The Great Return: The Gulag Survivor and the Soviet System
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Chapter I

Defining the Parameters

The last leader of the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachev, signified the second period of official de-Stalinization at the 70th anniversary of the October revolution in 1987. On this occasion he re-opened a discussion that had long been officially closed when he publicly declared that "thousands" of Party members and other Soviet citizens had been repressed under Stalin. This understatement reflected political, rather than historical reality. After all, there had been Khrushchev thirty years earlier, whose Secret Speech referred to "massive" crimes, presumably well over "thousands". But when Khrushchev's term of office ended, so, too, did the selected efforts at truth-telling. The Khrushchev era was followed by nearly 25 years of official amnesia.

A year after Gorbachev's public admission on crimes under Stalin, the General Secretary seemed to recognize its implications, that is, the implications of coming to terms with his nation's past. The realization was revealed at a 1988 Politburo session, where the agenda item "Memorial" was up for discussion. "Memorial" had commenced functioning in 1987 as a tiny organization -- an 11-person initiative group -- which was conducting a campaign aimed at gathering signatures to support the creation of a monument to victims of Stalin's repressions. But by the time of the 1988 Politburo session, its scope had expanded to encompass the establishment of a scientific and public research center in Moscow with an archive, a museum, a reception room, and a library containing information and data on victims of Soviet repression. Among others, Memorial's efforts immediately cast doubt on the suggestion that a mere "thousands" had been victimized under Stalin. Once the discussion became public, there existed a grave threat to the Soviet system itself.

Apprehensive about the political potential of Memorial, Gorbachev suggested the path of caution: he opted for retaining the investigation of the Soviet past in the hands of
the Party, by limiting Memorial to the regional level under Party supervision.¹ What did Gorbachev have to fear from Memorial’s mandate? After all, other states (but not regimes) had dealt with, and are still dealing with, the contentious issue of officially acknowledging national responsibility and guilt. The appropriate commemoration of the fiftieth anniversaries of the liberation of Auschwitz and the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, with all the history they evoked, are two current examples.

However, the problems associated with confronting their history were different for Gorbachev’s Soviet Union than for either Germany or Japan. Neither Nazi Germany nor Imperial Japan had in fact ever confronted their history nor attempted to make an evolutionary change toward a more open society. These political systems perished, defeated by force of arms, and it was only the subsequent democratic political system that took up the struggle to confront the onerous past. Soviet state terrorism, on the other hand, experienced a much slower death, long outlasting the demise of the dictator. The Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) remained ruthless, had a rigid hierarchy with only top-down accountability, and had no feedback mechanism for responding to the needs of the populous. In contrast to postwar Germany and Japan, in the Soviet system, many of the same people who committed the political crimes were still in political office and were not about to cede power to those who would challenge them.

The death of Josef Stalin in 1953 and the subsequent trickle of prisoners that began to be released from the Gulag system constituted the beginning of the Soviet process of coming to terms with the Stalinist past. These ordinary, for the most part non-political, innocent citizens had been arrested for "counter-revolutionary" activities and dispatched to the barely habitable regions of the North and Far East to mine nickel, chop wood, excavate gold, or build railroads leading nowhere,² but mostly just to waste away through hard labor and hunger under horrendous conditions. Those who, against all odds, had survived the Gulag were, by virtue of
their status alone, a political statement, awakening a social conscience that had to be reckoned with. They and the ghosts of the millions of victims who had died in the camps were evidence and damning testimony to a deranged system. The reappearance of innocent victims of a criminal system now compelled society and the state to confront its past.

But the process was neither smooth nor uninterrupted, and virtually came to a halt by the time of Brezhnev. When it resumed, under Gorbachev, the "unbearable shock" generated by the agonizing examination of Soviet history produced political tremors. In Lenin's Tomb, David Remnick observes, "(u)nder this avalanche of remembering, people protested weariness, even boredom, after a while. But, really, it was the pain of remembering, the shock of recognition, that persecuted them." The philosopher Grigory Pomerants describes it thus: "imagine being an adult and nearly all the truth you know about the world around you...has to be absorbed in a matter of a year or two or three." He considered the predicament of the country as a condition of "mass disorientation". But it was more than the condition of being politically lost. It was the shock of finding out and being found out. Moreover, revelations on the past further wounded the pride of an already economically failing nation. Society and the state suddenly had to deal with feelings of guilt, shame, and disgrace as well as the dismaying culture shock of learning a dreadful political truth.

Historiography, literature

Considering the paucity of knowledge regarding the re-adaptation of the victims of Soviet terror, little scholarly literature has been devoted to this problem. However, a number of works that deal with similar problems can help constitute a framework for a better understanding of this issue. Of particular interest are the works The Survivor and Die Schuldfrage, which will be discussed below in the context of this study. In The Wages of Guilt: Memories of War in
Germany and Japan, Ian Buruma describes how these two states have come to terms with their totalitarian past. He specifically refers to Japanese shame and German guilt. This work is useful in providing perspective for the Russian process of coming to terms with an ignominious past. While there is a proliferation of scientific literature written in post-totalitarian states dealing specifically with victims of political repression under the previous regime, particularly those of Nazi Germany (Holocaust), Cambodia (Khmer Rouge), and Latin America, most of what we know about the experience of victims of the Soviet era thus far is unsystematized. Our knowledge comes from camp memoirs, unofficial and unsystematic reports, testimonials, defector and emigre anecdotes, dissident literature (including samizdat) and a limited number of substantiated studies.

