to the authorities' control of information. One ceased being a victim and turned into a subversive intern, a witness-in-training. Curiosity was also a psychological aid to endurance."

While many well-known Gulag returnees, such as Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, Varlam Shalamov and Evgeniia Ginzburg, described the distrust between inmates and the camps as a place of the destruction of self, the former prisoners in this chapter frequently referred to the camps as their university. Although it would be easy to simply read this as a sarcastic comment about the environment that prisoners were prescribed for "reeducation," and indeed some used this metaphor to mock Maxim Gorky who proclaimed the redemptive features of forced labor in his book about the construction of the Belomor Canal, many Gulag returnees used this metaphor as an earnest description of their experience. They wanted to extract something useful from their suffering.[178] For instance, when former prisoner Vladimir Sollertinskii finally decided to write an autobiography for his grandchildren in 1984, the search for the source of who he became led him back to the camps:

> The true impulse to write this narrative was vague and indefinite at first, and then it spontaneously revealed itself; it was the desire to understand where I came from. In the process of working on the manuscript and summarizing my thoughts, it became clear that it [the Gulag] shaped every aspect of my development as a human being. The conclusion is trivial enough, but my example shows its universality.[179]

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[178] M. D. Baital'skii, "Znai istoriiiu goroda v kotorom zhivesh': Na kirpichnom zavode," *Zapoliar'e* Sept. 19, 2000. In one part of his memoir, which was published as part of a six-part series of articles in the Vorkuta newspaper *Zapoliar'e* in 2000, Baital'skii wrote on why he wrote about the camps, "I speak about camp customs not for the sake of exotics, but to show the environment which we recent communists, and hundreds of thousands of ordinary workers, were prescribed for correction." For Baitail'skii's memoir manuscript, see, Arkhiv Fonda Pokaianie (AFP) (M. D. Baital'skii, *Tetradi dlia vnukov*, Moscow, 1976). Gorky's book on the Belomor Canal was published in the West as propaganda in 1935. See, Maxim Gorky, ed., *Belomor: An Account of the Construction of the New Canal Between the White Sea and the Baltic Sea*, trans., S. G. Firin (New York: H. Smith and R. Haas, 1935). On the correlation between the destruction and creation of the self in the camps and the reeducation of prisoners see, Barnes, 38, 58; Julie Draskoczy, *Belomor: Criminality and Creativity in Stalin's Gulag* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2014), 23, 26.

[179] Arkhiv Memoriala "Kollektsiia memuarov i literaturnykh proizvedenii" (AM) f. 2, op. 2, d. 112, l. 176 (V. E. Sollertinskii, "Kuda bog smotrit, vospominaniia," Sosnogorsk, 1984). See also, AFP (G. I. Rivkin, "Po dorogam proizvola," 2005), 38.

Despite the horrors Sollertinskii witnessed in the Gulag, he remembered the camps as a site of personal development:

> The atmosphere of the 1930s, when the necessity of service to the common cause was accepted without discussion. The camp, which seemed to be a misfortune in every way, turned out to be a stroke of good luck. Here the grandiose intellectual and spiritual potential of my surroundings completed the work of my human development, here my spirit was freed and learned to be free.[180]

Although Sollertinskii described the impact of his imprisonment in a positive light, he was not blind to its destructiveness. The effects of years behind barbed wire cut both ways. For some, including Sollertinskii's brother and father, the camps destroyed whom they had been prior to their arrest. Contrasting his memory of the camps with the memory of his father and brother when they came to live with him after their release, Sollertinskii testified to the destructive potential of the Gulag: "I didn't recognize him. […] He was indifferent to everything, and if I insisted on something, he would submit, but only then. They lost the hunger for life, the will to live in the adversities they endured."[181]

The severe conditions in Komi's camps limited the chances of surviving on one's own. The climate of the Far North compounded the harmful effects of the unsanitary barracks, squalid rations, violence, and backbreaking manual labor, which quickly reduced able-bodied workers into walking skeletons. Thus, learning to survive from

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[180] Ibid.

[181] Ibid, 225. Contextualizing his father's and his brother's broken spirit after release, Sollertinskii wrote about the difficult they had describing what they had seen: "I already spoke about the aversion that our brother 58 [*brat-58*] felt toward discussing the details of the camp underworld, which is why father did not speak about them, and I did not ask. It's unlikely that the details differ much from what is written in *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* and I won't talk about them either."

other prisoners was one of the most important lessons of the camp university. Furthermore, caring for their "comrades in misfortune" despite their own critical condition was a defining characteristic of the camp brotherhood. In his undated autobiography, former prisoner Aleksandr Gurevich wrote that he owed his own survival to the camp brotherhood's sense of collective responsibility for the wellbeing of its own:

> It is no exaggeration to say that I owe these people. They taught me everything I learned. The majority of them received a basic education before the Revolution, and in the years after the Revolution they were among the most educated and cultured scientists and specialists who preserved institutions of higher education on the ruins of Russian universities. These people were distinguished by their keenness when they worked, energy, drive, and sense of responsibility. They commanded authority and were able to influence their subordinates and camp bosses. They generously shared their knowledge and experience in a way that was quite humble in comparison with today's leaders. As the most 'conscientious' workers, they were of course masters of padding the numbers [*tufta*], though not for the sake of personal gain, but for the sake of additional portions of bread, scoops of porridge, [and] seven grams of sugar for the workers.[182]

To be sure, however, Gulag returnees also learned to survive from seasoned convicts (*bytovkiki* and *ugolovniki*). Since many political prisoners were new to the camps and did not have the slightest understanding of the world they had entered, attending the camp university also meant learning to adapt. Former prisoner Vitalii Ol'shevskii remembered in his undated memoir that the first lessons of this education began at the moment of arrival:

> By the time we joined the column there were already thirty camp old timers [lagernikov] who were mainly criminals [*ugolovnikov*] shipped here from the Far East. Apparently, their role was to test our mettle to make us

[182] AM f. 2, op. 2, d. 22, l. 43 (A. S. Gurevich, "Vospominaniia," not dated). Judging by the references he made to the *Gulag Archipelago* and other texts, including newspapers, it seems likely that Gurevich wrote his autobiography between 1988-1992.

> into a productive camp collective out of a formless mass of normal citizens. They taught us all of the complex laws of the camp order and interrelations in a graphic, easy to understand way. This unwritten law was so barbaric that many of us could not grasp it and as a result they died. The first to die was Aleksei Putriu. Many more died later. They all died in different situations, but as a matter of fact they died because they could not adapt to this life.[183]

Gulag returnees forged powerful bonds in the camps that formed the basis of lifelong friendships. These friendships not only enabled Gulag returnees to survive, but also helped them adapt to life after release. Such friendships were one of the ways in which prisoners resisted the degradation of the camp environment and "remained human beings." Arrested as an eighteen-year-old student and sent to the strict-regime camp in Inta, Sussana Pechuro described the importance of friends who saved her life by getting her reassigned from general labor to the camp cultural-educational department. These people became her family after she was torn from her own:

> Friendship in prison – it is a topic of a separate conversation, yes, there has already been much written about this. A friend in prison is more than a friend. A person, with whom you become close, having lost everything that people live by in the normal world, replaces those close ones you lost. You give your camp friend all of your warmth, all of your soul. That is why in the camp more than anything [prisoners] fear being transferred. People cannot imagine, how they can bear another loss, the loss of a camp friend. God, how many of such losses I came to bear during the years of my imprisonment! It turns out that it's possible to survive all of it and not lose the ability to love, to be happy.[184]

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[183] AFP (V. B. Ol'shevskii, "Vyzhit! Ot Bamlaga do Pechlaga," not dated), 57. Ol'shevskii's memoir is not dated, however, part of the 308-page text was published in 1991 in the first edited volume of memoirs written by former prisoners from Komi. For the condensed, published version, see, Vitallii Ol'shevskii, "Vyzhit!" in *Pechal'naia pristan'*, ed., I. L. Kuznetsov (Syktyvkar: Komi Knizhnoe izd-vo, 1991), 257-268.

[184] GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 163, ll. 163-164, (S. S. Pechuro, "Vospominanie," not dated). Pechuro wrote: "The camp taught me, a young uneducated girl, and everyone else, about human kindness, self-confidence, and brotherhood" (165). On friendship and the bonds that tie, see also, A. L. Voitolovskaia, *Po sledam sud'by moego pokoleniia* (Syktyvkar: Komi knizhnoe izd-vo, 1991) [accessed 4/1/18] https://www.sakharov-center.ru/asfcd/auth/?t=author&i=616; GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d.

For Pechuro, her camp comrades were more than friends. They were her family. These bonds were the foundation of the brotherhood of zeks. For them, surviving without friendship would have been impossible. As Pechuro continued in her six-page description of the camp brotherhood:

> The friendship that connected us there has remained for all our lives. We realized a lot there, which we might not have been able to understand without having gone through the experience of imprisonment. There, evil and good were expressed clearly and simply. A person in prison cannot mask themselves. There is nowhere to hide. There are no decorations that could hide his essence. It is impossible to hide even from oneself there. People are divided by the principle, 'you die today – I die tomorrow,' or on the contrary, 'I agree to die today, so you can live until tomorrow.' Bad people became even worse, but good people ascended to the heights of human nobility.[185]

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163 ll. 27-145 (Petr Kotov, "Vospominanie," Gdansk, Poland, 1991). Kotov wrote: "Indeed the 'camp brotherhood' shared the difficult experiences that bring people together. This is clear in Nina Mikhailovna's interactions and relationships with former prisoners who were in prison and exile with her. The principle: 'Political prisoners of all countries unite!' was close to us and we tried to apply it in practice of our lives" (131).

[185] Ibid, 168-169. See also, Pavel Rachkov, "Kak my tam zhili (zapiski ssylnogo)" in *Pechal'naia* pristan', ed., I. L. Kuznetsov (Syktyvkar: Komi Knizhnoe izd-vo, 1991), 20-21; AFP (Vladimir Shervinskii, "Vospominanie," Riga, 1963-1965); AFP (L. M. Gorodin, "Avtobiografiia, pis'ma, vospominaniia," 1982). Gorodin writes about members of the camp brotherhood who taught him "about the simple things, without which it would have been difficult for me to survive; a person who gave me a drink of water, when I thirsted, who lifted me up when I lost heart and became a friend to me and a brother" (119).

Left to right: Sussana Pechuro after release in Inta, 1950s; Vladimir Sollertinskii, Sosnogorsk; Grigorii Rivkin, Vorkuta 1946. The photographs that Gulag returnees included in their memoirs remind us that there are real people behind these narratives of repression, survival, and life.[186]

Although friendship was the foundation of the brotherhood of zeks, Gulag returnees defined this community in opposition to the criminal other. They frequently characterized camp criminals (*ugolovniki*, *vory*) in their memoirs as violent, immoral, and, most importantly, the guilty ones. Criminals were the opposite of brothers, and thus they did not belong to the camp brotherhood. By defining themselves in opposition to the criminal other, Gulag returnees used this prisoner subcategory to consolidate their collective identity as innocent victims Stalinist repression.[187] For instance, when former prisoner Andrei Evstiunichev wrote his autobiography in 1991, he described Gulag returnees as a community defined by their resistance to the moral abyss of the camp world personified by the criminals:

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[186] GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 163, l. 159 (Photograph of S. S. Pechuro, Inta, 1950s); AM f. 2, op. 2, d. 112, l. 239 (Photograph of V. E. Sollertinskii, Sosnogorsk, not dated). Leona Toker also makes this point about the photographs Solzhenitsyn included of himself before arrest and after arrest in the *Gulag Archipelago*. See, Toker, 104.

[187] Barnes, 81. Barnes writes, "Categorization in the Gulag served as a source of power, both in the relationship between authorities and prisoners, and among the prisoners themselves."

> Identifying oneself with the others [*mezhdu soboiu*], we morally supported one another, raising hope for survival by morally strengthening the spirit and one's physical condition. The majority of political prisoners [*politicheskie zakliuchennye*] set themselves the goal to survive, to not lose one's human essence, to not stain oneself with criminal filth, despite everything to not lower one's morals, to not lower oneself to the level of criminality. Not allowing our minds to become stale, we read books to renew them, which came to us in various ways, we studied different fields, played chess, participated in theatre, held debates (except politics), shared our knowledge of art, ethics and much more, striving to remain a HUMAN BEING. Leaving the camp to freedom, every person carried a fear of return.[188]

By identifying himself as a member of a community that enabled him to survive, Evstiunichev underscored the correlational nature of Gulag returnees' collective identity. As we see in Evstiunichev's autobiography, this community was also defined by the division between politicals and criminals.[189]

By revealing who the real criminals were in their autobiographies, Gulag returnees asserted their innocence as victims of political repression. In concert with a growing number of voices, Gulag returnees attempted to alter the perception that those sentenced for article 58 were traitors and enemies, which was still a widespread belief

[188] Evstiunichev, 258. See also, AFP (Ol'shevskii, "Vyzhit'!"), 224. Vitalii Ol'shevskii expressed this sentiment in a slightly different way: "I am proud that despite everything I experienced, I preserved my name as an honest person, I did not become a scoundrel, traitor, or an informant." I will explore this theme in greater detail in chapter four.

[189] The group solidarity that Gulag returnees documented in their memoirs seems also to have been a response to the well-documented fact that criminals ran the camps. It was not uncommon for criminals to serve as guards, crew bosses, and in other positions of power over political prisoners. On the documentation of these divisions in the camps by NKVD and MVD officials, see, Vladimir Kozlov, ed., *Istoriia Stalinskogo GULAGa*, t. 6 (Moskva: ROSSPEN, 2004), 67. See also, Kate Brown, "Out of Solitary Confinement: The History of the Gulag," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 8, no. 1 (Winter 2007): 93-94.

among conservative members of Soviet society in the late 1980s.[190] As former prisoner Anton Kotvitskii wrote in the memoir he sent to the Ukhta-Pechora Memorial Society in the late 1980s, "In earlier times murderers, thieves, swindlers, and bandits sat in prison… The isolated, endured impoverishment and deprivation. Tortured by remorse, badly dressed, unshaven, and mean, they served time for crimes. As it should have been in our time. […] But who is sitting in this stinking cell? Who…?"[191]

For Gulag returnees writing in the 1980s and 1990s, ethnicity was not a determining factor of their definition of who belonged to the brotherhood of zeks.[192] The fact that such groups existed in the camps, makes the omission of ethnicity in Gulag returnees' memoirs all the more striking.[193] To be a member of the brotherhood of zeks one had to live by the principle "I'll die today so you can live to tomorrow." As one Gulag returnee and native of Poland, Petr Kotov, wrote about the camp brotherhood in 1992: "There were people of different nationalities, but there was no division of people by ethnic category. People unselfishly helped one another – a phenomenon which you see

[190] AM f. 2, op. 2, d. 112, l. 143 (Sollertinskii, "Kuda bog smotrit"). Sollertinskii wrote that criminals saw themselves as, "genuine citizens of the USSR. They were obliged to persecute any and all enemies of the people they encountered, that is our brother 58-ers."
[191] AM UGTU (A. A. Kotvitskii, "O chem molchit istoriia," Kiev, 1970), 17. See also, AFP (Ol'shevskii, "Vyzhit!"), 64; GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 40, l. 13 (Safronov, "Doroga vo mrake bez nadezhdy na prosvet"); AFP (Baital'skii, "Tetradi dlia vnukov," 1976), 69.
[192] These groups are well-documented in the memoir literature, see, Aleksandr I. Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago: An Experiment in Literary Investigation*, vol. 2 (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), 265, 350-51; Joseph Scholmer, *Vorkuta*, trans., Robert Kee (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1955), 121-155; Tamara Petkevich, *Memoir of a Gulag Actress*, trans., Yasha Klots and Ross Ufberg (Delkab: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010).
[193] Alexopoulos, 44-5. According to Alexopoulos, from 1930 to the 1950s the majority of prisoners were ethnic Russians. Barenberg's work confirms this and provides a breakdown of the ethnic composition of Vorkutlag and Rechlag in the years for which data is available, 1942-1954. See, Barenberg, *Gulag Town, Company Town*, 264-265.

rarely in the camps, especially in such a collective form."[194] While Kotov saw this as rare, the preponderance of Gulag returnees who sent their autobiographies to the Memorial archive and local history museums throughout Komi suggest that this was more common than Kotov realized. Former prisoners, such as Sussana Pechuro, underscored that politicals had much more in common with each other than the subgroups they belonged to in the camps suggested:

> It must be said that the relations of prisoners of different nationalities were far from simple. I experienced this for the first time in my life. Listening to their stories, I felt tortuous shame for my country, which brought so much sorrow and suffering 'to the liberated peoples.' In conversations with them I never tried to justify these actions. I said: since we are here together on the bunks, I am not your enemy. Just like you, I am an enemy of [Soviet] power. Indeed, they stopped looking askew at me, on the contrary, we related to one another with empathy and sympathy. We started to talk about our pasts, to share our thoughts and our meagre packages, if they came.[195]

Some Gulag returnees dedicated a significant amount of space in their autobiographies to describing their attitudes toward work. While this seems remotely related to how they remembered their lives in the Gulag, the differences in their attitudes toward work illustrate one of the important nuances of their collective identity. Some Gulag returnees, like Konstantin Marushchiak, maintained their belief that justice would prevail. Although they were certain of their innocence, this group of prisoners

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[194] GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 163, l. 91 (Kotov, "Vospominanie," 1992). See also, AM f. 2, op. 3, d. 59, l. 25 (K. P. Marushchiak, "Biograficheskaia rukopis' vospominanii," Syktyvkar, 1989); AFP (Gorodin, "Avtobiografiia, pis'ma, vospominaniia"), 65-67; AM f. 2, op. 2, d. 81, ll. 25 (I. V. Skakovskaia, "Vospominaniia o Vorkute i vorkutianakh, 1946-59," 1996).

[195] Ibid, 165 (Pechuro, "Vospominanie," not dated). See also, E. V. Markova, *Vorkutinskye zametki katorzhanki "E-105"* (Syktyvkar: Fond Pokaianie, 2005), 65 [re-accessed 25.07.2017] http://www.sakharov-center.ru/asfcd/auth/?t=book&num=821. Markova wrote of the new arrivals from the Baltic countries in her camp: "Two years after their arrival in the zone they looked like typical *katorzhane* in filthy, torn quilted jackets, pants, and *ushanki*. Everyone looked the same, only their numbers distinguished them."

highlighted their exceptional work performance as the only thing that made life in the camps easier. As Marushchiak wrote in his 1989 autobiography: "My camp life continued in difficult and severe conditions […] but it was necessary to endure and to work. Only conscientious labor and fulfilling the assignments smoothed over the difficulties and made life better. I understood this and tried to fulfill the production quota."[196]

Despite his early release for "good work performance," Marushchiak remembered the stigma attached to him as a former prisoner. In order to overcome this invisible brand, like other Gulag returnees, Marushchiak described how he worked harder than everyone else after release in order to prove that he belonged as a member of Soviet society:

> I understood excellently that I was innocent, but nonetheless the shortening of my sentence was a holiday to me. This was very rare at the time, it lifted my morale. However, it did not matter. I constantly thought about what sins they had torn my life apart for. A thought haunted me: 'Well, ok, they captured you, put you down, pinned the label of an enemy of the people on you, moreover they persecuted your family. Despite this, it was necessary to honestly work, to fulfill the production assignments. I worked and believed in impending justice. But still I had to endure 9 years of a hard existence. I always had a conscientious attitude toward labor.[197]

[196] AM f. 2, op. 3, d. 59, l. 24 (Marushchiak, "Biograficheskaia rukopis' vospominanii"). Marushchiak repeats himself for emphasis on the next page: "Faith in justice gave me the strength to work conscientiously and overcome all the difficulties. We worked for 12-14 hours straight. Everyone, of course, was half-starving, but the will to live gave us strength. Among the camp administration there were fair, kind people who helped us overcome all of life's burdens." See, Ibid, 25.

[197] Ibid, 26. See also, AFP (N. P. Volkov, "Gorod trudnoi sud'by," 1965-1970), 33. Volkov wrote: "A state award is a major event in anyone's life, but for us it was like the beginning of our exit from the vicious circle created by difficult fate. Then there was ceremony where they congratulated us with warm words and gave us our awards. The 'formers' hugged each other and even shed a few tears. It was unbelievable like in a dream."

Like many Gulag returnees, Marushchiak continued to work in the camp after release.[198] Besides the fact that he was no longer a prisoner, little changed during that first year except for his residence; Marushchiak moved from a barrack in the zone to a barrack in town.[199] Despite his good standing as an employee of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD), the need to outperform his colleagues never left Marushchiak until he was finally promoted to Chief Engineer of the Department of Major Construction at Ust'vymlag in 1955:

> This position was confirmed in Moscow. Such an assignment and confirmation [conferred] a lot of trust [in me]. By granting me such a position, The leadership, political department, officer corps, party and union organizations acknowledged me as an honest devotee to the cause of the Communist Party of Lenin, a Soviet person. Everything I knew, everything I could [give], I gave to the cause of fulfilling the plan without considering how long it would take or my own strength. This was my answer to the trust that was shown to me.[200]

On the surface, Marushchiak seems to be one of the former prisoners who "kept faith in the Party" and attempted to reconcile who he was before arrest with who he became after release.[201] However, he was not rehabilitated until 1957 and did not join the Party until

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[198] Barenberg, *Gulag Town, Company Town*, 161-197. Barenberg underscores the necessity of hiring former prisoners to maintain the production of coal in Vorkuta, which was undoubtedly an issue faced by authorities everywhere where prisoners composed a significant segment of the local labor force. Barenberg writes, "Many ex-prisoners had already secured jobs and housing in the city before they were released, as was the case with the thousands of de-zoned prisoners who were given permission to live outside the camp zone after Stalin's death. […] The release of tens of thousands of prisoners in such a short period of time, combined with the transition of Vorkuta's mines to non-prisoner labor, created an enormous demand for workers, particularly those with skills and experience" (199). See also, Adler, *The Gulag Survivor*, 71-72.
[199] This movement from the camps to the town just outside the barbed wire is well documented in state archives and Gulag returnees' memoirs. See, for example, L. P. Markizov, *Do i posle 1945: Glazami ochevidtsa* (Syktyvkar: Fond Pokaianie, 2003), 156; AFP (Volkov, "Gorod trudnoi sud'by"), 54,.
[200] AM f. 2, op. 3, d. 59, l. 28 (Marushchiak, "Biograficheskaia rukopis' vospominanii"). See also, AFP (A. I. Sapozhnikova, "Vospominanie," Syktyvkar, 2012), 18. Sapozhnikova wrote about her reinstatement in the Party: "In 1958 they accepted me into the party. Why did I need this? It was important to me to prove to those around me that although I was repressed, I was not guilty of anything."
[201] Adler, *Keeping Faith*, 28-92.

1960.[202] Although his career path seems somewhat unique – he eventually rose to the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel – his story reveals that release did not end the need to perform one's rehabilitation.[203] It was a lifelong process.[204] And perhaps most importantly, his autobiography illuminates the complexity of Gulag returnees' identities, which in some areas overlapped with those of other Soviet people who expressed both idealism and alienation.[205]

Although some prisoners accepted the idea that it was possible to return to Soviet society through hard work, others saw the camps as intentionally designed to destroy their work ethic. Despite their return and ongoing attempts to reintegrate, many Gulag returnees feared that their imprisonment had irrevocably damaged their attitude toward work, which prevented them from rising above the bottom rung of the social ladder. After serving a total of eighteen years in the camps and in exile, Leonid Gorodin was released in 1954.[206] Although he eventually went on to a career as the editor of a

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[202] AM f. 1, op. 3, d. 3123, l. 1-2 (K. P. Marushchiak, Moscow Memorial Society questionnaire, 1989); AFP (K. P. Marushchiak, Syktyvkar Memorial Society questionnaire, not dated).

[203] It is unclear how common this was. However, given the fact that most people who worked in the camps had very little education, it is perhaps unsurprising that camp officials tried to keep as many of the educated, skilled workers as they could. On education levels of camp officials in 1945, see, N. V. Petrov, ed., *Istoriia Stalinskogo GULAGa*, t. 2 (Moskva: ROSSPEN, 2004), 256. For other examples of former prisoners who joined the MVD after release, see, AM f. 2, op. 1, d. 77, ll. 54 (Iakov Kuperman, "Piat'desiat let, 1927-1977: Vospominaniia," not dated). Kuperman worked as an engineer for the MVD after release and recounts meetings with Naftalii Frenkel' who rose from prisoner to Chief of the Directorate of Railroad Construction (GULZhDS). Andrei Krems is another example of a former prisoner who became a prominent member of the local MVD. Although he never wrote a memoir, the apartment where he spent the rest of his life after his release in 1940 has become a museum in Ukhta. For Krems' biography, see, Rogachev, ed., *Pokaianie: Martirolog* t. 12, ch. 1, 329.

[204] On the lifetime of performing to fit in after release, see also, Markova, *Vorkutinskye zametki katorzhanki*; GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 156, ll. 22-45 (Serov, "Piat' let i vsia zhizn'"); GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 163, ll. 5-6 (K. M. Aleksandrovna, "Vospominanie," undated).

[205] Yurchak, 288-290.

[206] Rogachev, ed., *Pokaianie: Martirolog*, t. 12, ch. 1, 184. Gorodin was arrested in 1936 and sentenced to 5 years imprisonment in Ukhtpechlag. His release was delayed until the end of WWII. As a result, he was

newspaper in Sverdlovsk, he feared that the camps permanently destroyed his work ethic. As he wrote in his 1989 autobiography:

> You know what thought has relentlessly haunted me for some time now? Maybe the camps were devised by enemies who were given the task of arousing an aversion for labor in people. Take me for example. I experienced satisfaction from labor all my life. It relaxed me. I burst forward from prison into the camp, I wrote a petition, I even declared a hunger strike so that they would quickly send me away [to the camps] because there is no worse punishment for me than idleness. I knew that difficult, forced labor awaited me – which is why it was a thousand times more difficult. But it didn't scare me. But now I notice how a hatred toward labor grows in me, not only because it is forced, but because it is senseless.[207]

Unlike Marushchiak, Gorodin did not feel that his labor in the camps transformed him into an "honest" Soviet citizen. Instead, Gorodin felt alienated from labor and thus unable to completely rejoin Soviet society. With that door closed to him, Gorodin sought a new collective to join after release, which he found in the camp brotherhood.

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transferred to Vorkutlag in 1942. For "good work performance" he was released "early" in 1944. In 1950, he was arrested again and sentenced to eternal exile in Vorkuta. He was released from exile in 1954 and continued to work in Vorkuta. He moved to Sverdlovsk after he was rehabilitated in 1956.

[207] AFP (Gorodin, "Avtobiografiia, pis'ma, vospominaniia"), 98. See also, A. P. Evstiunichev, *Nakazanie bez prestupleniia* (Syktyvkar: Memorial, 1991), 261; Veniamin Vasil'ev, "V'iugi Vorkutlaga," in *Pechal'naia Pristan'* (Syktyvkar: Komi knizhnoe izd-vo, 1991), 175; AFP (Baital'skii, Tetradi dlia vnukov), 155. Baital'skii wrote, "The re-education of criminals, from what I observed, as it was to be expected, turned into the most extreme form of *tufta*, into total deception. Criminality, even the so-called 'everyday' [*bytovaia*] crime didn't decrease in the slightest" (155).

From left: L. M. Gorodin mugshot, 1936; after release, Vorkuta, 1947; mugshot after second arrest, Vorkuta 1950.[208]

In addition to telling their own stories, Gulag returnees' autobiographical narratives serve as textual monuments to their fallen comrades. Gulag returnees memorialized their friends by returning their names from the abyss with the hope that someday someone will learn the fate of a loved one.[209] In addition to listing their names, Gulag returnees also incorporated their stories into their own testimonies.[210] By telling their stories as part of their own, Gulag returnees preserved their memory and expanded the scope of their testimony. Furthermore, and perhaps most importantly, the inclusion of

[208] Nauchnyi arkhiv Gosudarstvennogo muzeiia istorii GULAGa (GMIG) (Personal file of L. M. Gorodin).
[209] AFP (Viktor Lozhkin "Material on the repressed Jewish intelligentsia in the camps of Abez', 19.05.2001). See also, AM f. 2, op. 1, d. 74, ll. 834 (I. K. Koval'chuk-Koval', "Svidanie s pamiat'iu: Vospominaniia," not dated); AM UGTU V. K. Novokhatskii, "Rokovaia chernaia shinel'," ll. 64, 1992; V. A. Samsonov, *Zhizn' prodolzhitsia: Zapiski lagernogo lekpoma* (Petrozavodsk: Kareliia, 1990). GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 163, l. 80 (P. Kotov, "Vospominanie," 1991). Petr Kotov provides an example of this aim of Gulag returnees' memoirs, "It turns out that the word Adak [in Komi] means whirlpool – a word, which very precisely relates the character of that place and those relationships, where I came to spend quite a long time. My fate turned out so that I managed to sail out of that whirlpool. Many remain there forever, and I remember them."
[210] Toker, 80. Toker writes, "Each memoir produces a specific new tension between a number of highlighted portraits and the undifferentiated mass of people who both remain at the background and press in upon one in overcrowded cells, trains, or barracks." For examples of this, see, GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 163, l. 53 (Kotov, "Vospominanie"); AM f. 2, op. 1, d. 139, ll. 308 (S. P. Shur, "Pod kolesom istorii, ch. 2," 1960).

their comrades' stories illustrates the entangled nature of the history they were trying to write. In 1996, Irina Skakovskaia wrote an autobiography with the explicit aim of preserving the memory of the Gulag returnees she lived among as she waited for her mother's release in Vorkuta: "In these pages, I wanted to speak about the people whom I knew and loved in my youth. It's possible that there are some inaccuracies in the details since much time has passed already. But I have not sinned against the spirit of Vorkuta, which formed me as a person. […] And I am grateful to my *Vorkutiane* for their steadfastness, bravery and the lofty, morals ideals that they followed despite those difficult times."[211]

While memoirists from the late 1980s and 1990s readily name names, those written before glasnost do not often attach stories to any particular person other than the author. Such omissions were made to protect their friends in the event that their manuscript fell into the hands of the state security services, which happened to Vladimir Sollertinskii in 1983 when the KGB confiscated his autobiography after he tried to send it to a friend in the mail.[212] However, as Sollertinskii wrote, the omission of names also

[211] AM f. 2, op. 2, d. 81, l. 25 (Skakovskaia, "Vospominaniia o Vorkute i vorkutianakh, 1946-59," 1996). Skakovskaia's parents met in exile in Syktyvkar before they were re-arrested and sentenced to camps. See also, GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 163, l. 80 (P. Kotov, "V Adake barrak no.2," Gdansk, 1991); AM f. 1, op. 3, d. 3123, l. 7-11: (K. P. Marushchiak to I. R. Liubavina, 19.09.1989); AM f. 2, op. 1, d. 101, ll. 226 (D. M. Rakhlin, "Griaznia istoriia," 1989-1990).

[212] AM f. 2, op. 2, d. 112, ll. l 95-100 (Sollertinskii, "Kuda bog smotrit"). Sollertinskii described the "polite talk" he had with local KGB officers in his re-written manuscript: "To conclude the conversation, they had me sign a paper, which enumerated everything 'bad' with a checkmark next to each […] The word 'allegedly' was put next to each adversity that I mentioned in the manuscript. I was warned about never allowing this to happen again and that the district procurator had been notified. I asked: 'For what? Is writing forbidden?' 'No,' they said, 'you can, it is your right.' 'But I can't write about this?' 'You know, it depends who will read it.' I signed on the line and sighed, 'How slowly the times change!' 'What, what?' I explained that we already went through this, truly, in several other forms" (96-97). See also, AM UGTU (Kotvitskii, "O chem molchit istoriia"); AFP (Volkov, "Gorod trudnoi sud'by"), 74.

underscored the shared nature of the experiences he documented: "I don't name names and I won't name them: any in the mass of those who were with me and those whom I singled out in these pages could have been Ivanov, Petrov, Sidorov, or myself […]."[213] Whereas other Gulag returnees chose not to name names simply because they did not want to incur doubt regarding the veracity of their memoir by assigning the wrong biography or event to someone.[214]

Life After Release

In the longest chapter of his 1991 memoir entitled, "FREEDOM, WHAT AN IMMENSE, FINE-SOUNDING WORD," Andrei Evstiunichev described the joyous day of release and the disappointment that followed when the reality of life as a Gulag returnee set in:

> Before every prisoner after release stands the question: 'How to live on?' According to our Soviet laws, a convicted person is deprived of all the rights of citizenship and human rights. [One's] apartment is confiscated for the use of the state, all [one's] belongings are requisitioned, redistributed, more accurately, stolen. Prisoners sentenced for political crimes often have relatives who were also subjected to repressions – [they are often sent] to the camp or into exile as family members of an enemy of the people. […] Having been released from the camp, a person, having no means for existence, no place to lay one's head at night, receiving a refusal to be hired at work, frequently became easy prey for vigilant police officers and were brought to court as persons without a definite place of residence or work and were once again returned to the familiar

[213] AM f. 2, op. 2, d. 112, l. 164 (Sollertinskii, "Kuda bog smotrit, vospominaniia").
[214] See, for examples, GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op.1, d. 16, l. 26 (Gorodin, "Rasskazy, vospominaniia," 1962-1977); GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 159, ll. 24-48 (Z. A. Dunchenkin, "Vospominanie perezhitogo detstva v ssylke," Verkhnyi Chov, 1992-1994); GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 159, ll. 54-79 (I. Iz"iurov, "Vozvrashchaias v tridtsat' sed'moi," undated).

environment of camp 'citizens.'[215]

After his release, Evstiunichev, like other Gulag survivors, faced an uncertain road ahead. Not only was he limited in where he could live and work, like most Gulag returnees, he also faced continued persecution from authorities and suspicion from his neighbors.[216]

Gulag returnees universally highlighted the first days of release in their autobiographies. Although some dedicated only a few pages to their lives after release, many wrote at great length about this new chapter of their lives. Their memories of release range from vivid descriptions of their first impressions to detailed account of the process of leaving "the zone to freedom."[217] Regardless of how they described release in their autobiographies, Gulag returnees universally underscored that they continued to carry the weight of their past.[218] Yet, despite this burden, they emphasized that there was indeed *life* after release.[219] Taken as a whole, this chapter of Gulag returnees' autobiographical narratives tells us about the continued importance of the camp

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[215] Evstiunichev, 231-232. See also, AM f. 2, op. 2, d. 81, l. 25 (Skakovskaia); Aleksandr Klein, *Ulybki nevoli (Nevydummanaia zhizn'. Sobytiia. Sud'by. Sluchai)*, (izd-vo 'PROLOG', 1997), 277-287; AM f. 2, op. 2, d. 90, ll. 134 (T. V. Tigonen, "Souchastie v prave: Vospominaniia," Leningrad, 1982-1989).

[216] On passport restrictions placed on Gulag returnees under article 38 and 39 "of the Instructions on Internal Passports" with the notation "*OMZ*" (released from places of confinement) see Rossi, 263, 294. Gulag returnee Elena Markova referred to the 101-kilometer radius around major cities and border areas where former prisoners could not live as "another zone." See, Markova, *Vorkutinskie zametki*, 153. This status was so common among former prisoners that it earned its own term in camp slang: "passport with a temperature / паспорт с температурой." See, GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 17, l. 22. **(**Gorodin, "Slovar' Russkikh argotizmov").

[217] See for example, GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 156, ll. 48-89 (P. I. Siamtomov, "Ispoved'," Syktyvkar, Oct. 1990 - Jan. 1991); GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 156, ll. 22-45 (Serov, "Piat' let i vsia zhizn',"); GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 163, ll. 5-6a (M. A. Kalimova, "Vospominanie," undated); L. M. Gurvich, "Zareshechennye gody," in *...Imet' silu pomnit': Rasskazy tekh, kto proshel ad repressii*, ed., L. M. Gurvich (Moskva, Moskovskii rabochii, 1991), 151-180.

[218] On the effect of "having a past" on Latvians who wrote narratives of their exile and imprisonment after Latvia was annexed by the Soviet Union in 1940, see, Veida Skultans, *The Testimony of Lives: Narrative and memory in post-Soviet Latvia* (London: Routledge, 1998), 67-82.

[219] AM f. 2, op. 2, d. 112, l. 149 (Sollertinskii, "Kuda bog smotrit"). As Sollertinskii wrote about his release: "Life continued, LIFE CONTINUED."

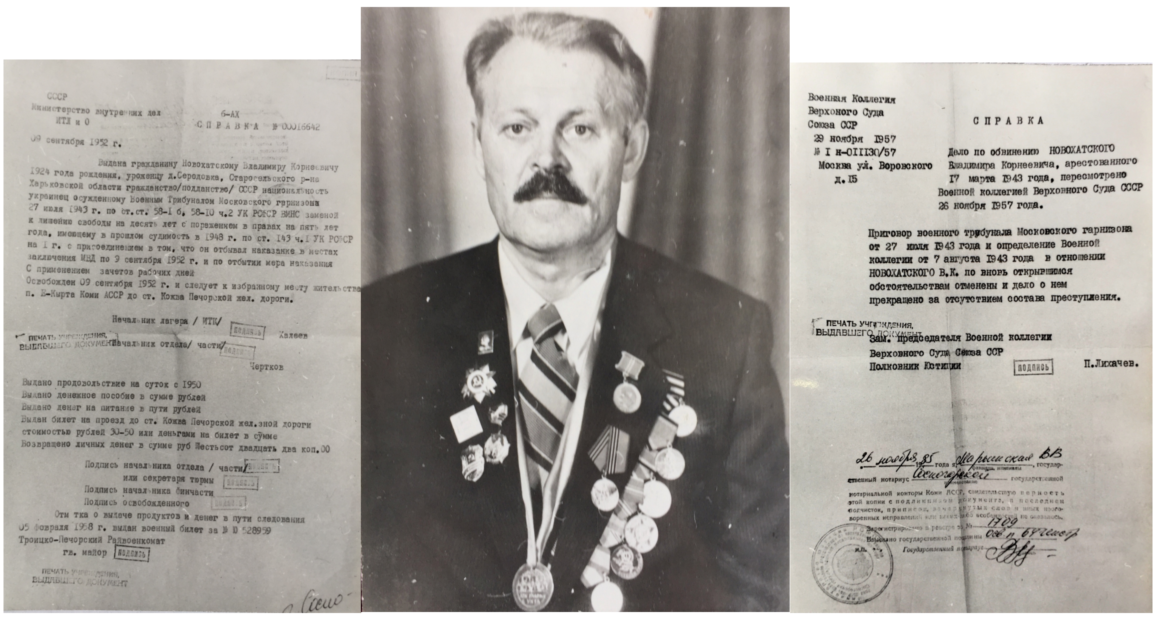
brotherhood, which enabled them to rebuild their lives and join a collective of their peers who understood better than anyone what they had gone through. In light of their changed status and the new concerns they had on the outside, their narratives illustrate the continuities and evolution of the community they formed in the brotherhood of zeks.

Gulag returnees faced many questions upon release. They returned from the camps bearing the scars of years of hard labor, which distinguished them from other citizens. If it wasn't apparent by looking at them, then a quick check of their documents would confirm their status. If one was not altogether sentenced to eternal exile, passport restrictions severely limited their options. However, despite the obstacles and the difficulty of this transition, Gulag returnees reintegrated back into Soviet society. They adapted to life after release just as they had survived the camps, by forming informal mutual-aid associations under the auspices of the camp brotherhood. All of this factored into Vladimir Novokhatskii's decision not to return to his native Ukraine, which he explained in his 1992 memoir:

> Questions arose in my mind every day and every night: 'I'm free!! But where should I go? Who will take me in? Who needs me? Where will I work and what will be my profession? How should I build my future life so what I endured doesn't happen again? Every person dreams of returning to their native land, to the country of their childhood, to their family and loved ones. But what awaits me in my motherland? My mother and step-father are there, but they are very old and live in the countryside […] and I thought, I'll return to the motherland disgraced for all my life so long as the USSR and the Stalinist regime exists. I decided that I would not return home – I will stay in the North, I will go to Ezhid-Krytu and get fixed up in a job. I'll earn enough if only for some civilian clothes – I won't go back to the padded, camp jacket and camp boots. And then, when I assume the look of a human being, maybe I will go to the motherland. At that time many prisoners ended up living where they served their time. They knew each other well. In the first days after

> release, they helped one another get fixed up in a job and helped one another. And so, I firmly decided that I would stay in the North. Maybe not for a long time. But you see I live in the North to this day. I tried to return to [my] mother Ukraine. I went there, but at that time I was still an 'enemy of the people'. And if I had not come back to the North, they would have definitely found a reason to imprison me again.[220]

Without the support of their community, which enabled them to find housing and work, it was unclear to former prisoners how long it would be before they might be arrested and sent back to the camps.[221]


СССР
Министерство внутренних дел
ИТЛ и О
6-АХ
СПРАВКА № 00016642
09 сентября 1952 г.
Выдана гражданину Новохатскому Владимиру Корнеевичу 1924 года рождения, уроженцу д.Середовка, Старосельского р-на Харьковской области гражданство/подданство/ СССР национальность украинец осужденному Военным Трибуналом Московского гарнизона 27 июля 1943 г. по ст.ст. 58-I б, 58-I0 ч.2 УК РСФСР ВМНС заменой к лишению свободы на десять лет с поражением в правах на пять лет года, имеющему в прошлом судимость в 1948 г. по ст. 143 ч.I УК РСФСР на I г. с присоединением в том, что он отбывал наказание в местах заключения МВД по 9 сентября 1952 г. и по отбытии мера наказания
С применением зачетов рабочих дней
Освобожден 09 сентября 1952 г. и следует к избранному месту жительства п. Е-Кырта Коми АССР до ст. Кожва Печорской жел. дороги.
Начальник лагеря / ИТК/ Халеев
Начальник отдела/ части/ Чертков
ПЕЧАТЬ УЧРЕЖДЕНИЯ, ВЫДАВШЕГО ДОКУМЕНТ
Выдано продовольствие на суток с 1950
Выдано денежное пособие в сумме рублей
Выдано денег на питание в пути рублей
Выдан билет на проезд до ст. Кожва Печорской жел.зной дороги стоимостью рублей 30-50 или деньгами на билет в сумме
Возвращено личных денег в сумме руб Шестьсот двадцать два коп.00
Подпись начальника отдела / части/
или секретаря тюрмы
Подпись начальника финчасти
Подпись освобожденного
Отметка о выдаче продуктов и денег в пути следования
05 февраля 1958 г. выдан военный билет за № Ю 528959
Троицко-Печорский Райвоенкомат
гв. майор
ПЕЧАТЬ УЧРЕЖДЕНИЯ, ВЫДАВШЕГО ДОКУМЕНТ
Военная Коллегия
Верхоного Суда
Союза ССР
29 ноября 1957
№ I н-0III30/57
Москва ул. Воровского д.15
СПРАВКА
Дело по обвинению НОВОХАТСКОГО Владимира Корнеевича, арестованного 17 марта 1943 года, пересмотрено Военной коллегией Верховного Суда СССР 26 ноября 1957 года.
Приговор военного трибунала Московского гарнизона от 27 июля 1943 года и определение Военной коллегии от 7 августа 1943 года в отношении НОВОХАТСКОГО В.К. по вновь открывшимся обстоятельствам отменены и дело о нем прекращено за отсутствием состава преступления.
ПЕЧАТЬ УЧРЕЖДЕНИЯ, ВЫДАВШЕГО ДОКУМЕНТ
Зам. председателя Военной коллегии
Верховного Суда Союза ССР
Полковник Юстиции
ПОДПИСЬ
П.Лихачев.

After escaping from a German POW camp near Stalingrad, Novokhatskii was sentenced to ten years in 1943. He included photographs of his release papers (left, 1952), his many medals (center), and his certificate of rehabilitation in his memoir (right, 1957).[222]

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[220] AM UGTU (Novokhatskii, "Rokovaia chernaia shinel'," 18.10.1992), 55.

[221] On former prisoners' social networks see, Barenberg, "From Prisoners to Citizens? Ex-Prisoners in Vorkuta During the Thaw" in *The Thaw: Soviet Society and Culture in the 1950s and 1960s*, Kozlov and Gilburd, eds., (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013): 118-144; Adler, *The Gulag Survivor*, 57-58. For descriptions of these mutual-aid associations in Gulag returnees' memoirs, see, Klein, *Ulybki nevoli*, 278; Markizov, *Do i posle 1945 goda*, 156; AM f. 2, op. 2, d. 81, l. 25 (Skakovskaia, "Vospominaniia o Vorkute i vorkutianakh, 1946-59").

[222] Ibid, 1, 12. Novokhatskii wrote: "Not everyone knows that captivity is hell! And even worse, if you survive and break out of this hell, the brand of traitor to the motherland will hang over you for the rest of your life. And I went through this hell [twice!]." (12).

After many long years behind barbed wire, Komi became home for many Gulag returnees. Even if one could leave, leaving would have meant abandoning the community that meant so much to them.[223] As Vladimir Sollertinskii wrote in 1984, "Not a single thread connected me to normal life: my family was scattered throughout the world, friends stopped being friends, in any setting outside the camp I was an undesirable outsider."[224] In many instances, after many years behind barbed wire friends from the camps were the only family that Gulag returnees had left. They provided an important source of comfort and support during the tumultuous transition to freedom. As Lev Safronov wrote about a member of his adopted family in 1993: "This was my older brother not by blood, but by spirit. F. G. is an optimist and he helped me a lot in the development of my spiritual state, he helped me strengthen my optimism to not give in and to endure, and I endured."[225]

There were also former prisoners from the Baltic countries, which were annexed in by the Soviet Union in 1940, who remained in Komi after release. For instance, having lived in Vorkuta for many years after release, Kraulis Visvaldis moved to Syktyvkar in 1961 where he worked as a studio artist. Not even an offer from his brother to live with him in Canada enticed Visvaldis to change his mind. He had married a local

[223] AM f. 2, op. 1, d. 139, l. 187 (S. P. Shur, "Pod kolesom istorii, ch. 2," 1960). Shur described life after release in Inta as a new spring: "Every morning, arising from sleep, we head off to work, we all thought about: what will today bring? We lived fully, feeling that another time had come, that the air was saturated with electricity, that things are shifting, that things are disappearing which were firmly rooted in our way of life, that something new was coming, the best, that smelled of the renewal of our tired, joyless lives."
[224] AM f. 2, op. 2, d. 112, l. 163 (Sollertinskii, "Kuda bog smotrit").
[225] GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 40, l. 26 (Safronov, "Doroga vo mrake bez nadezhdy na prosvet"). Safronov and his friend were reunited in Syktyvkar after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

woman and his life was now in Komi, as Gulag returnee Konstantin Ivanov wrote about his Latvian friend in 1997:

> When I asked him why he didn't move to Canada (after all, his brother offered him a house there), he logically explained to me that without a knowledge of English there is nothing for him and Galia to do. I will die, and Galia won't find work anywhere and it will be bad for her. 'Why don't you go to Riga?' I asked him. In Riga now there are just the same barracks as there are here. And again Galia… She will always be foreign there.[226]

Gulag returnees frequently mention their ability to identify *svoi* at a glance. As Aleksandr Gurevich wrote in the undated memoir: "Seasoned prisoners had a specific facial expression and deadened eyes. By these traits many years later in the happiest environment they recognized each other, strangers with a mutual fate."[227] Gurevich's description of the returned vividly depicts the transformation prisoners underwent in the camps. While some included these details as part of what Alexander Etkind refers to as the "parable of misrecognition" – a trope used in Gulag literature and memoirs that symbolizes the loss of identity as the cost of survival – others used them to illustrate their ability to recognize others like them.[228] The ability to recognize and identify with other former prisoners whom they did not know contributed to the expansion of the collective. In his 1986 memoir, Konstantin Flug described how he bonded with another Gulag returnee who recognized him on a trolleybus in Stalingrad, "Not long ago, on the Day of

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[226] Arkhiv Vorkutinskogo Muzeiia-Vystavochnogo Tsentra (VMVTs) f. OF 4327, op. 1, d. 26, l. 10 (K. P. Ivanov to Z. N. Fesenko, 3.01.1997). I examine Ivanov's extensive archive of memoir-letters in the next chapter.

[227] AM f. 2, op. 2, d. 22, l. 10 (A. S. Gurevich, "Vospominaniia," not dated); AM f. 2, op. 2, d. 112, l. 152 (Sollertinskii, "Kuda bog smotrit"); AFP (Ol'shevskii, Vyzhit!"), 278; Evstiunichev, 260; AFP (L. M. Gorodin, "Avtobiografiia, pis'ma, vospominaniia," 1956-1992), 67); AM f. 2, op. 2, d. 81, l. 21 (Skakovskaia, "Vospominaniia o Vorkute i vorkutianakh, 1946-59").

[228] Alexander Etkind, "A Parable of Misrecognition: *Anagnorisis* and the Return of the Repressed from the Gulag," *The Russian Review*, 68 (October 2009): 623-40.

the Border Guard, an old-timer in a blue beret came and sat next to me on the trolley and quietly asked: 'Were you in the arctic?' 'Yes.' 'Where?' 'In Vorkuta.' 'And I am from Kolyma.' And then he revealed his toothless mouth, just like mine, as if we were relatives. It's possible that we were brothers-in-arms. Brothers of the 70th parallel!"[229] While this seems like a minor detail, it illustrates how small interactions between former prisoners created an extended network that reached far beyond the small towns and villages of the Far North.

Gulag returnees not only recognized other political prisoners as their peers, they also saw themselves as superior to those who had not been repressed. Gulag returnees expressed their superiority in their descriptions of the interactions they had with other civilians who treated them as second-class citizens.[230] Petr Kotov's memoir about this chapter of his life reveals the tension between the two groups: the "formers" (*byvshie*) and the "civilians" (*vol'nonaemnye*).[231] Drawing from the experiences he shared in exile with his closest friend and "comrade in unhappiness," Nina Sobinova, Kotov described how the treatment of former prisoners in the 1950s contributed to their sense of superiority:

> The leadership and non-exiled workers at the meat factory tried to show her that they were superior at every step. Because she was an exile, she didn't exist. It's true that the law was on the side of non-exiles. However,

[229] VMG (K. Flug, "Chernyi ostrov GULAGa"), 31.
[230] On attitudes toward returning prisoners in the 1950s and after, see, Dobson, *Khrushchev's Cold Summer*, part II; Marc Elie, Jeff Hardy, "'Letting the Beasts Out of the Cage': Parole in the Post-Stalin Gulag, 1953-1973," *Europe-Asia Studies* 67, no. 4 (June 2015): 579-605; Weiner, "The Empires Pay a Visit"; Barenberg, *Gulag Town, Company Town*, 208-209.
[231] GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 163, ll. 89-113 (Kotov, "Nina Mikhailovna Sobinova," in "Vospominanie" Gdansk, Poland, 1992). Although "*vol'nonaemnye*" can refer to former prisoners who continued to work in town as free people, in this case it refers to Soviet citizens who had not been repressed.

> in my experience, exiled people were significantly superior than non-exiles. I don't say this without providing any proof, which comes from my life experience and observations. Having met many exiled people and interacted with bosses who were not exiles while I was in exile in the village Maklakova in Krasnoiarskii krai, I came to the conclusion that the absolute majority of people in power at that time, the so-called rulers, were much more stupid than their subordinates, especially than the exiles.[232]

However, not all civilians treated former prisoners with suspicion as the relationships and marriages between these two groups attest.[233] While the Party frowned upon these unions, this did not stop civilians and Gulag returnees from marrying.[234] For instance, Vladimir Sollertinskii married a local woman in Sosnogorsk in 1945 (two years after his release). Shortly after they registered the marriage, Galina Ivanovna was summoned to the political department of the local party headquarters where she was told to break off the marriage or return her party card. She laid her card on the table and left without a word. However, she did not remain unaffiliated for long. A few days later, Galina Ivanovna's boss at the telegraph office returned her party card with no fuss or further trouble.[235]

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[232] Ibid, 102. For other examples of this, see, AFP (L. M. Gorodin, "Vospominaniia byvshego politzakliuchennogo," Vorkuta, 1990), 115-117; GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 156, ll. 48-89 (Siamtomov, "Ispoved"); .

[233] See for example, AM f. 2, op. 2, d. 112, l. 187 (Sollertinskii, "Kuda bog smotrit"); AM f. 2, op. 1, d. 74, l. 674 (I. K. Koval'chuk-Koval', "Svidanie s pamiat'iu: Vospominaniia," not dated); AM UGTU (Novokhatskii, "Rokovaia chernaia shinel'"), 58; GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 40, ll. 33 (Safronov, "Doroga vo mrake bez nadezhdy na prosvet"); Evstiunichev, *Nakazanie bez prestupleniia*, 255.

[234] GU RK NARK 2 f. P-2576, op. 1, d. 4, ll. 55-70 (Intinskii raikom KPSS gorsoveta, 4.01.1955-27.12.1955). A report from the Inta city soviet reports the case of party member who allowed her daughter – a Komsomol teacher – to marry a "citizen who was only just released from prison, not reinstated in his civil rights. This citizen, T. Likhtenshtein, lives in a family of party members. Sokolova rushed to marry a former convict, who has still not proven himself to others. How can this be seen as anything but political negligence?" See also, GU RK NARK 2 f. P-2576, op. 1, d. 2, ll. 10, 16 (Intinskii raikom KPSS "Protokola zasedanii biura i Partiinykh sobranii," 8.01.1953-19.01.1954).

[235] AM f. 2, op. 2, d. 112, l. 187 (Sollertinskii, "Kuda bog smotrit").

Kotov's memoir stands out for his focus on life after release. This chapter of Kotov's autobiography draws from his extensive correspondence with Sobinova, which lasted from the end of their exile in 1956 until 1989.[236] He reproduced many of these letters in his memoir as evidence of his continued friendship with the prisoners he met in the Adak camp for invalids and in exile. These letters tell stories about their imprisonment and exile, inquire about the health and status of other "former *Adakovtsy,*" and offer critiques of the writings of other Gulag returnees.[237] They illustrate the permanence of these relationships, which Kotov and his friends maintained via correspondence long after he returned to Poland and they moved to cities throughout the Soviet Union:

> In the very beginning, I had the intention of cutting Nina Mikhailovna's letter to the minimum, but I chose not to after reading it [again]. It seems to me that everything Nina Mikhailovna writes about is very important to get a sense of the life and fate of people who were imprisoned in Adak and exiled in Eniseisk. From her letter it's clear that these people did not lose touch with one another and helped each other after release, that they concerned themselves with our physical and moral victory over ourselves, to which they ceaselessly strived. They absolutely did not manage to smash and destroy us (former prisoners and exiles). They weren't able to do this because, although these people were going through the most dreadful stage of their lives in inhuman conditions, they nonetheless

[236] Ibid, 86). Despite the danger of doing so and the ban on his passport, Kotov and his wife travelled to Leningrad to visit Nina Mikhailovna and her husband. The couples became close in the camps and remained so after release. Kotov writes about an episode in which they were caught during their trip and summoned to the local police precinct, but no problems followed, "it was a totally different time" but "we did worry that we would be arrested again [because of our records]."

[237] GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 163, ll. 89-113 (P. Kotov, "Nina Mikhailovna Sobinova," in "Vospominanie," Gdansk, 1992). Kotov repeatedly refers to himself and his fellow former prisoners as "Adakovtsy." See for example, Ibid, 133. Other Gulag returnees group themselves by camp or region in Komi as well, see, GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 159, l. 9 (E. A. Griaznova, Vospominanie, undated, Syktyvkar); VMG (K. Flug, "Chernyi ostrov GULAGa"), 50; GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 40, ll. 33 (Safronov, "Doroga vo mrake bez nadezhdy na prosvet").

> preserved their qualities as human beings and tried to realize them in life.[238]

While the bonds that Gulag returnees shared were a source of strength for them, they were concerning to camp officials and police. Despite the porousness of the boundaries between the zone and town, it seems that the authorities especially disapproved of relationships between Gulag returnees and their comrades who remained in the zone, which they saw as potentially subversive.[239] Nikolai Volkov remembered in his 1970 memoir that being warned to part ways with his friends after he exited the camps: "…But remember! You are now citizens (*vol'nonaemnye*). We expect that you will once and forever be done with your past [ways]. Everything that led you to be prisoners yesterday, must end today. Any connections between prisoners discredit a free person… Although we understand that you just returned from the camps and that this [cutting ties] will not be easy for you to do but do this you must. Your new position obliges you to do so."[240] However, camp authorities were not able to permanently, or even temporarily, disrupt the relationships that began in the zone and continued after release.[241] The camp brotherhood lived on.

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[238] GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 163, l. 94 (P. Kotov, "Nina Mikhailovna Sobinova," in "Vospominanie," Gdansk, 1992). See also, AFP (Volkov, "Gorod trudnoi sud'by"), 72; A. Klein, *Kleimenye, ili Odin sredi odinokikh: Zapiski katorzhnika* (Syktyvkar, Komi Respublikanskaia tipografiia, 1995), 197 [re-accessed 3/1/18] https://www.sakharov-center.ru/asfcd/auth/?t=book&num=1942.

[239] Barenberg, *Gulag Town, Company Town*, 198-230. Barenberg details the numerous ways in which former prisoners were systematically discriminated against and surveilled.

[240] AFP (Volkov, "Gorod trudnoi sud'by"), 49.

[241] GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 163, l. 88 (Kotov, "Vospominanie"). Kotov writes, "Of course, it gladdens me, and I am happy that there is such a strong connection between former prisoners and former exiles. After all, the authorities always tried to divide us, they tried to poison us against one another. Sometimes they managed to do this, but the majority did not follow. Solidarity between former prisoners prevailed, which in soviet reality directed a person to think about reconsidering the cynicism of life."

Writing at the End: Why Gulag Returnees Wrote Memoirs

A public reading of Khrushchev's speech "On the cult of personality and its consequences" in Ukhta is one of the most powerful moments of Anton Kotvitskii's 1970 memoir. Kotvitskii remembered how the large crowd of former prisoners, exiles, and their children became emotional and even angry as the text was read aloud in 1956:

> An unusual rumor spread throughout the city in October: they read a secret letter at the oil refinery – Khrushchev unmasked Stalin. People were disturbed, slept badly… The next day they read the letter out loud at the Geological Trust where I worked at the time. The building was completely full of people. There was nowhere to sit or stand. […] It was as if a strong clap of thunder on a clear day stunned the people. People listened intensely, totally silent and with bated breath. They were afraid to cough, to make a sound […] Except for a few party members, the overwhelming majority of people there were former 'enemies of the people,' the repressed, special settlers, exiles, and so on. All those who populated the Komi ASSR… People from the world of the unfortunate, innocent victims, survivors of prison dungeons and concentration camps who lived to this unusual and happy day… When the massive stone crushing them and blocking out the sun, crashed to the ground […] Old Bolsheviks who I sat with in prison spoke poorly of Stalin, but what Khrushchev said was awe inspiring and terrifying. […] When they read about Kossior, I couldn't take it and cried-out: 'But they turned me, and those like me, into ground meat' […] Several women fell into hysterics. Their husbands had been shot, and they had suffered for a long time themselves in the concentration camps.[242]

However, Kotvitskii continued, "Khrushchev did not speak about everything."[243]

Like many of his peers, Kotvitskii saw Khrushchev's attempt to come to terms with the Stalinist past as a failure because it did not present a full account of what they, the survivors of Stalinist repression, knew about the camps. Thus, when the topic resurfaced during glasnost, Kotvitskii took his memoir out of the drawer and immediately

[242] AM UGTU (Kotvitskii, "O chem molchit istoriia,"), 100-101.
[243] Ibid.

sent it to the Ukhta-Pechora Memorial Society: "One should not casually tell a lie that demands high-flown words and many decorations. It's possible to be silent about a book, [or] events. But one shouldn't keep silent about an entire epoch when tragedy is presented as prosperity and baseness as greatness."[244]

While the desire to overcome the silences of the state's narrative of the past explains why so many sent their autobiographies to branches of the Memorial Society and local history museums, Gulag returnees were motivated by other reasons as well. Some, such as Konstantin Marushchiak, were motivated by anti-Stalinism: "For all time there is no and will be no forgiveness for him [Stalin] and his henchmen. Stalin cannot be counted in the lists of Communists; his remains should not be preserved in the Kremlin wall. Stalin's remains should be scattered into the dust and filth as he scattered the remains of millions of innocent people into camp dust."[245] Others, such as Nikolai Volkov, wrote because they wanted others to know about their contributions to Soviet society, including who really built the cities of the Far North:

> Cities do not rise, they are built over the years. Everything has its beginning. They come into existence only once, from the first tent, earthen dugout, or house. And having said this, do not cast even the smallest shadow on the greatness of the service of all the subsequent builders, including some *vol'nonaemnye* among the few first builders, several of whom came here following the dictates of their heart. But one question for any honest historian must be clear: THE CITY OF A DIFFICULT FATE

[244] Ibid, 78-9

[245] AM f. 2, op. 3, d. 59, l. 24 (K. P. Marushchiak, "Biograficheskaia rukopis' vospominanii"), Syktyvkar, 1989). See also, GU RK NARK f. P3800, op. 1, d. 18, l. 8 (V. G. Lipilin, *Vospominaniia*, 1991); AM UGTU (A. A. Kotvitskii, *O chem molchit istoriia*, l. 87, Kiev, 1970); AM f. 2, op. 1, d. 21, ll. 23 (V. I. Belkin, "Protiv Stalina pri Staline: Zametki uchastnika i ochevidtsa," 1988); GU RK NARK f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 163, l. 165 (S. S. Pechuro, "Vospominanie"); VMG (K. Flug to Vorkuta Gorkom KPSS, 26.11.1983 reproduced in K. Flug, "Chernyi ostrov GULAGa"), 4-5; AFP (L. M. Gorodin, "Avtobiografiia, pis'ma, vospominaniia," 1956-1992), 97.

> was founded and built in the harsh conditions of the arctic under the leadership of the Communist Party and sincere Soviet people. But you have a right to say that not only you, recently rehabilitated [*reabilitirovannye*], participated in the construction of the city and even in the very beginning a significant number of real criminals who had the title thieves, bandits, counterfeiters, and so on, participated.[246]

Yet, new memoirs continued to arrive in the mail at local branches of Memorial even after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Despite the ongoing rehabilitation of "victims of political repression," many Gulag returnees were alarmed by the decline of public interest in the past during the mid-1990s.[247] Gulag returnees, such as Lev Safronov, submitted their autobiographies to combat the "gathering strength of the Stalinists" whom they feared were gaining power again after they traded their party cards for the "robes of democrats." As Safronov wrote in 1993, former prisoners feared for their families, as well as the future of the country:

> The reason why I, an old man of 82 years, sat down to write my memoirs is fear, not fear for myself, [but] fear for my children's future, my grandchildren's, and my countrymen. This fear arose long ago, but it has deepened after I saw on the television waves of raging crowds on the streets of Moscow, red calico flags – the symbol of blood, portraits of Stalin – a symbol of blood, Communist slogans – another symbol of blood. […]
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> Today in all echelons of power there are still hidden Stalinists, descendants and followers of those who tortured us, who show our relatives, who drove our country into the darkness and into poverty. This is borne out by the difficulty it took me to get a certificate [of

[246] AFP (Volkov, "Gorod trudnoi sud'by"), 28. See also, AM UGTU (Kotvitskii, "O chem molchit istoriia"), 69. Although it was published after Volkov's memoir was written, Vasily Grossman depicts a similar scene in his novel about Gulag returnees after Stalin's death, *Everything Flows*, "'I've got prisoners working on my construction site,' he said on one occasion. 'Their name for people like you is 'layabouts.' But when the time comes to decide who built communism, no doubt it'll turn out to be you lot who did all the plowing.'" See, Vasily Grossman, *Everything Flows*, trans., Robert & Elizabeth Chandler, Anna Aslanyan (New York: New York Review Books, 2009), 5.

[247] AM f. 2, op. 3, d. 59, l. 34 (Marushchiak, "Biograficheskaia rukopis'"); AM f. 2, op. 2, d. 112, l. 243 (V. E. Sollertinskii to Memorial Moscow, 20.11.1988); AFP (A. I. Dering, "Letopis' moei zhizni," Novocherkassk, 1990), 33.

> rehabilitation] […] I write about myself and my comrades in misfortune [*ondnobedtsy*], but this was a road travelled by millions of victims of terror. Some of them made it to today, but the majority of them remain in the frozen ground of our northern regions, which they conquered in the name of constructing a 'bright future.'
>
> The relatives and close ones of those who were shot, killed remain. The authorities have only one phrase in their answers to their inquiries about them, 'Place of burial unknown.' The living cannot pray at the graves of their fathers, mothers, brothers, they cannot lay flowers [because] the gravesite is unknown.[248]

Although the memory project of coming to terms with the Stalinist past in Komi developed exponentially over the course of the 1990s, Gulag returnees continued to emphasize the necessity of remembering the past. In 2000, former prisoner Georgii Ustilovskii wrote that the only way to prevent the return of the past was to remember it:

> Our main task, the task of all tasks, is to remember, to tell, to record, [and] to confirm with our testimonies the facts of these grave crimes of the bloody Stalinist-Brezhnevite regime against the people of our Great country. To name as many of the hangmen and oppressors as possible, those who mocked honest people who were not guilty of anything, so that the future generation knew the truth and only the truth so that our testimonies prevented anyone from ever making a fool of our ancestors, so that such savage barbarism, abasement, offense, inhumane tortures and suffering were never again repeated.[249]

While all of the above factored into why Gulag returnees contributed their life stories to the Memorial archive, they also wrote to respond to Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn. As Leona Toker argues, the presence of founding texts written before glasnost and the collapse of the Soviet Union relieved those who came forward in the 1980s and 1990s of

[248] GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 40, ll. 3-4 (Safronov, "Doroga vo mrake bez nadezhdy na prosvet"). Safronov describes in detail how he traveled to the KGB archives in Pavlodar and gained access to his father's, brother's, and his own case files. During his interaction with the officer/archivist on duty, they discuss why there will be no Soviet Nuremberg, which, for Safronov, justifies his fears of the continued vulnerability of Gulag returnees in post-Soviet society. For this story see, Ibid, 20-3.
[249] AFP (G. I. Ustilovskii, "Gor'kaia zhizn'," Sosnogorsk, 2000), 7.

the need to capture it all in their memoirs.[250] However, they were also a source for comparison, which inspired Gulag returnees to contribute their own stories to inform a more complete understanding of the past.[251] Just as it was in the debates over history and reform during the thaw, Solzhenitsyn's work was an important focal point in Gulag returnees' autobiographies of the late 1980s and 1990s.[252] These latter-day memoirists challenged, praised, criticized, and debated the merits of Solzhenitsyn's representation of the camps. The resulting overlaps and conflicts between Solzhenitsyn's work and the memoirs written by Gulag returnees from Komi illuminate the development of the collective story they tell.[253]

By referencing other Gulag literature and memoirs, in addition to the stories of those they knew in the camps, Gulag returnees connected their individual experiences to a community based in a shared past. In 1996, Gulag returnee Konstantin Ivanov sent a four-page letter to the Vorkuta Museum-Exhibition Center in which he compared Ivan Denisovich from Solzhenitsyn's novel to one of his campmates. Reflecting on his own difficulty adapting, Ivanov contrasted his experience with his memory of his friend's

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[250] Toker, 100.

[251] Ibid, 103. Toker writes, "*The Gulag Archipelago* expressly invites emendations. Its use of unverified testimony and its insufficiency of archival documentation are undisguised. […] later sources are *expected* to complement Solzhenitsyn's data and correct his factual misprisions." For instance, from 1989-98 the newspaper *Ukhta* published dozens of the hundreds of memoirs and autobiographical letters sent to the editors and the Ukhta-Pechora Memorial Society. See, for example, AM UGTU f. Bulychev.

[252] Miriam Dobson, "Contesting the Paradigms of De-Stalinization: Readers' Responses to 'One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich," *Slavic Review* 64, no. 3 (Autumn 2005): 581. See also, Denis Kozlov, *The Readers of Novy Mir: Coming to Terms with the Stalinist Past* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013); Jones, *Myth, Memory, Trauma*, 147.

[253] Toker, 90; Paperno, *Stories of the Soviet Experience,* 41. See also, AM f. 2, op. 1, d. 77, ll. 54 (Kuperman, "Piat'desiat let, 1927-1977: Vospominaniia"). For example, Kuperman interrupts his narrative with brackets and inserts a comment about how his interrogation experience was "detailed by Solzhenitsyn in [his novel] *In the First Circle*" (8). Referencing Solzhenitsyn as the master description of the interrogation experience, Kuperman spares himself of the burden of reliving the gory details and continues his autobiographical narrative.

"total adaptation" to camp life: "you could say that in the camp Savos'ko felt like a fish in water. And later when I read Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, I immediately thought that Solzhenitsyn copied several of Denisovich's characteristics from Savos'ko."[254] Contrasting his experience with such a widely recognizable character as Solzhenitsyn's Ivan Denisovich, Ivanov presented his testimony as a contribution to a fuller picture of what it was like in the camps: "I tried to describe everything from my 'belfry.' How I saw, understood, and experienced everything. Someone, maybe, saw it all differently and experienced it all in their own way."[255]

Petr Kotov dedicated sixteen pages of his memoir to discussing *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*. This section of Kotov's memoir combines excerpts of his correspondence with Nina Sobinova from 1962 and his own memories of the camps in 1993. Both Sobinova and Kotov saw *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* as a founding text on the "camp theme," but they disagreed over Solzhenitsyn's portrayal of the camp 'stooges' (*pridurki*).[256] In December 1962 Sobinova wrote to Kotov: "Of course, I read *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*. It's a wonderful story! I only disliked his disdainful attitude toward the 'stooges'. After all, 'stooges' like Nikolai Vladimirovich Podobedov, and others who worked as rate-fixers, secretaries, and doctors, saved people if they were kind and good hearted."[257] However, Kotov did not think that

[254] VMVTs f. OF 4327, op. 1, d. 5, ll. 4 (Ivanov to Fesenko, 19.2.1996).
[255] VMVTs f. OF 4270, op. 1, d. 18, l. 4a (Ivanov to Trukhina, 18.8.1992).
[256] A *Pridurok* worked office or light duty jobs in the camps. For instance, office workers, specialists, and doctors were considered "fools" or "stooges" because of the comfortable positions the work they did for the camp regime. See, Jacques Rossi, *The Gulag Handbook*, 334.
[257] GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 163 ll. 109-111 (Kotov, "Nina Mikhailovna Sobinova," in "Vospominanie," Gdansk, Poland, 1992).

Solzhenitsyn was unfair in his depiction of those who obtained easy jobs in the camps. As Kotov criticized his friend's position in 1992: "I knew a 'stooge' who was a genuinely good person and tried to help his fellow brother-prisoners. But this does not mean that in every place of confinement they were such people."[258] Thus, he continued, "It seems to me that Nina Mikhailovna is exaggerating the author's 'disdainful' attitude toward the 'stooges.' Not all of the 'stooges' in the novel are the bad sort. For example, Tiurin, the brigadier of the 104th brigade, and his assistant Pavel are not at all the bad type. And the author's attitude toward them is not 'disdainful', but totally serious and benevolent."[259]

Their debate over Solzhenitsyn's portrayal of camp 'stooges' is noteworthy for two important reasons. First, their attitudes toward the camp 'stooges' illuminate the moral code of the camp brotherhood, which informed their reading of Solzhenitsyn. According to Sobinova, Solzhenitsyn's mistake was that he did not take into account the actions of 'stooges' who helped their "brother-prisoners" in the camps, which made them members of the camp brotherhood and not, as she felt Solzhenitsyn portrayed them, villainous servants of the regime. Second, their dialogue illustrates that Gulag returnees were empowered by their status "as the ones who know camp life" to judge the truth of Solzhenitsyn's representation.[260] Both Sobinova and Kotov drew from their own memories of life in the camps to critique Solzhenitsyn's portrayal of one of the most painful and formative chapters of their life.

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[258] Ibid, 112
[259] Ibid.
[260] Ibid, 119, 122. Kotov also reviewed Boris D'iakov's memoir about the Gulag published under the title "*Perezhitoe*" in the journal in *Zvezda* in 1963. Kotov's criticism of D'iakov sheds some light on his own political beliefs: "To praise the power that sent him to *katorga* as an innocent person. Is this not an unnatural phenomenon?" (118).

While many accepted the general "truth" (*pravda*) of Solzhenitsyn's writing, some were motivated to "set the record straight." As former prisoner Konstantin Flug wrote in his 1986 memoir: "Solzhenitsyn is a great writer, but I don't accept his truth."[261] Flug submitted his memoir for publication to *Novy Mir* in 1987 under the title *One Day in the Life of Konstantin Valerianovich*, which was rejected because the journal simply could not publish all of the memoirs it received after Gorbachev initiated glasnost.[262] Throughout his fifty-page memoir, Flug continuously highlights the contradictions between his depiction of the camps and Solzhenitsyn's. Although he wanted to write about the "darkness" of the past as Solzhenitsyn did, Flug remembered only "life."[263] At another point in his memoir, Flug interrupts his narrative to underscore yet another difference between his and Solzhenitsyn's accounts: "It's curious that we had several people in common, but in his 'Archipelago' they were victims, and in my chronicle they were happy people."[264]

It seems that the underlying issue is victimhood. Although he accepted the label "victim of political repression" as the state's recognition of his innocence, Flug did not see himself as a victim; he was a survivor.[265] Perhaps the greatest evidence of this

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[261] VMG (Flug, "Chernyi ostrov GULAGa"), 49.
[262] VMG ("Editorial Board of *Novyi mir* to K. Flug, 9.14.1987" reproduced in "Chernyi ostrov GULAGa"), 2.
[263] Ibid, 13, 49. Flug expands on this idea in the last pages of his memoir, "Many condemn me because I only saw the good in the camps. But it was just this way. Solzhenitsyn saw the bad. […] The truth [*pravda*] of good is more valuable to me. It is impossible to forget the good."
[264] Ibid, 7.
[265] Ibid. On Gulag returnees' acceptance of the label of "victim of political repression" and the denial that they were victims, see also, AFP (V. B. Ol'shevskii, "Vyzhit! Ot Bamlaga do Pechlaga," Kiev, 1991), 1; AM f. 2, op. 3, d. 59, ll. 33-34 (Marushchiak, "Biograficheskaia rukupis' vospominanii"). See also, see, GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op.1, d. 16, l. 9, 49 (L. M. Gorodin, "Rasskazy, vospominaniia" 1962-1977); GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 156, ll. 22-45 (Serov, "Piat' let i vsia zhizn'"); GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800,

overarching theme in Flug's autobiographical narrative is the letter that he wrote to the Vorkuta Party Committee (Gorkom) in 1983, which he reproduced in opening pages of his memoir, chastising the Party for not acknowledging his achievements as a zek and one of the founders of Vorkuta:

> On the occasion of the 40th anniversary of Vorkuta I ask you to accept the congratulations of a pioneer of the Polar Stokehold, one of the first explorers of the virgin lands of the Vorkuta-Pechora coal basin! I participated in the construction of the city long before the official date of its founding, as far back as 1933! […] Having raised me from a prisoner student to a genuine specialist, Vorkuta has always been for me a geological virgin land, a school, for which I am grateful to this day to the political and operations organs of Vorkutpechlag NKVD-MVD. I gave almost 20 years of live and active labor to Vorkuta. And I am sincerely grateful to you personally, Gorkom KPSS, that you named me a veteran of the Arctic in 1979! Indeed, I participated in the birth of Vorkuta, which, alas, I cannot visit the forty-year-old city due to my seventy-two years. And that's why I have the right to honestly confess to you, that I am a little offended that my labor is never remembered, that the heroic pioneers and founders of the Arctic have been totally forgotten! This is a bit unjust against the general background of the Party's and the government's constant concern for veterans of the war and veterans of labor. After all, only a few of the first cadres of the GULAG, like me, remain.[266]

Despite Flug's insistence that his testimony was so radically different than Solzhenitsyn's, he too saw the Gulag as an important chapter of the country's history, which had not yet been written in full. As he wrote in 1986:

> Vorkuta is not only is not only an arctic coal basin, it is an entire epoch from dekulakization to victory during the Second World War, it is people's fate! Vorkuta is one of the industrial giants of the development of the Soviet arctic during the years of the first five-year plan. It is the history of our country! Even now in Soviet literature they attempt to evade the topic of human fates during the years of this unique in its unrepeatable

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op. 1, d. 156, l. 46-7 (L. A. Skriabina-Puzakova, "Ichet-Di," Ichet-Di, 1997); GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 156, l. 96-7 (K. P. Chudinova, "Vospominaniia o perezhitom proizvole podvergshimsia repressiiam po politicheskim motivam pri raskulachivanii," not dated).

[266] VMG (K. Flug to Vorkuta Gorkom KPSS, 26.11.1983 reproduced in "Chernyi ostrov GULAGa"), 4-5.

> epoch of two state systems in one country – Soviet power and the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs – when the people's labor was divided between trade unions and the assignments of the GULAG NKVD.[267]

While they debated the accuracy of Solzhenitsyn's representation of the camps, Gulag returnees contributed their testimonies to create a fuller picture of what it was like in "that world" (*tot svet*). Recording this unwritten chapter of the history of the Soviet Union before they were gone was ultimately what united such diverse figures as Flug, Sollertinskii, Skakovskaia, Pechuro, Sobinova, Kotov, and other members of the camp brotherhood.

The era of glasnost and the collapse of the Soviet Union produced a flood of new testimonies from Gulag returnees who previously remained silent. Once they understood what Memorial was and the moment they were living in, Gulag returnees submitted their autobiographies to the Memorial Archive at local history museums and branches of the Memorial Society in Komi and Moscow. In doing so they participated in the memory project of coming to terms with the Stalinist past. What began as testimony about their lives in the camps, transformed into a process of autobiographical writing that extended to their lives after release. Through this process, Gulag returnees remembered their pasts and defined themselves as part of a community that they referred to as the brotherhood of zeks. Although they came from all walks of life and belonged to various groups in the camps and after release, this community of *svoi* was the primary source of the identities they constructed in their autobiographical narratives. In these texts, Gulag returnees

[267] Ibid, 6.

often explained how they survived the camps and reintegrated back into Soviet society after release. In doing so, they described the most important features of their community: selflessness, devotion to one's comrades in misfortune, and humaneness. Both the qualities they described to personify this community and the methods they employed to rejoin Soviet society after release can be seen as contributing to the formation of a nascent civil society. While they were motivated by a variety of reasons, these ordinary political prisoners wrote autobiographies to combat the legacy of Stalinism, to memorialize their friends, and to write themselves as a community into Soviet history at its end. As we will see in the next two chapters, which examine two very different autobiographies, the process of remembering the past was not uncomplicated.

CHAPTER THREE

‘Memory of Vorkuta’: Konstantin Ivanov’s attempts at autobiography and art during and after the collapse of the Soviet Union

Introduction

After years of corresponding with the Vorkuta Museum-Exhibition Center following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Gulag returnee and artist, Konstantin Petrovich Ivanov, explained why he never wrote a memoir. In a letter to the museum from December 1996, Ivanov described himself as “derailed” from a life worthy of documenting:

> I don’t need to write memoirs, but a confession [*pokaianie*]. When I wrote you about my friends-comrades and, as you say, ‘in connection to them I mentioned my own affairs’ – I could manage… But to write about myself… that is already a pretension… a claim to be someone [*lichnost’*]. But I am a nobody. I am the most ordinary-mediocrity. And generally, I think that only a worthy person can write memoirs. A person, who, despite everything in his life achieved his sacred goal and benefited society with his labor, creativity, and craft, and thus thanked the society for having raised, taught, [and] fed him.[268]

Despite the painfulness of remembering and his hesitancy, Ivanov continued to write his memoir-letters. He was driven by his attachment to the region where he was once imprisoned, and his desire to ensure that his fellow zeks and their contributions to the transformation of Vorkuta, from prison camp into a Soviet city, were commemorated in history: “I never like my scribble and I send it out only because I feel a debt to the small piece of the history of culture of the great city of Vorkuta. […] I am very satisfied by the

[268] Arkhiv Vorkutinskogo gorodskogo muzeiia-vystavochnogo zala (VMVTs) f. OF 4327, op. 1, d. 16, l. 2 (K. P. Ivanov to G. V. Trukhina, 10.12.1996).

fact that in some way I have managed to be useful to you in your painstaking work in search of the truth (*istina*)."[269] On the basis of Ivanov's archive, this chapter provides a case study of a Gulag returnee that addresses two major issues: how those who survived the brunt of Stalinist violence experienced life after release, and how they defined themselves when finally given the chance in the last years of the Soviet Union.

Ivanov's contribution to the search for the "truth" about the past came towards the end of a period of intense fixation on political repression sparked by glasnost and the collapse of the Soviet Union. Ivanov was one of the hundreds of ordinary political prisoners of Komi's camps who wrote memoirs during this period of renewed interest in the past. While Ivanov's memoir-letters include many of the central themes of the Gulag memoir genre that we explored in the previous chapter, such as the tension between individual and collective concerns, they present us with something new.

In contrast with most Gulag memoirs which are more finished works, Ivanov's memoir-letters illustrate of the *process of remembering*. Despite the time that passed since his release and the relative openness of the period in which he wrote, Ivanov struggled to write about the camps. However, over the course of eight years, Ivanov reconstructed the two chapters of his life, two corresponding selves, in an autobiographical narrative of his life in the camps and after release.[270] His narrative is rife with unresolved tension between the two chapters of his life, which is evident in the

[269] VMVTs f. OF 4270, op. 1, d. 6, l. 1 (Ivanov to Trukhina, 20.4.1993). Ivanov's letters served as memoirs. Throughout this article I refer to his letters as memoir-letters.
[270] John Paul Eakin, *How Our Lives Become Stories: Making Selves* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999). On the construction of identity in narrative and autobiographical memory, Eakin writes, "the self in question is a self defined by and transacted in narrative process." See also, Bruner *Acts of Meaning*, 105-106.

frequent chronological shifts he made in his attempt to bridge them.[271] Yet, his letters also illuminate a deep connection to the city of Vorkuta - the place of his imprisonment and where he lived for ten-years after release among a group of ex-prisoners he befriended in the camps, which he referred to as the "Union of Outcasts-Artists." Like many of his peers, Ivanov described the camps as his "university" despite the horrors he witnessed there. Ivanov focused on the relationships that enabled him to survive the camps and sustained him after release as he reintegrated back into Soviet society. However, Ivanov's letters are unique for their focus on his life after release, which sheds new light on the bonds between prisoners, friendship, and identity.

The short autobiography that Ivanov recorded in the questionnaires he submitted to the Memorial Society and the Vorkuta Museum-Exhibition Center in 1991 marked the beginning of a process of autobiographical writing which he continued in 154 letters he sent to the museum over the course of the last eight years of his life, 1991-1999. The letters Ivanov regularly wrote to the museum vary in length from 1-18 pages (with an average length of 3-4 pages). While his letters are primarily descriptive, they are punctuated with emotion at powerful moments. In addition to this correspondence, Ivanov donated his personal archive to the museum containing artifacts from his life as a Gulag returnee and a series of artworks themed "Hope Dies Last" (*Nadezhda umiraet poslednei*).[272] From 1983 until his death, Ivanov created 53 pieces, which he described as

[271] Alessandro Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli And Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 20-21, 59-60. Portelli argues that chronological shifts in the narrative are a function of memory captured in oral history testimony. Overlaps in chronology occur when the subject seeks to breakdown a continuous life narrative into sequential events.
[272] VMVTs f. OF 4327, op. 1, d. 22, ll. 3 (Ivanov to Z. N. Fesenko, 16.12.1995).

his "memories" of his camp life.[273] These drawings captured the experiences that he could not bring himself to write about.