This short survey of the literature relevant to our theme will not address the multitude of works that deal primarily with the terror and the camps, since our present focus is on the aftermath of Soviet repression. Given that the Soviet authoritarian structure has crumbled only relatively recently, there has been little opportunity to systematically study the effects and political implications of its victimizations. Access to official archives was prohibited or limited, and only since 1988 have victims begun to openly discuss their history of repression on a broad scale. There are, however, a few Western, Soviet, and post-Soviet works or parts of works that do specifically address the issue of the victims' return to society. Among them are Stephen Cohen's 1985 Rethinking the Soviet Experience, in particular his chapter on "The Stalin Question Since Stalin". In his discussion of victims' requirements regarding housing, jobs, medical care, etc., Cohen evaluates the political impact of this group of survivors. His assessment that "these demands of the surviving victims had enormous political implications, if only because exoneration and restitution were official admissions of colossal official crimes" proved to be prescient, as the experience under Gorbachev's de-Stalinization was to
illustrate.\textsuperscript{12}

In Remembering Stalin's Victims: Popular Memory and the End of the USSR, Kathleen E. Smith compares transitions from totalitarianism or authoritarianism to democracy, specifically with reference to Khrushchev's and Gorbachev's respective reigns of power. She traces the history of each of their de-Stalinization campaigns, their efforts at truth-telling, and their search for accountability. The author notes that the complicated and unpublicized rehabilitation procedures "reinforced social atomization" and hindered the mourning process.\textsuperscript{13} Implicitly, the very process of rehabilitation laid bare the state's ambivalence about exoneration of those who were labelled "enemies of the people". With regard to the victim, she asserts that in 1956, "rapid release ... did not generally translate into rapid reintegration of returnees into society."\textsuperscript{14} Smith does not pursue this key issue in any depth.\textsuperscript{15}

In his 1994 The Unquiet Ghost: Russians Remember Stalin\textsuperscript{16} Adam Hochschild provides some insight into survivors' memories of their time in the Gulag. He even includes former henchmen in his selection of interviewees. But with the exception of a few isolated references to their post-camp fate, he focuses on the ex-prisoners' vision of the Stalinist epoch and of the present. Hochschild's work does not particularly devote attention to the status of the returnee in society.

Jane Shapiro's unpublished 1967 dissertation, Rehabilitation Policy and Political Conflict in the Soviet Union 1953-1964\textsuperscript{17}, is one of the earliest studies on this issue. It emphasizes the rehabilitation process of Party and military leaders who were victims of the '36 - '38 Purge. Shapiro also discusses changes in the MVD's jurisdiction of the camps after Stalin's death. However, with its focus on the rehabilitation of prominent Party members and understandably limited information on former victims, this study provides little about the fate of ordinary citizens.

Albert van Goudoever published a unique study on the rehabilitation of former Communist Party members, entitled The
Limits of Destalinization in the Soviet Union: Political Rehabilitations since Stalin. Though it is a detailed examination of the process and meaning of rehabilitation, the period during which it was written did not permit access to certain types of materials on social rehabilitation. Moreover, the victims themselves were not yet able to openly discuss their experiences, so oral history was not a readily available means of supplementing the written, official history. Van Goudoever himself asserts, "(f)rom a social point of view, the rehabilitation of the victims of Stalin presents one of the most pressing and, at the same time, least accessible issues in the history of Soviet society".\(^\text{18}\) In his criticism of the Medvedev brothers' contention that victims were fully accommodated, he pointed out (in 1986), "(t)he material is too deficient to justify any conclusion on the way in which reintegration into social life was realised".\(^\text{19}\) Fortunately, the material is no longer too deficient for such inquiries.

Much of the historiographical literature on Khrushchev's de-Stalinization focuses on changes in the political and cultural arena, the rehabilitation of prominent Party members, and the elimination of the "cult of personality". With regard to returnees, it generally limits itself to the description of administrative measures. The actual effect that these measures had on the victim was not a subject of extensive inquiry. Answers had to be sought in the memoirs and fiction of the period. Examples of how fiction was employed to cloak reality will be presented throughout this book.

Russian scholars, of course, have also addressed some of the returnee issues of the post-camp years. Assertions in Roy and Zhores Medvedev’s works on Khrushchev presumably are based on oral history, though it is not clear exactly what the sources are. Though these were very important early works, new information has revealed a number of inaccuracies, rendering some of their figures obsolete. In *Memory and Totalitarianism*, oral historians Darya Khubova and Irina Sherbakova have touched upon the returnee theme. Sherbakova
specifically discusses the issue of gender and memory with regard to the Gulag. The symptoms of post-traumatic stress and re-adaptation into society in victims of one particular (post-Stalin) manifestation of Stalinism -- dissidents who were incarcerated in psychiatric institutions -- have also been studied. Memorial’s own work with victims has been described and analyzed by the organization itself in, among others, their almanac Zvenya (Links). Though a few of the essays contain some material on the victim’s return to society, return is not handled as a separate theme.

In her study on the Gulag, GULAG v sisteme totalitarnogo gosudarstva (The Gulag in the System of Totalitarian Government), Russian historian G.M. Ivanova describes, with the help of archival references, the structure and function of the Gulag. She also briefly discusses the nature of rehabilitation -- the so-called "triumph of justice". Witness her observations on this practice: "the insulted feelings of the citizen could not be [altered] by this false restoration of honor". Ivanova’s inclusion of the victim’s experience of administrative measures makes this a particularly enlightening Russian reference work.

Memoirs necessarily constitute a key source for learning about the Soviet world from the perspective of the former victim. Solzhenitsyn and Shalamov have allowed us to enter the prisoner’s mind, and be in the camps with him. Throughout this book we will refer to numerous published and unpublished memoirs. However, a few accounts that provide insight into the prisoner’s post-camp journey deserve some extra attention here. Evgeniya Ginzburg dedicates a great deal of Within the Whirlwind, the second volume of her memoirs, to experiences she had after her release from camp. This work succinctly captures the psychological and physical aspects of the prisoner’s journey out of the camps and into society. After years of hard labor, Ginzburg’s last place of incarceration was the Elgen camp in Kolyma, where she worked as a nurse in the children’s home. Having served ten years for
"participation in a Trotskyite terrorist counter-revolutionary group," Ginzburg was liberated from camp (exiled) in 1947. Her description of the first official procedures after release epitomized what life was to be like for many ex-prisoners. Witness the officially imposed physical alienation of the former prisoner when she went to exchange her temporary certificate of release for a so-called Form A, that would eventually lead to the receipt of a one-year internal passport: "the window through which documents were handed out was so deeply recessed that looking at the man sitting there was like looking through binoculars from the wrong end". When the official mentioned something about Ginzburg's hand, she thought to herself, "(c)ould they have introduced anything so human as a ritual handshake to congratulate people on their release?" To her attempt to extend a hand in his direction, he responded, "Ten years you've done inside and you still don't know the ropes! ... Where are you putting your hand? Haven't you got eyes? On your right!" He motioned to an apparatus for taking fingerprints. Ginzburg's response reflects the anguish of injustice felt among many former prisoners:

I'd been imagining that I was free. All my release meant was that I could come and go without escort for the time being. I was stuck with my jailers for life, forever. Even now, after ten years as a prisoner, they wanted my fingerprints all over again, wanted to harass and persecute me to my dying day. You could spin around in this accursed wheel till every bone in your body was ground to bits.