From 1945-1955, Ivanov was a prisoner of Vorkutlag and then Special Camp No.6 (Rechlag).[274] Located in the far north, just west of the Ural Mountains – Vorkuta was the capital of one of the first and most populous epicenters of the Gulag.[275] Before his arrest, Ivanov attended art school in Odessa until his studies were interrupted by the outbreak of the Second World War. Following the Red Army's recapture of Sevastopol', like many Soviet citizens who found themselves in occupied territory during the war, Ivanov was arrested by the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs (NKVD) on May 25, 1944 and sentenced to fifteen years of hard labor (*katorga*) and five years of deprivation of rights under article 58-1a (treason) of the criminal code of the RSFSR.[276] In 1955, an MVD parole board reviewed Ivanov's file, reduced his sentence to ten years, and released Ivanov without the right to leave Vorkuta. Over the next ten years as a citizen of Vorkuta, Ivanov worked as an applied artist at the Vorkuta State Drama Theatre and the Vorkuta Television Studio. In 1965, Ivanov was invited to work in the

[273] VMVTs f. OF 4270, op. 1, d. 22, ll. 9 (Ivanov to Fesenko, 11.9.1995).
[274] Rogachev, ed., *Pokaianie: Martirolog* t. 12, ch. 1, 251; VMVTs f. NVF 3698, op. 1, d. 1, ll. 4 (Collection of materials on the repressed Ivanov).
[275] Barenberg, *Gulag Town, Company Town*, 252-54. Barenberg writes that the prisoner population of Vorkutlag grew from 16,096 in 1939 to 66,290 in 1949. In 1949, the combined prisoner population of Rechlag, which was formed as a special camp in 1948 to house especially dangerous prisoners, and Vorkutlag was 73,064. The prisoner population between the two camps peaked at 77,700 in 1950. After Stalin's death and the mass releases that followed, the prisoner population declined significantly until the camps were shuttered at the end of the 1950s. On the basis of Gulag records, Barenberg estimates that 20,000 prisoners died in Vorkuta between 1942 and 1954.
[276] VMVTs f. NVF 3698, op. 1, d. 1, l. 2 (Ivanov's questionnaire to Moscow Memorial, 23.3.1991). *Katorga* was re-introduced in 1943 as a replacement for the death penalty and was reserved for the worst enemies of the Stalinist regime. It was originally a form of punishment in Tsarist Russia, which was initially banned by the Bolsheviks. It was reinstated by decree of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet "On measures for punishing German fascist villains, spies, and traitors to the Motherland and their accomplices" on April 19, 1943. See, Alexopoulos, *Illness and Inhumanity*, 197.

capital of the Komi ASSR at the Syktyvkar Television Studio. After 20 years of living in the arctic, he left Vorkuta for good. Ivanov chose to live the rest of his life in Syktyvkar with his wife who had also been repressed and whom he met in 1957 while on tour with the Vorkuta Theater.[277] The region that was once his place of imprisonment and exile had become home over the course of many years.[278]

I have organized Ivanov's letters thematically following the chronology of his life as he constructed it. In this way, I am able to illustrate the *process* of remembering through his letters and art. Section one examines Ivanov's memoir-letters about life in the Gulag, focusing on how he portrayed these years and the link he drew between survival and the development of his sense of self. Section two explores Ivanov's narrative of adaptation to life after release in Vorkuta. In a town one step removed from the Gulag, friends and work as an applied artist were key to Ivanov's reintegration back into Soviet society. Ivanov's focus on this period of his life underscores that the Gulag alone did not define him. Section three analyzes Ivanov's Gulag art as a component of his autobiographical narrative. Ivanov's representations of his memories of the Gulag shed light on his attempt to overcome the silences in his memoir-letters by taking us down into the darkness of the camps.

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[277] VMVTs f. OF 4279, op. 1, d. 15, ll. 4 (Ivanov to Trukhina, 28.4.1993). This is one of the only references Ivanov makes to his wife in all of his correspondence, which focused on his camp family. According to the questionnaires he filed, they had two children.

[278] Ivanov was rehabilitated in 1992. He described the bittersweet feeling of rehabilitation in a letter to a camp comrade: "When I received this unexpected news… Tears, bitter tears, splashed from my eyes. I waited for this day for almost fifty years." See, VMVTs f. NVF 3698, op. 1, d. 3, ll. 2 (Ivanov to Volodia, 8.2.1992).

Behind Barbed Wire: Narrating life in the Gulag

Ivanov's writing about life in the camps is sparse.[279] He never takes us down to their darkest depths in his memoir-letters.[280] Instead, when Ivanov did write about life in the camps, he described them as his "university."[281] Like his comrades from the camp brotherhood examined in the previous chapter, Ivanov remembered the Gulag as the site of his development. However, since survival depended on a certain knowledge unavailable to the uninitiated "in freedom" (*na vole*), Ivanov also used this metaphor as a reference to learning to survive. As he explained in a two-page letter from 1996, the strict-regime camp was where he befriended many intellectuals and cultural figures who aided his development as an artist, person, and survivor:

> Rechlag – it was a separate, large chapter of my life. […] It was a strict regime camp for only political prisoners sentenced for article '58' with a sentence of at least 15 years (with the brand KTR, that is a *katorzhanin* with a number [on his clothes]. […] In a way, the strict regime camp turned out to be, especially for the strata of intellectuals, a blessing for us. […] I met a lot of famous people there. In general, for me it was one of the most significant courses of my 'university.' I could write a whole book of memoirs about this one camp, which is why I will stop knowing that I will get carried away.[282]

Ivanov's first encounter with the intellectuals in the barrack was one of his most prominent memories of Rechlag. Developing his university metaphor, Ivanov described this moment of self-awareness in an eighteen-page letter from 1996: "They were all

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[279] His letters about the camps detail his arrival at Vorkutlag, transfer to the special camp Rechlag, the camp environment and the division between politicals and criminals, hard labor, the dehumanization of having to wear a number, and work as an artist for the camp architectural department and Cultural-Educational Department (KVCh).

[280] As a *katorzhanin* (a prisoner sentenced to hard labor - *katorga*), Ivanov clearly saw some of the worst of the camps.

[281] VMVTs f. OF 4327, op. 1, d. 16, ll. 2 (Ivanov to Trukhina, 10.12.1996); VMVTs f. OF 4270, op. 1, d. 9, l. 2 (Ivanov to Trukhina, 15.6.1993).

[282] VMVTs f. OF 4327, op. 1, d. 16, l. 1.

strong men who managed to survive and acquired new professions, having become good, law-abiding specialists and leaders of labor. But among them there were also intellectuals: Doctors, teachers, scientists, and simply intellectuals."[283] Uncertain about his place among this group of elites, Ivanov continued, "And how did I wind up here in their company – I couldn't make sense of it? You see, I wasn't one nor the other […] And then I learned that I wasn't the only one who thought about all this. From [our] collective reflections the following conclusions emerged. […] [Our zone] was the 'brain trust' of the society of zeks [*mozgovaia chast' obshchestva zekov*]'"[284] While Ivanov eventually befriended many of these men and lived among them after release, he did not define himself as an intellectual.[285]

Ivanov presented his memories of the camps in a mosaic of contrasting images. While Ivanov found friendship and learned about the art of survival in the special camp, the general-regime camp, Vorkutlag, where he was sent on temporary re-assignment to work as a laborer, was an education of an entirely different kind. Here we see Ivanov struggle to put the destructiveness of the camps into words, which he alludes to in a six-page letter from March 1996: "Everyone looked at me, with my numbers on my hat,

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[283] VMVTs f. OF 4327, op. 1, d. 11, 1. 8 (Ivanov to Trukhina, 30.7.1996). In another letter, Ivanov references his friend and artistic mentor, Iakov Vunder, whom he met in Rechlag. Ivanov describes how they learned much (about themselves and their craft) in the camps from "masters" of Soviet painting Petr Bendel' and Boris Deineka, as well as Aleksei Kapler – the cinematographer. See, VMVTs f. OF 4270, op.1, d. 9, l. 2 (Ivanov to Trukhina, 15.6.1993).

[284] Ibid.

[285] Solzhenitsyn, *Gulag Archipelago*, 2: 280-1. This scene resonates with Solzhenitsyn's rejection of the idea that all political prisoners (and the so-called trusties among them) were intellectuals: "Over the years I have had much occasion to ponder this word, the *intelligentsia*. We are all very fond of including ourselves in it – but you see not all of us belong. […] An intellectual is a person whose interests in and preoccupation with the spiritual side of life are insistent and constant and not forced by external circumstances, even flying in the face of them."

jacket, and pants, like I was a scarecrow. No one greeted me. No one wanted to complicate their life. They brought a *katorzhanin*, well, let him be and let us live on our own."[286] There is no further mention of his physical state or the toll of hard labor on his body in the rest of Ivanov's letter. This makes Ivanov's simile, "like I was a scarecrow," all the more powerful. It is a glimpse of what Ivanov endured, which we do not fully see until he reveals it to us in his illustrations of prisoners' emaciated bodies breaking under the weight of the daily production quota.[287] However, it is also a statement about the added difficulty of surviving with the brand of "*katorzhanin*," whom Solzhenitsyn referred to as "the doomed."[288]

One of the keys to Ivanov's survival and development was his circle of camp comrades. While Ivanov "learned as much as he could" about art and self-preservation from his circle of close friends, these prisoners also provided an important source of mutual-aid. Ivanov received a temporary stay of this "dry execution" thanks to the efforts of his friends, who intervened on his behalf to get him released from lockdown in the strict-regime barrack and temporarily transferred to the camp planning division where he illustrated blueprints for architects.[289] As Ivanov explained in one of his longest letters in 1996:

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[286] VMVTs f. OF 4220, op.1, d. 1, l. 3 (Ivanov to Trukhina, 12.3.1996).
[287] Ibid, 8. On katorga, Solzhenitsyn wrote, "Little attempt was made to conceal their purpose: the *katorzhane* were to be done to death. These were, undisguisedly, murder camps: but in the Gulag tradition murder was protracted, so that the doomed would suffer longer and put a little work in before they died" (8). See also, Alexopoulos, *Illness and Inhumanity*, 198, 227-231.
[288] Solzhenitsyn, *GULAG Archipelago*, 3: 7.
[289] Solzhenitsyn described the impossibly high production quotas and low rations in the "destructive labor camps," as "dry execution." Solzhenitsyn, *Gulag Archipelago*, 2: 199.

> But their intrigue turned out in my favor. Under pressure from the intellectuals, the boss of the architecture department of the Planning Division took me under his defense, and I was taken on as a copier, and then I took Konstantin's place [as a drafter]. I began to draw and color architectural plans. Of course, the main 'foundations' were done by the architects themselves, but I gradually mastered this field [as well].[290]

Another one of the keys to Ivanov's survival was, to use Golfo Alexopoulos's phrase, "avoiding physical exploitation."[291] In the same letter from 1996, Ivanov underscored the importance of his life-saving, permanent re-assignment to work as an artist in the Cultural-Educational Department: "It was what I needed. It was as if I received a mandate from the very head [of the camp section] to work illegally at the Cultural-Educational Department. What a stroke of luck. By that time in my journey through hell, I'd gone through 'fire, water, and bronze pipes,' and therefore I learned well 'to strike while the iron was hot.'"[292] With this reference to his "journey through hell," Ivanov once again alludes to the painful memories he was only able to convey through his art. For Ivanov and other prisoners, such as Thomas Sgovio who survived the camps of Kolyma, obtaining a "soft job" was deliverance from the slow death of becoming a lifeless "goner" on the path to "early release" - death.[293] In addition to explaining his survival, Ivanov included these details to contextualize the continuity between his life in the camps and after release.

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[290] VMVTs f. OF 4327, op. 1, d. 11, l. 18 (Ivanov to Trukhina, 30.7.1996).
[291] Alexopoulos, 227-228. See also, Toker, *Return From the Archipelago*, 17. Toker highlights the concept of "dragging someone out [*vytashchit'*]" of general-labor as a central motif of the Gulag memoir genre.
[292] VMVTs f. OF 4327, op. 1, d. 11, l. 7 (Ivanov to Trukhina, 30.7.1996).
[293] Thomas Sgovio, *Dear America! Why I turned against communism* (New York: Partners' Press, Inc: 1979), 170-71. Solzhenitsyn described death as "early release" as "the most basic, the steadiest form of Archipelago output there is – with no norms." See, Solzhenitsyn, *Gulag Archipelago*, 2: 221.

Ivanov did not write in a vacuum. Comparing his memoir-letters with the more finished works of his comrades led Ivanov to reflect on the incompleteness of his remembering.[294] In a brief note to a campmate in 1992, Ivanov thanked his friend for sending him the first published collection of memoirs written by survivors of Komi's camps, *Sad Pier*.[295] Despite feeling that he was not up to the task of writing a memoir, Ivanov expressed regret that he did not contribute to the collection, "The memory of that experience (such a long gone past) is so close to the heart. It is a very interesting collection of memoir authors. *Sad Pier* – it is my refuge. My comrades-in-education [*odnokashniki*] write so well. It grieves me that in my own time, I did not manage to do the same, but for that one needs facts, and I don't have any."[296] Here it seems Ivanov doubted that his memories were enough to serve as historical testimony. Like so many of his peers, accuracy was important to Ivanov as he realized that his letters had become a part of the larger effort to rewrite the past. And yet despite the incompleteness of his memory, he continued to write to the museum to ensure that his comrades and their contributions to the city of Vorkuta were remembered: "I am endlessly happy that thanks to your initiative I managed to briefly tell about my friend, about that time. That, although only to a small extent, I helped you draw back the curtain of time concealing the years past."[297]

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[294] Ivanov also refers to memoirs written by his friends from Vorkuta as well as newspapers and books about the Gulag. VMVTs f. NVF 3298, op.1, d. 4, l. 1 (Ivanov to Volodia, 10.4.1992); VMVTs f. NVF 3298, op. 1, d. 5, l. 1 (Volodia to Ivanov, 3.11.1992); VMVTs f. NVF 3298, op. 1, d. 6, ll. 2 (Ivanov to Volodia, 28.10.1992).
[295] Kuznetsov, *Pechal'naia pristan'*.
[296] VMVTs f. NVF 3298, op. 1, d. 4, ll. 1 (Ivanov to Volodia, 10.4.1992).
[297] VMVTs f. OF 4270, op. 1, d. 11, l. 1 (Ivanov to Trukhina, 20.10.1992).

Life After Release in Vorkuta, 1955-1964

If the Gulag was his "university," then Vorkuta during the Thaw was where Ivanov found himself. In a letter from 1992 he described this chapter of his life as "a time of a great change… The golden age of the 'Thaw'… the time of mass releases of political prisoners… a time, for a while, of select complete rehabilitations. For us [it was] a bright ray of hope! We emerged from the darkness! Faith in tomorrow appeared. [It was] a time of spiritual emancipation."[298] Although the process of adapting to his new life was not easy, Ivanov managed to reintegrate back into Soviet society. Ivanov's intense focus on his life after release marks a departure from the Gulag memoir genre, which typically ends with release.[299] "In Gulag memoirs the issue of homecoming," Leona Toker writes, "is treated more or less extensively only when it involves problems of re-adaptation. Release from the camps is not tantamount to homecoming."[300] This is not the case with Ivanov. While he documented the struggles he faced as he re-adapted to civilian life, Ivanov's focus on "homecoming" illuminates his strong connection to Vorkuta, which he referred to as "the city of my unhappiness and small joys."[301] Ivanov, who lived in Vorkuta for ten-years after release before he moved to Syktyvkar, strongly identified with the city where he began his "new life" after release.[302]

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[298] VMVTs f. OF 4270, op. 1, d. 18, l. 2 (Ivanov to Trukhina, 18.8.1992).
[299] Toker, 93.
[300] Ibid, 270.
[301] VMVTs f. OF 4270, op. 1, d. 1, l. 1 (Ivanov to Trukhina, 25.1.1995).
[302] Other Gulag returnees who described release in these terms include, AM UGTU (A. A. Kotvitskii, "O chem molchit istoriia," Kiev, 1970); AFP (N. P. Volkov, "Gorod trudnoi sud'by," ll. 74, 1965-1970); AM f. 2, op. 3, d. 59, ll. 34 (K. P. Marushchiak, "Biograficheskaia rukopis' vospominanii," Syktyvkar, 1989). It seems Ivanov only ever left Komi once after he was sent there. He visited Crimea on a honeymoon with his newlywed wife in 1957. See, VMVTs f. OF 4279, op. 1, d. 15, ll. 4 (Ivanov to Trukhina, 28.4.1993).

The story of his release and first days of freedom are an important moment in Ivanov's memoir-letters that mark the beginning of the next chapter of his life. In the second half of an eighteen-page letter from July 1996, Ivanov vividly described the day of his release after ten-years of confinement and the hostility he faced as a former prisoner:

> And then came the day of my own release… On the first day of my free life I visited the Polish artist, Cheslava Upatuv [Tsidzik]. We became acquainted while we were still in 'the raspberry patch' at mine no.2. We kept secret correspondence through a Muscovite, Raisa Pervina, her former camp comrade in the women's camp at the brick factory. At that time, Chesia had already been released and lived as if in a free town, in an apartment style barrack outside the zone at the brick factory OLP. We had not even said a word, when women – camp guards who protect the innocence of civilian women - burst into her room. They arrested me, having accused me of an attempt to have intercourse with the former prisoner Upatuv. Chesia cried, trying to show the purity of my intentions with regard to her. But they were implacable. For three hours, they held me in an isolation cell. And when they let me out, they drove me to the bus stop and said, 'Forget the road to our neighborhood, find yourself a woman there, where you were imprisoned. Or else a certificate won't help you – we will throw you in prison again and you'll cry for your freedom. At first, during the period of general releases we encountered such paradoxical incidents. Zealous servants of the regime could not come to peace with real events. The mystery of the prisoners' period of transition.[303]

While many of Vorkuta's residents at that time were former prisoners, others did not know what to think of their new neighbors and had difficulty shaking the image of them as "enemies of the people," which had been reinforced by decades of propaganda and the chaos that ensued after the 1953 amnesty that released much of Vorkutlag's

[303] VMVTs f. OF 4327, op. 1, d. 11, l. 14 (Ivanov to Trukhina, 30.7.1996).

criminals.[304] In addition to prolonged suspicion, Gulag returnees also faced legal discrimination in housing and at work even in places like Vorkuta, where approximately one-third of local residents in the 1950s were former prisoners.[305] Ivanov remembered release not as an end to his persecution leading to the restoration of his status as an upstanding Soviet citizen, but the beginning of a new chapter in which he navigated a grey zone between freedom and unfreedom.[306]

Work at the Vorkuta State Drama Theatre played an important role in Ivanov's transition back into Soviet society. It was at the theatre where Ivanov felt he redeemed the time he lost and contributed something to Soviet society. Ivanov obtained employment at the Vorkuta Theatre in 1955 through his friend and fellow former prisoner Konstantin Gusev, who had been released only a few months prior.[307] As the city's cultural center, the Vorkuta Drama Theatre was originally an institution of Vorkutlag's political department responsible for the reeducation of prisoners and also a source of entertainment for local residents. In a twelve-page letter from 1994, Ivanov described working at the theatre as "the more important time of my life."[308] In another ten-page letter dated 1996, Ivanov described the theatre as a place of personal redemption, where he recovered the youth he lost to the camps, "You served 11 years in a camp, this is the time when you're supposed to spend developing in yourself an artist. Time passed, you

[304] Barenberg, 125; Dobson, 31.
[305] Barenberg, 216-222. Barenberg estimates that former prisoners and their families composed 1/3 of Vorkuta's population of approx. 175,000 by the end of the 1950s.
[306] Other Gulag returnees remembered similar experiences, AM f. 2, op.1, d. 88, ll. 22 (P. I. Siamtomov, "Ispoved': Vospominanie," Syktyvkar, Oct. 1990-1991); Evstiunichev, *Nakazanie bez prestupleniia*; AM UGTU (Novokhatskii, "Rokovaia chernaia shinel'," 1992).
[307] VMVTs f. OF 4262, op. 1, d. 9, ll. 12 (Ivanov to Trukhina, 22.1.1994).
[308] Ibid, 1.

won't catch up" and yet, Ivanov continued, "I found myself in the niche at the theatre. Self-reliance, independence, and spiritual satisfaction."[309] Thus, the theatre served as a sort of half-way house where repressed artists practiced their craft and participated in the development of culture in Vorkuta - a microcosm of the Soviet society they built in the far north.[310]

In his role at the theatre, Ivanov produced ideologically infused art that kept within the bounds of Soviet cultural norms.[311] Although Ivanov adhered to the standards of the time in his artwork, he was given free rein to create. His work at the theatre did not go unnoticed by party officials from Syktyvkar, who made the trip north to attend the theatre incognito. In a twelve-page letter written in 1994, Ivanov remembered being summoned to the director's office after the performance, where he was met by the deputy minister of culture and the deputy director of the cultural department of the Komi Obkom. Much to his relief, the two officials praised Ivanov's set design and costumes and invited him to drink with them.[312] As an episode in Ivanov's narrative, the details of his work in the theatre and his emphasis on the praise it received from party officials demonstrate the importance of work as a means of surviving exile. Perhaps most

[309] VMVTs f. 4327, op. 1, d. 44, l. 9 (Ivanov to Trukhina, 30.7.1996).
[310] Ibid.
[311] VMVTs f. OF 4262, op. 1, d. 9, ll. 12 (Ivanov to Trukhina, 22.1.1994). Ivanov describes a patriotic play he worked on about Bukovina under German occupation during WWII. He also lists non-Soviet plays, such as Lermontov's "Masquerade Ball," Molière's, "Scapin the Schemer," "Maria Tudor," Chekhov's "Uncle Vania," and "*Grushenka*" based on Nikolai Leskov's "The Enchanted Wanderer." Ivanov notes how "the charm of this play overwhelmed the public."
[312] VMVTs f. OF 4262, op. 1, d. 9, l. 9 (Ivanov to Trukhina, 22.1.1994).

importantly, Ivanov's story tells us how he performed his rehabilitation by successfully presenting himself as a Soviet person through his mastery of Soviet culture.[313]

In another four-page letter written in 1993, Ivanov expanded on the theme of his work and the gradual softening of local authorities' attitude toward former prisoners. In 1957, the Union of Outcasts was hired by the city soviet and the executive committee to decorate "our grey city" in preparation for the Youth Festival.[314] Ivanov painted a mural depicting, "smiling boys and girls on a background of a bright blue sky with white clouds. They were dressed in various, colorful national costumes surrounded by flowers with the slogan 'Peace to the earth' and to so on - stereotypes of those quite cheerful, heady days of freedom."[315] Although the mural was well received and the artists were paid on time, things did not end there. When they divvied up their collective pay, the former prisoners registered some of the earnings to others who contributed to the project, which also enabled them to avoid paying their full share of taxes. This drew the attention of the police who initiated a criminal investigation into corruption:

> Two weeks later, I received a summons to report to the investigator. But we were lucky that this happened in those years! It was our golden time, as they say, 'our hour of triumph.' The investigator that we ended up with was an intelligent and reasonable man. […] I wrote my testimony in about two hours. I honestly described everything (there was nothing for me to hide). [I wrote] only what I concealed from the woman who uncovered our trickiness when she signed the ledger, but she didn't react in any way. The

[313] Like many others, Ivanov recounted working harder than his co-workers who had not been imprisoned to overcome the stigma of their past. VMVTs f. OF 4270, op. 1, d. 6, ll. 6 (Ivanov to Trukhina, 20.4.1993); VMVTs f. OF 4327, op. 1, d. 26, ll. 11 (Ivanov to Trukhina, 3.2.1997). See also, Markizov, *Do i posle 1945 goda*, 196; GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 156, ll. 22-45 (Serov, "Piat' let i vsia zhizn'," Pechora, 1989).
[314] f. OF 4279, op. 1, d. 15, l. 1 (K. P. Ivanov to G. V. Trukhina, 28.4.1993). Ivanov mistakenly writes 1956, the World Festival of Youth and Students was held in the USSR in 1957.
[315] Ibid, 2.

> investigator carefully read my testimony, smiled and said: 'you described it well.' He saw our decorations [around the city], which he liked. It turned out by the time we met that he had almost finished the investigation of the case against us. He had questioned many witnesses, certified the description of [our] work and the expenses, but he didn't find anything criminal anywhere. 'Of course,' he said, 'it would be possible to accuse you of tax evasion, but what you did in this case is not a violation of the law as it is written.' […] Generally, it all blew over. This was also a sign of those times. For lack of evidence of a crime the case was dismissed.[316]

The documents that Ivanov selected for donation to the archive of the Vorkuta Museum-Exhibition Centre, which included playbills, art, identification cards, photographs, and letters of recognition from the Union of Soviet Artists of the Komi ASSR, also demonstrate Ivanov's pride as a former prisoner and artist who participated in the reformation of Vorkuta into a Soviet city.[317] Ivanov included these artifacts from his archive with his letters to the museum to historicize his membership in the community and verify his narrative of forced migration and a life in the arts: "I don't know whether you need them? It seemed to me that these [things] are also history."[318] As Ivanov commented on the theatre programs and photos he sent to the museum in 1993, "I look at them and then a warm breeze of years long past warms my soul a little."[319] The fact that the things he donated came from his post-camp life underscore the importance of this period. The Gulag alone did not define him.

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[316] Ibid, 3-4.
[317] Former prisoner Konstantin Flug, also described the pride and attachment he felt to the city of Vorkuta and his role in its transformation: "Vorkuta is my life's achievement and my youth!" See, Arkhiv Vorkutinskogo Muzeiia Geologii (AM VMG) (Flug, "Chernyi ostrov GULAGa," 50). Evgeniia Ginzburg similarly commented on "ridiculous pride" she felt upon returning to Magadan after a seven-year absence and seeing the city she and countless other zeks built: "We treasure each fragment of our life, even the bitterest." See, Evgeniia Ginzburg, *Within the Whirlwind*, trans., Ian Boland (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1981), 201.
[318] VMVTs f. OF 4262, op. 1, d. 9, l. 1 (Ivanov to Trukhina, 22.1.1994).
[319] VMVTs f. OF 4270, op. 1, d. 9, l. 1 (Ivanov to Trukhina, 15.06.1993).

K. P. Ivanov, Vorkuta, Dec. 1955 (eight months after release). Ivanov's theatre identification card issued in 1957.[320]

The letter that accompanied these artifacts also tells us something about how Ivanov related to his post-camp self from the present. Among the documents he donated to the museum was the transcript of a televised speech he delivered in 1961 on the meaning of art under communism and the creation of an authentic Soviet self, which read in part, "The theory of communism originates from the idea that every pursuit of any person is, in a communist society, an authentic creation (work) – it is an active and indisputable development of man himself, a manifestation of the highest possibilities of his reason, his feelings, his arms and body."[321] Reading these lines thirty-two years later in 1993, Ivanov reflected on this former version of himself: "It seems that at that time I still worked as a propagandist-artist for the enlightenment-educational division of Vorkuta" he continued "I thought that I had matured since then, but reading these old records, I now realize the crudity and primitiveness of [my] thought. Maybe more is

[320] Photo of K. P. Ivanov is from the personal collection of A. A. Popov, Syktyvkar, Russia; VMVTs f. OF 4262, op. 1, d. 2, l. 1 (Ivanov's Vorkuta Drama Theatre identification card, 19.12.1957). See also, VMVTs f. NVF 4362, op. 1, d. 6 (V. Poliakov to Ivanov, letter of appreciation for participation in 1955 exhibition).
[321] VMVTs f. NVF 4363, op. 1, d. 7, ll. 10-11 (Ivanov text of televised speech in Vorkuta, 24.11.1961).

understood [now], but this is not education-it's amateur."[322] Throughout Ivanov's correspondence we have seen the tension between the two periods of his life, in and after the Gulag, he reconstructed in his memoir-letters. However, here, as Ivanov read his old manuscripts in the wake of the Soviet collapse, we see the tension between the present in which Ivanov wrote, and the past he reconstructed through the process of remembering. This tension between his past and the present was not only a product of the genres he drew from in his memoir-letters, but also the need Ivanov felt to explain himself and how he fit into Soviet society.[323] It is worth noting that when he reflected on his past words, Ivanov did not say that he did not believe these words when he wrote them despite having been imprisoned and exiled by the communist state for decades.

A core component of Ivanov's memoir-letters is his memorialization of those who helped him readapt to civilian life after release.[324] In a ten-page letter written in 1992, Ivanov wrote at length about the friendships that sustained him and the community of Gulag returnees that became an essential part of his new life. He described this community as the "Union of Vorkuta Artists," an informal "club of survivors and those released from the camps, of unaccomplished dropouts. We weren't a union, more so we thought of ourselves as a band of bohemians, an assembly of like-minded lovers of chatting about art and we were all united in conscience."[325] The group, which was

[322] VMVTs f. OF 4270, op. 1, d. 9, l. 1 (Ivanov to Trukhina, 15.06.1993).
[323] Paperno, *Stories of the Soviet Experience*, xiii. Paperno explains this tension as inherent to the memoir genre in which the author attempts to connect their past self to their present self.
[324] Toker, 80. Toker identifies the memorialization of one's camp comrades as a key feature of the Gulag memoir genre.
[325] VMVTs f. OF 4270, op. 1, d. 18, l. 1 (Ivanov to Trukhina, 18.8.1992). See also, AM f. 2, op. 2, d. 112, l. 164 (Sollertinskii, "Kuda bog smotrit"). Gulag returnee Vladimir Sollertinskii described the group of

formed before Ivanov's release by fellow-artist and camp comrade Iakov Vunder, worked together on official projects. They shared the profits "as it should have been under 'failed communism.'"[326] While the Vorkuta Union of Artists was initially an informal group comprised of former prisoners, it eventually became a branch of the Komi ASSR Union of Soviet Artists – the main organization which employed and helped artists, especially those who had been imprisoned, find work in their respective fields.[327]

In this same letter, Ivanov described how former prisoners banded together and helped each other adapt to civilian life:

> Everyone needed to exchange their camp overalls for a normal civilian suit. Everyone needed to find a shelter, a roof over one's head, to get fixed up in a job, especially in one's field. After all, we still did not have the right to go home or to move to another place. They freed us from the camps with the right to live only in Vorkuta. Collective actions helped us to adapt more quickly to [our] new life. And thus, our so-called 'Union' was 'a voluntary club of artists and outcasts.' [It was] a club without a meeting place or manual. The organizer of this union, of all of us half-starving artists after release, was the artist Iakov Iakovlevich Vunder – the soul of the club. His home was our first shelter. His poor wife – the [*vol'nonaemnaia*] ballerina Maria Grigor'evna Vunder had to put a lot of thought and physical energy, in order to feed this crowd of outcasts during our meetings. […] Though at that time in the city already more than half of the population consisted of 'formers.' In almost every Vorkuta family you met guests who were not of one's station [*ne po odezhke*], who themselves in the past bore the many burdens of deprivation [of freedom]

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friends he kept after release in a similar way: "We talked about literature, music, the land-surveyor read his poems, under [their] influence I also started to compose some, [which] were of no quality in comparison with those that the land-surveyor wrote. Sometimes the regular military officer of a high rank joined us, a tankman, and we discussed the details of the war."

[326] Ibid.

[327] The Union of Soviet Artists Komi ASSR was founded in 1943 by Valentin Poliakov who organized political-educational groups, Komsomol brigades, and exhibitions of Komi's artists. He was the first civilian artist to visit Vorkuta in the early 1950s and an advocate of Gulag returnees. Ivanov includes a letter of recognition from Poliakov in the materials he sent to the Vorkuta Museum. See, N. Zh. Beliaeva, "V. V. Poliakov i ego vospominnanki" and "Uchastie repressirovannykh khudozhnikov v Komi respublikanskikh vystavkakh 1940-x godov", *Materialy i issledovaniia* vypusk 2 (Syktyvkar: Natsional'naia galereia Respubliki Komi, 2008), 60-69, 73-99.

> – all of whom were welcoming and hospitable. Back then there were none of today's publicized charitable organizations. We did everything by ourselves, without profit or publicity.[328]

Ivanov's "comrades-in-education" clearly played an essential role in his re-adaptation to Soviet society. However, his letter also emphasized the self-reliance of the group, which it seems Ivanov saw as almost superior to those who did not experience the Gulag. As Alan Barenberg shows, such social networks were widespread in Vorkuta, even among those who did not know one another.[329] The shared experience of imprisonment formed a powerful social bond especially, though not only, among prisoners of the same camp contingent.

In subsequent letters, Ivanov underscored the importance of the "union of outcasts" as a source of emotional support: "we were all in need of spiritual warmth of one's neighbor. We had this in our 'club' and in every social outcast in the city."[330] Ivanov's letters reflect Gulag returnees' usage of the language of "*svoi*" and "*nash*" (one of our own), which, as we saw in the previous chapter, they used to identify themselves as members of the "camp brotherhood."[331] Emphasizing the importance of this community in a letter from 1994, Ivanov described the letters and postcards he received from his camp "classmates" as a "symbol of the warmth and tenderness of people who survived a tragedy together."[332]

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[328] VMVTs f. OF 4270, op. 1, d. 18, l. 1 (Ivanov to Trukhina, 18.8.1992).
[329] Barenberg, 222-227.
[330] VMVTs f. OF 4270, op. 1, d. 18, l. 1 (Ivanov to Trukhina, 18.8.1992). See also, VMVTs f. OF 4270, op. 1, d. 6, ll. 6 (Ivanov to Trukhina, 20.4.1993).
[331] Ibid, 3; VMVTs f. OF 4270, op. 1, d. 17, l. 1 (Ivanov to Trukhina, 15.9.1992); VMVTs f. OF 4270, op. 1, d. 14, ll. 8 (Ivanov to Trukhina, 17.5.1994).
[332] VMVTs f. OF 4262, op. 1, d. 9, l. 2 (Ivanov to Trukhina, 22.1.1994).

Postcard sent to K. P. Ivanov from his friends on the Vorkuta-Moscow train home after release, 1956.[333]

In a ten-page letter about the "union" from 1992, Ivanov remembered one of the most important events at the start of his "new life" after release. In the autumn of 1955, just months after Ivanov was released from Rechlag, the Vorkuta Union of Artists held its first exhibition in the foyer of the Vorkuta State Drama Theatre. The exhibition, which was organized by Iakov Vunder, featured the art of former prisoners Konstantin Gusev, Kraulis Visvaldis, Iurii Shepletto, and Cheslava Tsidzik.[334] As his first exhibition after his release, the show was important to Ivanov not only as a cultural event but also as a means of demonstrating that he belonged in Soviet society. As he wrote in another letter from 1995, "After all, the exhibition is the life of the artist."[335] And yet despite his

[333] VMVTs f. OF 4262, op. 1, d. 2, l. 3 (Postcard to Ivanov, 1956). The postcard reads: "Dear Kostia! We send you a heartfelt hello from the road. We're getting along wonderfully. We are not worried for Chesia, she will leave soon too. You probably have heard the news as well. Don't forget us. Barbara, Broni, Taniia, and Frank."

[334] VMVTs f. OF 4270, op. 1, d. 18, l. 2 (Ivanov to Trukhina, 18.8.1992). Ivanov and Vunder also presented at the 11th Exhibition of Works of Artists of the Komi ASSR in Syktyvkar in Oct., 1955. See, Biblioteka Natsional'noi Galerei Respubliki Komi (NGRK) (V. V. Poliakov, red., *Ministerstvo Kul'tury Komi ASSR XI-ia Vystavka rabot khudozhnikov Komi ASSR: Katalog*, Syktyvkar, 1955). Although Ivanov never comments on divisions in the camps along ethnic lines, his descriptions of friends from the camps who were not Russian illustrate how these divisions did not matter so long as they were *svoi*.

[335] VMVTs f. OF 4327, op. 1, d. 19, l. 6 (Ivanov to Trukhina, 9.11.1995).

newfound freedom, Ivanov remembered the self-censorship required of former prisoners[336] if they wished to remain free: "At the first city exhibition I showed small portraits of miners and different Rechlag prisoners. Of course, I removed the numbers from the overalls otherwise they would not have made it to the exhibit. I also did not indicate the family names. They went out under the general subtitle 'Toilers of the arctic stokehold.'"[337] Furthermore, when prisoners' artworks were shown at all-union exhibitions in Moscow, they went out under the general title "Exhibition of Komi Artists." As Ivanov explained in a six-page letter from 1995: "When our artists [*nashi*] from Vorkuta, Syktyvkar, Ukhta, Inta presented at all-union exhibitions in Moscow – they were called artists from Komi, or an exhibition of artists of Komi (that is the Komi branch of the union)."[338]

The subjects of Ivanov's artworks during this period suggest his desire to document the remnants of the camps, the origins of the city and Ivanov's university, before they disappeared as Vorkuta rapidly grew. This work was influenced by the education he received from his camp comrade, which continued outside the barbed wire when Ivanov accompanied his friend Vunder on trips into the tundra to document natural environment of the arctic for the Vorkuta Geological Expedition.[339] In 1960, Ivanov

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[336] Upon release prisoners were obliged to sign non-disclosure agreements. These legal documents prohibited writing about, representing, or discussing what they witnessed or heard in the camps. The penalty for disclosing these "state secrets" was 8-10 years. For an example of this document, see, VMVTs f. NVF 2917, op.1, d. 3, ll. 2-3 (Personal file of Ia. Vunder).

[337] VMVTs f. OF 4270, op. 1, d. 18, l. 2 (Ivanov to Trukhina, 18.8.1992). In subsequent letters to the Vorkuta museum, Ivanov notes many of the pieces he displayed at the 1955 exhibition were painted "from nature" in the camps and smuggled out during release.

[338] VMVTs f. OF 4327, op. 1, d. 19, l. 2 (K. P. Ivanov to G. V. Trukhina, 11.09.1995).

[339] VMVTs f. OF 4327, op. 1, d. 12, ll. 4 (Ivanov to Trukhina, 13.9.1996); VMVTs f. OF 4270, op.1, d. 9, l. 2 (Ivanov to Trukhina, 15.6.1993).

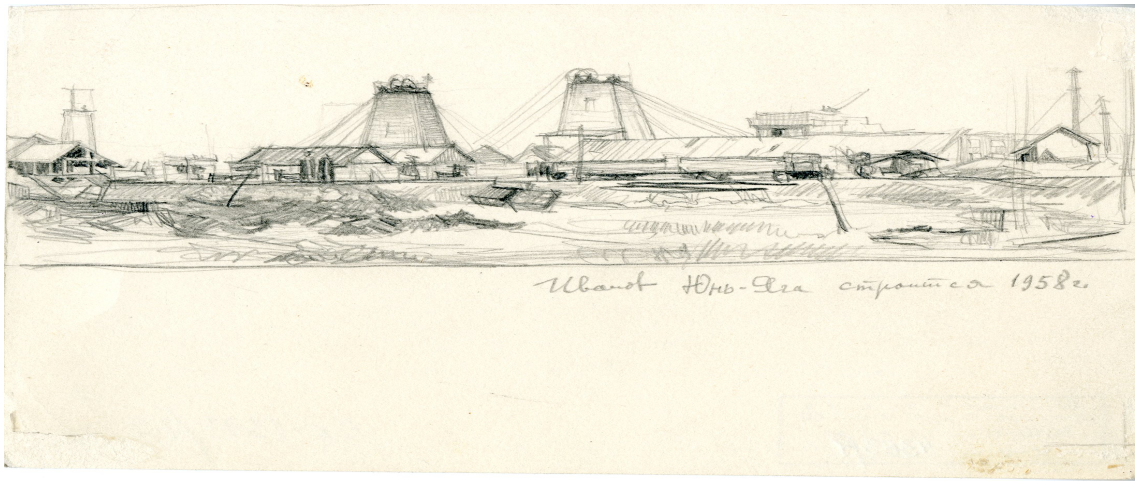
participated in the "Second exhibition of Vorkuta artists" to mark the opening of the Vorkuta Regional History Museum. Once again, Ivanov's artistic eye was fixed on Vorkuta's flora and fauna, which we see in his landscape of the remnants of the "infamous" camp section no. 59 entitled "Usinsk Street."[340] The painting depicts a grey, derelict camp section. The prisoner barracks are surrounded by guard towers and a barbed-wire fence, which separates the camp zone from the city just outside its gates. The painting is emblematic of Ivanov's position in Vorkuta, a former prisoner shaped by the camps and bound to the city as an exile.

K. P. Ivanov "Usinsk street," April 1959, oil on canvas.[341]

Although there is no indication that he presented it at the 1960 exhibition, Ivanov sent a landscape of the Iun'-Iaga mine to the museum, which he sketched as it was undergoing construction in 1958. The sketch is a part of the visual record that Ivanov created to document the city "of his unhappiness and small joys." By juxtaposing the two

[340] VMVTs f. OF 4270, op. 1, d. 21, ll. 4 (Ivanov to Trukhina, 27.1.1994). This letter contains a list of all works presented at the exhibition; VMVTs f. OF 4327, op. 1, d. 19, ll. 6 (Ivanov to Trukhina, 9.11.1995).
[341] K. P. Ivanov, "Ulitsa Usinskaia," 1959 oil on canvas displayed online as part of the multi-media project "*Kraevidenie: Respublika Komi glazami khudozhnikov,*" http://www.kraevidenie.ru/nizhnee_menju/opisanie_kartiny/317/?type=125,0 [accessed 8.8.17].

images we see the camp origins of the city and its rebirth as an arctic mining town at the start of Ivanov's "new life."



K. P. Ivanov "Iun'-Iaga under construction," 1958, pencil.[342]

A recurring theme in Ivanov's memoir-letters is the pride he felt and the painful lack of recognition of Gulag returnees' contribution to Vorkuta's growth.[343] Citing their suffering as prisoners and their work as artists after release, Ivanov emphasized the significance of "union members" who, "despite everything made their massive contribution to the development of culture in Vorkuta."[344] In another three-page letter from 1993, Ivanov elaborated on the role former prisoners played in the city's transformation:

> The fact is that in those old times every factory, office, enterprise needed a person capable of performing font graphic works or other artistic design works. For the implementation of the so-called visual agitation, starting

[342] VMVTs f. NVF, op. 1, d. 4, l. 1 (K. P. Ivanov, "Iun'-Iaga stroitsia," 1958).
[343] VMVTs f. OF 4270, op. 1, d. 6, l. 1 (Ivanov to Trukhina, 20.4.1993); VMVTs f. OF 4270, op. 1, d. 7, ll. 6 (Ivanov to Trukhina, 2.2.1993); VMVTs f. OF 4270, op. 1, d. 8, ll. 4 (Ivanov to Trukhina, 30.1.1993).
[344] VMVTs f. OF 4327, op. 1, d. 26, l. 3 (Ivanov to Trukhina, 3.2.1997). "Union members" is both a reference to Ivanov's "Union of Artist-Outcasts" and camp slang meaning former zeks. On the meaning of this slang term and others, see, GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 17, l. 22 (L. M. Gorodin, "Slovar' Russkikh argotizmov," 1984-1985).

> from the wall press, slogans, the design of signs and diagrams, to scenery for amateur artistic performances. Previously, all these works were performed free of charge by artists from the camps. But new times had come. The talented workforce was no more. But the demand for visual agitation remained. There were no studios that could have fulfilled this demand in the city. Furthermore, even if they existed, there would not have been able to staff them daily. And thus, bosses began to offer artists permanent employment as staff, but they were not registered as artists. Instead, artists started [to work] as engineer-technicians or some sort of high-paying job as a technical worker.[345]

The lack of acknowledgement fueled Ivanov's efforts to ensure that his comrades and their contributions would be remembered. However, the emotions these memories raised led Ivanov to question the distorting effect they may have had on his process of remembering: "So, without pretending to the truth (*istina*), I described our heroes, my colleagues, comrades, and friends. I tried to be objective. But my memory lets me down."[346]

Ivanov moved to Syktyvkar with his family in 1964. Although he briefly mentioned this chapter of his life in several letters, he did not tell us much. It seems that Ivanov was not happy about the move to Syktyvkar, nor were his friends in Vorkuta, but he did so anyways because his wife was in poor health. As Ivanov wrote in 1994: "I did not really want to leave Vorkuta. I lost a lot in pay, but my wife's health was more important. Iasha was very upset about my departure. Iasha and Amman accompanied us [to the landing strip]."[347] However, despite his sadness about leaving the arctic city that

[345] VMVTs f. OF 4270, op. 1, d. 6, l. 2 (Ivanov to Trukhina, 20.4.1993).
[346] VMVTs f. OF 4327, op. 1, d. 26, l. 3 (Ivanov to Trukhina, 3.2.1997).
[347] VMVTs f. OF 4270, op. 1, d. 14, l. 7 (Ivanov to Trukhina, 17.05.1994).

had become his home, Ivanov was happy to see another old friend and fellow artist from the camp, Kraulis Visvaldis, who was waiting for him at the airport.[348]

Ivanov's memoir-letters frequently digress from the topic at hand to illustrate an episode from the camp or describe a comrade in order to properly contextualize his life after release. As Ivanov wrote after a series of detours in 1993, "Forgive me for another long digression. When remembering the past – images arise which are difficult to ignore. And the more positive occurrences are remembered, and the negative are left in the remote of the past. The good is more easily remembered. The bad you always want to forget."[349] These digressions throughout his correspondence illuminate the porousness between the two periods of his life and the pain of remembering, which he attempted to overcome in his art.

"Hope dies last:" Art as Memory and Narrative

Six years after his release from Rechlag, on November 24, 1961 Ivanov delivered a televised speech announcing the grand opening of the Vorkuta Art School and Studio, which he directed. It was a place where former prisoners and young artists came together to develop their craft and to study life in the tundra.[350] Ivanov's speech celebrated the achievements of Vorkuta's cultural scene and the role of art in building Soviet society.

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[348] Visvaldis moved to Syktyvkar in 1961. Although he was not rehabilitated at the time, the Union of Soviet Artists of the Komi ASSR facilitated his move. See, VMVTs f. OF 4327, op. 1, d. 26, l. 3 (Ivanov to Fesenkov, 3.01.1997)

[349] VMVTs f. OF 4270, op. 1, d. 7 (Ivanov to Trukhina, 2.2.1993). Ivanov echoes Shalamov, who wrote: "A human being survives by his ability to forget. Memory is always ready to blot out the bad and retain only the good. […] We had all been permanently poisoned by the north, and we knew it." See, Shalamov, 66.

[350] VMVTs f. OF 4270, op. 1, d. 14, ll. 8 (K. P. Ivanov to G. V. Trukhina, 5.17.1994).

For Ivanov, art was more than entertainment, it was the means of elevating and transforming man and society. "For artists, paintings are a specific means of studying the world. This method makes it possible not only to recognize forms of nature, but also to creatively capture them, that is to turn them into forms of art."[351] Ivanov expounded on the purpose of art and the manifestation of one's true self: "Art is needed because, it is in art that man is higher, a more complete manifestation of his versatile capabilities. Knowledge of art offers that, which science cannot: it reflects man and all the world in its integrity, its correspondence and value from an aesthetic point of view of the ideal representation of harmony."[352] As a former prisoner addressing his neighbors by radio, Ivanov posited a vision of art as a tool for the spiritual mastery of the world, a means of overcoming the limitations of man. How, then, did Ivanov use those tools to represent his memories of the Gulag?

In a one-page letter to the Vorkuta Museum written in 1995, Ivanov described his Gulag art series as, "the history of my life, my memory,"[353] which was valuable to him "not as works of art, but as memory."[354] Much like other repressed artists, Ivanov produced artworks as documentation of those formative years and representations of his memories.[355] The artworks he produced are a component of the same process of

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[351] VMVTs f. NVF 4363, op. 1, d. 7, ll. 11 (K. P. Ivanov text of televised speech in Vorkuta 11.24.1961).
[352] Ibid, 9.
[353] VMVTs f. NVF 4363, op. 1, d. 15, l. 1 (Ivanov to Trukhina, 5.8.1991).
[354] VMVTs, f. OF 4270, op.1, d. 16, l. 2 (Ivanov to Fesenko, 7.9.1995).
[355] A. B. Roginskii, ed., *Tvorchestvo i byt GULAGa: Katalog muzeinogo sobraniia Obshchestvo "Memorial"* (Moskva: Izd-vo Zven'ia, 1998). Thomas Sgovio and Evfrosiniia Kersnovskaia also included drawings of their memories in their memoirs. See, Sgovio, *Dear America!*; Evfrosiniia Kersnovskaia, *Naskal'naia zhivopis'* (Moskva: SP Kvadrat, 1991). Former prisoner Nikolai Miller did not write a memoir, but he showed the artworks he made in Ukhtpechlag in an exhibition in Ukhta in 1989. See, V. Sergeev, "Nepokornost' sud'be," *Ukhta*, Oct. 11, 1989. The Memorial Society and the State Museum of the History

remembering that produced his memoir-letters, however, Ivanov felt much more comfortable reliving the past in this medium.

Time and again Ivanov refused to write a memoir, citing the unpleasantness of remembering and writing about those difficult times. In a letter to the Vorkuta museum dated June 26, 1996, Ivanov wrote that he wanted to refuse Syktyvkar Memorial's request to interview him, but that he didn't because they helped him obtain rehabilitation in 1992.[356] He explained that when they asked to speak about life in the camps, it was difficult for him to remember and to decide what to say – the tape recorder made him nervous. Ivanov preferred to sit and write letters and to draw his memories in calm and quiet.[357] Thus, Ivanov's choice to use visual art as the media of his Gulag memoir should be read in the way it was intended, as a part of his autobiographical narrative. His artworks are a manifestation of his self looking back as a survivor.

In a letter to the Vorkuta Museum and Exhibition Center written in 1995, Ivanov explained that he began the project while he was imprisoned in Rechlag but did not resume it until 1983.[358] He began the project with several portraits of prisoners done "from nature" in pencil "behind the barbed wire," which he smuggled out of the camp

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of the Gulag (GMIG) hold two major collections of Gulag art. Part of which can be seen here, https://yandex.ru/collections/user/yndx-collections/kollektsiia-zhivopisi-muzeia-istorii-Gulaga/ [accessed 21.9.17]. Other works of art done by prisoners while they were in the camps and after release are still coming to light. See, for example, O. M. Ranitskaia, *Meteo-chertik. Trudy i dni*, Alena Skhanova, ed., (Moskva: Avgust Borg, 2017); Ksenia El'iashevich, "My v plenu u svoikh": Repressirovannyi khudozhnik iz Minska v kartinkakh opisal tiur'mu, sud, i lageria," *Novosti Tut.By*, Sept. 22, 2017, https://news.tut.by/society/560412.html [accessed 25.09.17].

[356] VMVTs f. OF 4327, op. 1, d. 10, ll. 2 (Ivanov to Fesenko, 26.6.1996).

[357] Ibid, 2.

[358] VMVTs f. OF 4270, op. 1, d. 22, l. 9 (Ivanov to Fesenko, 11.9.1995). Ivanov was not the only one to make sketches of "nature" in the camps. In a letter from Oct. 1992, Ivanov writes about how Evgenii Ukhnalev used to secretly sketch in the zone. See, VMVTs f. OF 4270, op. 1, d. 11, l. 1 (Ivanov to Trukhina, 20.10.1992).

zone and subsequently gave away.[359] Although Ivanov lost the originals, he wrote that the experiences were engrained in his memory and described his Gulag art as his "memoirs about the distant past."[360] The pieces he completed were part of a planned larger work that ultimately went unfinished.[361] The fact that Ivanov started this work in the camps and returned to it thirty-two years later illuminates not only that his memories of the Gulag remained with him, but also the importance of documenting his experiences in the camps through art, which he sketched "for the drawer" before the return of the topic of political repression to public discourse during glasnost. Ivanov's art explores themes developed in his memoir-letters, especially his description of the Gulag as a place of his derailment but also his development. Ivanov's art captures the fierceness and beauty of the camp environment and the bonds prisoners forged by surviving it.[362]

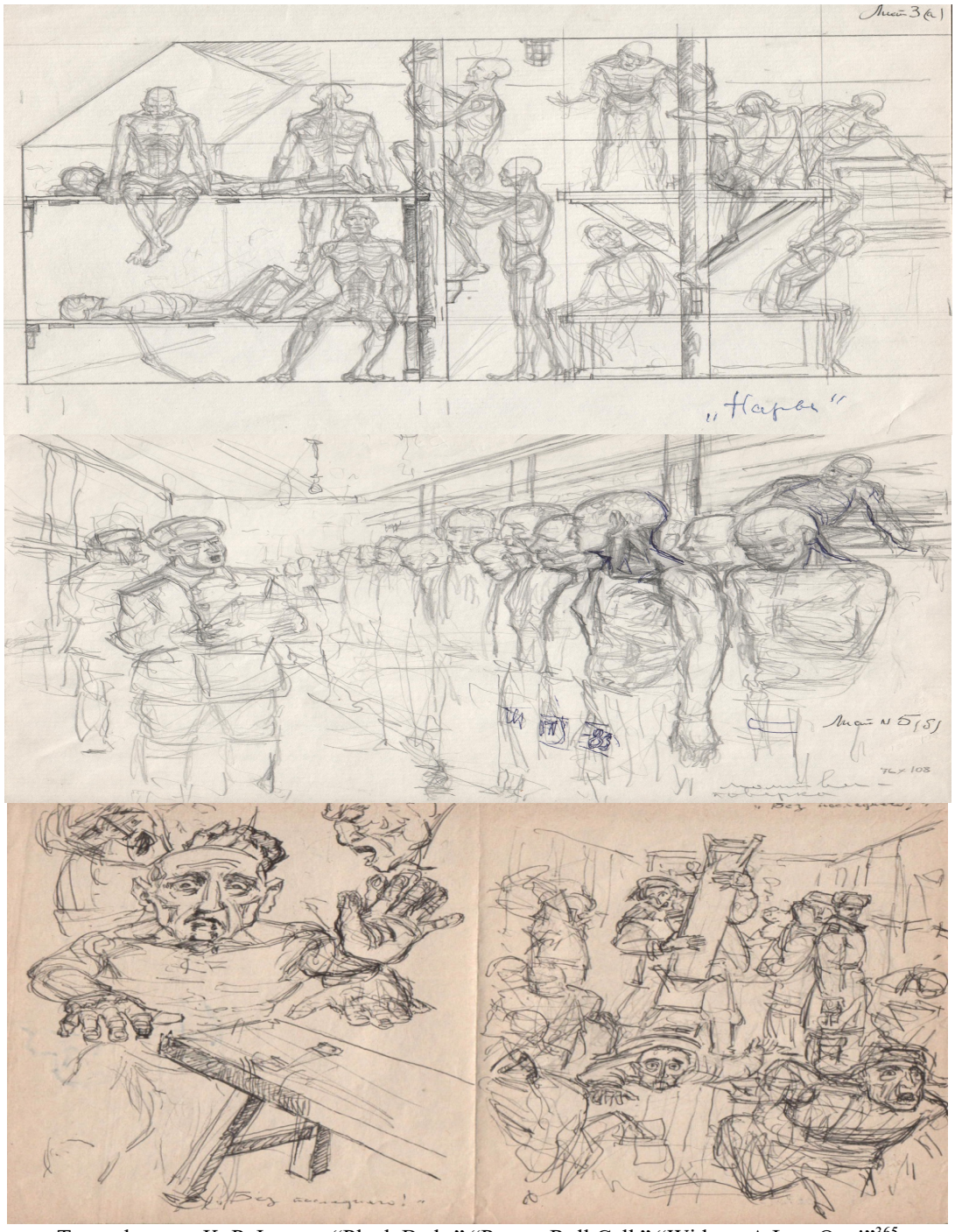
[359] VMVTs f. NVF 4363, op. 1, d. 15, l. 1 (Ivanov to Trukhina, 5.8.1991). This letter indicates that he gave some of these works to Cheslava Tsidzik, his friend from Rechlag and fellow member of the union, with whom he kept in touch with after she returned to L'vov. In a letter from 1992, Ivanov laments that he lost these works from the camps: "And now, when it turned out that I have no present and there will be no future, I live only by the past - these works have suddenly become dear to me." See, VMVTs f. OF 4270, op. 1, d. 11, l. 1 (Ivanov to Trukhina, 20.10.1992).
[360] VMVTs f. OF 4270, op. 1, d. 22, l. 9 (Ivanov to Fesenko, 11.9.1995).
[361] VMVTs f. OF 4327, op. 1, d. 22, l. 3 (Ivanov to Fesenko, 16.12.1995).
[362] VMVTs f. OF 4327, op. 1, d. 12, l. 3 (Ivanov to Trukhina, 13.9.1996).

Clockwise From top: K. P. Ivanov, "Untitled," "Miners KTR '45-'46" (1987), "Miners-*katorzhanki* '45-'46."[363]

[363] VMVTs f. OF 3673, op. 1, d. 16, l. 14, 11, 10 (Ivanov, "Hope Dies Last").

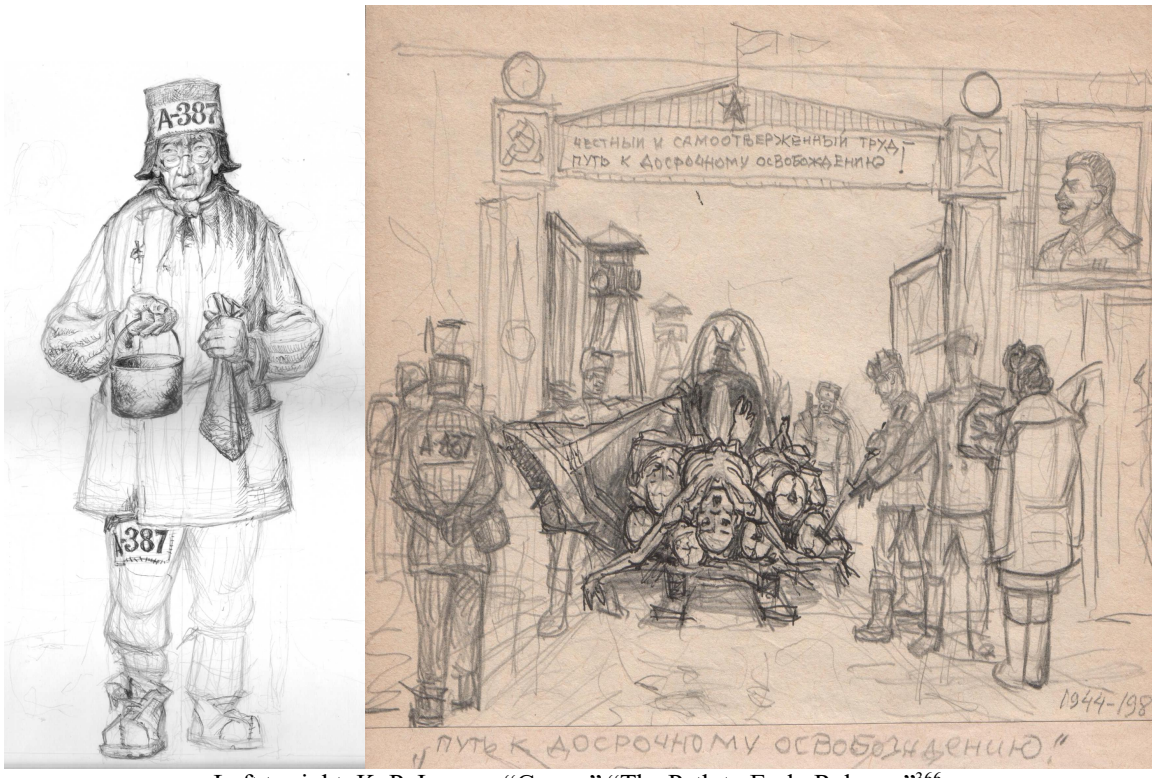
Clockwise From top: K. P. Ivanov, “Untitled,” “Polar Stokehold of the Country,” “Love in the Mine.”[364]

[364] VMVTs f. OF 3673, op. 1, d. 16, l. 15, 19 (Ivanov, “Hope Dies Last”); Ivanov, “Love in the Mine” is from the personal collection of A. A. Popov, Syktyvkar, Russia. Ivanov wrote about the bottom right image: “The wire passage from the mine zone to the residential zone. I passed through this passage from OLP-2 to mine no.2.” See, VMVTs f. OF 4327, op. 1, d. 22, ll. 3 (Ivanov to Fesenko, 16.12.1995).



Top to bottom: K. P. Ivanov, “Plank Beds,” “Prayer-Roll Call,” “Without A Last One!”[365]

[365] VMVTs f. OF 3673, op. 1, d. 16, l. 17, 16, 3. (Ivanov, “Hope Dies Last”).



Left to right: K. P. Ivanov, "Goner," "The Path to Early Release."[366]

"Hope dies last" recreates scenes from his life in Vorkutlag and Rechlag, illustrating the entire cycle of the prisoner experience from selection and assignment on arrival to early release upon death.[367] Unlike other Gulag returnees' art done in a more fantastic and surrealistic fashion, Ivanov's works represent a genre, which Katya Pereyaslavska calls, "authentic realism."[368] Ivanov's artworks document the camp

[366] Arkhiv Natsional'nogo Muzeiia Respubliki Komi (ANMRK) (Ivanov, "Goner"); VMVTs f. OF 3673, op. 1, d. 16, l. 6 (Ivanov, "Hope Dies Last").
[367] Ivanov's art can be compared to Shalamov's *Kolyma Tales* and Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*. Although their approaches to writing about the Gulag differed, they thought the only way to represent their lived experiences was through literary art based on real life that depicted the entire cycle of the Gulag experience.
[368] Katya Pereyaslavska, "Gulag Art: Elusive Evidence from the Forbidden Territories," *Art Documentation*, Vol. 30, No.1, 2011: 33-42. Pereyaslavska writes, "With no access to photography, these images remain the only form of visual documentation providing a glimpse into the Soviet concentration camps. What Gulag art seems to offer is exactly what Socialist Realism sought to obscure – the *actual* post-revolutionary Soviet reality or, what one could call *Nastoiaschii realism*, the true, authentic Realism" (34).

architecture, prisoner clothing, and scenes from everyday life, which illustrate prisoners' humanity and the inhumanity of the camps. They represent the environment that shaped Ivanov and his fellow union members. Such works, Pereyaslavska writes, offer their "own version of 'reality in its revolutionary development.'"[369]

In Ivanov's contributions to this genre, such as his drawings of miners, we see the *katorzhane* who provided coal to the country. However, in this version, the numbers Ivanov once removed to pass the censor are restored to reveal the true identities of the lauded heroes of socialist labor. In "Plank Beds," "Prayer-Roll Call," and "Goner" Ivanov shows us the emaciated bodies of prisoners on their "last legs," which he could not bring himself to describe in his letters. In "Without A Last One!" we see the visual representation of the violence that Ivanov and other political suffered at the hands of the criminals and camp staff. And in "The Path To Early Release" Ivanov reveals the most frequently travelled road out of the camps - death; the path that Ivanov was spared by his friends. These artworks disrupt the socialist realist image of prisoners reforged by their labor and reveal the reality of the camps through the eyes of a survivor. In many of these images we see the numbers that *katorzhane* were forced to wear, which Ivanov frequently described in his letters as a "brand."[370]

The obvious exception is Ivanov's only finished piece in the series, entitled "Memory of Vorkuta," which surreally depicts the living skeletons that built Vorkuta and

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See also, Svetlana Boym, *Territories of Terror: Mythologies and Memories of the Gulag in Contemporary Russian-American Art* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006), 17.

[369] Ibid, 35.

[370] Gulag returnees frequently described felling as if they'd been branded by the numbers on their clothing. Ivanov describes this repeatedly in his memoir-letters. See, for example, VMVTs f. OF 4220, op. 1, d. 1, ll. 6 (Ivanov to Fesenko, 12.3.1996); VMVTs f. OF 4327, op. 1, d. 11, ll. 7 (Ivanov to Trukhina, 30.7.1996).

the rivers of blood that carried prisoners to its coal mines and bonded them in barbed wire. In this image, the ghosts of the past man the watchtower as Stalin's gaze looks through the viewer out into the tundra. In such images of the camps, as Alexander Etkind writes, the distortions of surrealism combine representation of the past and "frightening" images in order to express the artist's subjectivity.[371] Thus, in Ivanov's only finished piece, we see his representation of the darkness he wanted to forget, which he feared distorted the testimony he produced in his memoir letters.

K. P. Ivanov, "Memory of Vorkuta."[372]

[371] Etkind, 93. Etkind focuses on surrealist examples of Gulag art that enabled artist-survivors to represent the unimaginable and inhumane in the camps.
[372] VMVTs f. OF 3673, op. 1, d. 16, l. 22 (Ivanov, "Hope Dies Last").

Ivanov's work is not only intended as visual evidence of an experience for which there is little photographic evidence, but also a representation of the memories of his camp life he could not convey in words. Yet he felt it was important to include these memories in order to overcome the silences in his memoir-letters and to explain the person he became. In a three-page letter written in 1995, Ivanov described his art as a return to Vorkuta, "the cradle of my formation from prisoner (*Z/Ka*-exile) into a person."[373] In using art to tell his story about life in the Gulag, Ivanov employed skills he learned in Rechlag and continued to develop after release as he trained with the artists of the Union of Vorkuta Artist-Outcasts, which enabled him to create a bridge between the present and his "distant past."

Although Ivanov never exhibited these artworks, he contributed several pieces to Fond Pokaianie's *Martirolog* – a book of memory containing the names, memoirs, and archival sources, which document the history of the Gulag and political repression in the Komi Republic.[374] Perhaps, as he once wrote about Rechlag, Ivanov was painting the book he could not bring himself to write.

In one of his final letters almost a year before his death on May 9, 1999, Ivanov wrote to the museum about what their correspondence had meant to him. His words were

[373] VMVTs f. OF 4327, op. 1, d. 22, l. 1 (Ivanov to Fesenko, 16.12.1995).
[374] VMVTs f. OF 4327, op.1, d. 33, ll.4 (Ivanov to Trukhina, 24.8.1998). For these images, see, G. V. Nevskii, ed., *Pokaianie: Martirolog*, t. 1 (Syktyvkar: Komi knizhnoe izd-vo, 1998); -- , *Pokaianie: Martirolog*, t. 2 (Syktyvkar: Komi knizhnoe izd-vo, 1999). I discuss the *Martirolog*, as well as Fond Pokaianie in chapter five.

mixed with satisfaction, doubt, and the hope that he remembered as best he could. As Ivanov wrote on August 24, 1998:

> And despite what it cost to remember, I wrote these memories down as they arose. Now, when I begin to write about myself… breaking through the thick fog of the long, distant past… A place… which wasn't!? And a small, bright, happy childhood, and adolescence. And such sicknesses, disorders in our little family... and the storm of war… occupation, prison, the camps… The struggle for life, for a place under the sun with honorable and dishonorable methods. Scribbling with a quill about open wounds, I tried to write about everything. But I could not withstand the pain and dropped the quill. In fact, I turned out to be a weak person [I was not up to the task].[375]

Ivanov's life was shaped by his experiences as a prisoner and an exile in Vorkuta. For him the Gulag was many things. It was the source of his "derailment" and the "university" that shaped his development as a human being and an artist. His emphasis on the influence of the Gulag on the development of his sense self raises questions about the impact of the camps on Gulag returnees as they adapted to life after release. As Ivanov's memoir-letters show, he remembered this period of his life as a prolongation of his alienation as a "former," which raises a central question that will continue to explore over the remaining two chapters, how did Gulag returnees experience the collapse of the Soviet Union?

Although Ivanov never intended to write a memoir, the letters and art he produced in the *process of remembering* transformed into a memoir of his life, which started in the camps and evolved into a story about his life after release. While the collapse of the Soviet Union made it possible for Gulag returnees to share their pasts without fear of

[375] Ibid, 3.

reprisal, Ivanov provides us with an example of a former prisoner who struggled to write, a struggle other ordinary Gulag returnees also faced. Although Ivanov tried to remember as much as he could, he could not and did not want to put it all down on paper. Writing about the Gulag was too painful, too difficult, and perhaps Ivanov felt that he couldn't possibly add anything new to the history of political repression at a time when so many of his *odnokashniki* came forth with their own testimonies.

Ivanov's memoir-letters and art should not be read as a book, with a beginning, middle, and end – they should be read and analyzed not only for their content but also for what they so vividly illustrate – the process of remembering. While Ivanov's autobiographical narrative is unique for its focus on life after release, his letters contain themes of the Gulag memoir genre and provide testimony about how Gulag returnees were at the same time a part of and estranged from Soviet society. The contents of Ivanov's archive underscore what he felt was important for those who had not been imprisoned to know about the Gulag and former prisoners. By returning to the Gulag to contextualize his life after release, Ivanov traced his origins to a formative moment (in his personal life and history) and made a claim to an identity, which was informed by the "Union of Outcasts" of which he was a member.

CHAPTER FOUR

"How I remained a human being": Elena Markova's Spiritual Resistance in and After the Gulag

Introduction

At the end of a two-hour lecture in 2017 about her time in the Gulag and how she and her friends resisted its destructiveness, Gulag returnee Elena Vladimirovna Markova concluded with the following words:

> Vorkuta was always with us. Do you understand? Vorkuta remained in our hearts. […] Spiritual resistance is connected to the spiritual life of prisoners. This is what saved prisoners. Yes, the theatre was an escape [*ostrov spaseniia*], but it was also our independent action, camp poetry, and the environment [we created] where you were surrounded by smart, cultured people. This is spiritual salvation [*dukhovnoe spacenie*]. And when I moved to Moscow after 17 years in Vorkuta, I had such a [negative] reaction to the Muscovites, forgive me Muscovites. I thought oh my God what uninteresting, petty, small-minded people. In Vorkuta we really had a different public, a totally different milieu. Vorkuta has always remained with me in my soul. I am at the end of my life now, but the paradox of *katorga* [which led to the creation of this public] is the most astonishing phenomenon to me. There were such good people there whom I associated with, whom I drew strength from, and who spiritually saved me. In Moscow, I did not have such an environment.[376]

Gulag returnees frequently asked themselves in their memoirs, "How did I remain a human being in such conditions?"[377] For Markova the answer was "spiritual resistance." As she wrote in her 1993 memoir: "Those who survived physically understood that long-term incarceration in a concentration camp meant moral and

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[376] E. V. Markova, "Lektsiia: Dukhovnoe soprotivlenie v GULAGe," YouTube video, 2:31:54, posted by the Sakharov Center, Apr. 20, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rHk-j2t3Cyg [accessed 26.09.17].
[377] See chapters two and three. See also, GU RK NARK f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 17, l. 13 (Gorodin, "Slovar' Russkikh argotizmov"). In the introduction to his Gulag encyclopedia dictionary, Gorodin illustrates how prisoners celebrated humanity. Calling someone a "*Chelovek*" (person) was the highest honor prisoners could bestow on one another.

spiritual degradation. Those who survived also resisted spiritual death. For their spiritual self-preservation, they sought several compensatory mechanisms."[378] These compensatory mechanisms included composing and memorizing poems, which they recited to one another, creating art, writing illegal letters to one another, and friendship. All of these practices can be seen as what Alexei Yurchak defines as *obshchenie* or "both a process and a sociality that emerges in that process, and both an exchange of ideas and information as well as a space of affect and togetherness."[379] While these practices enabled Markova to endure the camps during some of the deadliest years of its existence, they were also an important part of her life after release.[380] Previously, Historians have focused on how prisoners physically survived the camps, however, this chapter presents an in depth focus on the strategies they adopted to survive psychologically.[381] On the basis of Markova's memoir, correspondence with her camp comrades from the 1950s and 1990s, and interviews that I conducted with her in 2016 and 2017, this chapter explores the ways in which Markova's spiritual resistance in and after the Gulag strengthened her sense of self and the "public" of zeks she belonged to in Vorkuta and Moscow.

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[378] Markova, *Vorkutinskie Zametki "E-105"*, 144. Markova's memoir was written over the course of 1992-1993. On writing her memoir, see, E. V. Markova, interview with the author by phone, Oct. 10, 2017.

[379] Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever*, 149-150. In other words, Gulag returnees formed a community of *svoi*, which they referred to as the Vorkuta brotherhood, through the practices they employed to spiritually resist the camps.

[380] The mortality rate in Vorkutlag for those sentenced to KTR in 1944 (the year Markova arrived) was 377.96 deaths per thousand. The next year it dropped to 197.62 and continued to decline in the years afterward. For mortality rates in Vorkutlag and Rechlag, see, Barenberg, *Gulag Town, Company Town*, 270.

[381] Golfo Alexopoulos is the most recent to write on the question of physical survival in *Illness and Inhumanity*. For other works that explore this topic, see also, Barnes, *Death and Redemption*; Solzhenitsyn, *Gulag Archipelago*, 3 vols.; Michael David Fox, ed., *The Soviet Gulag: Evidence Interpretation, and Comparison* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2016). An exception is a gender analysis of Romanian women sent to Soviet camps, see, Jill Massino, "Gender as Survival: Women's Experiences of Deportation from Romania to the Soviet Union, 1945-1950," *Nationalities Papers* 36, no. 1 (March 2008): 55-83.

Like many Gulag returnees, Markova was both a part of – and estranged from – Soviet society. As Markova wrote in a 1995 essay about her past: "Everything that I achieved after release cannot erase what I experienced in prisons and the camps."[382] However, unlike other former prisoners who at least attempted to identify themselves as Soviet people after they were released, Markova rejected this label. Although she was not anti-Soviet nor a dissident, Markova felt more of a kinship with those whom she survived the Gulag than her countrymen who had not been "there." As we will see, this bond was not only the product of having survived a traumatic experience together, it was also based on the common set of values espoused by the act of spiritual resistance.

While their solidarity with *svoi* and the pride they felt as *Vorkutiane* illuminate important connections between Markova and Ivanov, who travelled in some of the same circles in Vorkuta, they could not be more different. Unlike Ivanov, Markova emphasized her status as a survivor. Although her time in the camps was no less difficult, Markova felt empowered to write an autobiography after the collapse of the Soviet Union whereas Ivanov was reluctant to write at all. As Markova told me in an interview in 2017: "The collapse of the Soviet Union presented a chance to write and when the opportunity arose I took it."[383] Furthermore, Markova did not refer to the camp as her university. While she saw her imprisonment as a formative chapter of her life, she

[382] E. V. Markova, "Doroga, kotoruiu ia ne vybirala" *Radost'*, no. 3-4, 1995: 126-133, http://www.sakharov-center.ru/asfcd/auth/?t=page&num=2793 [accessed 25.07.2017].
[383] E. V. Markova, interview with the author by phone, Oct. 10, 2017. She qualified her answer by explaining why she waited so long to write about the past: "None of us wrote about our lives in the camps in those times because it was so strictly forbidden. You would receive another sentence if you were caught writing about the camps. We all had to sign an agreement of nondisclosure when we left the camps that was kept in the organs. And besides, I didn't think anyone would care [about my story]."

assigned a different meaning to it. Instead, Markova represented both her years in the Gulag and her life after release as a time of prolonged development, a time when her identity was shaped by her simultaneous habitation of two temporal spaces. As she wrote in 1993: "Many years have passed after my release, but the past is not forgotten… Such is the way you live, in two temporal spaces. One – Moscow, the present, the other – the past, Vorkuta."[384] By her own words, Markova is an exceptional Gulag returnee for another reason as well.[385] Unlike many of her friends from the camps, Markova and her husband were completely rehabilitated during the 1950s and even given an apartment in Moscow.[386]

The intertextual shifts in her memoir, much like oral history, illuminate a collective memory of the Gulag which shapes and is shaped by individual identity.[387] In order to impart scope to her memoir and to show that the story she had to tell was not just her own, Markova frequently drew from the lives of others she knew in the camps and after release. In addition to her memories of the past, Markova included material from the archive of testimony that she built over the years. This archive includes official documents, letters, poems, notes, photographs, and stories that Markova collected over

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[384] Markova, *Vorkutinskie zametki,* 130. See also, E. V. Markova, interview with the author, May 17, 2017, Moscow, Russia.

[385] E. V. Markova, interview with the author, May 17, 2017, Moscow, Russia. This was one of the first things that Elena Vladimirovna said to me as we sat down to discuss her life and experiences in the Gulag. It is a reference to the fact that many former prisoners didn't survive long after release or were not as successful as she and her husband were in rebuilding their lives after release.

[386] This seems to have been somewhat rare. Rehabilitation usually entailed a dismissal of all charges and the lifting of passport restrictions.

[387] Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli*, ix, 1. Portelli informs my interpretation of Markova's memoir. He argues that historical fact confirms something existed or happened, but memory of something tells us about the meaning of that event as it pertains to identity and culture. As both a cultural form produced through the process of remembering, memoir illuminates the connection between the individual's identity and their community.

the years. Markova sent some of this material to her mother while she was still imprisoned "through all means, both legal and illegal."[388] These sources, which are reproduced throughout Markova's memoir, tells us about the experiences of *katorga*, survival, release, and the struggle to adapt to civilian life in real time. However, as part of a remembered past, the narrative Markova constructed also tells us about the meaning she assigned to these experiences as she looked back on her life from the present. Thus, while the collapse of the Soviet Union made it possible for her to tell her story, the process of remembering, including the construction of her own personal Gulag archive, unfolded over the course of the rest of her life.

This chapter contains three sections. Taken as a whole, the subsections of this chapter illustrate the various aspects of Markova's life, which defined her. Section one provides a brief overview of Markova's biography, which creates a timeline of her life from the 1920s to her life in Moscow in the 1960s. Section two examines Markova's life in the Gulag through the lens of spiritual resistance. This section explores how spiritual resistance and spiritual life laid the foundation for the "public" of zeks that Markova joined after release. Section three illustrates the continued importance of spiritual resistance after release. Although Markova did not write at length about this part of her life, this chapter of her memoir provides new insights into the extended network of former prisoners, which Markova referred to as the "Vorkuta diaspora."

[388] E. V. Markova, interview with the author by telephone, Oct. 10, 2017. Markova gave parts of her archive to the Sakharov Center and the State Museum of the History of the Gulag (GMIG) in Moscow.

Markova's Life History

Elena Vladimirovna Markova (Ivanova) was born in Kiev to polyglot schoolteachers in 1923. Before her own arrest in March 1943, political repression befell her family. Her grandfather, an Orthodox priest, died trying to save his church's library after a band of militant godless set fire to it in 1922. In 1937, Markova's father was arrested and shot as the Great Terror raged throughout the Soviet Union, sweeping away hundreds of thousands of innocent people.[389] Following her husband's arrest, Markova's mother was imprisoned for a year and half as the "wife of an enemy of the people."[390] Temporarily orphaned by the NKVD, Markova's maternal grandmother saved her from the orphanage. She fled with Markova to a remote village where they lived an impoverished life as family members of "enemies of the people," which, as Markova wrote in 1993, "in those times was scarier than the plague."[391] After the repressions that tore apart the Ivanov family in the 1920s and 1930s, Markova lived a quiet life with her mother and maternal grandmother, who was an ethnic German. Markova was an excellent student who loved learning and dreamed of attending university in Leningrad. On June 21, 1941 Markova graduated the 10th grade filled with excitement about her plans for higher education; however, the next morning Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet

[389] On the basis of extensive work in declassified Soviet archives, the consensus among historians is that more than 1 million people were victims of political repression during the Great Terror (1936-38), of that number approximately 700,000 were executed from 1937-1938. See, J. Arch Getty, Oleg V. Naumov, *The Road to Terror: Stalin and the Self-Destruction of the Bolsheviks, 1932-39* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 591; Hiroaki Kuromiya, *The Voices of the Dead: Stalin's Great Terror in the 1930s* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 1.
[390] Markova, *Vorkutinskie zametki*, 31.
[391] Ibid, 11. See also, E. V. Markova, interview with the author, May 17, 2019, Moscow, Russia.

Union, postponing Markova's education and sending her on a course that would change her life forever.

Soon after the German invasion of the Soviet Union during the Second World War, Markova and her mother were deported to the small village Krasnoarmeiskii in the Donbas region of Ukraine along with other ethnic German families.[392] Eventually their village was captured by advancing Wehrmacht and S.S. units and occupied until 1943.[393] In February of that year, the Red Army liberated Krasnoarmeiskii, but not for long. During the ensuing battles to retake the village, Markova heroically gathered the wounded Red Army soldiers and treated them in a make-shift field hospital. When the village was overrun and recaptured by the Wehrmacht, Markova hid the wounded who could not escape among families in town as the Red Army hastily retreated. Knowing that the Wehrmacht would search for and execute the wounded Red Army soldiers on sight when they returned, Elena Vladimirovna collected their weapons and documents and stashed them at her family home.[394] To prove that the unfamiliar faces in the village were indeed local residents Markova forged residency documents, which listed the wounded soldiers as citizens of Krasnoarmeiskii. However, this was only a temporary measure to forestall inquiry into the increase in the village's population. On the orders of Major A. N. Ul'ianov, the commander of the Red Army medical battalion who remained

[392] Pavel Polian, *Against Their Will: The History and Geography of Forced Migrations in the USSR* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2004), 123-139. Polian writes that during the war 1.2 out of 1.5 million Soviet ethnic Germans were subject to internal forced migration and resettlement. As of 1942 1,031,300 ethnic Germans were registered as special settlements throughout the central and eastern regions of the USSR. Markova's family was part of a cohort that was more or less left in place due to the rapidity of the German advance into Ukraine.
[393] Markova, *Vorkutinskie zametki*, 7
[394] Ibid, 15-16.

in hiding in Donbas, Markova enrolled in the German labor exchange in town with the aim of obtaining work permits for the walking wounded.[395] Ul'ianov entrusted this dangerous assignment to the 19-year-old Markova because of her fluency in German. Markova's successful deception saved the lives of 76 men and earned her a military commendation signed by Major Ul'ianov.[396]

Despite the commendation for her heroism at great personal risk, Markova was arrested by the NKVD when the Red Army drove the Wehrmacht out of Donbas and recaptured the village. On December 1, 1943, Elena Vladimirovna was convicted by an NKVD Military Tribunal of treason as a collaborator and German spy and sentenced to 15 years of hard labor (*katorzhnykh rabot*) and an additional 5 years of deprivation of civil rights: "My guilt lay in the fact that for two and a half months I worked on the German labor exchange. Why I wound up working there did not interest my interrogators, although the letter of reference [from Ul'ianov] was in my file."[397] Following Markova's interrogation she was sent to prison no.1 in Stalino, where her father was executed and her mother served time following her husband's arrest.[398] After months of interrogation, Markova was sent by cattle car to the Far North in May 1944. In June 1944, she passed through the barbed wire gates at Vorkutlag and was sent to work in the coal mines of Vorkuta.