This sentiment was shared by many returnees in the years before 1953 and, in many cases, it persisted throughout the Soviet period. Ginzburg also takes readers through the process of amnesty, rehabilitation, and the search for housing and appropriate work.

In Vse Dorogi Vedut Na Vorkutu (All Roads Lead to Vorkuta), Pavel Negretov, who was arrested for belonging to the NTS (National Labor Union of the New Generation) and spent from 1945-1955 in the mines of Vorkuta, presents a collection
of anecdote-memoirs about the people he met in Vorkuta during and after incarceration, for many stayed in this city even after being freed. In one episode, Negretov describes how Ursula Valterovna Elberfeld (later to become his wife), daughter of repressed parents, went to Leningrad to study in 1949. "Ursula always felt the stamp of being an outcast," writes the author, as he goes on to tell how a soldier who wanted to court her never came back after hearing that her parents had been incarcerated. With its emphasis on the post-camp period, this work provides valuable examples and insight into the disparity between policy and practice with regard to former prisoners.

Though they do not fit neatly into a section on historiography, two additional sources of memoirs should be mentioned here. Vozvrashchenie, a support organization for former victims, has published a number of their stories. One of their volumes, Dodnes Tyagoteet (Till My Story Has Been Told), a collection of memoirs by women survivors, contains some information on the returnee theme. Lastly, the organization Memorial has played a significant role in exposing the nature and extent of victimization under Stalin and Stalinism. It provides victims with a forum for telling their stories and voicing their demands. Memorial’s data base of information has been systematically collected since the beginning of the second period of de-Stalinization in 1987. The organization has a wealth of unpublished, unedited, sometimes handwritten memoirs, collected in the late eighties and early nineties, that provide insight into how ordinary people experienced the terror and its aftermath. These documents range from two to two-thousand pages and are the writings of mostly non-professional writers. To the extent that they are the testimony of witnesses, the historical value of these materials is undeniable. There is considerable rambling in these stories, but specific information on the victims’ return can be found. The sources noted in this literature survey help form but a framework for understanding the Soviet victim’s predicament. It is the object of this
The study

The return of these alienated, institutionalized, survivors, each representing many who had perished, was unsettling for them as individuals and traumatic for the body politic. The society to which they returned had no comfortable physical or emotional place to put them. Enormous adjustments would be required by the returnees, by their families, by their communities, and by the political system. All of these adjustments would have personal, social, and political consequences. The focus of the present study is the description of the attempt by victims of Stalinist terror to readapt and resocialize into Soviet society, and the reciprocal struggle of Soviet society and the Soviet system to adapt to returnees. The discussions that follow in this chapter should serve to offer a perspective on this problem. They will raise many questions, but they provide few answers as yet. These will be offered at a later stage.

It will be from the perspective of adaptive and maladaptive behaviors that we will examine the Gulag returnees, their families, and repression as a state instrument of governance. All living systems -- individuals, families, and governments -- either perish, or survive by adapting. The process of adaptation between two opposing parties requires an accommodation by at least one of the parties, but often by both. The Soviet system of state-run terror forced its citizens to accommodate to it through the unconstrained use of coercion. The surviving, returning prisoner was in some important ways a changed person from the one who first went into the camp. The families of the returnees were also changed by the experience. They were under pressure to change their feelings toward the prisoner in order to protect themselves from frustration and even, perhaps, imprisonment.

Soviet leaders adapted to repression and the use of
terror as an instrument to maintain power, inmates (who survived) adapted to the Gulag, families and the social network of prisoners who were left behind had to adjust to their absence. As part of their effort to survive by adapting, prisoners were under considerable pressure to reshape themselves to fit into a pathologic system. As noted in Terence Des Pres' *The Survivor*, the first stage in camp is similar for all prisoners of totalitarian regimes, Nazi, Soviet, or other:

every newcomer immediately had to traverse a course of profound personal degradation and humiliation... There were two possibilities and within three months it became apparent which one would apply. By that time a man would have gone into an almost irresistible mental decline -- if, indeed, he had not already perished in a physical sense; or he would have begun to adapt himself to the concentration camp. 31

Prisoners had to learn what to do and how to act in their new situation, however abnormal it may have been.

For its part, the strength of the Soviet political system was its unwavering control over its citizens. This was also its weakness. Because it did not accommodate, it could not institute the kind of changes necessary to meet the changing conditions. It turned out to be a brittle monolith that finally crumbled.

We can view the cautiousness with which even a committed reformer like Gorbachev had to move as appropriate, though, given that the whole Soviet system was maladapted to repression. Indeed, terror and the use of forced labor (no stranger to Tsarist times) had been an integral means of preserving the Soviet state's power since mid-1918 when Lenin legalized a decree sanctioning the existence of work camps. 32 By 1922, 65 concentration camps existed. 33 A year later the first Correctional Labor Camps were opened in the Solovetsky island monasteries in the far north. 34 (It was for this very reason that Memorial chose an unsculpted stone brought from Solovki, as the islands are also called, for its monument to victims of totalitarianism. It appropriately symbolized the
continuity of Soviet terror.) Moreover terror, along with bureaucratization, a ruthless leader, and loyal executants and believers, were characteristic of Stalin’s rule and Stalinism in general.35

Before proceeding with our discussion on de-Stalinization, we should note that the term "Stalinism" has a number of definitions. Some define it as the personal evil of Stalin (the person), while others view it as a larger phenomenon (the system). The beginning of the Stalinist repression has been variously attributed to the 1934 murder of Kirov or to the collectivization in 1930. There are even those who regard Lenin’s "Red Terror" in the early days of the Soviet state as its starting point. Memorial adheres to the definition of A.D. Sakharov -- "illegal and terroristic methods of governing", and considers that it can be applied to the entire period of Soviet rule, as its effects persisted.36 Without getting into the discussion of the "hero in history", Stalinism seems well defined as "the meeting point of a man and a system, which has not only survived him in part but which also antedated him."37 However, for our purposes we are primarily focusing on its manifestation in the years from 1934-1953 and the ensuing consequences.38 These manifestations and these consequences of Soviet repression can be best understood as a system of interdependent parts that are to varying degrees adapted to each other in such a way that it is difficult to change only one part of the system.

The Stalinist system had no mechanism for accommodating to a constituency. It used repression as an adaptive tool, forcing accommodation to the totalitarian system. When we consider the central role played by terror in the maintenance of the Soviet state, then viewing it as a maladaptive system can help us to explain the resistance of the leadership to (liberalization-oriented) reform, which would require some accountability to a constituency. Because the Soviet system was adapted to repression, reform was a slow and dangerous undertaking. Revelations on the Stalinist past, and rehabilitation -- the official admission of official crimes --
ran the risk of destabilizing the system and unseating the leaders themselves.

By contrast, post-war Germany and Japan could move quickly because their "adapted" political systems were defeated by the Allies. They did not have to go through the slow process of evolving from within (noteworthy is the distinction between reproach "von aussen aus der Welt oder von innen aus der eigenen Seele" (from without -- the world, or from within -- the soul)). Real change requires acknowledging past mistakes, attempting to correct them, and attempting to prevent their recurrence. This process is generally operationalized by revealing the extent of the crime, providing financial compensation, returning confiscated property, creating new laws, and prosecuting those responsible. Though these measures deal with juridical and political aspects, they do not cover the moral and metaphysical issues. While it is true that political systems can create climates of terror, the terror is carried out by individual people against other individuals. This brings into focus the question of personal responsibility for one’s actions or inactions.

In 1947, Karl Jaspers discussed the German process of Vergangenheitsbewältigung in his work Die Schuldfrage (The Question of Guilt). He distinguishes between four types of guilt: criminal - clear violation of law; political - "es ist jedes Menschen Mitverantwortung, wie er regiert wird" (everyone is responsible for how he is governed); moral - the individual is responsible for all his actions, political and military, "Befehl ist Befehl" ("an order is an order") being unacceptable because a crime remains a crime even if it has been ordered by someone else; and finally metaphysical - the solidarity of man with man, making everyone co-responsible for wrongs and injustices, for not doing whatever is possible to prevent the crime. He considers it morally absurd to accuse a whole people of a crime, because "es gibt keinen Charakter eines Volkes derart, dass jeder einzelne der Volkszugehörigen diesen Charakter hätte" (there is no such national character
that everyone who belongs to the population group in question shares). Thus, Jaspers argues, there cannot be collective guilt of a people or a group, though they may be politically liable. In addition, when a whole people is labeled as guilty, this has the morally undesirable effect of mitigating the responsibility of any particular individual. The moral, metaphysical, and criminal guilt bring other issues to the fore, such as recognition of one’s blindness to the evil of others. Jaspers raises the question of membership in the Nazi Party, a question that finds some analogy in the Russian membership in the CPSU. He maintains that we need to look at the context and motivation of those who joined the Nazi Party, since in 1936-37 belonging to the Nazi Party was part of keeping one’s profession, and not necessarily a political act. Jaspers asserts, "ohne Reinigung der Seele keine politische Freiheit" (without purification of the soul, there is no political freedom), which requires consciousness of guilt, of solidarity and of co-responsibility.

The Gulag returnee’s plight was compounded by the fact that this consciousness was only partially attained in the Soviet Union of the fifties, and had progressed only a little further in the late eighties and early nineties. One can argue that Gorbachev was clearly a proponent of raising consciousness about the Stalinist past, but the Soviet system was still in place (and he wanted to keep it that way). Revelations on the crimes of Stalinism even further discredited the already failing state structure.

**Scope**

A discussion of the aftermath of the terror would be incomplete without some assessment of the number of victims it claimed. The exact number of victims of Stalinist terror has long been a fiercely debated issue, even further intensified by the opening of official archives. We shall briefly review some of the available statistics demonstrative of the victimizations. Estimates range from the J. Arch Getty, Gabor
T. Rittersporn “revisionist”\textsuperscript{45} claims in the hundreds of thousands, to millions. The researchers presenting the lower-range figures assert that 786,098 victims were executed between 1930 and 1952-53, the majority of the death sentences having been carried out between 1937-1938. They conclude that a little over 2.3 million victims (excluding deaths among deportees and exiles) perished in the entire Stalin period.\textsuperscript{46}

In his pioneering work prior to the opening of archives, Robert Conquest’s original calculations were approximately twenty million victims. But the issue rages on, as evidenced by his attack on the revisionists’ attempt to minimize the numbers of Stalin’s victims:

Those of us who accepted, in some areas, estimates that now seem too high, have amended or reconsidered. But some theory resembling psychosomatic blindness seems to prevent any act of self-criticism from Getty -- without which he can scarcely expect absolution.\textsuperscript{47}

Steven Rosefielde, considering the economic significance of the Gulag, calculated the forced labor population between 1929-1956. With regard to numbers at the height of the terror, he basically concurred with Conquest, Swianiewicz, Dallin, and Solzhenitsyn that 8-12 million prisoners were victimized.\textsuperscript{48} Stephen Wheatcroft, citing other scholars (Timasheff, Jasny and Bergson) who support his (lower-range) position, suggests that the labor camp population at the end of the thirties was approximately three and a half million.\textsuperscript{49} Edwin Bacon, also basing his estimates of victimizations on a number of official archival materials, asserts that millions were incarcerated in the Gulag in its decades of existence. He contends that Gorbachev’s glasnost was selective regarding which information from the archives to reveal and which to curtail. These selections were made at the discretion of the Party. Based on inflow and outflow statistics, Bacon calculates that there were approximately 12 million repressed in camps and labor colonies between 1934-1947.\textsuperscript{50} Alec Nove goes even further in his estimate to assert that there were
approximately 10-11 million "surplus deaths" in the thirties.\textsuperscript{51}

Russian figures have tended to be in the higher range. In 1987 the economist, Nikolai Shmelyov, cited an estimate given by Khrushchev of those who were or had been in labor camps as 17 million for the years 1937-1953.\textsuperscript{52} Dmitry Volkogonov, a historian who had ample access to official archives, asserted that 21.5 million were repressed from 1929-1953\textsuperscript{53}, while Shatunovskaya, a former prisoner who worked on Khrushchev's rehabilitation commission gives 19.8 million as the number of persons repressed from 1935-41.\textsuperscript{54} Colonel Grashoven of the Russian Security Ministry offers similar figures.\textsuperscript{55} Aleksandr Yakovlev, one of the architects of perestroika, and head of Gorbachev's (and later Yeltsin's) Rehabilitation Commission, also subscribes to the high range assessments. He suggests that around 15 million Soviet citizens fell victim to man-made famine, dekulakization, deportation, and terror.\textsuperscript{56} V.P. Zemskov cautions that the high numbers may include such inaccuracies as counting re-arrested victims twice.\textsuperscript{57} And these are just the main actors in a debate that is as yet unresolved.