In 1950, Markova was transferred to the adjacent strict-regime camp, Rechlag, where she continued to work in the harshest conditions on the construction of the railroad

[395] Ibid, 13-14.
[396] Ibid, 23. Markova reproduced the commendation dated Mar. 20, 1943 on this page.
[397] Ibid, 31.
[398] Ibid.

to the village Mul'de. Markova's fortune changed dramatically when she was re-assigned to the camp clinic where she treated the sick and dying and also nursed infants who were born in the camps.[399] Another lucky break came in 1951. Thanks to the persistence of her mother, who tracked down the soldiers Markova saved in Krasnoarmeiskii and got them to petition on behalf of her daughter for leniency, the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the USSR reviewed Markova's file and reduced her sentence to 10 years.[400] In November 1953, Markova was released without the right to leave Vorkuta.

After release, Markova married former prisoner, Aleksei Alekseevich Markov, in 1954. Markov was arrested in 1943 in Moscow for uttering an anti-Soviet anecdote, sentenced to *katorga*, and sent to Vorkuta.[401] The amnesty of September 17, 1955 released Markova from exile, however she remained in Vorkuta as an un-rehabilitated former prisoner.[402] In 1957, she gave birth to her daughter Inna. In 1959, Aleksei was rehabilitated. A year later, Markova was also rehabilitated by the Supreme Court of the USSR, which dismissed her case "for lack of evidence of a crime." After she was

[399] Alexopoulos, *Illness and Inhumanity*, 85-109. Gulag labor camps, colonies, and construction sites were always in need of medical personnel and often recruited prisoners with either experience or training to staff these positions, since civilians would often not last very long at camp sites.
[400] Markova, *Vorkutinskie zametki*, 9.
[401] E. V. Markova, interview with the author, May 17, 2017, Moscow, Russia. Markov worked alongside Iakov Vunder and Konstantin Ivanov at the Vorkuta State Drama Theatre, where he also met Markova.
[402] There were major differences between these legal categories which greatly affected a Gulag returnees' prospects after release. Release as a result of a term expiring, amnesty, pardon, or conditional-early release did not expunge former prisoners' criminal records. If a prisoner's sentence was not overturned with rehabilitation or other administrative action, release did not restore their civil rights. See, A. Artizov, et al., eds., *Reabilitatsiia: Kak eto bylo. Dokumenty Prezidiuma TsK KPSS i drugie materialy* Mart 1953-fevral' 1956, t. 1 (Moskva: Mezhdunarodnyi fond "Demokratiia," 2004), 45-48, 257-259. See also, Adler, *The Gulag Survivor*, 26-34.

rehabilitated in 1960, the Markovs moved to Moscow.[403] Although she missed Vorkuta, living in the capital afforded her the opportunity to pursue the education that she had always dreamed of. Despite the fact that she was rehabilitated, Markova found it difficult to find work or gain entrance to the university because of the stigma attached to her status as a former *katorzhanka.* In 1962, Markova enrolled in correspondence courses at the Moscow State University of Economics, Statistics, and Informatics. And in 1965, she defended her candidate degree, followed by her doctorate in engineering six years later.[404] After her husband, Aleksei passed away in 1973, Markova continued to live with her daughter in Moscow, where she lives to this day.

Spiritual Resistance in the Gulag

For Markova, spiritual resistance was not connected to any institutional religion. Instead spiritual resistance was a form of self-preservation, a means to maintain her humanity amidst the inhumanity of the camps. In other words, spiritual resistance was a practice, a feeling, a faith in one's self and one's friends.[405] This is not to say that religion was totally absent in the Gulag, for it was not.[406] Markova does not mention her encounters with Russian believers in the camps but when she interacted with foreign

[403] Markova, *Vorkutinskie zametki*, 9. Here, 215. See also, E. V. Markova, interview with the author, May 17, 2017, Moscow, Russia.
[404] Rogachev, ed., *Pokaianie: Martirolog*, t. 12, ch. 2, 27-28. See also, "Markova Elena Vladimirovna (urozhd. Ivanova)," Sakharov Center, accessed March 27, 2019, https://www.sakharov-center.ru/asfcd/auth/?t=author&i=593.
[405] Markova, *Vorkutinskie zametki*, 115.
[406] See for example, Aleksandr I. Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago, 1918 – 1956, An Experiment in Literary Investigation*, vol. 2 (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1974), 309-10; Janusz Bardach, *Man Is Wolf to Man: Surviving the Gulag*, trans., Kathleen Gleeson (Berkley: University of California Press, 1998), 209-210, 235.

believers in the camps, she remembered feeling a belief in something greater. However, as Markova wrote in 1993, it was not religion: "Not once was the discourse about God. As children of the atheistic times, we did not delve into religious questions, we didn't know the prayers. […] We felt the need to something higher, but how, with which words?"[407]

Markova found "something higher" and the words to express it through "internal migration."[408] To withstand the destructiveness of her environment Markova retreated inward and remembered pieces of the life that she left behind.[409] However, she did not do so alone. By interacting and associating with other political prisoners, Markova forged solidarities with her camp comrades who retreated inward with her. As she wrote in her memoir:

> The reality [of the camps] was so terrible, that it seemed I would not last not one day. And I faced a sentence of 15 years. In order to somehow save myself, I constantly lived by memories of my former life. Working in the mine, I recited poems, committed to memory favorite songs or old romances that my mother sang. The total starvation of information was tortuous, an excommunication from books, journals, newspapers and radio. We lived as if we had been transported back to the pre-historic epoch, when writing hadn't been invented yet. The only thing that we had left was conversation with our close friends in spirit. I highly valued such conversations and tried my hardest to find interesting people to converse

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[407] Ibid,.

[408] Yurchak, 132-33. Yurchak uses the metaphor of internal migration to describe the formation of publics of *svoi* during late Socialism that were simultaneously invisible within, and a part of, Soviet society. I use it here to describe how Markova retreated inward with other prisoners to "spiritually resist" the environment that actively destroyed their bodies and their sense of self, which ultimately contributed to the formation of the public of zeks that she constructs in her memoir.

[409] Arrest and imprisonment split Markova's life in two. This is reflected in the recurring metaphors and imagery she uses to describe the splitting of her autobiographical self. For instance, Markova wrote: "Two banks [of a river] – two worlds. One dark, hair raising, the other – light, free, serene. The gates of the dark world open, and the convoy drives us in, like a flock of livestock to the slaughter." See, Markova, *Vorkutinskie zametki*, 34.

> with. This is how I attempted to resist the sinister process, which was supposed to turn us *katorzhanki* into dull soulless creatures.[410]

In the harsh conditions of the arctic, bread was symbolically and literally life. However, as Markova wrote, "We didn't live by bread alone."[411] For Markova and her friends, poetry and intellectual comradeship were the metaphorical bread that sustained them. Although there were libraries at the cultural-educational department of the camp, Markova and the other *katorzhane* were not allowed access to the books. To fill the void, they remembered the poems of Tsvetaeva, Gumilev, Akhmatova, Mandelshtam, and others, as Markova wrote, "whom we only began to talk about openly only after the 'Thaw'."[412] In addition to reciting the poems of other well-known artists, Markova composed and collected camp poems, which she memorized.[413] Thus, poetry was a form of resistance that enabled Markova to "remain human."[414] Furthermore, the creative and mnemonic processes involved in composing poems served as a means to document their environment for future generations:

> But most importantly, we wrote poems ourselves. Often, they were unskillful, childish poems, which specialists and lovers of high poetry disdainfully relate to. But I think that one must apply a special measure to amateur camp art. It is original documentary evidence of our spiritual life, our emotions, interactions, and relations to camp events. After all, there is simply no other documentary evidence [that captures these aspects of camp life]. Some letters have been saved, but they were composed with

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[410] Ibid, 51. For other examples, see, Markova, *Vorkutinskie zametki*, 65, 67-8.
[411] Ibid, 114-5. Markova also repeated this statement in our interview and her lecture at the Sakharov Center.
[412] Ibid, 70-71
[413] On memorizing poems in the camps as a form of self-preservation, see also, M. D. Baital'skii, "Znai istoriiu goroda v kotorom zhivesh': Na kirpichnom zavode," *Zapoliar'e*, Sept. 19, 2000; AM f. 2, op. 2, d. 81, l. 21 (I. V. Skakovskaia, "Vospominaniia o Vorkute i vorkutianakh (1946-59)," 1996); AM f. 2, op. 2, d. 112, l. 164 (V. E. Sollertinskii, "Kuda bog smotrit, vospominaniia," Sosnogorsk, 1984); A. Ia. Istoginoi, ed., *Intaliia: Stikhi i vospominaniia byvshikh zakliuchennykh Minlaga* (Moskva: Vest', 1995).
[414] Ibid, 52.

> the censor in mind and [also] in order to not worry our loved ones, we expressed ourselves very carefully. In camp poems, [authors wrote about] resistance to the slave, *katorzhnoi* life, overcoming spiritual death, the search for paths of intellectual development. *Poems were a unique chronicle of our unfree life* [emphasis added]. Alas, more than anything they recorded the chronicle of terrible, bloody events… Camp poems are poetic resistance in the Gulag, a violation of the regime, which was punished harshly.[415]

Markova saw the poems that she and her friends composed as evidence of the "spiritual world of the camps."[416] These unique works of art represented their experiences in the camps more than the letters they wrote home. Since letters home had to pass the censor, as Markova wrote, "no one ever risked completely unburdening one's heart."[417] Camp poems, on the other hand, "were not intended for print, composing poems, we didn't think about the camp censor. Camp poems are a mirror of our spirituality, a unique camp diary."[418] By composing poems in their heads, prisoners assigned meaning to their experiences as they lived them. However, since these poems changed overtime as they were remembered, recited, and recorded, they also resemble the same process by which Gulag returnees constructed their autobiographies.[419]

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[415] Ibid. On writing letters that would pass camp censors, Markova made sure to write in her usual romantic, spirited language "of her old self", as a proof of life for her mother and an indicator of her unbroken spirit. Here, 76. In this sense Markova's poems are like Gulag letters, which Emily Johnson describes as, "a time-stamped window on a past that was still unfolding." See, Formakov, *Gulag Letters*, 16.

[416] Markova, *Vorkutinskie zametki*, 114-5. See also, L. K'eralli, "Poeziia GULAGa kak literaturnoe svidetel'stvo: teoreticheskie i epistemologicheskie obosnovaniia," *Studia Litterarum* 3, no. 3 (June 2018): 144-163.

[417] Ibid.

[418] Ibid.

[419] For an example of a Gulag returnee who wrote autobiographical poems, see, Aleksandr S. Klein, *904 Moi nomer "2P-904": Avtobiograficheskie stikhi i poema* (Syktyvkar, 1992).

One of the unifying motifs of Markova's and other Gulag returnees' camp poetry is the tundra.[420] These poems capture the beauty and harshness of the arctic and describe their relationship to it. As Markova wrote, the tundra represented "the personification of our troubles and the single source of beauty [in the camps]."[421] In Markova's poetry, the tundra represented a "parallel world," which she was simultaneously a part of and separated from.[422] However, the tundra was not just a theme in camp poetry, it was a continuous source of inspiration and spiritual resistance for other Gulag returnees as well. For instance, Iakov Vunder, Konstantin Ivanov, and a host of other Gulag returnee-artists frequently travelled out into the tundra at different times of the year to capture the movement of light and darkness across the pristine landscape as the seasons changed above the arctic circle.[423]

Over the course of her nine years behind barbed wire, Markova corresponded with her mother and other prisoners in the camp through legal and illegal channels.[424] As Markova wrote in 1993, these letters "were a kind of symbol of spiritual salvation. […] They were ineradicable like the camp poems. It was the prisoners' moral resistance against the hated GULAG."[425] Markova's "illegal" letters passed to other sections of the camp through a network of inmates, friendly civilians, and corrupt guards. At times

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[420] Markova, *Vorkutinskie Zametki*, 72-82. Other themes include, love, friendship, and memorializing the dead. Markova dedicates an entire chapter of her autobiography to the tundra.
[421] Ibid, 71.
[422] Ibid.
[423] For descriptions of this work, see, chapter three.
[424] For Markova's correspondence with her mother while Markova was in Vorkuta see Gosudarstvennyi muzei istorii GULAGa (GMIG), nauchnyi arkhiv f. 5, d. 2, (1944-1958). Markova managed to keep many of the illegal letters that she received over the years. After release, she also managed to collect some of the letters she sent to others. These letters are also included in this archive.
[425] Markova, *Vorkutinskie zametki*, 151.

when Markova was separated from her "circle of friends in katorga" (*kruzhok druzei po katorge*), camp correspondence enabled the group to continue their "spiritual life" (*dukhovnaia zhizn'*) together. Furthermore, these letters illustrate the great risk that Markova and others were willing to take in order to maintain these meaningful relationships in the camp.[426] Underscoring this point, Markova continued in her memoir: "These letters served as a window to another world – a world of human emotions, lofty impulses and thoughts. These grey pieces of paper, covered in writing in pencil, were of inestimable significance to long-term prisoners."[427]

Many of the letters from Markova's archive are from her close friend and fellow prisoner Georgii Rontal', who was released in 1955.[428] The letters Markova received from Rontal' mention the poems that Markova composed, which tells us that she shared her poems with prisoners in other camp sections. Although we only have one side of this dialogue, these letters reveal the variety of topics that Markova and Rontal' discussed in their illicit correspondence, which included literature, art, and music among other things.[429] However, most importantly, these letters illustrate that Gulag returnees risked harsh punishment – solitary confinement, reduced rations, added time on their sentence, or worse – simply to comfort and remind each other that they were valued members of a

[426] Ibid.
[427] Ibid.
[428] From 1950-1952 Rontal' wrote 74 illegal letters to Markova who, it seems, was imprisoned in a separate camp section. For Rontal's brief biography, see, E. V. Markova, et al. *Gulagovskie tainy osvoeniia severa* (Moskva: 2001), 315. The biographical data Markova gives is incomplete.
[429] See for example, GMIG f. 5, d. 3, l. 29 (Note from G. M. Rontal' to E. V. Markova, not dated); GMIG f. 5, d. 3, l. 24 (G. M. Rontal' to E. V. Markova, 28.12.1950); GMIG f. 5, d. 3, l. 23 (G. M. Rontal' to E. V. Markova, 24.12.1950). In our phone interview Markova said the following to me about the topics her illegal camp correspondence: "We didn't whine about deprivations in our letters. We wrote about music, culture, spiritual life. And this saved us." See, E. V. Markova, interview with the author by phone, Oct. 10, 2017.

community. As Rontal' wrote to Markova in a letter dated December 21, 1950 about how her turn outward to her friends coincided with an improvement in her emotional wellbeing:

> With all my heart, I send you congratulations and wishes for the utmost happiness in everything in the New Year. I hope the New Year brings your much happiness and joy and relief from the weight of the separation from your mother and me. I am very glad to hear that you have cheered up now thanks to your friends and acquaintances who have a good influence on your mood and thoughts. It is so good that in the end you renounced your reticence, which you found yourself in for the last few years and embarked on the path of the community. Remember the words of Shota Rustaveli: 'He who does not look for friends, is an enemy to himself'? […] Lenok, I am very glad that you're well and cheerful. For the first time, (in your letter from 19.XII) you write that your days are interesting and that you are even writing poetry. And I am unable to read them… how annoying! Perhaps they reflect your change in mood? Thank you, my dear, for the [other] poems. I like both editions, the old and the new. […].[430]

In addition to illustrating how members of the community who were scattered throughout different camp sections interacted and how turning outward to one another buoyed their ability to spiritually resist, Rontal's letters shed new light on how members of the camp brotherhood identified themselves while they were imprisoned. Although he used a false name to conceal his true identity, lest his letters fall into the wrong hands, Rontal' identified himself and Markova as members of the camp brotherhood by referring to himself as her brother.[431] For example, in a letter to Markova dated December 1951, Rontal' encouraged her not to lose heart with such little time left on her sentence:

> My beloved Lenusia! Happy New Year 1952! I wish you, dear, very much happiness, joy, and health. I hope the new year brings you long awaited freedom, and with it the happiness of meeting with all your close ones and

[430] GMIG f. 5, d. 3, l. 22 (G. M. Rontal' to E. V. Markova 21.12.1950).
[431] In his letters, Rontal referred to Markova as his "dear sister" and signed them as "your brother."

friends and with science, art, and music. You can be certain that despite the distance separating us, I will always be with you with all my being. Be well and cheerful, my dear sister. Sending you my love. Heartily embracing and kissing you. Always your brother, Vsevolod.[432]

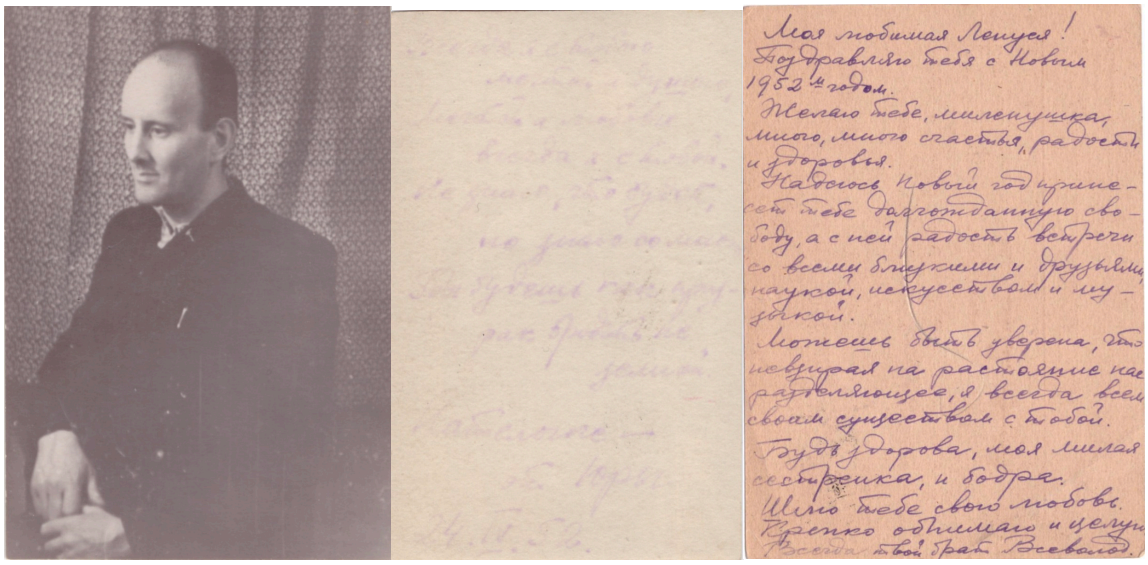
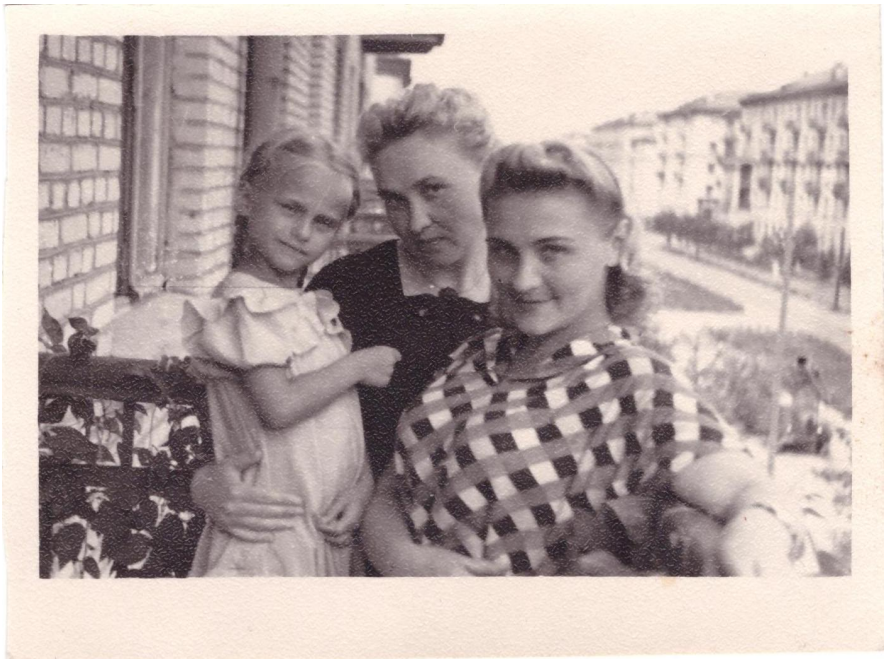


Photo 1: Self-portrait that Rontal' sent to Markova in 1952. Photo 2: Poem Rontal' wrote to Markova, Sept. 24, 1952. Photo 3: Letter from G. M. Rontal' to Markova, Dec. 1951.[433]

Spiritual resistance did was not only confined to conversations, inner thoughts, and illicit letters, it had a space – the camp theatre – which was organized by the state. Although she did not work in the theatre herself, it represented a refuge for Markova who worked grueling shifts underground and, later, with sick children born in the camp. It was also the place where Markova met her future husband, as well as many of the friends whom she would spend the rest of her life with. However, most importantly, Markova remembered performances at the camp theatre as a temporary inoculation against the horror of her environment. As evidence of how much the theatre meant to other prisoners

[432] GMIG f. 5., d. 3, l. 27 (G. M. Rontal' to E. V. Markova, Dec., 1951).
[433] GMIG f. 5, d. 3, l. 30, 30ob (Photograph of G. M. Rontal', 1952); GMIG f. 5, d. 3, l. 27 (G. M. Rontal' to E. V. Markova, Dec. 1951). The poem reads: "I am always with you, in your dreams and in your soul, I am always with you. I do not know what will come, but I know that you will, like a spectre, roam the heavens."

as well, Markova reproduced a letter from one of her friends who wrote and performed music for the camp theatre. Larisa Guliachenko's letter to Markova from 1990 illuminates how Gulag returnees also bonded over their memories of the theatre and not just the things they endured: "Now I warmly remember those long-past times, our stage (our pitiful stage), our performances and concerts (poor, miserable!). And once again, with sadness, I am firmly convinced that after Usa I never experienced such creative energy, such an incomparable joy and enthusiasm as then!"[434]



Markova (middle) visiting Guliachenko (right) and her daughter Ira (left), who was born in Rechlag, in Kiev.[435]

[434] Ibid, 93. Markova followed this note with "This is what the camp theatre meant to us!" Guliachenko was imprisoned in Rechlag from 1951-1955. After release, Guliachenko returned to Kiev where she graduated from Kiev State University and later taught English and German. During the war, she was dropped behind enemy lines as a radio operator. She was eventually captured by the Gestapo in Crimea. After escaping back to Red Army lines, she was arrested and sentenced to 10 years corrective-labor camps and 5 years deprivation of civil rights. For Guliachenko's biography see Markova, *Vorkutinskie zametki*, 90-91. See also, "Vysotskaia (Guliachenko) Larisa Nikolaevna" Vitural'nyi muzei GULAGa, http://www.gulagmuseum.org/showObject.do?object=48578757&language=1 [accessed 28.09.2017].

[435] GMIG f. 5, d. 11, l. 11 (Photograph of Markova with Larisa Guliachenko and her daughter Irina, Kiev, 1956 or 1958). The caption on the back reads: "Kiev, 1956 or 1958." It seems more likely that this photo

The Vorkuta Diaspora: 1953-1993

As the time left on her sentence expired in September 1953, Markova wrote a farewell note to her friends. She reproduced this note in her memoir as an illustration of just how much their friendship meant to her:

> Midnight. The hazy-pale, starless, arctic night is the personification of our existence, so far from real life. The concert is tomorrow. I'm writing to you, my friends… But why such pain? We will soon part and will no longer march together […] It's difficult to imagine that the day is coming when it will no longer be our shared day, they will be different days for us, separated by uncertainty…In our life together, deprived of everything that could have filled the soul with happiness and light, we had only one thing – our friendship! Thanks to it we were happy in misfortune. We thought and felt when we should have turned into mindless creatures! We asked ourselves about good and evil as lawlessness and tyranny ruled around us. Our camp stage - our small world of beauty and light among pitch darkness - gave me new life. I will hold the sacred memory of our poor camp stage, on which you, my dear friends, were the greatest, most talented artists to me. OLP 'Zapoliarnyi' on the Usa River. Sept., 1953.[436]

Despite thinking at the time that her release meant saying goodbye, Markova continued to maintain these friendships on the other side of the barbed wire. The "epistolary fever," as Markova aptly described it, that gripped prisoners in the camp continued after release. Faced with new concerns and the challenge of blending into a society that remained suspicious of them, these relationships became even more important to Markova and other Gulag returnees who exited the camps in the 1950s. As Markova wrote in her memoir, "They found a spiritual outlet in the letters, which they

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was taken at a later date, since Markova was not rehabilitated until 1959 and, according to her memoir, did not leave Vorkuta until 1960. For other images from the personal archive of E. V. Markova that she donated to the Sakharov Center see, "Teatr v GULAGe: iz kollektsii E. V. Markovoi" Muzei Sakharovskogo tsentra, http://museum.sakharov-center.ru/fotodok/index.php?p=141605:141607,141607:142504,142504:150656 [accessed 1.10.17].

[436] Markova, *Vorkutinskie zametki*, 92-93.

valued above all else. But here approaches the long-awaited release [with] new impressions, worries, and concerns…One would think that they no longer need the letters. But no! The epistolary fever continued more than ever, my personal archive attests to this."[437] As Gulag returnees adapted to civilian life after years in the camps, letters between prisoners, however infrequent, offered a connection to something familiar during the difficult period of adjustment.

As evidence of the effect and meaning of these post-imprisonment letters, Markova and others saved this correspondence as their memories of the past. Yet, these letters were also a link to the community of zeks, which grew and shrank as friends left the camps and then left Vorkuta after they were rehabilitated.[438] While Markova and her husband remained in exile in Vorkuta she conducted correspondence with close friends who managed to leave. She reproduced select letters in her memoir narrative as evidence of the ties between herself and other Gulag returnees, but also as proof that these relationships did not end upon release: "Our friendship continued through regular correspondence, including many photos that [he] took, which we cherished very much."[439] One letter, which Markova reproduced in full, described the incredible feeling of leaving the camp zone and reuniting with friends. As Edgar Shtyrtskober wrote to

[437] Ibid, 161. Ivanov also received letters from his comrades who moved away after release, which he cherished and kept for the rest of his life. See also, VMVTs f. OF 4262, op. 1, d. 9, l. 2 (K. P. Ivanov to G. V. Trukhina, 22.01.1994); VMVTs f. OF 4262, op. 1, d. 5, ll. 2 (Unidentified former prisoner (Rein) to K. P. Ivanov, 5.12.1955); VMVTs f. NVF 3298, op. 1, d. 3, ll. 2 (K. P. Ivanov to unidentified former prisoner (Volodia), 8.02.1992).
[438] Ibid, 161, 163. See also GMIG f. 5, d. 3, ll. 7-8 (I. Virzhonis to E. V. Markova 1992-1993). On changes in the social composition of Vorkuta's population in the 1950s see, Barenberg, 198-230.
[439] Ibid, 162.

Markova from Leningrad on January 28, 1956, on one of the most important days of his new life:

> My mind is in a tangle from happiness. […] Up until the last moment when I got on the train, I had the feeling that I was there to say goodbye and not to leave. […] Imagine my state as I sat in my compartment across from my neighbor and wondered what to do. I was thinking of you, and then suddenly a wave of memories about Leningrad, my loved ones, and my sister washed over me, and I sat there on pins and needles totally intoxicated [with delight].[440]

When Markova moved to Moscow with her family in 1960, she did not experience the same rapturous delight. Markova remembered the transition to Moscow as jarring. The capital was like a foreign country to her.[441] Finding work in Moscow was difficult for Markova who, despite her total rehabilitation, continued to suffer from the stigma associated with her she status as a "*byvshii*" (former prisoner). It did not help, as Markova wrote in her memoir, that she freely disclosed her status with would-be employers: "In my scrupulousness I did not hide my Vorkutlag past even though I was rehabilitated. At the end of interviews, I would usually say: 'I should tell you that I was sentenced under the political article of the law and served a sentence.'" She continued, "No further explanations were necessary. I especially remember the reaction of the head of the personnel department at one academic institute: 'How dare you show your face in our institute with such a biography!'[442] Despite the fear that her past evoked in many

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[440] Ibid, 162-64. The letter was sent from Edgar Vil'gemovich Shtyrtskober to Markova upon his return to Leningrad.

[441] Ibid, 214. Markova notes that this was also the experience of their dear friends the Korovins, who were also a family of former political prisoners who spent many years in the camps of Vorkuta and in exile after release.

[442] Markova, *Vorkutinskie zametki*, 214. See also, E. V. Markova, interview with the author, May 17, 2017, Moscow, Russia. On the effect of "having a biography" in Latvia, see, Vieda Skultans, *The Testimony of*

people, Markova eventually found work at the Central Automatization Complex (TsNIIKA) in Moscow.

Her work as an engineer took her to many different factories throughout the Soviet Union. On trips to Stalinogorsk (Novomoskovsk) she would stay with her friends from Vorkuta, the Korovins, who left the Far North in 1960 after 24 years of prison and exile.[443] The decision to leave Vorkuta was difficult for the Korovins, who, Markova wrote, "participated in the transformation of Vorkuta from nothing into the capital of the vast tundra, into the center of Pechora coalmining. In Vorkuta, they had a 'mighty bunch' of friends in freedom who supported them and made life interesting. They perceived Stalinogorsk as a foreign city, unattractive and uninteresting."[444]

When the Korovins eventually moved to Moscow, they became part of the "Vorkuta diaspora," which included other Gulag returnees such as Pavel Shapiro, Iurii Volkov, Vadim Iasnyi, Aleksei Eisner, and Leonid Raikin.[445] Many of their gatherings

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Lives: Narrative and Memory in Post-Soviet Latvia (London: Routledge, 1998), 67-82. Skultans quotes the biography of a Latvian deportee, which echoes the defiance of Markova's proclamation of her biography to would be employers: "Circumstances forced us to relocate to Siberia" (68).

[443] Nikolai Ivanovich Korovin (1905-1988) was imprisoned from 1936-1939. After release, Korovin remained in Vorkuta. From 1942-1950 he worked as the head of the electric station and laboratory TETs-1 but was removed from this post in 1950 when the camp regime and control over former prisoners became more severe. Later, Korovin worked as the senior engineer at Vorkuta Mechanical Factory (VMZ). In 1944-1950 he taught at the Vorkuta Distance Learning Center (VUKP) and the Vorkuta campus of the Leningrad Mining Institute. In 1963, he defended his candidate degree at the Leningrad Mining Institute. His wife Bronislava Iakovlevna Korovina was a close friend of Markova and a "Decembrist of the twentieth century." For Korovin's biography, see, Rogachev, *Fond Pokaianie: Martirolog* t. 12, ch. 1, 315. For the story of Bronislava Korovina's life in exile in Vorkuta with her husband after his release see, Markova, *Vorkutinskie zametki*, 171-218.

[444] Markova, *Vorkutinskie zametki*, 214.

[445] Ibid, 216. It is unclear whether or not their wives were former prisoners because Markova does not name them. However, Markova includes them as members of the Vorkuta diaspora. For Volkov's biography, see, Rogachev, ed., *Pokaianie: Martirolog*, t. 12, ch. 1, 126-27. For Iasnyi's, Shapiro's, Eisner's, and Raikin's biographies, see Rogachev, ed., *Pokaianie: Martirolog*, t. 12, ch. 2, 159-60, 333, 367, 386-87.

took place at the homes of Pavel Shapiro and Nikolai Korovin.[446] While the circle of former prisoners did not meet often, Markova remembered these gatherings as "the most interesting, dear visits of my life. Contrary to Soviet tradition, the main thing was not the feast, but thoughts of high aspiration."[447] Although these gatherings enabled Markova to reconnect with the community that she thought she had left behind when she moved to Moscow, they were important for another reason as well.[448] Since writing about the past remained dangerous until Glasnost, these meetings were also a means to keep the memory of those times alive by reminiscing about their "Vorkuta past."[449] As the collective remembered its shared origins, it became clear to Markova that the spiritual resistance, which saved her, had formed the group as well. As Markova wrote in 1993: "It turned out that the Vorkuta brotherhood was stronger than those times of annihilation."[450]

The second generation of *Vorkutianie* continued their parents' traditions. Although many of them lived in Vorkuta for only a few years, they shared the same attachment to the city as their parents and identified themselves as members of Vorkuta

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[446] Markova, *Vorkutinskie zametki*, 216. Markova writes that she often spoke with other former prisoners about Vorkuta and those engineers and Gulag returnees who built the city of Vorkuta on the permafrost. See also, Markova, *Zhili byli v XX veke*, 256.
[447] Ibid, 216. See also, E. V. Markova, interview with the author by phone, Oct. 10, 2017.
[448] Ibid.
[449] E. V. Markova, interview with the author by phone, Oct. 10, 2017. These meetings enabled Markova to collect testimonies for her archive years before she wrote her memoir. For other examples, see also, AM f. 2, op. 2, d. 112, l. 164 (Sollertinskii, "Kuda bog smotrit"). See also, f. 2, op. 1, d. 77, ll. 54 (Iakov Kuperman, "Piat'desiat let, 1927-1977: Vospominaniia," not dated). Although he was not a prisoner in Komi, Iakov Kuperman worked in Vorkuta as an engineer during the War. He provides an example of how Gulag returnees outside of Komi also met with one another to remember the camps: "They all lived not far from one another, [and] worked together. The great work united them. Not by chance the veterans of BAM, even in the 60s and 70s held meetings every year, where (in principle: 'past pain is pleasure') they remembered with pleasure working on the gigantic project under tough, but sensible leadership of Frenkel'."
[450] Markova, *Vorkutinskie zametki*, 106.

brotherhood. These children of former prisoners spent the summers of their youth and adulthood together at the Korovins' dacha outside Moscow. As Markova wrote about the "second generation of the Vorkuta brotherhood" in her memoir:

> The second generation of *Vorkutiane* – the children of the Korovins and their friends who spent their childhood in Vorkuta – continue these traditions to this day. […] Although she left Vorkuta at the age of one year four months, my daughter Inna also considers herself a *Vorkutianka* and she also gravitates towards the second generation of the Vorkuta brotherhood.[451]

Although it is unclear how many other Gulag returnees agreed with Markova's sentiment, the letters to Memorial examined in chapter one reinforce the idea that children of Gulag returnees certainly considered themselves members of the extended community.

However, the Vorkuta diaspora was not limited to Moscow. As Markova told me during our second interview in October 2017: "They were everywhere – Kharkov, Kyiv, Moscow, Leningrad, Vorkuta."[452] Although it remains unclear how much contact Markova had with the Vorkuta brotherhood outside of Moscow, this network of former prisoners enabled Markova to connect with those she had not heard from since they left Vorkuta in 1960. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Markova obtained the address of one of her long-lost friends, Iosif Virzhonis, who returned to Lithuania sometime after she left Vorkuta, and began corresponding with him. Over the course of 1992-93, Markova and Virzhonis sent each other a total of eleven letters. Although some of the letters allude to current events – the collapse of the Soviet Union and the independence of the Baltic states – Markova and Virzhonis primarily discussed Vorkuta,

[451] Ibid, 216.
[452] E. V. Markova, interview with the author by phone, Oct. 10, 2017.

their friends, and their camp past.[453] The most striking aspect of this correspondence is its illustration of how Markova and Virzhonis, who had not spoken for 40 years, connected with one another and their community by remembering their shared past. The first letter that Markova sent to Virzhonis on July 1, 1992 reads, in part:

> I began to write you and involuntarily paused to imagine your surprise – who sent this from Moscow? Markova who? Yes, we met a long time ago in Usa in OLP 'Zapoliarnyi' in 1952, forty-years ago! ~~Maybe you don't remember~~. I was not Markova then, but Ivanova, not Elena Vladimirovna, but Lenochka. You came under guard to the men's section of the OLP to work in the medical unit. I was glad to chat with you and our good comrades Valentin Viktorovich Oliger, Tikhon Subokov, and Volodia. Do you remember that time? Alas, I don't know anything about the fates of our friends who remained in Usa. When I learned that Volodia had your address and asked him to give it to me. I hope it's ok that he shared it with me without your knowing! I am so happy to have the opportunity to speak with your after so many years! To hear your voice is like another life! Iosif, I have not had any information about you and Olia since 1955, when last saw you in my apartment. I've kept our 'tortured path to starvation' in my memory. And with gratitude, I fondly remember the comrades and friends, who, by the kindness of their heart, warm words, and care, helped me survive and remain a human being. Now, in the twilight of life, I am increasingly detached from the reality of the present. […] I have begun to collect memoirs and poems about our camp life for the Vorkuta local history museum. After I hear back from you, I will write more. I will answer all of your questions. I eagerly await your letter and hope to receive news from you about Oliger. I am sending you a photograph [of us] from 1955. Wishing you all the best. A big hello to your family.[454]

[453] Markova's and Virzhonis' letters are organized as two pages in the archival file, which is why the page number repeats. For letters that allude to current events, see, GMIG f. 5, d. 3, l. 8 (E. V. Markova to I. Virzhonis, 10.08.1992); GMIG f. 5, d. 3, l. 7 (Virzhonis to Markova, 19.08.1992); GMIG f. 5, d. 3, l. 7 (Virzhonis to Markova, 25.09.1992).
[454] GMIG f. 5, d. 3, l. 8-9 (E. V. Markova to I. Virzhonis, 1.07.1992).

Markova with camp friends V. V. Oliger (left) and Iosif Virzhonis (right), Vorkuta, 1955.[455]

Unable to contain his excitement, Virzhonis responded in a rambling four-page letter on July 14, 1992. Despite the time that had passed, Virzhonis reassured Markova that he not forgotten anything and expressed his happiness about reconnecting with his old friend and camp comrade:

> 40 years is a huge length of time – it is an entire lifetime, which has flown by in a flash. But its light constantly illuminates those unforgettable days when fate brought such people together – Valentin Viktorovich, Aleksandr Vasil'evich Khokhlov, and even you and me – when we were still young and stupid despite our humbling camp experience. […] I remember you very well, especially since I still have the photo you gave me. Even then in your family it was possible to find such good conversation, such discourse, which was welcome to those who thirsted [for contact] like people thirst for water in the desert.[456]

Despite the decades that had passed since their imprisonment, the memory of their spiritual resistance to the camps united Markova, Virzhonis, and other members of the

[455] GMIG f. 5, d. 3, l. 32 (Photograph of Markova with V. V. Oliger and I. Virzhonis, Vorkuta, Arp. 24, 1955)
[456] GMIG f. 5, d. 3, l. 7 (I. Virzhonis to Markova, 14.06.1992).

Vorkuta diaspora. However, the same networks of mutual-aid that united prisoners in the camps, also enabled them to find one another after release.

On October 30, 1993, Markova stepped foot in Vorkuta for the first time since 1960. She returned to the city as a member of a delegation from Moscow to participate in the observance of the Day of Victims of Political Repression. After the ceremony, she visited the MVD archive in town where she hoped to find some information about the fates of several of her "friends in *katorga*" whom she had lost track of many years ago. Despite her status as a rehabilitated victim of political repression and a *Vorkutianka*, Markova remembered how the archivist treated her with suspicion and disrespect: "The head of the archive greeted me like in the old, bad days. I immediately felt like a *katorzhanka* again."[457] The officer did not give Markova the files, instead she read Markova's personal file aloud and said goodbye.[458] This experience confirmed the necessity of her trip to the Far North and her decision to write her own testimony about Stalinist repression and its afterlife.

Although Markova's memoir contains motifs that can be found in the memoirs of other Gulag returnees, she stands apart for several reasons. While other former prisoners spoke of the importance of friendship and community to surviving the Gulag and adapting to life after release, Markova's memoir is unique for its detailed illustration of just exactly how prisoners resisted the destructiveness of their environment. And yet the

[457] Markova, *Vorkutinskie zametki*, 136.
[458] Ibid.

story she tells is much bigger than that. Markova's story of spiritual resistance is also the story of how those who were discarded by the state formed a *public* of zeks that existed within Soviet society, despite the regime's attempts to curb the formation of independent groups. Drawing from her personal archive of letters, photographs, poems, and stories, Markova provides us with time stamped evidence of the development of this community and its collective memory from its origins in the camps to the present in which she wrote. Despite the fact that Markova and her fellow prisoners had been repressed, traumatized, and stigmatized for a lifetime, they documented their struggles and their triumphs not only for themselves or each other, but also for the country as it dealt with the dark chapters of its past.

CHAPTER FIVE

Local Newspapers and the Production of Cultural Memory in Komi, 1987-2010

Introduction

On November 26, 1956, the head of the Komi KGB sent a "top secret" report to the secretary of the regional party committee regarding an unprecedented event that had taken place in the subarctic city of Inta. On July 29, 1956 a group of current and former prisoners unveiled the Soviet Union's first monument to the victims of political repression in the village Vostochnyi. The memorial was erected at the entrance to the eastern cemetery – which initially served as a graveyard for prisoners.[459] The report described this unprecedented event in full detail and even included a photograph showing flowers that were laid at the foot of the monument with the cemetery in the background:

> Materials received in July-August of this year testified to the fact that Baltic nationalists, living in the city of Inta, Komi ASSR, began to erect monuments to persons who died in the camp and exile.
>
> On the 29 of July of this year at the cemetery in the second district of the city of Inta, the unveiling of a monument to Latvians who died in the camp and exile took place at the entrance to the cemetery. The unveiling occurred with a large crowd of approximately 200 people with the accompaniment of a brass band.
>
> During the unveiling of the monument a number of speeches were given, several of them bore a nationalist character.
>
> As one speaker, a Latvian [by the name of] Krastin'sh, said: '…We unveil this monument to the departed daughters and sons, who as victims of arbitrariness will never again see the motherland. The memory of them will forever live in our hearts…'
>
> After the unveiling of the monument those present performed the bourgeois Latvian anthem 'God save Latvia.'

[459] On Edvard Sidrabs, the prisoner who sculpted the monument, see, M. B. Rogachev, ed., *Pokaianie: Martirolog*, t. 12, ch. 2 (Syktyvkar: Fond Pokaianie, 2017), 208.