Witness this example of the ongoing discussion. In his recent work, Life and Terror in Stalin's Russia, 1934-1941, Robert Thurston argues that the 681,692 executions that he records for 1937-38 did not constitute mass terror and that the terror had no profound, long-term effects on everyday life.\textsuperscript{58} In rebuttal, Robert Conquest disputes Thurston's numbers as well as Thurston's comparison of the hysteria surrounding the Stalin Terror to that of McCarthyism, during which the two Rosenbergs were executed. Conquest wryly suggests that the analogy would be more fitting if, in a two-year period, the Americans "shot that half a million suggested above, including most of the US Government and three-quarters of Congress, hundreds of writers, thousands of military officers -- which might even have intimidated the citizenry a little".\textsuperscript{59}

After the opening of the archives, the revisionist
estimates of victims came out higher, and some of the traditionally accepted estimates were reduced. But the archives cannot present the true dimensions of the problem. Stephen Cohen calls our attention to the "great multitude" of descendants of Stalin’s victims, who, as family members, were also afflicted by the terror. They can certainly be counted in the millions. Thus we are still dealing with pervasive repression and terror on a massive scale. Though crucial in its conviction of the system, the exact calculation of repressed is a subject for a different kind of study. A significant issue is the distribution of repression within the time period -- especially with regard to the fifties. (More attention will be devoted to this question at a later point.) Our concern here is those who survived and the meaning of their experience for them, for Soviet society, and for the Soviet political system.

Periodization, demography of arrests, releases

Now that we have dealt with the scope of the terror, let us turn to the development of repression in the course of time. The purpose of this section is not to discuss the political aspects of the period of terror, or Stalin’s personal role, or the development of the camp system, but rather to present a chronology of the repression. Like the Gulag itself, the instrument of repression was an integral part of the Soviet system from its early days, although, according to archival sources, 1926 seems to have marked the true birth of large-scale forced labor as a "method of re-education." In the words of one Russian historian:

The Bolshevik authorities set out to destroy their real and potential opponents, casting aside all generally accepted [legal] norms.... The camps in all their forms -- concentration, forced labor, special designation, corrective labor, etc. ... were ideally suited for this goal. The creation of the camps did not demand much time or special materials.

The camps of the twenties, especially Solovki, were populated
with, among others, priests, White Guards, socialists, anarchists, and other political opponents. While the Stalinist terror was a constant threat, it varied in its intensity. There were waves of arrests, waves of releases, and different kinds of releases in different periods. Thus different cohorts of prisoners and returnees had different experiences.

In 1929, in the midst of the collectivization and dekulakization campaigns, the idea of colonizing the northern regions with prisoners who had terms of longer than three years was proposed and accepted. This was as much practical as ideological because the prisons could no longer accommodate so many prisoners. In early 1930, a normative act that regulated the activity of the GULag (Main Administration of Labor Camps) was passed -- the camp system had thus become a legally sanctioned instrument for exerting political influence on society (i.e., deterring even potential opposition). The prisoners were used to exploit resources and build such infrastructures as railways, roads, and canals. By mid-1930, the corrective labor camps had already expanded to encompass 41,000 prisoners in the Northern Camps and 15,000 in the Far Eastern camps. The Vyshersky, Siberian, and Solovetsky camps confined another 84,000 prisoners.

Those arrested in the countryside in the years 1930-1932 were primarily peasants while those arrested in the cities were mostly engineers, scientists, and the "bourgeois" intelligentsia. The terror gained new momentum after Kirov's murder in 1934, and 1935-36 saw arrests of oppositionists, mostly professional revolutionaries, and Party and Soviet workers. The Great Trials began in 1936 and were followed by the great purges of Yezhovshchina by 1937-38. This campaign of terror named after state security chief Yezhov "renewed" the whole state and Party apparatus, the military cadres, the diplomatic corps, and managers on all levels. A great many of the victims were Party members, but also among the arrested were countless (non-Party) ordinary citizens, workers and peasants. Blame for the excesses of the purges was deflected
to Yezhov, and he was replaced by Beria at the end of 1938. The releases of the late thirties 'liberated' approximately 327,400 victims of the collectivization as well as 'Trotskyites' and other oppositionists. The system of repression remained, however, and the Gulag and prisons were constantly replenished. As the state's circle of suspicion widened, "Article 58," which defined "counter-revolutionary crimes," was liberally applied. According to the Russian (and Soviet) Criminal Code, these offenses included: "any action directed toward the overthrow, undermining or weakening of the authority of the worker-peasant soviets ... espionage ... terrorist acts... [anti-Soviet] propaganda or agitation, etc." In essence, almost any type of action -- or inaction -- could make one vulnerable to arrest under these charges. Likely suspects came to include: active members of the church, members of religious sects, rebels (i.e., anyone who in the past had, however remotely, been involved in an anti-Soviet uprising), those who had contacts abroad, active members of student organizations, the National Guard, anyone who had fought against the Reds in the Civil War, representatives of foreign companies, anyone who had contact with foreign countries (i.e., businessmen, hotel/restaurant owners, shopkeepers, bankers, clergy, the former Red Cross), etc.... Even a veterinarian who had treated consular dogs or a woman who supplied the German consul's milk, or her brother(!), were subject to arrest. By 1940, such offenses as arriving at work twenty-one minutes late were criminally punishable. In this period political repression was also carried out along national lines. In 1939, for example, Poles and Balts were targeted. In 1942-1945 other repressed national groups included Finns, Germans, Kalmyks, Chechens, Tatars, Armenians, Latvians, Koreans, and others.