The monument was constructed out of concrete and cement 2.5 meters in height, [it] depicts a girl in the national Latvian costume with a branch in her hand, symbolizing Latvia. At the base [of the monument] "to the Motherland" is inscribed in Latvian.

The monument was erected by the sculptor Strazdin'sh Eduard Teodorovich, born 1902 (released from imprisonment by decision of the Commission of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet USSR, at present he has left to live in the Latvian SSR). The Latvian Puntulis Adol'f Petrovich, born 1913, who works at the construction-assembly directorate as a technician-builder, lent much aid in the erection of the monument.

At this very cemetery, Lithuanian nationalists intended to erect a monument in honor of Lithuanians buried there. There was already a draft of the monument and preparatory work had already begun for its construction.

The initiators of the monument were Grigonis, Babrauskas and Baniunis, the leaders of the mutual aid foundation that exists among the Lithuanians.

Considering that the monument erected at the entrance of the cemetery is not a gravestone monument and was constructed without the permission of the organs of Soviet power, a number of prophylactic measures were conducted by us through the Executive Committee of the Inta city council of workers' deputies with a view to prohibit the construction of new such monuments by Lithuanian and other nationalities and the prevention of nationalistic displays during their unveiling.

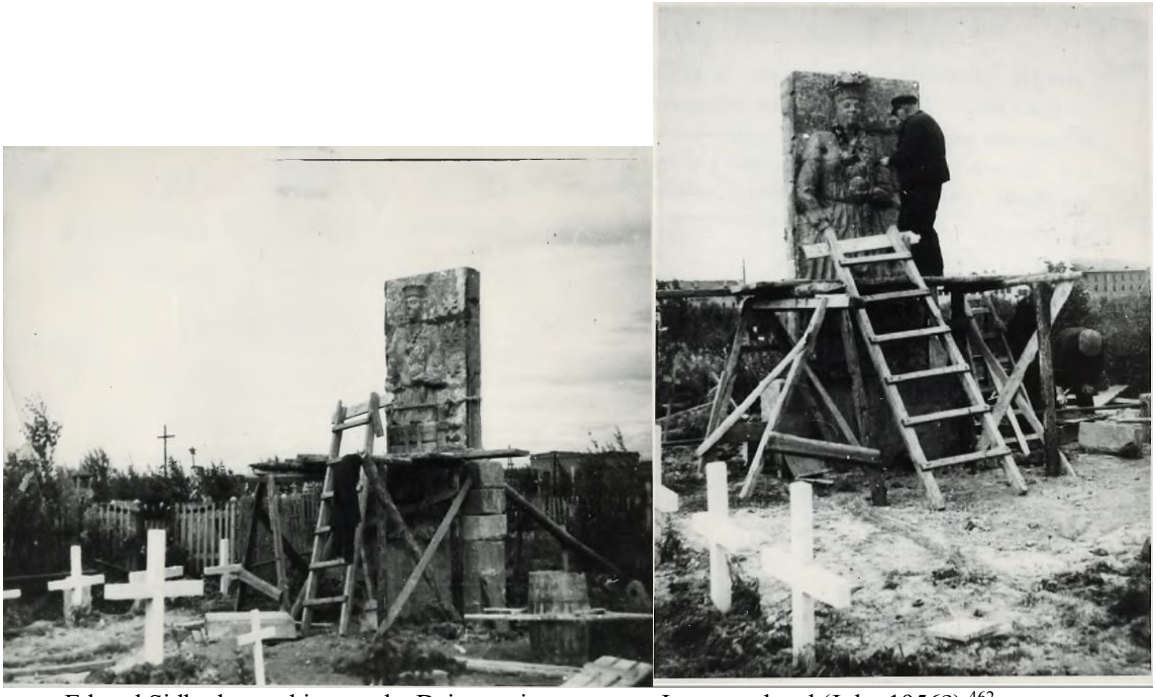
In particular, at our request the active participants in the construction and unveiling of the monument Puntulis, Krisons, and others were summoned by the chairman of the city soviet, comrade Petrov, for conversations, during which the illegality of their actions were explained to them, [and] that the construction of such monuments are allowed only with the permission of Soviet organs.

Individuals who were summoned to the city soviet stated that they, taking part in the construction and unveiling of the monument, thought that the initiators of the construction had agreed with the city soviet and that they did not foreknowingly violate any Soviet laws.

As a result of conducting these conversations on the illegal acts of the Latvians, the Lithuanian and Estonian nationalists ceased the construction of similar monuments.[460]

[460] GU RK NARK 2 f. P-1, op. 5, d. 461, ll. 77-80 (Chairman of the KGB of the Komi ASSR, V. N. Modianov to Secretary of the Komi Obkom KPSS, G. I. Osipov, 3.11.1956).

The note on the back of the photograph reads: "Photograph of the monument erected by Latvians at the cemetery in Inta. Inscription: 'To the motherland.' Taken in Inta 31.08.1956. [Signed] Modianov."[461]



Edvard Sidbrabs working on the Dzimtenei monument, Inta, not dated (July, 1956?).[462]

[461] Ibid, 80.

There is a curious lack of documentation in this case. Despite an exhaustive search, there is no documentation of local authorities' initial approval of the monument or the KGB's "prophylactic measures."[463] The monument was constructed in a basement studio outside the camp zone where artists fabricated decorations for Inta's buildings using materials from the camp. In light of this, it seems likely that local authorities gave oral consent to the project, which they could deny later if (when) problems arose.[464] Astonishingly, the monument was not destroyed after the KGB and Party officials in Syktyvkar learned of its existence. It was left in place and abandoned when the cemetery was closed in 1962.[465] However, the monument did not languish and pass on into oblivion.

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[462] Arkhiv Intiiskogo kraevedcheskogo muzeiia (AIKM) (Photos of Edvard Sidrabs working on the monument, Inta, 1956). It is unclear who took these photographs. However, they were donated to the Inta Local History Museum by Al'fred Iur'evich Puntulis who was one of the active participants in the monument's construction. Researchers at the museum believe that one of the Latvian exiles took the photos. See, N. A. Baranov, e-mail message to the author, Feb. 19, 2019; N. A. Baranov, e-mail message to the author, Feb. 21, 2019.

[463] L. A. Kyz"iurov, "Pervyi pamiatnik zhertvam GULAGa v Komi ASSR," M. B. Rogachev, ed., *Politicheskie repressii v Rossii XX vek: Materialy regional'noi nauchnoi konferentsii 7-8 dekabria 2000 g.* (Syktyvkar: Fond Pokaianie, 2001), 221-222; L. N. Malofeevskaia, M. B. Rogachev, eds., *Pamiat' o GULAGe: Inta. Putevoditel'* (Syktyvkar: Fond Pokaianie, 2012); N. A. Baranov e-mail message to the author, June 14, 2018; Intiiskii kraevedcheskii muzei, e-mail message to the author, June 19, 2018. Neither Kyz"iurov's conference paper nor the Guide to Inta's sites of memory make any mention of these measures or the initial approval for the monument. Working from a separate report authored by another KGB officer, Alan Barenberg briefly mentions this episode in the context of the crisis of the Gulag after Stalin's death. However, he is also unable to solve this riddle. See, Barenberg, *Gulag Town, Company Town*, 210. Thanks to Alan Barenberg for sharing the report he cites, which was delivered in a speech to the Vorkuta Gorkom by a local KGB official.

[464] This is also the conviction shared by archivists, museum staff, and researchers who have been working on the history of the Gulag in Komi since the late-1980s.

[465] Starting in 1944 the burial of prisoners in common graves was forbidden by central authorities. The cemetery was opened in the late-1940s approximately 1.5km from OLP no.2 of Minlag. Prisoners were buried here in individual graves until it ceased to be a camp cemetery in the 1950s, when it started to serve as the Vostochnyi village cemetery. During this time *vol'nonaemnye*, including those sent to work in Inta as camp staff and exiled former prisoners, were buried alongside the repressed. See, M. B. Rogachev, ed., *Pokaianie: Martirolog*, t. 12, ch. 1 (Syktyvkar: Fond Pokaianie, 2016), 142. On Gulag burial practices, see also, Vladimir Anatol'evich Isupov, *Demograficheskie katastrofy i krizisy v Rossii v pervoi polovine XX veka: istoriko-demograficheskie ocherki* (Sibirskii khronograf, 2000), 163.

Thirty-three years after it was first erected the Dzimtenei monument made headlines in Komi when it once again became the focus of coming to terms with the past. On August 23, 1989, the central Komi newspaper, *Molodezh' Severa*, reported on the restoration and rededication of the monument and the abandoned cemetery in a ceremony attended by local residents, members of Memorial, and former prisoners who first unveiled it in 1956. The newspaper told its readers the history of this forgotten monument, which was the first of its kind in the USSR: "The high relief was done and unveiled in 1956 right after the XX Party Congress and dedicated to the repressed Latvians who died in Minlag during the years of Stalin's lawlessness. […] Time passed, and after the thaw other times arose. The monument was forgotten without a trace, it was overgrown with weeds just like the old cemetery."[466] Underscoring the highly symbolic presence of survivors, the article continued, "At the meeting that took place here, former repressed [people] said that they believe in the triumph of justice on the Earth and will do everything so that they do not have to unveil this monument a third time."[467] Yet the episode did not end there. In a subsequent interview in the local newspaper *Iskra*, Al'fred Geidans, the 77 year-old former prisoner who travelled from Latvia to attend the ceremony, corrected *Molodezh' Severa*'s report and proclaimed the monument, "not only a tribute to the memory of Latvians who became victims of Stalin's repressions, but also

[466] L. Kudriashova, "Svechi skorbi i nadezhdy," *Molodezh' Severa*, Aug. 23, 1989. See also, P. O. Bursian, "V subbotu, v 10 chasov," *Iskra*, Sept. 2, 1989.
[467] Ibid.

a warning to the future to all people – Russians, Ukrainians, Lithuanians, Germans, Jews – the fates of the prisoners of the 'GULAG archipelago' must never be repeated."[468]

Rededication of the Dzimtenei monument, Aug. 22, 1989.[469]

The story of the Dzimtenei monument is emblematic of one of the central issues of the late-Soviet and early post-Soviet period: how to commemorate the victims of political repression? Not only the content of memory but also the form of ceremonies and monuments was a major issue, if not *the issue* debated in Komi newspapers during this period of revolutionary change. This chapter examines the formation of the cultural memory of the Gulag and political repression in the Komi Republic by investigating the

[468] L. Kudriashova, "Ty ostalsia zhiv…," *Iskra*, Sept. 2, 1989.
[469] AIKM (Photograph of the rededication of Dzimtenei monument 22 Aug. 1989).

ways in which these topics were addressed in the proliferation of articles in Komi newspapers from 1988-2010.[470] Reportage on these previously taboo subjects became possible only after Gorbachev relaxed censorship as part of the Communist Party's renewed effort to address the Stalinist past. During this period, the press became the principal forum for debate and source of new information about the past. Although it initiated reform, the Party could not control the process after it started. The avalanche of testimonies written by former prisoners, exiles, and their children, which filled the mailbags of local newspapers, contradicted the Party's claim that the main victims of Stalinist repression were party members. Once their testimonies became public, it became increasingly difficult to preserve Lenin's legacy as the country sped toward the precipice.

The major themes of the coverage in Komi newspapers over this twenty-two-year period tell us much about the ways in which cultural memory was produced and how people in the Komi Republic came to terms with the past. These themes include the definition of victims and perpetrators, the need for a people's archive based on victims' testimonies, and the search for a proper medium to represent the past and commemorate "victims of political repression." What happened, who were the perpetrators and the victims, and how it all should be remembered posed intense dilemmas that played out in the local press: How were people supposed to view those who were once "enemies of the people" who were now "victims of political repression?"

[470] I have collected approximately 160 newspaper articles on various topics pertaining to the Gulag and political repression in newspapers with a republic wide circulation such as, *Krasnoe znamia*, *Molodezh' Severa*, *Respublika*, *Krasnoe znamia Severa* and local city newspapers such as *Ukhta*, *Zapoliar'e*, *Iskra*, *Tvoia gazeta*, *Vechernii Syktyvkar*, *Moia Ezhva*, *Komi mu*, and others.

Although it had cast itself as a victim and restorer of justice, the Party stood at the center of the mounting evidence of mass death that was literally being unearthed at unmarked mass graves throughout Komi, which raised the question: who was to blame? How the public understood the past, remembered it, and commemorated it tells us much about the legacy of the Gulag and Stalinist repression and its place in cultural memory at the end of Soviet history.

The literature on post-Soviet memory has taken two different approaches based on ideas of trauma and transitional justice.[471] Looking through the lens of contemporary politics, these studies overwhelmingly focus on the recycling of Soviet symbols, the partial rehabilitation of Stalin's cult of personality, and the state's contradictory approach to commemorating the victims of political repression. Furthermore, if they consider them at all, these studies are dismissive of local memory projects aimed at preserving the memory of the Gulag and Stalinist repression.[472] I adopt a different approach. I examine how cultural memory of the Gulag and political repression developed from glasnost forward to 2010. In this way, I am able to illustrate the ways in which cultural memory

[471] For such studies, see, Sherlock, *Historical Narratives in the Soviet Union and Post-Soviet Russia*; Kathleen E. Smith, "Whither Anti-Stalinism?," *Ab Imperio* 4 (2004): 433-448; Nanci Adler, "The future of the soviet past remains unpredictable: The resurrection of Stalinist symbols amidst the exhumation of mass graves," *Europe-Asia Studies* 57, no. 8 (December 2005): 1093-1119. Adam Hochschild, *The Unquiet Ghost: Russians Remember Stalin* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2003). For an excellent survey and critique of these approaches to post-Soviet memory, see, Antony Kalashnikov, "Stalinist Crimes and The Ethics of Memory," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 19, no. 3, Summer 2018: 599-626.

[472] Etkind, *Warped Mourning*, 189-192. Etkind is questionably dismissive of local monuments erected by civil society groups. See also, Bogumił, *Gulag Memories*. Curiously, Bogumił's study of cultural memory in Solovki, Komi, Perm, and Magadan argues that local memory projects failed to create a cohesive, secular language of commemoration, which left room for the Russian Orthodox Church – supported by the state – to step into the breach. This conclusion overlooks Memorial's and Fond Pokaianie's successes in forming a durable infrastructure of memory in Komi.

was produced in Komi, while avoiding a teleological examination of the Putin regime's use of the past to justify its present authoritarianism.

Building on and moving beyond Alexander Etkind's conception of the hardware and software at work in the production of cultural memory, I highlight the development of the infrastructure of memory in Komi, which links cultural memory to the lived environment.[473] My examination of Komi newspapers illuminates the transformation of Soviet infrastructure, which once stood as monuments to socialist achievement, into memorials to its victims.[474] As we saw in the previous chapters, this process was initiated by Gulag returnees who were the first to describe the infrastructure they built as monuments to their suffering. In this chapter, we will see the various textual, material, ceremonial, and spatial ways in which memory was produced, as well as the ways in which Gulag returnees' collective memory informed the content of cultural memory.

This chapter is organized into three thematic sections that explore the development of the cultural memory of the Gulag in the Komi Republic; each section develops chronologically from 1988-2018. Section one explores the definition of victim and perpetrator and how these categories changed over time. Section two explores

[473] On the interplay between the two ideas and their usage in studies of Soviet and post-Soviet memory, see, Etkind, *Warped Mourning*, 40. On infrastructures of memory, see Iwona Irwin-Zarecka, *Frames of Remembrance: The Dynamics of Collective Memory* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1993), 13.
[474] Anna Neimark, "The Infrastructural Monument: Stalin's Water Works under Construction and in Representation," *Future Anterior: Journal of Historic Preservation, History, Theory, and Criticism* 9, no. 2 (Winter 2012): 1-14. For an interesting examination of memory and the infrastructural monuments left behind in Spain in the wake of Franco's death, see, Jonah S. Rubin, "How Francisco Franco governs from beyond the grave: An infrastructural approach to memory politics in contemporary Spain," *American Ethnologist* 45, no. 2 (May 2018): 214-227. Neimark argues that Stalinist infrastructure was meant to be monumental and thus served as the task of "representing memory, sovereignty, and history." I argue the re-signification of the railroad to Vorkuta as a road of prisoners' bones in Komi newspapers is not only a reversal of the associated meaning of Stalinist infrastructure, but was an essential component of reconstructing the past and producing a new cultural memory of Stalinism.

debates over the veracity of memoir testimonies that were published with increasing frequency in the press. Section three examines the most prevalent theme in the coverage on political repressions, which focused on the issue of how to commemorate the "victims of political repression." Starting in the late 1980s, mass graves were discovered throughout Komi which became the primary sites of memory and mourning. The mapping of these gravesites, which in many instances were the only remaining traces of remote camp sections or special settlements, was of great concern to everyone since they presented incontrovertible evidence of what survivors described in their memoirs. By marking these grisly sites throughout the republic, the people of Komi sought to properly lay the dead to rest while simultaneously cementing this tragic history in cultural memory.

"Restoring Justice": Defining Victims and Perpetrators

The central theme of early press coverage on Stalin and political repression in Komi focused on identifying the victims and perpetrators. Once this process began, both party officials and members of society realized they needed to define these terms, which led to differences over what they meant. While the definition of victim became much clearer and comprehensive over time as the full scale of repression was revealed, who exactly was responsible remained vague. This was not a simple question with a straight forward answer. Yet defining these categories was important since they ultimately set the limits of de-Stalinization and, perhaps most importantly, who would be remembered and who would be forgotten.

The opening salvos on this issue in the central press highlighted the Party's renewed efforts to rehabilitate the "innocently repressed victims of Stalin's arbitrariness."[475] While these articles conceded that some outside the ranks of the party unjustly suffered, they portrayed the Party as the primary victim. To support their position, they underscored the Party's great losses under Stalin's "command administrative system." In many ways this discourse simply reproduced the language of Khrushchev's attempt to implement "socialist legality," which saw the limited rehabilitation of some party affiliated Gulag returnees and Purge victims.[476]

The first article to address the question of victimhood in the Komi press was an interview with the chairman of the Party rehabilitation commission published under the title "Without A Statute of Limitations" in the September 21, 1988 issue of *Molodezh' Severa*.[477] According to the interview, the commission defined victims as "illegally repressed members of the Party," including those sentenced as so-called "Trotskyites," saboteurs, and also those who suffered for any "connection with anti-Soviet elements."[478]

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[475] "Torzhestvennoe zasedanie Tsentral'nogo Komiteta KPSS, Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR i Verkhovnogo Soveta RSFSR: Doklad M. S. Gorbacheva," *Pravda*, Nov. 3, 1987, no. 307 (25294). See also, F. A. Karmanov, et. al., *Reabilitirovan postmertno. Vtoroi vypusk* (Moskva: izd-vo Iuridicheskaia literature, 1988).

[476] On the incomplete nature of rehabilitation during the 1950s, see, Elie, "Rehabilitation in the Soviet Union, 1953-1964," in McDermott, Stibbe, eds., *De-Stalinising Eastern Europe*, 25–45; Rachinskii, ed., *Reabilitatsiia i pamiat'*.

[477] A. Sivkova, "M. K. Ignatov: Bez sroka davnosti," *Molodezh' Severa*, Sept. 21, 1988. The commission was formed in August 1988 and operated under the authority of the Central Committee of the Politburo. It was composed of V. S. Osipov, secretary Komi Obkom; V. P. Moskalev, Iu. V. Gavriusov, leaders of the departments of the party Obkom; V. S. Zhinkin, Chairman of the Supreme Court Komi ASSR; A. I. Bulankov, Procurator Komi ASSR; G. T. Rukavishnikov, Minister of Justice; V. I. Chistiakov, Editor of the newspaper *Krasnoe znamia*, as well as other heads of district and city party committees throughout Komi.

[478] Ibid. The article noted that from April 1988, the commission had reviewed 500 cases submitted to them from village, town, district, and regional party committees.

However, when it came to the perpetrator of these crimes, the chairman was not so clear. Instead he made a vague statement about the "environment" of the 1930s and 1940s:

> [Q:] Who was subjected to groundless expulsion from the party and for what? [A:] I want to note that it was impossible to do without strict demands and discipline in those times. But brutality has no justification. There were many false accusations, denunciations, made out of a feeling of self-preservation. The rules of behavior were dictated by the environment: things are not going well at the collective farm, the harvesting of grains is dragging on, the plan for lumber production is not being fulfilled – and an order was prepared. All shortcomings were 'the work of hands of enemies of the people.'[479]

While the article remained obscure on exactly who the perpetrators of these crimes were, except to blame the environment of "those times," it raised three important issues that demanded readers' attention. First, it laid out the party's narrow definition of victim, which it defined as a party member who suffered from Stalin's "arbitrariness" during the 1930s and 40s. Noticeably, it mentioned nothing of those who were shot, sent to the camps, or exiled, although they were certainly among those cited in the figures published in the article. Second, the article re-emphasized the current party leadership's role in the restoration of justice, which had been left unfinished following the 22nd Party Congresses. By taking on the mantle of Khrushchev's reform, the article signaled a break with Brezhnev era polices of enforced silence and forgetting and initiated a new effort to come to terms with the past in the Komi Republic. However, the third issue regarding the difficulty of reform raised by the chairman's comment "there are almost no eyewitnesses left," drew a direct response from those who been left out of the party's narrow definition

[479] Ibid.

of victim.[480] As we will see, the missing "eyewitnesses" responded resoundingly in the Komi press.

The definition of victim was passionately debated outside the Party's ranks, which became the focus of extensive coverage in the Komi press. On November 25, 1988, *Molodezh' Severa* reported "debates broke out" over the definition of "victims of Stalinism" at the founding conference of the Memorial Society.[481] Several members of the audience, which included survivors who were left out of the Party's definition, raised questions about the "hangmen" who fell victim themselves after they carried out acts of mass killing during the Red Terror, Civil War, and the Purges. Another member of the audience responded with the suggestion of "limiting it to the years 1925-1953. Otherwise [we will] have to remember the white terror, and the victims of the revolution of 1905."[482] However, the article continued, "He was opposed [by others]: Stalinism has its own roots and continuities, that is why it should not be limited by time, or place. There was even a suggestion to include victims of Maoism and of the *Polpotovshchina* as inescapable consequences of the *Stalinshchina*. The question was left open."[483]

Not only was the definition of victim, but also the chronology of commemoration was now called into question. To get a sense of who else might be out there and to help solve these debates the *Molodezh' Severa* opened the issue to all in an appeal to its readers: "In order to help Memorial, it is not even obligatory to be a member. It would be good even if every reader of *Molodezh' Severa* clarified whether one of their relatives or

[480] Ibid.
[481] I. Bobrakov, "Za vsenarodnoe pokaianie," *Molodezh' Severa*, Nov. 25, 1988.
[482] Ibid.
[483] Ibid.

simply someone they know was repressed and wrote about this to the editors of the newspaper."[484] Although the question of who was a victim and who was to blame was not going to be solved overnight, the editors of *Molodezh' Severa* recognized the debate as the "first step toward national repentance."[485]


ФОТОФАКТ

АСА-КРД-ПШ-КРТД-ЧСИР-УПТО-НПГ-НИР

АСА — антисоветская агитация
КРД — контрреволюционная деятельность
ПШ — подозрение в шпионаже
КРТД — контрреволюционно-троцкистская деятельность
ЧСИР — член семьи изменника Родины
УПТО — участник подпольной троцкистской организации
НПГ — нелегальный переход границы
НИР — намерение изменить Родине.

Вот такие нелепейшие обвинения, среди многих других, выносила «тройка» невинным советским людям без суда и следствия.

ОСОБОЕ СОВЕЩАНИЕ

This photo from the newspaper *Ukhta* (1989) identifies the primary perpetrators of repression (left to right) Stalin, Molotov, and Voroshilov. The caption reads: "ASA-KRD-PSh-ChSIR-UPTO-NPG-NIR. Special Board." These were the abbreviations given to those accused of treasonous political crimes.[486]

The invitation to share one's experiences as a victim of political repression was not passed over by former prisoners and exiles, their children, and others who lived through the period of the *Stalinshchina*.[487] Survivor's memoirs flooded editors'

[484] Ibid. For similar coverage and appeals to members of society, see also, Arkhiv Muzeiia UGTU f. Bulychev, A. I. Terent'ev, V. Bulychev, "Khotelos' by vsekh poimenno nazvat'," *Ukhta*, Feb. 22, 1989, no. 37 (8652). Coverage on the same conference in Moscow in the newspaper *Ukhta* called for the "moral cleansing" of society and the need to recognize "mass illegal repressions a crime against humanity" and to initiate a "social court against Stalin and all those guilty of repression."
[485] Ibid.
[486] AM UGTU f. Bulychev, A. I. Terent'ev, V. Bulychev, "Khotelos' by vsekh poimenno nazvat'," *Ukhta*, Feb. 22, 1989, no. 37 (8652). The abbreviations stand for Anti-Soviet Agitation, Counter-Revolutionary Activities, Suspicion of Espionage, Counter-Revolutionary-Trotskyite Activities, Family Member of a Traitor to the Motherland, Member of an Underground Trotskyite Organization, Illegal Border Crossing, Intention to Betray the Motherland.
[487] S. Raevskii, "O nikh vspominaiu vsegda i vezde...," *Zapoliar'e*, Dec. 9, 1989; AM UGTU f. Bulychev, A. Balashova, "Po 'delu Alliluevykh'," *Ukhta*, Aug. 9, 1989, no. 152 (8767); Ibid, V. Bulychev, "I vnov' Ia posetil…" *Ukhta*, Jul. 18, 1991, no. 135 (9250); Ibid, V. Bulychev, "Ad ili Dos'e na samogo sebia," *Ukhta*, Aug. 7, 1990, no. 151 (9016); GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 102, l. 25 (V. Morozova, "Mechenyi GULAGom," *Krasnoe znamia*, Jan. 7, 1992).

mailboxes, which newspapers published excerpts of in an effort to ground abstract categories in the details of individual lives.[488] In doing so they humanized the colossal nature of state violence abstractly referred to as "political repression" and contributed to the expansion of the definition of victim and perpetrator in public discourse.

For instance, the December 8, 1989 issue of *Molodezh' Severa* featured a full-page article on the 1953 uprising in Rechlag with testimony from a Gulag returnee who named Stalin personally responsible for the corpses buried in mass graves throughout Komi.[489] He understood the uprising not as an anti-Soviet act of resistance but as an expression of political prisoners' righteous frustration as innocent "victims of Stalin's repression" who remained behind barbed wire while common criminals were set free in the wake of Stalin's death.[490] By featuring the stories of local survivors, the article attempted to provide readers with a clearer understanding of what exactly repression was and who its victims were: ordinary Soviet people from all walks of life.[491] However, the relatives of the repressed also shaped public understanding of categories when they wrote to newspapers. For instance, on August 7, 1990, *Ukhta* published a "Search Bulletin" for "persons subjected to illegal repressions" who were imprisoned in Ukhta.[492] Listing brief biographical details of the repressed and their family's contact information, the

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[488] Merridale, *Night of Stone*, 307. On the national impact of survivor's testimonies published in Moscow and Leningrad newspapers, Catherine Merridale writes, "Though Brezhnevite negligence and euphemism had robbed the word 'repression' of its human force, no one could read these rediscovered stories of abuse with equanimity. Stalinism – the very word was an ideologized abstract – was detailed for the first time in individual narratives of nerve and muscle" (307).
[489] I. Gol'ts, "Bunt," *Molodezh' Severa*, Dec. 8, 1989.
[490] Ibid.
[491] See also, S. Raevskii, "O nikh vspominaiu vsegda i vezde...," *Zapoliar'e*, Dec. 9, 1989; "Zharkoe leto 53-go," *Zapoliar'e*, Dec. 9, 1989; S. Volkovinskii, "Nikto ne prosil o poshchade," *Ukhta*, Sept. 29, 1990, no. 139 (9054).
[492] AM UGTU f. Bulychev, "Biulleten' poiska," *Ukhta*, Aug. 7, 1990, no. 151 (9016).

bulletin added to the growing diversity of Stalin's victims.[493] The legacy of the *Stalinshchina* was not some abstract horror that could be easily compartmentalized and relegated to the past, but something that continued to resonate in the lives of Soviet families throughout the country.

The growing chorus of voices in the local press asking, "Why was mass lawlessness possible?" prompted a response from local party organizations and the Supreme Court of the Komi ASSR. In an article published in *Krasnoe znamia* on March 3, 1989 under the title "To restore the good name of those who were illegally repressed," the deputy chairman of the Supreme Court of the Komi ASSR accused the prior weakness of the courts of having contributed to the "atmosphere of intolerance and enmity" under Stalin.[494] Without naming names, this charge laid part of the blame for mass violence on the court itself. In another unprecedented step, the deputy chair of the Supreme Court shared the details of former prisoners' and Purge victims' cases in order to illustrate how Stalin's "arbitrariness" affected real lives. As the deputy chair wrote, "Lately the names of honest, innocent people who were crossed out of the history of our country, and sometimes from life itself on the basis of false denunciations, are returning from fifty years ago. These are not only the names of marshals and leaders of industry,

[493] The brief biographies published in this article do not list what these people were arrested for – though it seems they were politicals. With the exception of one person, who was arrested in 1939, they were all arrested in 1937-38 and died in the camps. They included a worker, diplomat, teacher, professor, priest, a manager of a local branch of the chief administration of supply (Glavsnab), and a translator.
[494] V. Shishiedin, "Vernut' chestnoe imia tem, kto byl nezakonno repressirovan," *Krasnoe znamia*, Mar. 3, 1989. For similar reports from the Komi party commission, see also, "V partii vostanovlen posmertno," *Krasnoe znamia*, Jan. 12, 1989; "V riadakh partiii vostanovleny," *Krasnoe znamia*, Feb. 4, 1989.

but also rank-and-file workers, including residents of our republic."[495] While the article continued to obscure who exactly was guilty of these historical crimes, its self-criticism as part of the state machinery of repression and review of cases - regardless of party affiliation - was a step toward a broader definition of victimhood.

Despite the court's acknowledgement of a growing range of victims, the Party's perspective on the issue changed little since 1988. In 1990, *Krasnoe znamia* published two progress reports on the rehabilitation commission's work.[496] While the focus remained on party members, the second of the two articles entitled "Restoring Justice: For the Sake of Moral Cleansing," published numbers for the first time that revealed the scale of repression:

> During the period 1934-1939, 3,778,234 were accused of political crimes, of them 786,098 were shot.[497] The situation of arbitrariness developed in the country during the years of the *Stalinshchina*, it touched a thousand people of our republic, of the Komi oblast' party organization. 743 members and candidates were expelled from the party. Among those convicted and expelled were leaders of party and Soviet organs, Komsomol and union members, teachers, workers, builders, and transportation workers… The majority of those expelled were subjected to arrest and trial, and several were taken under arrest straight from the party bureau meeting or as a result of their decisions.[498]

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[495] Ibid. As the article stated, some of these residents included those who were arrested for committing petty crimes and then charged with counter-revolutionary activities under article 58.

[496] GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, d. 102, l. 2 (K. Pavlenko, "Vosstanavlivaia spravedlivost': Radi obshchei pamiati" *Krasnoe znamia*, Aug. 30, 1990).

[497] Arch Getty points out that these numbers came from a 1990 KGB press release in *Pravda*. Actual numbers, as far as historians have been able to document, of those shot during 1937-38 hover around 681,692. Numbers of the repressed vary depending on what categories are used to tally them and what years are considered. See, J. Arch Getty, Oleg V. Naumov, *The Road to Terror: Stalin and the Self-Destruction of the Bolsheviks, 1932-1939* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 590-591.

[498] GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, d. 102, l. 3 (I. Pavlenko, "Vosstanavlivaia spravedlivost': Radi nravstvennogo ochishcheniia," *Krasnoe znamia*, Sept. 7, 1990). The stakes of this work were highlighted in an interview with a member of the Komi party commission, M. K. Ignatov, who stated: "The process of restoring justice now must go on without haste with the necessary care. Whoever was falsely accused must be reinstated and evaluated by [their] honor, but this does not mean that we must acquit everyone. We should not reinstate in the party those, who intentionally ran down honest, honorable people, [and] Soviet

In light of the barrage of survivor testimony, the publication of official numbers seems to have been an attempt to put a tourniquet on the escalation of further revelations in the press. However, as we will see, this was not enough to evade the question of guilt, which was shifting from solely resting on Stalin's shoulders to the Party itself.[499]

The staggering scale of repression revealed on the pages of *Krasnoe znamia* raised questions not only about the Party's complicity in mass repression but also the culpability of ordinary Soviet citizens as well. Weeks after the numbers article, Komi newspapers struggled to make sense of what Irina Paperno refers to as the "suicidal" nature of Stalinist repression.[500] On September 29, 1990, the newspaper *Ukhta* severely criticized the Party's interpretation of the past and its claim to victim status.[501] The article called on its readers to consider tough questions left unanswered by the Party:

> Let's better ask ourselves the question: how can it be that the party and the entire Soviet people turned out to be silent witnesses of all the horrors that took place? And not only silently acquiesced, but also wildly welcomed mass punishments of people who were not guilty of anything? How to understand the faculty of social and party psychology of a person of that time? Why did people, who commanded armies for twenty years give themselves with a lamb's submissiveness to the tyrant to be taken to the executioner's block? No one will save the people, until each of us are imbued with a consciousness of political and civil responsibility for everything that happened and is happening with the country.[502]

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power. The goal of our commission is the restoration of justice." See, M. K. Ignatov, "Vosstanovit' spravedlivost'," *Krasnoe znamia*, Feb. 10, 1989.

[499] Ibid. See also, "Vinovnymi sebia ne priznali," *Krasnoe znamia*, May 12, 1990.

[500] Irina Paperno, "Exhuming the Bodies of Soviet Terror," *Representations* 75, no. 1 (Summer 2001), 109. Paperno writes: "For many, the Holocaust is a terror so extreme and unique that it raises the question of the limits of comprehension, interpretation, and representation. Perhaps making sense of the state-perpetrated mass murder that targets its own population is no easier challenge. The difficulty lies in the very nature of the regime that formally came to an end in 1991" (109).

[501] AM UGTU f. Bulychev (A. Osipov, "Konvoia vernyi strazh," *Ukhta*, Sept. 29, 1990, no. 139 (9054).

[502] Ibid.

This statement was an explosive departure from previous efforts to identify victims and perpetrators, which maintained a wall between the Party of Stalin and the present. The article is striking not only for its accusation against the Party but also for its answer to the question of how to understand the complex legacy of mass repression. The absence of mechanisms through which people could make sense of the past made the struggle to identify perpetrators and victims all the more difficult. The key to this process, it seems, was the development of society's historical consciousness.

Two articles published on October 12, 1990 in the newspaper *Ukhta* illustrate how emerging civil society groups formed a coalition of the repressed and their neighbors and petitioned the Party to adopt a broader definition of victim. The first article reprinted the speech of the co-chair of the national Memorial Society to the second Congress of People's Deputies in Moscow. Framing its request for aid for the victims as part of building a stronger democracy, the speech cited the examples of other socialist countries (Poland, Hungary) and Germany, which had long since engaged in the process of coming to terms with the dark chapters of the past.[503]

The second of the two articles in *Ukhta* was an open-letter to Gorbachev from the participants of the "Week of Conscience."[504] Under the banner of the Ukhta-Pechora Memorial Society, the group of Soviet citizens expressed their "deep anxiety" over the

[503] AM UGTU f. Bulychev (K. Musaelian: 'Proshu slova'," *Ukhta,* Oct. 12, 1990, no. 198 (9063). Musaelian, condemned the inaction of the party which made proclamations but did little to realize them in the eyes of Memorial and the people: "A year and a half ago with the tribune of the XIX party conference, the restoration of historical and social justice was declared as 'our political and moral responsibility.' However, almost nothing has been actually done to this end. Many have passed away, having not lived to see what was promised."

[504] AM UGTU f. Bulychev ("Otkrytoe pis'mo Prezidentu SSSR, General'nomu Sekretariu M. S. Gorbachev ot Uchastnikov Nedeli Sovesti provedennoi Ukhto-Pechorskim obshchestvom Memorial," *Ukhta*, Oct. 12, 1990, no. 198 (9063).

"developing crisis" in Soviet society. They wrote, "Only justice and the whole truth can stabilize this condition."[505] Their petition proposed a comprehensive definition of victim, called for the identification and lustration of all perpetrators by stripping them of the honors and privileges they earned working for the secret police, and suggested measures to make "rehabilitated" a status befitting the unjustly repressed Soviet citizens:

> 1). Openly name all those who bravely went through Stalin's camps and exile, and were rehabilitated with the degrading wording 'for lack of basis of a crime', *not victims of repression but veterans of unequal struggle with lawlessness* [emphasis added]; to review the formula 'rehabilitated for lack of basis of a crime' (article 58), [and] change it to a more just [formula], reflecting the bravery and patriotism of repressed communists and non-party members who, having served the motherland in the inhumane conditions of the camps and exile, lost their health to hard labor.
> 2). Condemn the totalitarian system and the ideology it founded in the name of the people at the Congress of Peoples' Deputies of the USSR [by] remov[ing] the graves of the hangmen of the people (Stalin, Vyshnevskii, Mekhlis and others) from Red Square.
> 3). Pay compensation to those illegally repressed for [their] slave labor and all the years in the camps and prisons from the budget of the CPSU.
> 4). By state decree provide privileges to all rehabilitated at the same level as invalids of the Great Patriotic War.
> 5). Revoke all state awards and privileges, from those who received them for service in the repressive organs, as well as their curators from the party-state who participated in illegal repressions.
> 6). For complete transparency, open all materials of the archives in connection with those illegally repressed.[506]

In this public letter to the Soviet leadership, we see not only the most encompassing definition of victim but also an attempt to assert the heroism of these long-suffering patriots of the Soviet motherland. This definition of victimhood echoed former prisoners who sought an acknowledgment of their innocence and their contributions to Soviet

[505] Ibid.
[506] Ibid.

society but did not wish to be seen as victims.[507] Furthermore, while the letter pointed an accusatory finger at Stalin (and the Party by extension) the petition to Gorbachev was an acknowledgement of the Party's power to affect the restoration of justice in Soviet society.

From 1991-1995 the discourse on victimhood in Komi newspapers shifted from remembering "victims of Stalin's repressions" to victims of "totalitarian" and "communist repression."[508] As a result of the continuing coverage on the "debasement of human dignity" under Soviet rule the definition of victim expanded to include previously excluded children of former prisoners, exiles, and deported nationalities. For instance, on October 30, 1992 *Vechernii Syktyvkar* featured an article on "Children of the GULAG," which profiled the life of Syktyvkar State University Professor of History, Nikolai Morozov. Morozov was born in the camps to two political prisoners and then sent to a children's home for children of enemies of the people. He was reunited with his estranged mother and stepfather in Inta where they were forced to live after their release from a strict-regime camp. Addressing the difficult issue of classifying the children of Gulag returnees, Morozov told the interviewer: "And now I ask myself the question: 'Was I guilty of the imaginary sins of my parents? After all, it turns out that I also had

[507] For example, Konstantin Ivanov and Elena Markova thought of themselves in this way.
[508] For articles that illustrate this shift in discourse, see, GURK NARK 2 f. P-3800, d. 102, l. 16 (V. Poleshchikov, "My zagnany na ledianuiu katorgu: O golodovke zakliuchennykh Vorkutlaga v 1936 godu," *Molodezh' Severa*, Oct. 26, 1991); GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, d. 102, p. 45 (I. Bobrakov, "Veniamin Poleshchnikov: Esli Ia nazovu konkretnye imena, etikh liudei rasterzaiut na ploshchadi" *Molodezh' Severa*, Apr. 27, 1995); GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, d. 102, l. 46 (T. Roman'kova, "Krovavyi avgust piat'desiat tret'ego," *Molodezh' Severa*, Aug. 31, 1995).

article 58, but for some reason I am not considered a convict, a repressed person.'"[509] This same difficulty applied to those repressed during the War. An article in the November 23, 1991 issue of *Ukhta* argued those who were repressed as a result of their capture, forced migration, or simply having been in occupied territory during WWII should also be considered victims of political repression: "And do you remember our questionnaires until recently: were your relatives captured or [taken] abroad? Were you on occupied territory? The answer: 'Yes' – ruined the fates of many people."[510] All of these diverse groups of people fit into an evolving definition of victim, as the chairman of Syktyvkar Memorial told *Krasnoe znamia* in 1992: "to us they are all repressed [*repressirovannye*]."[511]

In 1994, the Ukhta-Pechora Memorial Society published the second volume of its widely lauded book of memory, *In the bowels of Ukhtpechlag*, which, after years of intense debate, unambiguously proclaimed: "We have come to the conclusion that the victim was the entire people. Before us is the terrible legacy of the never before seen in history of human genocide."[512] This definition was the product of a long process

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[509] GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, d. 102, l. 41 (K. Markizov "Deti GULAGa" *Vechernii Syktyvkar*, Oct. 30, 1992). See also, GU RK NARK 2, f. P-3800, d. 102, l. 34 (S. Men'shikova, "Suzhdeno li svidet'tsia?" *Krasnoe znamia*, May 7, 1992); GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, d. 102, l. 38 (K. Markizov, "Spetspereselentsy," *Vechernii Syktyvkar*, Aug. 27, 1992).

[510] I. S Chernikov, "U nas plennykh net," *Ukhta*, Nov. 23, 1991, no. 225 (9340). See also, GU RK NARK 2, f. P-3800, d. 102, l. 34 (E. Glok 'byvshii repressirovannyi, nyne reabhilitirovannyi,' "Kopai sebe mogilu!.." *Krasnoe znamia*, May 7, 1992).

[511] GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 102, l. 28 (E. Oteva, "Chotb ne propast' poodinochke," *Krasnoe znamia*, Apr. 2, 1992).