There were also releases of prisoners on the eve of the war. Approximately 420,000 prisoners were initially transferred to the Red Army. In the course of the war, the
total of releasees sent to the front comprised about one million prisoners.\textsuperscript{74} Article 58'ers, even if they requested the chance to fight for the motherland, and many did, were generally not released in this period due to their discredited status.\textsuperscript{75} The unfortunate few who were, however, were mobilized into labor battalions and sent right to the front. Witness one such prisoner's description of his train journey: "I was sitting in the coupe, still dressed in my camp rags. The man across from me asked where I was headed. [I replied]: 'I escaped from the grave and I am searching for a new cemetery'."\textsuperscript{76}

After the war came the arrests of returning P.O.W.s -- Soviet citizens coming back from incarceration in German camps only to enter the "NKVD verification-filtration points", that is to say, the Gulag. They were considered "not completely clean"\textsuperscript{77} and often received 10-25 year sentences on charges of spying or treason.\textsuperscript{78} To the post-war ranks of the repressed we can also add Ukrainians and, in Medvedev's words, "militant officers like Solzhenitsyn, who manifested too much audacity or curiosity."\textsuperscript{79} Some of the ex-officers proceeded to lead the Vorkuta revolt of the late forties.\textsuperscript{80} The years 1947-1948 brought a number of releases of those who had survived the arrest and incarceration of the Great Terror, since a served term could (but did not necessarily) allow for release. The next arrest wave, 1949-1952, struck "cosmopolitans", that is, the Jewish intelligentsia in, among others, the notorious "Doctors Plot" and "Leningrad Affair".

Stalin's death on March 5, 1953, "a biological event" that constituted "the first act of de-Stalinization"\textsuperscript{81} led to an amnesty of March 27 that released 1.2 million ordinary criminals (53.8%) out of an official Gulag population estimated at 2.5 million.\textsuperscript{82} Prisoners referred to this as the Voroshilov amnesty, though it was possibly a brief act of de-Stalinization on the part of Beria before his unanticipated arrest and death sentence. The amnesty did not apply to political prisoners. However, a few who were convicted or requalified on "criminal" charges may have fallen under this
category. Moreover, approximately 600,000 new arrivals were added to the camp population of that year.\textsuperscript{83} Writing in 1975, Roy Medvedev asserted that 4,000 prisoners were released in 1953.\textsuperscript{84} It is not entirely clear to which contingent he is referring, or on what his information was based, but the archives have shown this to be a gross underestimate.

The years 1953-55 were a period of "silent destalinization", during which some non-publicized rehabilitations took place.\textsuperscript{85} The release (not to be confused with rehabilitation) of those convicted of "counter-revolutionary crimes" (article 58'ers) was sanctioned by a decree of the General Procuracy of the USSR of May 19, 1954.\textsuperscript{86} Between 1954 and 1955 almost 90,000 political prisoners were released either under this decree, or on the basis of early re-evaluation of their cases. Tens of thousands of others were also set free on the basis of a September 1955 amnesty for "wartime collaborators".\textsuperscript{87} Additionally, certain groups of exiled kulaks -- the victims of collectivization -- were also released from special settlement by an MVD decree in the fall of 1954.\textsuperscript{88} According to the Medvedevs, Khrushchev personally arranged for the release of a "very special 12,000" prisoners in 1954-1955, most of whom were influential Party members.\textsuperscript{89} They also point out that only about 5 percent of those arrested in the thirties were still alive in 1956.\textsuperscript{90} If true, then the group of returnees released in the fifties would have been largely composed of arrestees of the forties (former soldiers, etc.). Indeed, the strong presence of this contingent of ex-soldiers and officers in the Gulag population is, among others, evidenced by their heading of strike commissions in the camp rebellions of Norilsk and Vorkuta in 1953, and Kengir in 1954.\textsuperscript{91}

Khrushchev's Secret Speech at the XX Party Congress on February 25, 1956 led to the liberation of a great majority of surviving prisoners and exiles, perhaps seven million, in 1956-1957.\textsuperscript{92} In addition, some were granted posthumous rehabilitations.\textsuperscript{93} Some figures on post-XX Party Congress releases have run in the millions, while others point to only
"hundreds of thousands" of liberated citizens.\textsuperscript{94} The Western historian Van Goudoever calculated that on the basis of registered voters approximately two million people had their rights restored.\textsuperscript{95} Chapter V will devote more attention to these figures, but it may be that the discrepancies and inexactitude can best be explained by the fact that some of the historians who first started working with these numbers confused release with rehabilitation. In addition, there is a vast difference between the number of prisoners actually returning from the camps and the great number of their (implicated) family members returning from exile. They, too, faced the ordeal of re-assimilation. For the purposes of this study, the exact number of returnees is less relevant than the experience of the returnee. What will be examined is the struggle of ordinary citizens, formerly labeled "enemies of the people", to re-enter society, and the Soviet system's efforts to adapt to this \textit{prima facie} evidence of its criminal nature, which began on a broad scale in these years.

\textbf{Khrushchev}

In what Stephen Cohen has called "the intensely historicized politics" of 1953-64,\textsuperscript{96} Khrushchev partially decried Stalin's abuse of power, but blame was deflected from the socialist system that supported it and redirected to Stalin's "personal defects". Efforts were made in the legislative arena to modify and stabilize the system, but not to correct its fundamental flaws. Much was still left to the discretion of the authorities. In fact, elements of re-Stalinization were also introduced under Khrushchev, for example, the "parasite" campaign of 1957 which targeted mostly writers and poets. The Pasternak affair, in which the writer declined the Nobel Prize for literature for fear of exile from his country, was another example of Khrushchev's balancing act.\textsuperscript{97}

Khrushchev was very much a man of his time and his ambivalent role -- that of liberator and victimizer -- reflected the \textit{zeitgeist}, a recoiling from the past and a dread
of the unknown future. This is the social and historical context that shaped the fate of the returnee, so we will proceed by examining it. His Secret Speech, which portrayed a governmental system whose modus operandi included criminal acts, lawlessness, mass murder, incompetent leadership and systematic falsification of history resulted in a "mass exodus". These revelations at the XX Party Congress were indeed a bold effort at de-Stalinization. However, materials from the Presidential Archive show that Khrushchev was late in arriving at this liberal position. He himself had played a direct role in the terror in Moscow and Ukraine in 1936 and 1937 as first secretary of the Moscow Committee and the Moscow City Committee of the Communist Party, and in 1938, as first secretary of the Communist Party of Ukraine.