[512] V. Bulychev, ed., *V nedrakh Ukhtpechlaga: Vypusk vtoroi* (Ukhta: Ukhta-Pechorskoe obshchestvo Memorial, 1994), 44. The address continued: "That is why the human rights work of 'Memorial' was and remains at the center of attention, uniting all strata of society, all generations and aiming at the liquidation of the legacies of genocide. We are not gathered to change one unjust court for another. Memorial was and remains on the side of human law, on guard for the rights of individuals, the rights of the nation, social [and] moral values" (44).

documented by the Komi press, which was shaped by members of the local community as well as Gulag returnees who wrote to the editors of local newspapers from outside of Komi.

Although there had been some discussion about the need for a post-Soviet Nuremberg, it remained unclear who exactly would stand trial. Even after the collapse of the Soviet Union, there was still a hesitancy among state officials and others to wade further in to the issue. For instance, in an interview in the February 27, 1995 edition of *Molodezh' Severa*, former KGB officer and historian Veniamin Poleshchikov discussed the idea of prosecuting Stalin's "hangmen."[513] The interviewer asked: "In your book you imply the need for our own type of 'Nuremburg Trial' on the grounds that the genocide against our own people was unleashed by the Soviet state. How do you imagine this process? After all, if there are any of those guilty of this tragedy from those years left alive, they are already very elderly."[514] Despite denouncing the crimes of Stalinism, Poleshchikov ultimately balked at the idea of opening the archives and extending the retributive justice to lower officials and foot soldiers who carried out these crimes:

> I think that in the course of this process we must make public the monstrous facts of the heinous crimes of that time. The state should also apologize to those who suffered from these brutalities. Finally, we must somehow mark the places of mass executions. After all, we know where they are. We do not need to go far, take Syktyvkar for example. There are several of such places here in the area of Verkhnii Chov [and] Dyrnos

[513] GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 102, p. 45: I. Bobrakov, "Veniamin Poleshchikov: Esli Ia nazovu konkretnye imena, etikh liudei rasterzaiut na ploshchadi" *Molodezh' Severa*, 27.02.1995. See also, V. M. Poleshchikov, *Za sem'iu pechatami: Iz arkhiva KGB* (Syktyvkar: Komi knizhnoe izd-vo, 1995), 9. Poleshchikov gained notoriety in Komi when he bucked the commands of his superiors and published an article about the violently suppressed uprising of prisoners in Vorkutlag in 1953 and the location of their mass graves. While Poleshchikov was not arrested or fired, he was demoted.
[514] Ibid.

> Kiul'. I even know the person, who carried out the executions. I even know that one day they took people to be shot in the area of Verkhnii Chov and drank spirits (they were supposed to drink a glass) until they got down to business. As a result, one person was wounded but not killed. Since they used up the bullets assigned to them according to the norm set by the bosses, they finished off this person with a shovel. Imagine what would happen to this person, if I named his name. The next day he would be torn to pieces somewhere on Stefanovskaia square.[515]

With the collapse of the Soviet Union fresh in their minds, Poleshchikov's opinion on the possibility of a post-Soviet Nuremberg illustrates how even those who worked to bring the past to light remained hesitant to address the question of complicity at a local level. Identifying the victims of political repression was painful enough. Furthermore, it seems that Poleshchikov and others did not wish to antagonize the new state, which inherited many of its predecessor's former employees.[516]

While the definition of victim became more comprehensive over time, the same was not true for the category of perpetrator which remained an ill-defined category vaguely referring to Stalin and the Communist Party. This outcome reflects the intense focus on commemorating victims in the press and also the difficulty of unpacking the complex legacy of repression in which perpetrators became victims themselves. As we will see in the remaining sections of this chapter, these definitions were constantly in flux as citizens of Komi made sense of, commemorated, and mourned the victims of political repression.

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[515] Ibid.
[516] V. Bulychev, "Veniamin Poleshchikov: Ia vyshel iz partii i poplatilsia za eto," *Ukhta*, Oct. 16, 1991.

Introducing New Evidence: Memoirs, Letters, and Memory as Sources of a New History

On September 28, 1989, *Krasnoe znamia* published a full-page editorial, which questioned whether the "truth" [*pravda*] about the past could ever be restored in the face of the unimaginably colossal scale and horror of state repression:

> Neither fantasy, nor imagination can recreate the cruel pages of that history in full truth. Moreover, even the memory of those who experienced all this, refuses to remember. And not because [they] want to forget, but because if they remember everything, [their] heart will break and [their] mind will not endure. Survivors have a right to cross off those years and to forget. But the rest of us do not have this right. [We] have a duty to prevent oblivion. Piece by piece, line by line [we must] collect history as exhortation and warning.[517]

In order for the memory project to successfully proceed, it required new sources offering a new perspective. During the late 1980s and 1990s newspapers turned to survivors as sources with the hope of forming a more complete understanding of the Stalinist past. However, the feeling among many was that time was running short: "We must hurry, time settles accounts with people and memory faster than us. And yet there is still the feeling that nonetheless we are too late."[518]

From 1989-1992 Komi newspapers saw a peak in the publication of stories about individual lives trampled "under the wheels" of political repression. As one librarian in Ukhta remarked in 1991, "We learned many new things about the camp past of our

[517] T. Boriseevich, "Pole pamiati," *Krasnoe znamia*, Sept. 28, 1989.
[518] Ibid. The article noted that the party commission of the Vuktyl district and Memorial were conducting a search "for those once repressed, but now rehabilitated victims of Stalin's tyranny. This search is not very simple – there are few documents, only a handful of eyewitnesses (yes and how to get them to emerge?). their relatives have different last names, and more often than not neighbors will not share secret information." However, not every repressed person wanted to participate, illustrating the traumatic nature of remembering and the memory of the thaw followed by the coming of winter and a renewal of repression: "Who needs this? […] I don't want to remember. You don't understand, but I do… Here is your sermon, a sort of prayer on the radio or television to listen to – nothing more is necessary."

republic from all the publications in the periodical press."[519] Not only did these stories shed light on Komi's camp past, they also humanized the enormity of mass repression.

One result of featuring survivors' testimonies as a source of the past was that it undermined the bias toward state and party archives as the key to the past. This section examines the ways in which survivors' testimonies that were not stored in party archives were discussed in public discourse as the people's "historical memory." It shows how these sources were seen as essential to revising the state's narrative of the past.

Calls for historical revisionism in Komi newspapers highlighted the absence of survivors' voices in the record. They argued this previous silence was a product of the attempt to erase all traces of Stalin's crimes. A featured article in the February 22, 1989 issue of *Ukhta* focused on the Ukhta-Pechora Memorial Society's efforts to collect the stories of marginalized groups in Soviet society in order to build a new archive:

> History must not only be built on the evidence of illustrious people or their relatives. Generally, history is understood in simple human fates. But, unfortunately, we have never surveyed the surviving witnesses of those times – the dekulakized peasants, repressed workers. Now these people represent a priceless piece of history.[520]

While returning the voices of the repressed and writing history "from below" was important in its own right, the local newspaper raised the stakes of this memory project by connecting it to the recovery of the nation's past: "Collecting this material, we will prepare future textbooks of history, we are saving our own national history from

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[519] AM UGTU f. Bulychev (L. Gechus, "185 let po prigovoram, 36 tiurem i 215 sutok v kamere smertnika," *Ukhta*, Sept. 28, 1991, no. 188 (9303).
[520] AM UGTU f. Bulychev (A. I. Terent'ev, V. Bulychev, "Khotelos' by vsekh poimenno nazvat'," *Ukhta*, Feb. 22, 1989, no. 37 (8652).

oblivion."[521] Thus, Gulag returnees' testimonies not only shed light on Komi's camp past, they were the basis of an alternate history of the Soviet Union.

Over the course of 1989, denunciations of the Party's guarded candidness about the past expanded into criticisms of the limited archival sources it now allowed to pass into circulation. Coupled with the sheer volume and revelatory shock of survivors' testimonies, the incompleteness of official documents led many to question the official version of the past. For instance, the May 12, 1989 issue of *Ukhta* featured a full-page of letters-to-the-editor from all over Komi and the Soviet Union. The editor's introduction to this commentary called on readers to reflect on the purported numbers of repressed and to ask oneself how such a thing was possible:

> How could such a thing have happened? Where did they find among our people the hundreds and thousands of torturers and murderers of millions of tortured and murdered? After all, if we adhere to the traditional number of losses during the Great Fatherland War – 20 million, then the number of victims of Stalinism, the bacchanalia of exiles, arrests, prisons, executions (from 1927 to 1953) [must be] almost two times greater![522]

Absent any archival documents on the actual number of the dead, imprisoned, and exiled, the editor cast doubt on the Party's repeated claim that Stalin's acts primarily targeted party members. The article concluded with an excerpt from another letter-to-the-editor from the daughter of a Gulag returnee in Kiev. Praising *Ukhta* for publishing the "truth about the past," she underscored the importance of these new sources of the past to those

[521] Ibid.
[522] AM UGTU f. Bulychev (V. Bulychev, "Trava zabveniia," *Ukhta*, May 12, 1989, no. 90 (8705).

left behind: "And, while we still live, we want to extract something more from oblivion than a name and date of birth."[523]

The degradation of Stalin's legacy was not welcome by all. In 1990, newspaper editors noted the growing number of anonymous complaints about how such an "obsessed" focus on past tragedies "blackens our glorious history."[524] However, these conservative voices were drowned by those who saw the total de-Stalinization of Soviet memory as an absolute necessity to the success of reform and the health of Soviet society. This was exactly the position that the Vorkuta newspaper *Zapoliar'e* took in its introduction to a collection of letters from the camp published in the August 2, 1990 issue: "The pernicious legacy of Stalinism still persists in politics, economics, culture, [and] our soul. Like a painful, chronic illness. We must never drive it deep down. Like pus from an abscess, it must come out. Otherwise the entire organism may be poisoned."[525] For the sake of future generations, the article called for a complete account of the past: "A people that does not know its own past, does not have a future. We are obliged in the name of our own salvation to tell the whole truth (and not some prescribed part of it!) about what happened to us."[526]

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union the desire to "extract something more from oblivion" intensified. However, the long sought-after archival documents raised more questions than they answered. As one article in *Krasnoe znamia* lamented: "We

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[523] Ibid.
[524] R. Mirin, "M. V. Kriukov: 'Kak khochetsia zhit'!'" *Zapoliar'e*, Aug. 2, 1990. See also, I. Kliamkin "Pochemu trudno govorit' pravdu," *Novy Mir*, no. 2, 1989 cited in V. Bulychev, "Trava zabveniia," *Ukhta*, May 12, 1989, no. 90 (8705).
[525] Ibid.
[526] Ibid.

search for memory in documents but there are none. Or they lie. Or even more terrible – they tell [us] part of the truth. And what is truth, especially about those times?"[527] Even the archives of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD), as many families came to realize, were incomplete. In many cases, the archives offered little more than a victim's name, date of birth, sentence, place of confinement, and date of death. To the victim's relatives and those who took up the charge to recover the past, such as the Inta Local History Museum, this lack of documentation was evidence of how mass repression continued to obfuscate attempts to overcome it. As the historians at the Inta Local History Museum wrote in an editorial in the April 22, 1992 issue of *Krasnoe znamia*:

> There are not even the usual photographs in their case file[s]. [The case] was conducted for almost two years. Yellowed and decayed by time, the folder is covered in a multitude of typed numbers and letters. It looks like they set this file aside and then returned to it, but they didn't get around to taking a photo. [This was] precisely because in the 1930s in the provinces it was difficult [to complete the file] because the investigator would decide it's useless, the case needs to be carried out so that only one person remains in memory: all five – enemies of the people – were sentenced to be shot. The sentence was executed. And forget about them. Yes, happily, we did not forget…"[528]

During this new stage in the memory project, the public was confronted with limitations of archival documents, which were sometimes unable to resolve long-standing questions, nor were they always able to reconstruct fates of those lost in the camps. While archival documents (and the lack thereof) raised new questions about the nature and extent of political repression under Soviet rule, a shift had occurred in support of

[527] GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, d. 102, l. 8 (G. Spichak, "Za strokoi A. Solzhenitsyna," *Krasnoe znamia*, Nov. 27, 1990). See also, GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, d. 102, l. 33 (E. Konstantinova, "Oleg Volkov: My zabyli zhit' po sovesti," *Krasnoe znamia*, May 1, 1992).
[528] GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, d. 102, l. 31 (N. Kozina, "'Zabud'te o nikh!..' Ne zabyli," *Krasnoe znamia*, Apr. 22, 1992).

memory as the source of an alternate past. Even after state and party archives became more accessible following the collapse of the Soviet Union, people continued to turn to non-state archives for insight into how political repression affected individual lives.

Laying the Dead to Rest: Ceremonies and Monuments to the Victims of Political Repression

Commemorations of the "victims of political repression" primarily focused on laying the dead to rest with monuments and ceremonies designed to restore dignity to those who were denied it in life and to communicate cultural memory of the past. The ceremonial internment of the dead who lay in unmarked mass graves was an attempt to come to terms with the mounting evidence of the regime's crimes that was literally being unearthed throughout Komi during the late 1980s and 1990s. This process of discovery continues to this day; while I was conducting research in Ukhta a new mass grave was discovered in April 2017.[529] This section will explore the ways in which the victims of political repression were commemorated in ceremonies and monuments that formed an infrastructure of memory linking the Komi landscape with the cultural memory of the Gulag.

From the very beginning, the link between memory and space was a central feature of the newspaper coverage on political repression in Komi. In the absence of preserved camp complexes such as Auschwitz in Poland and Perm-36 in Perm oblast',

[529] "Na Zabolotnom snova nakhodiat chelovecheskie cherepa i kosti," *Pro Gorod*, May 15, 2018, accessed 20.08.18, https://progoroduhta.ru/news/12320; Pavel Vlizkov, "V prigorode Ukhty na meste massovykh rasstrelov zakliuchennykh v gody terrora naideny novye ostanki. Chto ob etom izvestno," *7x7*, Jun. 1, 2018, accessed 20.08.18, https://7x7-journal.ru/item/107749.

place names in Komi took on new meaning during the collapse of the Soviet Union.[530] By revealing the true origins of many of Komi's towns as sites of repression, newspapers transformed these places into monuments to the victims of political repression.[531] The leader of the Ukhta-Pechora Memorial Society underscored this shift in meaning in the September 29, 1989 issue of *Ukhta*: "The camp memory of the village Vetlosian lives by its own name, the concrete and brick buildings: the boiler room, the isolator, the water tower. The wooden buildings still exist: the rotting barracks of the camp guards."[532]

Places associated with Komi's camp past underwent a subsequent transformation into sites of mourning when mass graves were discovered. In addition to confirming the darkest details of survivor's testimonies, these grisly discoveries evoked moral outrage when newspapers reported that many graves were destroyed as camps grew into cities. For many, the lack of respect for the dead was an indicator of the Party's moral bankruptcy and another blow to its legitimacy, as a 1990 newspaper article stated: "The industrial use of the areas of former mass graves of the many thousands of prisoners

[530] Perm-36 is exceptional for Russia. Once a part of the infrastructure of the Soviet carceral system, it was the last corrective labor camp to be closed in 1987 and subsequently transformed into a museum and made into part of Russia's infrastructure of memory. However, the majority of camps were left to rot, repurposed as part of the towns that sprung up around them, or destroyed after they were closed in the 1950s. See, Neimark, 1. On Auschwitz as a "warning monument" in the cultural memory of the Holocaust, see, Primo Levi, "Revisiting the Camps," in *The Art of Memory: Holocaust Memorials in History*, ed., James Young (New York: Prestel, 1994), 185. Etkind explores the interaction between texts and monuments, see, *Warped Mourning*, 177-178.

[531] On the link between memory and ruins of former camps in Gulag returnees' letters, memoirs, and testimonies, see chapter one.

[532] AM UGTU f. Bulychev (A. Terent'ev, "Vetlosianskaia slabokomanda," *Ukhta*, Sept. 29, 1990, no. 139 (9054).

speaks of a deficit of conscience in the leadership […] There is no kind memory for the victims of Stalinism."[533]

The return of the dead confronted the public with powerful evidence at a time when it was still working out whom to remember and how to commemorate them. This process was aided by elderly residents who wrote to newspapers to identify the location of sites missing from the map. As one letter-to-the-editor published in the December 9, 1989 issue of the Vorkuta newspaper *Zapoliar'e* read:

> I send you a photo of the cemetery, as it was in the middle of the 1950s at mine no.40 ('*Vorkutinskaia'*). It stood near the fur workshop on the hill. Not a bad place. Then they filled it in with rocks and built over it. Now Kirov street is there. How many people lie there, having fallen during Stalin's repressions! I myself saw how they hauled off the dead in wagons – pulled by a horse, and behind two people filled the graves. They did not put the deceased in coffins, but simply in wide pits [and] covered them. They drove a stake with a number into the grave mound and that's it…[534]

The unmarked graves covering the vast Komi landscape became the central focus of civil society's efforts to commemorate Stalin's victims.[535] As one member of Memorial wrote about local residents who aided in the search for the gravesites in *Ukhta* in 1990, "For us *Memorialtsy* this is not simply help and participation in the search, but also new material,

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[533] Ibid.
[534] Z. V. Petrova, "Tam seichas ulitsa Kirova," *Zapoliar'e*, Dec. 9, 1989. See also, T. Boriseevich, "Pole pamiati," *Krasnoe znamia*, Sept. 28, 1989.
[535] Memorial conducted vast correspondence with victims of political repression (see chapter 1) as well as their family members. In many cases their letters shared scraps of information that led to discoveries in the archives or the ground. For Syktyvkar Memorial's correspondence, see, GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 39, ll. 33 1993; f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 56, ll. 69 1994-1995; f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 79, ll. 35 1997 (Correspondence with family members of the repressed regarding questions of rehabilitation and the activities of the Memorial Society). For an example of correspondence with state institutions (MVD, KGB, FSB) see, f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 105, ll. 134 1994.

evidence, the truth about what happened to us. For if the people do not know their own past, they will not have a future."[536]

In order to commemorate the living and the dead victims of political repression, the Ukhta-Pechora Memorial Society developed a ceremony of remembrance. Inspired by the first event organized by the Moscow Memorial Society in 1988, the Week of Conscience became an annual memory event in Ukhta in 1989.[537] As ground zero of the Gulag's colonization of Komi, the choice to hold the Week of Conscience in Ukhta was highly symbolic. As Gulag returnee and local resident, Nikolai Volodarksii said in his opening remarks to the 1990 Week of Conscience:

> I remind you, although it is well known without me saying so, that the days of conscience are being held at the very site, where not so long ago one capital of the GULAG empire was located. Here, more than most, the victims of Stalin's terror, those who were not guilty of anything, who were sentenced for nothing, people with clean consciences, served sentences. I myself served ten years for the leader of all times and peoples. […] In Vorkuta, Inta, Abez', Pechora, all throughout Komi there were thousands of so-called 'enemies of the people' behind barbed wire. Stalin's hangmen did not pass over the Poles, western Ukrainians, Belorussians, and Balts. All those to whom the Soviet Army extended a 'helping hand' at one time or another. Now, thank God, different times have come… We are gathered here to remember the terrible years, the years of arbitrariness and violence, to remember the names of those who are no longer among us. THE *STALINSHCHINA* MUST NEVER BE REPEATED.[538]

[536] AM UGTU f. Bulychev (L. Kashanov, "Gorst' zemli s mogily materi," *Ukhta*, Aug. 7, 1990, no. 151 (9016). On the importance of identifying graves and providing closure to the families who went long years without knowing for certain the fate of their loved ones, see also, GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, d. 102, l. 1-1a (E. Vladimirov, "Ssyl'nym sorok pervogo," *Molodezh' Severa*, Aug. 8, 1990, no. 92 (6354); "…Spasi i sokhrani ikh dushi!," *Zapoliar'e*, Sept. 21, 1991.
[537] On the first Week of Conscience in Moscow, see, Adler, *Victims of Soviet Terror*; Smith, *Remembering Stalin's Victims*, 179-180.
[538] Bulychev, ed., *V nedrakh Ukhtpechlaga: Vypusk vtoroi*, 44.

Noting their diversity, Volodarskii's speech underscored that the purpose of the memory event was to remember all of Stalin's victims. Rather than selectively remembering the few, as the Party had done. Furthermore, by listing towns and cities that were once camps in Komi, Volodarskii connected the gathering in Ukhta to an expansive infrastructure of memory that linked the region with the rest of the country.

From 1990 to 1993 the Week of Conscience received extensive front-page coverage in the newspaper *Ukhta*. The memory event included seminars on the history of the Gulag and political repression, the opening of a museum exhibit entitled "Memory of the victims of illegal repressions during the cult of personality," excursions to former camp sites, and an evening of memory featuring the screening of a documentary film and readings of memoirs.[539] However, the main event of the week was the Requiem service (*Panikhida*) in memory of the victims of political repression led by an Orthodox priest from the community. Former prisoners, exiles, and their families came to Ukhta from all over Komi and the rest of the country to remember and to mourn their loved ones at grave sites that once belonged to Ukhtpechlag. As *Ukhta* reported on September 29, 1990, "They come to pay their respects to their loved ones, sons, daughters, and grandchildren of those who vanished in these lands. They come for a handful of earth

[539] AM UGTU f. Bulychev ("Nedelia sovesti' v Ukhte s 30 sentiabria po 7 oktiabria 1990" *Ukhta*, Sept. 29, 1990, no. 139 (9054). For the 1991 program see, AM UGTU f. Bulychev ("Nedelia sovesti v Ukhte (29, 30 sentiabria, 1 oktiabria)," *Ukhta*, Sept. 28, 1991, no. 188 (9303); V. Bulychev, ed., *V nedrakh Ukhtpechlaga* (Ukhta: Ukhtinskaia tipografiia "Memorial," 1989).

from their parent's graves. And also come those, for whom the search for the graves of the innocent victims of repression has become a matter of debt."[540]

As an occasion for coming to terms with the past, the Requiem service illuminates the public response to the knowledge that mass violence against the Soviet people was perpetrated by their own government, which many others also struggled to comprehend throughout the rest of the country.[541] Although many in Komi had first and second-hand knowledge of state repression, this struggle to comprehend suggests that they did not really know about the massive scale of repression. However, the Requiem also responded to an acute need for closure for those who still did not know the fate of their loved ones decades later. As the son of prisoner wrote in *Ukhta* in 1993, "He died without the right to a burial in a marked grave. And today in Ukhta there are no traces of the graves of the many thousands of innocently murdered citizens of Russia and other countries in the GULAG. […] But the sacred memory of him remains, lives, and will continue to live."[542]

While Komi is unique in many ways, the focus of memory work on the dead reflects trends that emerged throughout Eastern Europe following the collapse of

[540] V. Vladimirov, "Gosti nashei 'nedeli'," *Ukhta*, Sept. 29, 1990, no. 139 (9054). A letter addressed to Ukhta-Pechora Memorial in 1991 from a daughter of a former prisoner in Petersburg expressed her desire to participate in the ceremony that year and to bring home a handful of earth from her father's grave. See, Bulychev, ed., *V nedrakh Ukhtpechlaga: Vypusk vtoroi*, 26.
[541] On the exhumation of purge victims' graves in Ukraine, see, Paperno, 108. See also, Catherine Merridale, *Night of Stone: Death and Memory in Twentieth-Century Russia* (New York: Penguin Books, 2000), 297-324.
[542] AM UGTU f. Bulychev (Leonid Chizhevskii "Pamiati Chizhevskogo Luki Dmitrievicha," *Ukhta*, Jun. 16, 1993, no. 113 (9728).

communism.[543] As Katherine Verdery argues, shifts in the "worlds of meaning" that bind societies together, such as the one that accompanied the collapse of the Soviet Union, are expressed in ceremonies that "set up right relations between living human communities and their ancestors."[544] In this light, the emphasis on mourning the dead can be seen as part of an attempt to cement the new interpretation of the past in cultural memory by sacralizing it at specific sites throughout Komi, rather than the return of repressed memory or continuity with pre-revolutionary religious practices as other scholars have argued.[545]

[543] Paperno, 106; Catherine Merridale, "Revolution among the dead: cemeteries in twentieth-century Russia," *Mortality* 8, no. 2, 2003: 176-188; Adler, "The future of the soviet past remains unpredictable," 1106. This is not unique to post-Soviet countries; it is also the focus of an ongoing memory project on the legacy of fascism in Spain. See, Rubin, 214-227.

[544] Katherine Verdery, *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies: Reburial and Postsocialist Change* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 42. See also, Svetlana Malysheva, "Soviet Death and Hybrid Soviet Subjectivity: Urban Cemetery as a Metatext," *Ab Imperio* 3 (2018): 351-384.

[545] For the argument of the return of repressed memory and the preservation of pre-revolutionary religious practices, see, Merridale, *Night of Stone*. Zuzanna Bogumił argues the Orthodox Church replaced Memorial in the 1990s as the main shaper of cultural memory see, Bogumił, et. al., "Sacred or Secular? 'Memorial', the Russian Orthodox Church, and the Contested Commemoration of Soviet Repressions," *Europe-Asia Studies* 67, no. 9 (November 2015): 1416-1444; Bogumił, "Stone, Cross, and Mask: Searching for Language of Commemoration of the Gulag in the Russian Federation," *Polish Sociological Review*, no. 177 (2012): 71-90. For a study of the "iconization" and "veneration" of Russia's "new martyrs" by the ROC, see, Christensen, *The Making of the New Martyrs of Russia*. While Christensen does not argue that the "new martyrs" are evidence of the continuity of religious practice, she underscores how the church as an institution "icononized" and "venerated" new martyrs as a "traditional" form of producing cultural memory, which focuses on repressed Orthodox clergy and parishioners.

Week of Conscience Requiem at Vetlosian. The Orthodox cross was erected by the Ukhta Oil and Gas Geological Trust, "In acknowledgment of part of the guilt of their predecessors [the MVD who ran the trust]."[546]

While the Requiem service at the Week of Conscience drew large crowds and enjoyed broad support among those who could not travel all the way to Ukhta, it did not garner the support of party officials who refused to attend. The snub did not go unnoticed and resulted in a sharp rebuke of the party's behavior in the October 12, 1990 issue of *Ukhta*,

> Wreaths from the city executive committee, Memorial, Ukhta council of veterans of war and labor, and the division of culture were laid on the grave. **THERE WAS NO WREATH FROM THE CITY'S COMMUNISTS**. Either they forgot in the vanity of vanities (on this day a party conference was held), or they just did not want to attend. After all, the Vetlosian burial mound was abundantly fertilized with the bones of faithful Leninists.[547]

At a historical moment when the past was undergoing radical transformation and the country's future seemed to be at stake, the Party's contempt for the new martyrs was

[546] For the photo see, Bulychev, ed., *V nedrakh Ukhtpechlaga: vypusk vtoroi*, 45. For the quote, see, AM UGTU f. Bulychev (V. Bulychev, "A. Akhmatova – 'Vsego prochnee na zemle pechal','" *Ukhta,* Oct. 12, 1991, no. 198 (9063).

[547] AM UGTU f. Bulychev (V. Bulychev, "A. Akhmatova – 'Vsego prochnee na zemle pechal','" *Ukhta,* Oct. 12, 1991, no. 198 (9063).

unacceptable. In addition to calling out the Party's insincerity toward reform, the article placed the blame for the people's suffering squarely on its shoulders:

> And generally, who, if not the CPSU, bears responsibility for the situation that has developed in the country? But not only for this? And for collectivization, and for the GULAG, and for the grave consequences and victims of the Second World War? Although millions of communists were not guilty (they themselves were deceived and became victims), but this does not remove responsibility from the 'center' and 'avantgarde,' which has led the country into a dead end.[548]

With the Party discredited by its own actions (both past and present), the production of a new cultural memory of Soviet repression continued with the erection of a variety of monuments.

An array of monuments to the victims of political repression appeared throughout Komi during the collapse of the Soviet Union.[549] They ranged from simple plaques to memorial stones inspired by the Solovetskii stone in Moscow to crosses marking the site of mass graves.[550] Despite the existence of gargantuan abstract monuments in places like Magadan and the Levashovo Cemetery in St. Petersburg, no such monuments appeared in Komi.[551] Instead, Komi's monuments primarily resembled grave markers. Local authorities were simply not interested in spending what little money they had on

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[548] Ibid.
[549] Komi's monuments and mass graves were mapped as part of the "Map of Memory: Necropolis of the Terror and Gulag" produced by the Ioffe Fond. See, "Karta pamiati: Nekropol' terrora i GULAGa," Fond Ioffe, 2015, accessed 29.08.18, https://www.mapofmemory.org. According to this map there are 83 gravesites and monuments to the victims of political repression in the Komi Republic.
[550] On the laying of a memorial stone outside of the Ukhta ethnographic museum, which served as the headquarters of Ukhtpechlag, see, A. Sorvachev, "Kamen' u muzeiia," *Ukhta*, Apr. 23, 1999. On the choice of a memorial stone a member of Ukhta-Pechora Memorial said at the opening, "Some 10-20 thousand years ago a glacier delivered the boulder from the Kola Peninsula. And in 1929, along a route close to the path of the quartz boulder, moved hundreds, and then thousands of *zeks*. This is how the thought arose to use the stone as a monument to the victims of the GULAG."
[551] On these monuments, see, Etkind, 186.

monuments after the collapse of the Soviet Union. It seemed the fate of communism had been decided. For instance, despite the decision of the Supreme Soviet of the (now) Komi Soviet Socialist Republic to name Vorkuta a "city-memorial" and to install there a massive monument sculpted by the émigré sculptor Ernst Neizvestnyi who completed Magadan's "Mask of Sorrow," nothing came to fruition.[552] Thus, the majority of Komi's monuments that appeared during this period were erected without financial support from the state.[553]

Despite the scarcity of funds, monuments much smaller in scale began to spring up across Komi, which were primarily funded voluntarily by private individuals. In Ukhta, a statue of Pushkin sculpted by a prisoner of Ukhtpechlag (who was subsequently shot in 1937), was refurbished and moved from the children's garden to the city center in 1993.[554] Although the statue did not depict the camps in any way, it was lauded in *Ukhta* as a "natural symbol and emblem of the city's character" as a site of memory of the Gulag.[555] Other small markers appeared as well throughout Komi, such as a plaque installed in the city garden of Sosnogorsk in 1993. Perhaps more significant than their

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[552] GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, op. 1, d. 102, l. 19 (S. Pystin, "Proekt Neizvestnogo: neizvestno ostaetsia," *Molodezh' Severa*, Dec. 7, 1991). On the controversy surrounding the Vorkuta Neizvestnyi monument see also, Bogumił, Moran, Harrowell, "Sacred or Secular?" It is unclear who paid for the monuments in Komi.
[553] The list of Komi's monuments compiled by the Sakharov Center notes where the financial resources for each monument came from. In almost every case the money came from collections gathered locally or branches of the Memorial Society. See, "Pamiatniki zhertvam politicheskikh repressii na territorii byvshego SSSR," Sakharov Center, accessed 29.08.18. https://www.sakharov-center.ru/asfcd/pam/pam_place.xtmpl-town=167.htm. According to this list, there are 1,210 monuments and commemorative plaques to the victims of political repression throughout the former Soviet Union, 714 of which are scattered throughout the Russian Federation. The list is updated frequently. For this list, see, "Spisok pamiatnikov i pamiatnykh znakov po stranam" Sakharov Center, accessed 18.02.18, https://www.sakharov-center.ru/asfcd/pam/?t=list.
[554] M. B. Rogachev, ed., *Pokaianie: Martirolog*, t. 12, ch. 2 (Syktyvkar: Fond Pokaianie, 2017), 99.
[555] AM UGTU f. Bulychev (Vasilii Belykh, "Poet s ottiapannoi desnitsei," *Ukhta*, Jun. 16, 1993, no. 113 (9728).

appearance, such markers reflect the shift in cultural memory, which now commemorated the "victims of the communist regime" instead of just "victims of Stalin's repressions."[556]

Throughout the 1990s monuments dedicated to particular ethnic groups were installed at camp cemeteries.[557] For instance, a year after the restoration of the Dzimtenei monument in Inta, Lithuanians returned in 1990 to erect the monument dedicated to "the unreturned" in Lithuanian, Komi, and Russian.[558] In Vorkuta, several monuments were erected in memory of "The Victims of Political Repressions" (1988, 1990), repressed Ukrainians (1990), Lithuanians (1994), Germans (1995), and Poles (1997).[559] While many of these monuments of the late 1990s and early-2000s specify whom they mourn, they stand in memory of all who never left Komi.

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[556] "Memorial: Vozdvignut' zhertvam pamiatnik," *Zaria Timana*, Nov. 4, 1993. The article continued, "The fact that *Sosnogortsy*, without any meetings, independently laid flowers on the monument over the weekend speaks to the necessity of such a monument for our city. It must be added that such a thing became possible thanks to the efforts of the administration of the city and the Memorial society." On the installation of other memorial plaques, see, T. Iurchenko, "Chtoby pomnili," *Pechorskoe vremia*, Jan. 11, 1999.

[557] M. B. Rogachev, ed., *Pokaianie: Martirolog*, t. 12, ch. 1 (Syktyvkar: Fond Pokaianie, 2016); Rogachev, ed., *Pokaianie: Martirolog*, t. 12, ch. 2, 99-104; Malofeevskaia & Rogachev, *Pamiat' o GULAGe: Inta*; T. G. Afanas'eva, O. I. Azarov, *Pamiat' o GULAGe: Pechora. Putevoditel'* (Syktyvkar: Fond Pokaianie, 2014);

[558] Malofeevskaia & Rogachev, *Pamiat' o GULAGe*, 51.

[559] "Pamiatniki zhertvam politicheskikh repressii na territorii byvshego SSSR," Sakharov Center, accessed 29.08.18, https://www.sakharov-center.ru/asfcd/pam/pam_place.xtmpl-town=167.htm.

(Clockwise from to left): Pushkin monument to the victims of political repression, Ukhta; Lithuanian monument "Mourning Savior" to the "unreturned," Inta; Vorkuta memorial cemetery of the Rechlag prisoners shot for their role in the 1953 prisoner strike – Lithuanian monument (1994) looms over the mass grave; metal cross erected by a former prisoner at the entrance to a series of mass graves of prisoners in the village Adzherom.[560]

The establishment of the Repentance Foundation (*Fond Pokaianie*) in 1998 ushered in a new period in the production of cultural memory in Komi. As the first organization of its kind in Russia, Fond Pokaianie formed a partnership between

[560] Tyler Kirk, *Bruni Monument,* Ukhta, Komi Republic, R. F., Personal Archive, Spring 2017; Arkhiv Fonda Pokaianie (AFP) f. N. A. Morozov, (Photograph of meeting in memory of victims of political repression in Vorkuta, 3.08.2002); "Vostochnoe kladbishche Intalaga: Skorbiashchii spasitel'," Fond Ioffe, accessed 29.08.18, https://www.mapofmemory.org/11-21; Tyler Kirk, *Unmarked Mass Grave: P. Adzherom*, Komi Republic, R. F., Personal Archive, Spring, 2009.

Syktyvkar Memorial and the Komi Republican government to "perpetuate the memory of the victims of political repression" and conduct historical research on Komi's Gulag past.[561] This was a major step forward in the politics of memory in Komi, which brought state support and financial aid to the memory work that had been done on the initiative of local citizens and the Memorial Society. In May 1998, the official newspaper of regional government, *Respublika*, printed several decrees from the governor's office that ordered the construction of a monument in Syktyvkar, the development of memorial complexes at the camp cemeteries in Ukhta and Inta, and the allocation of funds from the republic's budget to support research projects. These efforts were part of the "year of harmony and reconciliation" in "commemoration of the memory of the victims of mass political repressions in the Komi Republic."[562]

Fond Pokaianie made two major contributions to Komi's infrastructure of memory: the capital's first monument to the victims of political repression and the publication of the multivolume book of memory the *Martyrology* (*Martirolog*).[563] Prior to the 1998 decree there was no monument to the victims of political repression in Syktyvkar except for a "foundation stone," which was installed in 1997 to mark the site

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[561] "Ob uvekovechenii pamiati zhertv massovykh politicheskikh repressii v Respublike Komi," *Respublika*, Feb. 3, 1998. In his introductory letter to the first volume of Komi's book of memory, *Martirolog*, the former governor of the Komi Republic Iurii Spiridonov wrote, "We, the living, owe an unpayable debt to the countless victims of the repressive system. Our fortified memory, our moral repentance for past crimes, for the nightmarish lapse of reason, has given rise to a miracle – a guarantee that reason will never leave us again, that human life is the measure of all value on earth. This is the path to harmony." See, G. V. Nevskii, ed., *Pokaianie: Martirolog*, t. 1 (Syktyvkar: Komi knizhnoe izd-vo, 1998), 1.

[562] Iu. Spiridonov, "O respublikanskom memoriale zhertvam massovykh politicheskikh repressii v gorode Syktyvkare: ukaz glavy RK," *Respublika*, May 19, 1998. For the government order, see, "Ob uvekovechenii pamiati zhertv massovykh politicheskikh repressii v Respublike Komi," *Respublika*, Feb. 3, 1998.

[563] G. V. Nevskii, ed., *Pokaianie: Martirolog*, t. 1 (Syktyvkar: Komi knizhnoe izd-vo, 1998).

of the future monument. The form of the monument was decided by a committee convened by the head of the Komi Republic that included representatives of the republican government, activists and researchers from Fond Pokaianie and Memorial, and the Syktyvkar diocese of the Orthodox Church, which rejected all of the entries submitted at a competition held in the House of Artists in Syktyvkar in 1998.[564]

A year later the monument was still in the planning stages. As the Day of Memory of Victims of Political Repression approached, no concept had been agreed upon. Although it was a new government, which of course was made up of former communists, some saw the lack of progress as yet another unkept promise. As Gulag returnee Leonid Markizov wrote in an editorial in *Krasnoe znamia* a year after the commission was formed in 1999,

> Already now it is clear that the monument in Syktyvkar will not be installed by October 30. That is why some *Syktyvkartsy* think that the project ought to be assigned to one of the studios without any competition and that the city administration should just approve it. To one degree or another such haste is justified […] At Memorial they think that the inefficacy of the installation of monuments to the victims of groundless repressions is highly characteristic for our country on the whole. Take Vorkuta [for example], although they erected monuments to the victims of the GULAG, the main [monument] – designed by the famous sculptor Ernst Neizvestnyi has still not been installed, even though the celebrated master made it free of charge. […] But everything has come to a standstill. When will we finally, honorably pay homage to the memory of the victims of repression on our island of the GULAG archipelago?[565]

Markizov's editorial in *Krasnoe znamia* illuminates not only the complicated process of selecting the monument's form, but also the growing frustration and lack of faith in the

[564] M. B. Rogachev, e-mail message to the author, Aug. 18, 2018. It is unclear why they were all rejected. I found no information about what these entries looked like or who made them.
[565] Leonid Markizov, "Pamiatnik bez pamiatnika," *Krasnoe znamia*, Jun. 26, 1999.

government's pledges of support to such projects. In the case of the Syktyvkar monument, the stalemate was overcome only when the governor unilaterally assigned the project to a local artist.[566] Despite the false starts, this complicated process illustrates the diverse interests that shaped the production of cultural memory, which crystallized when the monument was finally erected in 2000.

Continuing traditions established in the late 1980s and early-1990s, the Syktyvkar monument mourns the dead with a mixture of secular and religious iconography.[567] Despite its decentralized location, the site was chosen for its significance as the former site of Syktyvkar prison no.1, which served as a transit camp for prisoners on the long road north.[568] While the monument's facade is that of an Orthodox chapel, which is oriented east to west and adorned with crucifixes and icons, up-close the monument is primarily composed of symbols and imagery representing Komi's camp past.[569] The inner walls of the chapel are lined with the names of those who were sent to Komi (published in volumes 1 and 2 of the *Martirolog*) as a reminder of the diversity of the repressed. The outer panels record in bronze the names of the camps interspersed with

[566] M. B. Rogachev, e-mail message to the author, Aug. 18, 2018. Although he approved the governor's choice of Nevorov, it seems that the Syktyvkar Bishop's concerns over the form and content of the monument may have slowed down the process. The Fond was made aware of the appointment only after the Bishop approved it. See, M. B. Rogachev, e-mail message to the author, Aug. 24, 2018; Bogumił, Moran, Harrowell, 1439.

[567] Bogumił, *Gulag Memories*, 123. Bogumił writes that the monument did not ruffle feathers with the church because of its "conservatism" in its representation of a burial site.

[568] It is also noteworthy that the site is flanked by the current offices of the Komi Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) and the Federal Penitentiary Service (UFSIN).

[569] It seems that Bogumił et al. focus on the religious imagery of the monument and miss the mosaic of symbols it is composed of. Bogumił, et al., 1439. Rogachev, whom I noted above as having participated in its founding, emphasizes the "eclecticism" of the monument in its commemoration of victims of all faiths and nationalities. See, M. B. Rogachev, e-mail message to the author, Aug. 18, 2018.

scenes from "that world." The largest panel, "Desecrated Faith – Night Arrest" [*Porugannaia vera – Nochnoi arrest*] faces east.[570]

The main panel symbolizes the shattering of communist faith and repentance for past crimes.[571] From eye level looking up, the panel depicts a man standing with a downturned face and outstretched arms reaching out toward the shattered crest of the Order of the Red Banner, indicating that the victim was a distinguished communist. His wife stands next to him, holding a child in her arms; a packed suitcase sits at their feet. Looking upward, above the shattered crest, is an angel with the inscription: "To the victims of repression: Our pain, sorrow and repentance." Before the doors to the monument's inner sanctuary, which are made of heavy iron bars to give the appearance and heft of a prison door, there is a granite tomb containing earth from the cemeteries of the major camp complexes of Vorkuta, Ukhta, Inta, Sosnogorsk, and Syktyvkar.[572] A symbolic cemetery for the repressed, the earth from the remote islands of Komi's Gulag archipelago links Syktyvkar with these diffuse sites of memory and mourning.