The KGB archives have yielded documentary materials that prove Khrushchev’s participation in the conducting of mass repressions in Moscow, the Moscow province, and Ukraine in the pre-war years. He had personally forwarded proposals for the arrests of leading figures of the Moscow City Council and the Moscow provincial Committee. In the years 1936-37 the Moscow and Moscow province NKVD was responsible for the repression of 55,741 people. Under Khrushchev’s Party leadership in Ukraine in 1938 106,119 were arrested, in 1939 - 12,000, and in 1940 - approximately 50,000. The Ukrainian Party Secretary personally sanctioned the repression of hundreds of people suspected of plotting terrorist acts against him. Khrushchev did indeed have blood on his hands.

Other newly available evidence even further tarnishes both Khrushchev’s reputation and his efforts toward de-Stalinization. While we know that in the fifties there were large numbers of releases of those arrested on political articles (58 and 59), statistics of the Procuracy of the RSFSR demonstrate that in these same years there were also a significant number of arrests for "especially dangerous crimes against the order of governing" (Article 59). In consequence, while some politicos were released, others were incarcerated.

Article 59 defines as criminal, among a host of other
activities, the maintenance of contact with foreign governments or their representatives with the goal of instigating armed intervention in the Soviet republic, helping with the declaration of war or organization of military expeditions after the declaration of war, banditism, etc. Maximal penalty for such crimes was capital punishment.\textsuperscript{102} Witness these examples of the pattern of convictions on Article 59-3, 59-3b, and 59-7, etc., for the period of 1936 - 1957: 1936: 3,667, 1937: 4,372, 1938: 5,373, 1941: 14,415, 1942: 26,136, 1945: 5,981, 1949: 11,188, 1953: 13,257, 1954: 12,490, 1955: 12,765, 1956: 12,869, 1957: 14,930.\textsuperscript{103} These figures suggest that some degree of tempo was maintained in the punitive repressive apparatus (see also Chapter V). They further attest to the Soviet system’s dependence on repression as well as to the cosmetic character of the first period of de-Stalinization. While officials from Khrushchev on down denounced the Stalinist repression, it is clear from their actions that the system of governance did not renounce repression. This dualism, if not hypocrisy, expressed itself at all levels of the system and of society and hampered the rehabilitation of the returnees. The ambivalent attitude toward ex-zeks can be seen as having extended both from the top down and from the bottom up.

Pavel Negretov allegorized Soviet society’s search for identity during this period in the tale of a former camp-mate: "The XX Party Congress gave Sasha freedom, and he became, like Dusya [his wife], a Stalinist, he did not trust the new course of the Party and did not believe that it would last".\textsuperscript{104} (We can assume that Stalinism in this case refers to opposition to Stalin’s successors, or to their methods of governance.) Negretov decided not to argue with them about their type of Stalinism: "they were simply looking to it for support in our unstable existence".\textsuperscript{105} Like Hamlet, some people were more prone to bear the ills they had than to fly to others that they knew not of. And so the system in those years oscillated in a narrow range between de-Stalinization, stagnation, and re-Stalinization.
In his biography of Khrushchev, Roy Medvedev cites some concrete cases of returnees for whom Khrushchev intervened with preferential treatment, but he goes on to describe how 15 years later (in the early seventies) returnees making similar requests were rebuffed with the statement: "The fashion for rehabilitated people is now dead".\textsuperscript{106} Newly available documentation provides additional examples of the shifting political forces. In a 1974 confidential meeting of the Politburo much discussion was devoted to the Solzhenitsyn case. Brezhnev commented cynically, "Solzhenitsyn was incarcerated, served his term for gross violation of Soviet law (my italics) and was rehabilitated. But how was he rehabilitated? He was rehabilitated by two people, Shatunovskaya and Snegov".\textsuperscript{107} These two returnees to which Brezhnev referred with such disdain played important roles in the de-Stalinization process. The former was a member of an official commission that examined the crimes of the thirties and the Moscow purge trials, the latter was a key organizer of the troika commissions that were empowered to release prisoners in 1956-57.\textsuperscript{108} At the meeting there was apparent consensus regarding Brezhnev's views. It is therefore significant in measuring political (official) sentiment toward rehabilitation that among those present at this Politburo session were: Andropov, Grishin, Gromyko, Kirilenko, Kosygin, and Podgorny. (In a Politburo meeting ten years later, where "no-one found a good word to say about Khrushchev,"\textsuperscript{109} the issue of Solzhenitsyn's rehabilitation was raised again. Chebrikov, then head of the KGB, asserted that a number of illegal rehabilitations of people who were "rightly punished" had taken place. He cited Solzhenitsyn as one such example. It is interesting to note that Gorbachev, who was later appointed General Secretary, was present at this session.) Stephen Cohen has described returnees as an "important historical and social dimension of political de-Stalinization".\textsuperscript{110} Indeed, their fate was a key indicator of the state's persistent entrenchment in Stalinism.

To what extent could the Communist structure adapt to de-
Stalinization without destabilization? What were in fact the tolerable limits of such political changes for the Soviet system? Brezhnev apparently felt that they had been exceeded under Khrushchev, and a process of re-Stalinization (absent unbridled mass terror) was carried out in the sixties and seventies. Prisoners and potential prisoners were generally more fortunate than their Stalinist-era counterparts, perhaps partially because detente rendered the opinion of the West of some significance. By and large, however, the Soviet political system of those years did not tolerate its dissidents (a group that sometimes overlapped, but was not synonymous with the Article 58’ers of the Stalin era). It incarcerated them, put them in psychiatric hospitals, or expelled them (i.e. Solzhenitsyn, Bukovsky).