[570] Ibid.
[571] Ibid.
[572] M. B. Rogachev, ed., *Politicheskie repressii v Syktyvkare. Putevoditel'* (Krasnoiarsk: PIK 'Ofset', 2011), 10.

(Clockwise from top left) Monument to the Victims of Political Repression; granite tomb, inscription reads: "Eternal memory to the victims of repression"; bronze outer paneling; inner sanctuary; main outer panel.[573]

Fond Pokaianie's multi-volume book of memory, *Martirolog* (currently in its twelfth-volume), informs the symbolic meaning of the Syktyvkar monument in cultural memory. While newspapers continued to serve an important role in keeping the topic of

[573] Marina Kirk, *Syktyvkar Monument to the Victims of Political Repression*, Syktyvkar, Komi Republic, R. F., Personal Archive, Oct. 30, 2016. The photos were taken following the ceremony for the Day of the Memory of Victims of Political Repression.

political repression within public historical consciousness during this period, the *Martirolog* became one of the primary sites of what Aleksandr Etkind refers to as the "software" of cultural memory.[574] By publishing the names of the dead, archival documents, and survivors' memoirs, the *Martirolog* informs who and what is remembered at the monument, the "hardware" of memory.[575] As the first chairman of Fond Pokaianie, Gennadii Nevskii, wrote in the first volume of the *Martirolog* in 1998:

> This is a book of memory and mourning of hundreds of peoples, representatives of those who were thrown into the hell of the GULAG, into one of the islands [of the archipelago] which was on Komi soil. 'Preserve forever' is inscribed on the cover of the *Martirolog.* Preserve forever the memory of terrible events of the second quarter of the 20th century, so that the tragedy never again repeated. Preserve forever the memory of victims of political repressions – not out of bitterness, not for vengeance, but for repentance. […][576]

The collective memory contained in the *Martirolog* is anchored to the landscape by the monument, which interrupts daily life to remind passersby that Komi was once the "kingdom of camps." In other words, the *Martirolog* and the monument produce cultural memory which is made part of the landscape and perpetuated by future generations who alter it over time as they remember.

The link between cultural memory and the Komi landscape is also evident in the initiatives of Fond Pokaianie and local history museums. For instance, in 2000 Fond Pokaianie and the Inta Ethnographic Museum partnered together to get the Komi

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[574] Etkind, 177. On the *Martirolog* in the press, see, "Pokaianie: khranit' vechno," *Krasnoe znamia*, Mar. 5, 1998.
[575] Ibid.
[576] G. V. Nevskii, ed., *Pokaianie: Martirolog*, t. 1 (Syktyvkar: Komi knizhnoe izd-vo, 1998), 1. See also, "Fond 'Pokaianie' otmetil desiatiletie," *BNK: Informatsionnoe agenstvo*, Dec. 21, 2008, accessed 18.02.19, https://www.bnkomi.ru/data/news/1925/.

government to recognize the Inta water tower as a "protected monument of history, culture and architecture."[577] Built in 1954 by prisoners of Minlag following the blueprints of imprisoned Swedish architect Artur Tamvelius, the water tower was part of the camp's infrastructure. It continued to serve the needs of the subarctic mining town, which emerged after the camp was closed.[578] The re-signification of the water tower into an infrastructural monument to the victims of political repression is documented in the guidebook to the city's "ring of repentance," *Memory of the Gulag: Inta*.[579] The guidebook describes the monument as "representing the boundary between two epochs: life in unfreedom of thousands and thousands of victims of political repression who built the city, and the free development of the toiler-city, born in that very year. It is the embodiment of the link of time: of the tragic fate and deserved glory of the city."[580] The re-signification of the water tower as an infrastructural monument led to the 2014 opening of Komi's first museum dedicated solely to the history of the Gulag and political repression inside the water tower.[581] Underscoring that this was not just a symbolic event in an small town in the Far North, 12,000 people visit this museum each year.[582]

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[577] Malofeevskaia & Rogachev, 35.
[578] Artur Gustavovich Tamvelius (1907-1959) was a prisoner of Intalag and Minlag from 1946-1955. Prior to arrest he worked as an architect in Rezh in Sverdlovksia oblast'. Arrested on 20.03.1944 he was sentenced by an NKVD Special Board to 20 years. In addition to the water tower, Tamvelius also designed the Inta polyclinic. He was transferred to Dubrovlag in Mordovia along with other foreign prisoners in 1956, when his case was reviewed and overturned. He returned to Sweden and died in 1959. He was posthumously rehabilitated in Russia in 1991. See, Rogachev, *Pokaianie*, t. 12, ch. 2, 243.
[579] Malofeevskaia, Rogachev, eds., *Pamiat' o GULAGe: Inta. Putevoditel'*.
[580] Malofeevskaia & Rogachev, 35.
[581] Viktor Ivanov, "V Inte otkroetsia 'Muzei istorii politicheskikh repressii'," *7x7*, Mar. 21, 2014, accessed 31.08.18, https://7x7-journal.ru/item/39516; Iaroslava Parkhacheva, "V Inte otkryli pervyi v Komi muzei istorii politicheskikh repressii," *7x7*, Oct. 4, 2014, accessed 31.08.18, https://7x7-journal.ru/item/48162. See also the Virtual Gulag Museum project, which presents the collections and exhibits of Russia's disperse ethnographic museums in one digital space. "Sledy terrora: Vodonapornaia bashnia g. Inta,

Top: Panorama of Inta (not dated) with the water tower visible in the center of town, near the former camp zone. Bottom (left to right): Photo of the water tower (2014) and the museum inside at the base of the tower (2014).[583]

However, by the early-2000s a number of Komi newspapers began to express anxiety over the insufficiency of the existing monuments and civil society's declining participation in memory projects dedicated to coming to terms with the past. Local

Respubliki Komi," Virtual'nyi muzei GULAGa, accessed 31.08.18, http://www.gulagmuseum.org/showObject.do?object=435503&language=1.

[582] N. A. Baranov, email message to the author, February 18, 2019. Baranov, who works at the museum and has been involved in local memory projects since the late 1980s, writes that approximately 50 people travel the Inta "ring of repentance" each year on October 30.

[583] Arkhiv Muzeiia Kvartiry A. Ia. Kremsa g. Ukhta (AMK A. Ia. Kremsa) "Fotografii staroi Inty"; Parkhacheva, "V Inte otkryli pervyi v Komi muzei istorii politicheskikh repressii."

newspapers, such as *NK* in Inta, pointed to the "lack of memory" among local residents.[584] According to the director of the Inta ethnographic museum, the biggest indicator of this deficit of memory was that many residents claimed not to know where Inta's sites of memory were located and that no one in the city had "raised one memorial plaque to the Victims of Stalin's repressions with the city limits."[585] What made this situation "shameful" and "painful" was that all the existing monuments, she claimed, "were installed by outsiders, former prisoners of Inta's camps and their relatives."[586] It was not enough that Memorial and others had previously done much to preserve these sites of memory, the director called for the state to officially recognize "these sacred places" and to ensure their continued preservation, which was desperately needed for "the sake of our conscience."[587]

Newspapers of the early-2000s pointed to the disregard for memorial cemeteries, which lay abandoned and littered with trash, as another indicator of the decline in cultural memory.[588] In 2002, a Syktyvkar weekly published the comments of local residents who expressed outrage over the disrespect for the dead: "Memory of the past, of people, must not only be in museums, memoirs and beautiful speeches. Where in Europe will you find a forsaken and desecrated cemetery? Where would you find such [a thing] in Asia? A

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[584] V. Abueva, "Sovest'- poniatie nravstvennoe" *NK*, Dec. 2, 1999, no. 54. See also, "Pamiat': Memorial vedet poisk" *Zaria*, Jul. 9, 2000. See also, Ol'ga Pleshakova, "V Zapoliar'e poiavilsia eshche odin pamiatnik zhertvam politicheskikh repressii," *Zapoliar'e*, Oct. 21, 2010.
[585] Ibid.
[586] Ibid.
[587] Ibid.
[588] N. Dukhovskaia, "Krest na kraiu obryva," *Ukhta*, Sept. 5, 2000; N. Dukhovskaia, "Programma 'Pokaianie:' god spustia," *Ukhta*, Aug. 26, 2000; A. Galkin, "S chego nachinaetsia Rodina?..," *Ukhta*, Sept. 6, 2000.

cemetery is a sacred place."[589] The rebuke of local authorities' for failing to protect the cemetery continued: "After all, far from everyone likes to go to museums, [and] breath their stale air. But here it is possible to see works of art, to touch history, to learn about [repressed] peoples' fates directly under the open sky."[590] It is important to note here that even during the Soviet period, religious traditions of proper burial and maintaining a family member's grave remained an important part of Soviet culture.[591] Beyond this, the destruction of the cemetery was all the more shameful because it had been publicly hailed in 1990 as a symbol of the triumph of the restoration of justice.[592] Regardless of what one thought about Soviet history and the continuous calls to remember, cemeteries and the monuments that marked them held a special place in cultural memory as "material reminders of the people's past troubles."[593]

Similar outrage was sparked when the former mayor of Vorkuta, Igor Shpektor, proposed constructing a "living" Gulag museum in the tundra. According to the proposal

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[589] "Zabvenie," newspaper unknown, Oct. 11, 2002.
[590] Ibid.
[591] Malysheva, 352. For context, let us also consider for a moment the steady flow of outmigration during this period. From 1990 to 2002, approximately 368,000 people migrated out of Komi due to the declining economy, which led to the shuttering of many of Komi's mines and decaying factories that supported life in the Far North. See, V. V. Fauzer, "Migratsionnye protsessy v Respublike Komi: Otsenka i tendentsii protekaniia," in *V Ural'skii demograficheskii forum: Sbornik materialov* (Ekaterinburg: Institute ekonommiki UrO RAN, 2014), 173, http://elar.urfu.ru/bitstream/10995/30048/1/irdso_2014_32.pdf. On the continuing decline of Komi's population, see, "Naselenie Komi prodolzhaet sokrashchat'sia iz-za migratsii," *BNK: Informatsionnoe agenstvo*, Jan. 31, 2018, accessed 19.02.19, https://www.bnkomi.ru/data/news/73972/.
[592] GU RK NARK 2 f. P-3800, d. 102, l. 1-1a (E. Vladimirov, "Ssyl'nym sorok pervogo," *Molodezh' Severa*, Aug. 8, 1990, no. 92 (6354).
[593] "Nialta: Poslednie v smert'," *Usinskaia nov'*, no. 401-405, Nov. 6, 2008. See also, Nikolai Baranov, "Blagorodnaia missiia," *Iskra*, Aug. 16, 2008; A. Smingilis, "Poliaki v Komi," *Tvoia gazeta*, no. 16, Jul. 8, 2009. Member of the Inta ethnographic museum, N. Baranov, wrote about the importance of graves as a part of Komi's cultural memory and symbols of its past: "Abez' – it is the historical past of the Inta region, the Komi Republic, [and] the country. To know the historical truth, however bitter it may be, is necessary for the current and future generations, so that it never happens again."

in the July 30, 2010 issue of *Respublika*, tourists would be able experience the extreme conditions of Stalin's arctic Gulag.[594] Although it was never realized, the plan was vociferously opposed by Fond Pokaianie as making a mockery of human suffering. The arguments in favor of the project expressed a dissatisfaction with the absence of museums dedicated wholly to the Gulag (despite the fact that almost every ethnographic museum in Komi features permanent exhibits on the subject) and a desire to recreate the camp experience as a warning that the Gulag could return. As sitting mayor of Vorkuta and grandson of a former prisoner of Vorkutlag, Valerii Budovskii, said of the necessity of such institutions, "Unlike Germany, where Nazi concentration camps such as Dachau or Buchenwald are preserved, or Poland where there is Auschwitz, in Russia there is no such thing. And the memory of the terrible years of the Stalin's repressions must be preserved for [our] descendants."[595] However, unlike his predecessor, Budovskii did not support building a camp as a tourist attraction, "We will exhibit old spades, picks, and dishware in the museum. We will show the conditions, in which prisoners lived. But the main thing is this is still history. But I am against people spending the night on bunks in barracks behind barbed wire. I would not stay there one night."[596] The chairman of Fond

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[594] Artur Arteev, "GULAG dlia turistov: v Vorkute reshili vossozdat' lagernuiu zonu Stalinskoi epokhi," *Respublika*, Jul. 30, 2010. The New York Times featured a piece on this story when the idea was first proposed by the then sitting mayor of Vorkuta. See, Steven Lee Meyers, "Above the Arctic Circle, A Gulag Nightmare for Tourists?" *The New York Times*, Jun. 6, 2005, https://www.nytimes.com/2005/06/06/world/europe/above-the-arctic-circle-a-gulag-nightmare-for-tourists.html.

[595] Ibid. Budovskii endorsed the idea of a museum but rejected turning it into a tourist attraction. He said, "I think that even *Vorkutintsy* would be interested to see how and in what conditions our city was built. We don't intend to forget out history, after all Vorkuta was entirely built by prisoners, my grandfather was also a prisoner of the camp." In this light, it is interesting that Budovskii did not mention the Perm Gulag museum. Given the profile of the museum, it is doubtful that he did not know about it.

[596] Ibid.

Pokaianie, Mikhail Rogachev, also opposed the proposal on similar grounds: "a Gulag museum is needed in Komi. But it should be an actual museum, and not a relaxation center for tourists."[597]

Anxieties over the growing indifference to the past in the early years of the new millennium were met with the introduction of new ceremonies. While the Week of Conscience remained a regular event in Ukhta, it was eventually superseded by the annual celebration of the Day of Memory of the Victims of Political Repression, which is observed throughout Komi and the Russian Federation on October 30.[598] In honor of the holiday, the October 28, 2010 issue of *Krasnoe znamia* featured a brief survey of the recent history of the event, which described how it was observed in cities that were once sites of the Gulag throughout Komi.[599] The article underscored the significance of the holiday in Komi's "biography," which was "closely interwoven with the epoch of the GULAG."[600]

Continuing the tradition of blending secular and religious rituals, the Day of Memory of the Victims of Political Repression is observed throughout Komi in candle-light readings of lists of the names of the repressed led by local ethnographic museums and Fond Pokaianie at monuments. Such memory events were an attempt to stabilize what many experienced as the destabilization of cultural memory under Putin, when the

[597] Ibid.
[598] It remains unclear when exactly this switch occurred. The Day of Memory of the Victims of Political Repression was first celebrated in 1989 by Memorial in Moscow. Originally it commemorated the Day of Political Prisoners which began in 1974 political prisoners launched a mass hunger strike. On October 18, 1991 the Day of Memory of the Victims of Political Repression was added to the calendar of state holidays by decree of the Supreme Soviet RSFSR "On the establishment of the Day of Memory of the Victims of Political Repression." On the history of the holiday, see, Smith, 160-163.
[599] "Iz teni GULAGa: Den' osoboi pamiati," *Krasnoe znamia Severa*, Oct. 28, 2010, no. 126.
[600] Ibid.

state shut down and took over the Perm-36 Museum as it simultaneously passed legislation on the commemoration of the victims of political repression.[601] Echoing earlier appeals to remember the past as an act of ensuring the future, the Director of the Inta Local History Museum underscored the importance of remembering in 2010: "[We must] ensure that the link of memory is not broken. People pass away, but we must preserve memory."[602] In addition to the passing of the last generation who directly experienced Stalinist violence, these fears were stoked by the increasing normalcy of justifications of Stalin's repressions found in federal school history textbooks and on state television despite politicians' posturing speeches to remember the dead.[603] For example, these interpretations of the past frame Stalinist violence within a unifying, patriotic narrative in which the Gulag was essential, rather than detrimental, to industrialization and the war effort.[604]

[601] The coverage of the Perm-36 episode was extensive in the West and in Russia, see, Anna Dolgov, "Russia's Gulag Museum Shuts Doors Amid Mounting State Pressure," *The Moscow Times*, March 3, 2015, https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2015/03/03/russias-gulag-museum-shuts-doors-amid-mounting-state-pressure-a44401; Elena Bobrova, "Soviet-era Gulag museum NGO Perm-36 announces closure," *Russia Beyond the Headlines*, March 6, 2015, https://www.rbth.com/society/2015/03/06/soviet-era_gulag_museum_ngo_perm-36_announces_closure_44297.html; Ivan Kozlov, "'Potok donosov byl bespretsedentnym' Kak v Permi borolis' s muzeem istorii politicheskikh repressii," *Meduza*, November 10, 2014, https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2015/03/03/russias-gulag-museum-shuts-doors-amid-mounting-state-pressure-a44401; Irina Tumakova, " 'Perm'-36': Muzei GULAGa i Minkul'ta," *Fontanka*, October 30, 2016, https://www.fontanka.ru/2016/10/30/041/. On the state's program to commemorate the victims of political repression under Putin, see, Koposov, *Memory Laws, Memory Wars*, 238-299.
[602] "Iz teni GULAGa: Den' osoboi pamiati," *Krasnoe znamia Severa*, Oct. 28, 2010, no. 126.
[603] Thomas Sherlock, "Confronting the Stalinist Past: The Politics of Memory in Russia," *The Washington Quarterly*, 34, no.2, Spring 2011: 93-109; Nanci Adler, "Reconciliation with – or rehabilitation of – the Soviet past?" *Memory Studies* 5, no. 3, 2012: 327-338.
[604] Tyler C. Kirk, "Toward A Settled Past and a Brighter Future: The Creation of a 'Usable Past' in Modern Russia, 2000-2010," MA thesis (University of Chicago, 2011).

The presence of Komi's past was the focus of a 2008 interview with Komi's deputy to the State Duma in Moscow, Rostislav Gol'dshtein, who declared, "All of the Komi Republic is a big monument to the victims of political repression."[605] Deputy Gol'dshtein elaborated on the importance of memory of the past in the present,

> Komi was literally embroiled in camps. The 'zone' stretched for thousands of miles. Most of our northern towns and settlements are former places of exile. At the beginning of the last century, half of Komi's population were 'politicals.' In 1939 the 'free' population of the Komi ASSR was 320,300 people, while the 'camp' [population was] 112,000. It was the repressed who constructed the coal mines, oil fields, logged, and built the railroad on the permafrost and were even the first in the country to start producing radium. Many of them are heroes, at the very least the one who landed in the Gulag without guilt. But they are unknown heroes. We still do not know the exact number of the exiled, or their names. The camp archives have been destroyed and the [last] witnesses are almost gone. *But the memory lives* [emphasis added].[606]

Despite the exhortations of Komi's leaders to remember the past and an infrastructure of memory dedicated to commemorating political repression, new research and efforts to remember outside the proscribed forms are met with resistance from state officials. Moreover, as the collapse of the Soviet Union slides further into the distant past, the turnout in Syktyvkar on October 30 declines. For the most part, the children and relatives of the victims along with the faithful *Memorialtsy* continue to attend. While popular historians defend Stalin on national state television and some people see him as an "effective manager," there remains a cohesive cultural memory of the Gulag and political repression in Komi. Although memory changes with the context in which it is

[605] Olga Repina, "Vsia Respublika Komi – bol'shoi pamiatnik zhertvam politicheskikh repressii ubezhden deputat Gosdumy ot Komi Rostislav Gol'dshein," *Komiinform*, Oct. 30, 2008, http://www.komiinform.ru/news/52437/.
[606] Ibid.

reproduced, the stability of cultural memory in Komi is the result of a memory project that has been ongoing since 1987.

While the center initiated the memory project of coming to terms with the Stalinist past, the production of cultural memory was taken over by the people who published evidence, erected monuments, and invented rituals that ultimately delegitimized the Communist Party and contributed to the collapse of the Soviet Union. While Komi is unique in many ways, it is emblematic of the memory projects that unfolded during the collapse of the Soviet Union in other parts of the country touched by the Gulag and political repression. While forgetting is a part of every society, hope remains in the places colonized by forced labor that continuing to commemorate the past will prevent oblivion. Despite the shifting currents of the capital, memory lives and dies in the provinces.

CONCLUSION

On October 30, 2016, I joined the crowd of a hundred people gathered around the monument to the victims of political repression in Syktyvkar to observe the 25th annual ceremony in their honor. Although it started to snow and the temperature was well below freezing, people of all generations stood silently during the solemn ceremony, which lasted for over an hour. The archbishop of the Syktyvkar diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church blessed the ceremony with a prayer before he spoke about the repressed members of his family, some of whom were sent to the camps in the north while others were executed on the outskirts of city.[607] The Bishop's speech was followed by another speech by the Chairman of the State Council of the Komi Republic, Nadezhda Dorofeeva, whose grandfather was executed in 1937. Dorofeeva underscored the importance of preventing history from repeating itself. The memory of the victims of political repression should not just be commemorated on October 30, she stated, but every day so that Komi's children would know "the truth about their ancestors who have come to call Syktyvkar their home."[608] The final speech was delivered by Mikhail Rogachev, the chairman of Fond Pokaianie. In the presence of the repressed, citizens of Syktyvkar, the Bishop, and representatives of the republican government, Rogachev concluded his speech by questioning the seriousness of those, such as the governor of Komi who was noticeably absent, who called for remembrance while making it difficult for civil society organizations to conduct research:

[607] Archbishop Pitirim (Pavel Pavlovich Volochkov) is also the Archbishop of all of Komi. See, "Episkopat RPTs," Russkaia Pravoslavnaia Tserkov', accessed 21.02.19, http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/31720.html.
[608] Nadezhda Dorofeeva, quoted in author's field notes, Oct. 30, 2016.

> We try to tell people about that time, not at all thinking that this exhausts Soviet and Russian history. We should know all chapters of history, and not only those that we have a right to be proud about. Otherwise our memory will be incomplete. For 25 years we have observed this day, but Books of Memory are published only in a few regions. In several regions their publication has stopped and in others it never even began. On the one hand we say that we need to name all the names, but on the other with each passing year it becomes increasingly difficult to get information about people who vanished in the camps, exile, and the special settlements.[609]

From left to right: The Bishop of Syktyvkar blessing the ceremony; Rogachev delivers his speech, Oct. 30. 2016.[610]

As a participant in the week of events leading up to the October 30 ceremony, I witnessed the continuation of a memory project 86 years in the making. The events of the week included evenings of memory where members of the public gathered to

[609] "V Syktyvkare otmetili 25-i Den' pamiati zhertv politicheskikh repressii," *BNK: Informatsionnoe agenstvo*, Oct. 30, 2016, https://www.bnkomi.ru/data/news/55443/. The governor did publish an address to the residents of Komi in a local online newspaper which echoed Dorofeeva's speech, see, S. A. Gaplikov, "Obrashcheniie Glavy Respubliki Komi k zhiteliam respubliki v sviazi s Dnem pamiati zhertv politicheskikh repressii," *Komiinform*, Oct. 30, 2016, https://komiinform.ru/news/140563.

[610] Tyler Kirk, *Day of Victims of Political Repression*, Syktyvkar, Komi Republic, R. F., Personal Archive, Oct. 30, 2016.

remember, special church services, public lectures, book releases, documentary film screenings, student essay contests, and the opening of exhibitions at the National Archive, Library, Gallery, and Museum of the Komi Republic.[611] Although fewer people participate in these events than they once did, the events I participated in were well-attended by members of the community, including representatives of the local government, Russian Orthodox clergy, citizens, and victims of political repression and their families.[612] For example, over a hundred people filled the large reading room on the second floor of the National Library of the Komi Republic for public lectures led by Fond Pokaianie on the history of the Gulag and political repression.

While the unifying theme of these events was remembrance, there was another underlying theme. At the opening of the new exhibit at the National Museum of the Komi Republic, which presented the history of political repression in Komi through the lens of one family, Elena Morozova, the museum's curator, and Mikhail Rogachev repeatedly underscored the importance of civil society organizations and private individuals who kept the memory project alive by donating their personal archives to the Fond Pokaianie archive. Without their donations and participation, tightening restrictions on access to state archives containing information broadly construed as "personal and family secrets" would make it virtually impossible to produce new research and exhibits,

[611] AFP (Schedule of events in observance of the Day of the Memory of Victims of Political Repression, Oct. 20-30, 2016).
[612] M. B. Rogachev, noted in the author's fieldnotes, Oct. 31, 2016. I attended all of the events with the exception of the church services.

such as the one we were attending.[613] Yet, as Rogachev noted, these sources were important for another reason as well. The individual lives documented in the Gorodetskii archive represented a "hidden whole" that was obliterated by Stalinist repression. As he concluded his speech: "Of these millions we only know the fates of [relatively] few families because of the destructiveness of the regime."[614]

Two days later, another interaction I had with an archivist at the National Archive of the Komi Republic confirmed the continued importance of Fond Pokaianie's archive. During the "Day of Open Doors," archivists at the National Archive of the Komi Republic gave a presentation on Komi's history as a region of exile and imprisonment under Tsarist and Soviet rule. Although they acknowledged the tragedy of past repression, their narrative struck a remarkably different tone than the one I heard at the museum. The lecture focused on exiles' and prisoners' contributions to the development of the Far North with little mention of their suffering or the mass death that came as the cost of these achievements. Perhaps to account for the glaring absence of individual prisoners and exiles from the story they told, the archivist invited the audience to examine the individual case files of former prisoners at the end of the lecture. The files covering the long table in the center of the room were the same personal files that are typically off limits to researchers. As I read several files belonging to the tsar's exiles

[613] For this law see, "Federal'nyi zakon ot 22.10.2004 No.125-FZ 'Ob arkhivnom dele v Rossiskoi Federatsii," Federal'noe arkhivnoe agenstvo Rossiskoi Federatsii, [updated 18.06.2017] http://archives.ru/documents/fz/zakon-archivnoe-delo.shtml.
[614] M. B. Rogachev, quoted in author's fieldnotes, Oct. 26, 2016. The Brochure for the exhibition reads: "The exhibit shows the horror and tragedy of the political repressions of the 1920s-1950s through the personal archive of one family." See, Arkhiv Natsional'nogo muzeiia Respubliki Komi (NMRK) ("Gorodetskie. Tragediia odnoi sem'i', broshiura, Syktyvkar, 2016).

and Stalin's enemies of the people, one of the archivists came up to me and said, "Take a good look and remember what they look like. You will never see them again."[615] Although the archivist acknowledged that these documents were an important piece of Komi's history, they could not allow me to photograph them because they contained "personal data."

Four years prior to these events, the Russian State Duma passed a law in 2012 that required all nongovernment organizations who receive funds from foreign sources and engage in "political activities" to register as foreign agents.[616] The law sought to weaken already enfeebled civil society groups after the widespread protests of Putin's election to a third term as president.[617] Branches of Memorial throughout Russia were threatened with closure and the confiscation of their files when they refused to follow the law, which they unsuccessfully challenged in the Supreme Court as a violation of the constitution of the Russian Federation.[618] Although Memorial was not shut down and their archive was not confiscated, the law was successful in curtailing the activities of smaller branches

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[615] Archivist, quoted in author's field notes, Oct. 28, 2016.
[616] "Russia: New 'Foreign Agents' Law Ruling Court Orders Prominent Rights Group to Register," *Human Rights Watch*, Dec. 13, 2013, https://www.hrw.org/news/2013/12/13/russia-new-foreign-agents-law-ruling.
[617] The Russian state's attack on human rights organizations under Putin has been widely covered in the Russian and international press. For a recent summary, see, "Russia: Government vs. Rights Groups. The Battle Chronicle," *Human Rights Watch*, June 18, 2016, https://www.hrw.org/russia-government-against-rights-groups-battle-chronicle. On the state's takeover of Perm-36 Museum and the persecution of Memorial as a "foreign agent," see, Jeffrey S. Hardy, "The State Museum of Gulag History (Moscow, Russia)," in *Museums of Communism: New Memory Sites in Central and Eastern Europe*, ed. Stephen Norris (forthcoming with Indiana University Press).
[618] Sarah Rainsford, "Russian Soviet-era remembrance group Memorial risks closure," *BBC*, Oct. 30, 2014, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-29831134; "Russia censures Memorial rights group as 'foreign agent'," *BBC*, Nov. 9, 2015, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34767014; "Memorial NGO Fined for Noncompliance With Foreign Agent Law," *The Moscow Times*, Sept. 4, 2015, https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2015/09/04/memorial-ngo-fined-for-noncompliance-with-foreign-agent-law-a49353.

who do not have the resources of the Moscow and St. Petersburg branches.[619] Even Fond Pokaianie ran into problems as a result of this law. While they were not forced to register as a foreign agent, their access to the personal files of former prisoners and exiles in the archive of the Komi Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) has been cut off.[620] Despite this blow, Fond Pokaianie's troubles with the state seem to have been resolved for the time being as they continue their work, including the publication of new volumes of the *Martirolog*.

Although it has faced direct challenges from the state, which controls access to archives, public space, and funding, the cultural memory of the Gulag is perpetuated in Komi even as it fades in other parts of the country. While Fond Pokaianie's tireless efforts and its historical relationship with the local government have been essential to the continued success of the memory project started by Syktyvkar Memorial in 1989, the vitality of Komi's cultural memory is due in no small part to the efforts of the victims of political repression and their families who, by their participation, form communities of memory that extend beyond Komi. By continuing to gather to remember outside of the formal contexts designated for commemorating the victims of political repression, these

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[619] Kathy Lally, "Putin pushes NGO foreign agent law," *The Washington Post*, Apr. 17, 2013, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/putin-pushes-ngo-foreign-agent-law/2013/04/15/d9509ec2-a37e-11e2-9c03-6952ff305f35_story.html?utm_term=.21ba04fac380. As of writing this, it seems Memorial is no longer considered a "foreign agent" by the Russian government, see, "Miniust ne vkliuchil NIPTs 'Memorial' v reestr inostrannykh agentov," Memorial Society, Feb. 12, 2019, https://www.memo.ru/ru-ru/memorial/departments/intermemorial/news/235.

[620] On these challenges, particularly battles over archival access in Syktyvkar, see, "Izdateli martirologa 'Pokaianie' ne teriaiut nadezhd poluchit' dostup k arkhivam," *BNK: Infromatsionnoe agenstvo*, Dec. 23, 2011, https://www.bnkomi.ru/data/news/11202/; "Predsedatel' pravleniia fonda 'Pokaianie' Mikhail Rogachev: 'Ne iskliucheno, chto izdanie martirologa pridetsia 'svernut''," *BNK: Informatsionnoe agenstvo*, Nov. 24, 2012, https://www.bnkomi.ru/data/interview/16679/; Valerii Chernitsyn, "Mikhail Rogachev: 'Moia dal'neishaia sud'ba zavisit ot sud'by Martirologa,'" *Krasnoe znamia*, Apr. 2, 2015, https://komikz.ru/news/interview/15295.

people perpetuate the memory of the Gulag. In turn, this strengthens Fond Pokaianie which claims to represent a living memory that has crystallized in the archives, publications, museum exhibits, ceremonies they organized.[621] Widely accepted as part of the region's history and firmly established in cultural memory, the memory of the Gulag cannot be silenced in Komi because it informs the story that its residents and the state tell about themselves.

In fact, this is the legacy of the brotherhood of zeks who formed a community of Gulag returnees and constructed a collective memory of their experiences, which formed the basis of an alternate history of the Soviet Union. This alternate history illustrates that mass repression and the carceral regime were part of the foundation of Soviet society rather than a Stalinist aberration. Although the camps were largely emptied and the penal system was substantively reformed after Stalin's death, the industries and cities of the Far North stand as monuments to former prisoners' forced labor. By acknowledging their contributions to Soviet society despite their suffering, this alternate narrative brings those who were excluded back into history not only as victims to be mourned but as examples of the country's best daughters and sons. Although the Gulag and the victims of political repression became a part of official histories of the Soviet Union after 1991, they were primarily presented as victims and their contributions, if acknowledged at all, were downplayed.[622] Furthermore, the autobiographical narratives that Gulag returnees

[621] This illustrates the development of cultural memory, which Aleida Assmann, describes as a transition from intergenerational memory to long-term transgenerational memory. See, Aleida Assmann, "Transformations between History and Memory," *Social Research* 75, no. 1 (Spring 2008): 56.
[622] The controversial state-sponsored history textbooks and teacher's manual published in 2007 are an example of this, see, A. A. Danilov, A. I. Utkin, and A. V. Filippov, eds., *Istoriia Rossii, 1945-2008 gg.: 11*

contributed to this unwritten past, illuminate how former enemies of the people formed a nascent civil society under an authoritarian dictatorship. Ultimately, this reveals how the most vulnerable and marginalized members of Soviet society resisted the state through group solidarity and acts of memory, which laid the foundation for future human rights groups.

The commemoration of the victims of political repression and the memory of the Gulag has continued outside of Komi as well. Fifty-seven years after Khrushchev first proposed it and twenty-six years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Russian state erected the Wall of Sorrow with the participation of human rights groups on October 30, 2017. Although the Solovetsky Stone was the first monument to the victims of political repression erected in Moscow in 1990, the Wall of Sorrow represents the first monument to political repression erected by government decree. Three years in the making, the monument, which is 100 feet long and 20 feet high, depicts human figures in a large wall that forms the shape of a scythe, which represents how people were cut down by political repression.[623] At the unveiling of the monument, Russian President Vladimir Putin was joined by Patriarch Kirill and Natalia Solzhenitsyna, the widow of the most famous

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klass. Uchebnik dlia uchashchikhsia obshcheobrazovatel'nykh uchrezhdenii. (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 2008); A. V. Filippov, ed., *Istoriia Rossii, 1945-2008: kniga dlia uchitelia*. (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 2008); Filippov, *Noveishaia Istoriia Rossii, 1945-2007 gg.: kniga dlia uchitelia*. (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 2007).

[623] For a description of the monument and its unveiling, see, "Putin Orders Memorial to 'Victims of Political Repression,'" *Moscow Times*, Sept. 30, 2015, https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2015/09/30/putin-orders-memorial-to-victims-of-political-repression-a49971. "V Moskve otkryli memorial zhertvam repressii. Na tseremoniiu otkrytiia 'Steny skorbi' priekhal Putin," *Novaya gazeta*, Oct. 30, 2017, https://www.novayagazeta.ru/news/2017/10/30/136550-v-moskve-otkryli-memorial-zhertvam-repressiy-na-tseremoniyu-otkrytiya-steny-skorbi-priehal-putin; "Wall of Grief: Putin opens first Soviet victims memorial," *BBC*, Oct. 30, 2017 https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-41809659.

former resident of the Gulag. While Putin lauded the monument as an important step toward healing past traumas, he simultaneously highlighted the dangers of dwelling on the past: "Indeed, we and our descendants must remember the tragedy of repression and what caused it. However, this does not mean settling scores. We cannot push society to a dangerous line of confrontation yet again."[624]

Sculptor Georgii Frangulian walks along the Wall of Sorrow in Moscow.[625]

While the appearance of new monuments and a revamped Gulag in Moscow seems to signal a victory for human rights groups who work to bring Stalinist repression to light, they have not been without controversy. Some, including as former Soviet dissidents Aleksandr Podrabinek, Pavel Litvinov, and Vladimir Bukovsky, signed a

[624] For Putin's speech see, Vladimir Putin, "Opening of Wall of Sorrow memorial to victims of political repression," President of Russia, Oct. 30, 2017, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/55948.
[625] For image see, Neil MacFarquhar, "Critics Scoff as Kremlin Erects Monument to the Repressed," The New York Times, Oct. 30, 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/30/world/europe/russia-soviet-repression-monument.html. According to this article, most of the $6,000,000 monument was paid for by the city of Moscow, upwards of $800,000 was donated from "corporate donors and individuals."

petition published on Facebook criticizing the intention behind the Wall of Sorrow when the government continues to persecute, and jail, human rights activists.[626]

This was not the only controversial monument erected recently. On October 27, 2018, the Wall of Memory was unveiled at the Kommunarka NKVD Special Object in Moscow where 6,609 people who were executed between 1937 and 1941 are buried.[627] After years of research, planning, and fundraising, the Wall of Memory was realized as a joint project of the Memorial Society, the State Museum of the History of the Gulag, and the Russian Orthodox Church. The monument drew wide criticism for listing the names of victims alongside the names of NKVD operatives who later became victims themselves. Some accused the project leaders of attempting to "rehabilitate hangmen" with this monument.[628] However, as Ian Rachinskii, the Chairman of the Memorial Society in Moscow, wrote: "This wall is a tombstone on a common grave. This is not canonization or rehabilitation. That is why at Kommunarka (as in Butovo) all names are listed on the wall, regardless of presence or absence of rehabilitation. These are all

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[626] Aleksandr Podrabinek, "Podderzhivat' litsemerie vlastei amoral'no," Facebook, Oct. 29, 2017 https://www.facebook.com/alexander.podrabinek/posts/1441353112649712. The petition can also be accessed via the *New York Times* article cited above. For a sympathetic view of Putin's approach to the past and a criticism of western media coverage of the event, see, Stephen F. Cohen, "The Unheralded Putin – Russia's Official Anti-Stalinist No. 1," *The Nation*, Nov. 8, 2017, https://www.thenation.com/article/the-unheralded-putin-russias-official-anti-stalinist-no-1/.

[627] Since the killing continued at Kommunarka after 1938, Memorial includes those executed there up until the site was evacuated after the start of the war. Butovo and Kommunarka were two of the largest killing fields of the Great Terror discovered in Moscow in 1991. Of the 26,098 executed in Moscow between 8 August 1937 and 19 October 1938, a total of 19,799 were executed at Butovo (15,036) and Kommunarka (4,763). On these killing fields and their excavation in the 1990s, see, Karl Schlögel, *Moscow 1937*, trans., Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge: Polity, 2012), 472-504.

[628] Ian Rachinskii, "O Stene pamiati v Kommunarke," Memorial Society, Nov. 2, 2018, https://www.memo.ru/en-us/memorial/departments/intermemorial/news/205. See also, Ekaterina Vorob'eva, "Tom 3, list 135," *Novaya gazeta*, Oct. 27, 2018, https://www.novayagazeta.ru/articles/2018/10/27/78376-tom-3-list-135.

people, who lie here. This is not an assessment but a statement."[629] Nearly a year later, the controversy was the topic of a public forum hosted by the Memorial Society where members of various groups who participated in the planning and construction of this monument defended their decision.[630]

Wall of Memory at Kommunarka in Moscow.

While debates over the recently erected monuments in Moscow seem to raise new questions about commemorating the past, the issues at the center of these questions are not new. Since the first days of glasnost, and Khrushchev's thaw before it, members of society and the state have debated whom to mourn, whom to blame, and how to remember them. These debates will continue for the foreseeable future as memory actors throughout Russia – human rights groups, historians, individuals, and the state – produce new knowledge about the past and commemorate it with an ever-expanding infrastructure

[629] Ibid.

[630] The forum took place on Feb. 15, 2019 at the offices of the Memorial Society in Moscow, where the event was live streamed over the internet. Historian and member of Memorial, Nikita Petrov, agreed with Rachinskii's statement that it would be wrong to divide the victims as Kommunarka was not only a site of memory, but also a mass grave.

of memory. The ever-growing queue of participants who wish to read the names of the repressed at the annual "Return of the Names" ceremony held on October 29 at the Solovetsky stone on Lubyanka Square in Moscow, and in thirty-five other Russian cities, illustrates that the memory of the Gulag and political repression is important to more than just the immediate relatives of the repressed.[631] To silence this memory, the state would have to silence these people.

Although new memory actors, such as the State Museum of Gulag History and the Russian Orthodox Church, are playing a more active role in shaping how the past is understood, the future of the past will be determined by the enduring legacy of those who came forward to testify about the Gulag and political repression in the previous decades.[632] While the partial opening of the archives has led to a greater understanding of how Stalinist terror and the Gulag functioned in Soviet society, Gulag returnees' memoirs, letters, artworks, photographs, and other material artifacts are the principal sources that civil society groups and museums draw on to assign meaning to these events. Furthermore, these sources enable the horror of these events to be translated for contemporary audiences, especially those born after the collapse of the Soviet Union,

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[631] According to a tweet posted by Memorial, 263 people participated in the first Return of the Names in 2007, in 2018 5,286 people participated. Names of the repressed are read from 10:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. See, Memorial Moscow (@MemorialMoscow), Twitter post, Oct. 29, 2018, 12:44 p.m. https://twitter.com/MemorialMoscow/status/924723560337330177. For more on the Return of Names, see, "Ob aktsii 'Vozvrashchenie imen'," Vozvrashchenie imen, accessed 22.02.19, http://october29.ru/about/. There is even a Return of the Names ceremony in Syktyvkar. This ceremony was added to the schedule of events commemorating the victims of political repression every October in 2014. See, "Pravozashchitnik iz Komi Igor' Sazhin o 'Vozvrashchenii imen': U liudei est' zapros na vospriozvedenie proshlogo," *7x7*, Oct. 27, 2018, https://7x7-journal.ru/discuss/113084.

[632] For an analysis of this museum and its history, see, Hardy, "The State Museum of Gulag History (Moscow, Russia)." For a study of the New Martyrs commemorated by the Russian Orthodox Church, see, Christensen, *The Making of the New Martyrs of Russia*.

whose personal connection to past repressions grows ever more tenuous with each passing generation. Time will tell if society stays interested in these documents but they are there, at least for now, to be used.

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Za doblestnyi trud
Za Intiiskii ugol'
Za obraztsovuiu sluzhbu: organ politotdela
Zapoliar'e
Zapoliarnaia kochegarka: organ politotdela
Za Ukhtinskuiu neft'
Zaria
Zaria Timana
7x7

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E. V. Markova, interview with the author by phone, October 10, 2017.

N. A. Morozov, interview with the author, May 19, 2017, Moscow, Russia.

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