If we conceptualize history as a dialectic process, then it is not surprising that the eighties brought a new corrective force to the repressions of the Stalinist system in organizations such as Memorial. The widely circulated stories of the survivors or their family members and the sympathetic public reaction to them provided Gorbachev’s de-Stalinization efforts with a broader base of support than that enjoyed by Khrushchev. When Gorbachev mentioned "thousands" of victims of Stalin, many were disappointed by the grossly understated estimate. But it was a politically calculated underestimate.\textsuperscript{111} This statement was at some level as monumental as Khrushchev’s XX and XXII Party Congress revelations, because Gorbachev dared to reopen the subject. People were permitted to do investigation into the real numbers, and perhaps Gorbachev hoped that those "numbers would speak for themselves so that the leadership at the time would not have to take responsibility for some of the jarring disclosures."\textsuperscript{112}

We might recall that Gorbachev did not want to let this rediscovery of history get too far out of (Party) control, because the Soviet system was still in place. Even so, there was a political tide, uncertain of its fate, but drifting unsteadily away from repression. Gorbachev’s wide-ranging de-
Stalinization and rehabilitation campaign coincided with and, perhaps even significantly contributed to the dissolution of the Soviet Union. But let us not get ahead of ourselves. Coming to terms with the Stalinist past began at the moment of release from incarceration.

**Types of release and/or rehabilitation**

Release did not by any means automatically imply rehabilitation, a term defined under Khrushchev as the "revision of all legal consequences of a judgment pertaining to a person who was unlawfully prosecuted, in consequence of the acknowledgement of innocence". Some zeks received partial rehabilitations, that is, they were cleared of certain charges, while other charges remained in their record. Some prisoners who spent ten years in the camps were liberated (at some point) after their terms had been served. Many of them received "restoration of rights" — a term meaning that the prisoner was entitled to his former political and civil rights.\(^{114}\)

In *The Limits of Destalinization in the Soviet Union*, Albert van Goudoever characterizes different types of rehabilitation: individual formal rehabilitation -- reassessment of one's case and implication of innocence; social rehabilitation -- compensation for lost wages and suffering, return of confiscated property, restoration of former position, pension and financial settlement, etc.; reinstatement in the Party; posthumous rehabilitation; and public rehabilitation.\(^{115}\) This last category, which was utilized mostly for prominent Party members, is described by Jane Shapiro as, "restoration of [the victim's] name and deeds to Soviet historiography. A victim is considered to have been rehabilitated fully when his biography has been published in the Soviet press or his own work republished."\(^{116}\)

As regards legal rehabilitation, Leopold Labedz accurately describes this as the invalidation of juridical sentences which does not necessarily imply political
rehabilitation. Alternatively, writing in the sixties, Shapiro asserts that repudiation of the victim's conviction (judicial rehabilitation) was also accompanied by restoration of Party or military rank where relevant. She goes on to claim that physical rehabilitation, i.e., release from prison or labor camp, followed judicial rehabilitation. This was not the case. Prisoners were sometimes released on the basis of amnesties, or when their terms expired, but apart from being liberated from the camps, their status was uncertain. The process of rehabilitation and reinstatement in the Party appears to be and to have been systematically long and drawn out. As we shall see, a great number of victims did not receive rehabilitation until forty years after their release. Rehabilitation was a politically explosive issue because, as Labedz asserts, "what is at stake in the battle of rehabilitations is not so much the resurrection of the dead as the survival of the living -- at least the political survival." Many Party members had built their careers under Stalin and were personally involved in the repression. They were certainly aware that exoneration of its victims could implicate them.

Some zeks were released with "loss of rights": while the charges were dropped, they were sent to particular places for "permanent settlement" or "eternal exile". Those without rehabilitation had a so-called "minus" in their passports which restricted the ex-prisoners' freedom of movement, and forbade them to be closer than 101 kilometers from Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev and a number of major cities. This was enforced by, among other means, requiring the ex-prisoner to report at least twice monthly to the local authorities. One former prisoner observed that, "of course, that [practice] did not exclude constant secret surveillance, the system of stool-pigeons that entangled the whole country.... I think the system of surveillance in some variant still exists even today [1995]." In addition to that, she explained, "the work book ("trudovaya knizhka"), without which it was impossible to get work, also had a notation on the potential employee's stay in
the camps, which barred access for me even to such work as that of a stenographer...". Another prisoner defined exile thus:

What is exile? Exile means you are assigned to a region and transported there. You have no passport, you are registered for that region. You have no right to exceed the borders of that region. Then there is a commandant that you have to check in with twice a month. And these are all of your rights and obligations. No one is interested in where you work, what you eat ... it is not camp, where you are fed....

Some prisoners were released with restored rights, constituting, in a certain sense, rehabilitation, but they were not given a **spravka** (certificate of proof of rehabilitation, see Roginsky’s comments in Chapter III). Such documents carried a great deal of meaning in the Soviet social system. There was considerable variation in how they were dispensed. Some prisoners were released and rehabilitated in the fifties and sixties, others were released in the fifties and rehabilitated only in the nineties, and some were never rehabilitated. As will be noted, rehabilitations are still being carried out, the status of the children of the repressed and/or rehabilitated is being reconsidered, and the scope of the rehabilitations is still being calculated.

The year in which the prisoner was released had political implications which affected their resocialization. Even in the years prior to Khrushchev’s XX Party Congress "Secret Speech", there must have been apprehension about how political accounts would be balanced. Witness the remarks of Anna Akhmatova in 1956, "(n)ow they [officials] are trembling for their names, positions, apartments, dachas. The whole calculation was that no one would return." But many, some millions, somehow managed to survive and did return. The Gulag survivors who returned to society after 1953 were confronted with many of the same problems as their predecessors. Previously published memoirs in addition to many stories which were collected in the late eighties attest to this. Even later in the fifties the rehabilitation of
victims was impeded by the fear of those in power for their own safety and for the stability of the system. The rehabilitation of its victims was almost antithetical to the authoritarian (Soviet style) system, because it threatened the legitimacy of that system -- a legitimacy maintained by terror.

Some prisoners not only returned, but wanted reinstatement in the Communist Party. The motivation behind this desire is a perplexing issue. Sometimes it was utilitarian. When Evgeniya Ginzburg received her rehabilitation certificate, she was given the telephone number of the Party Control Commission. She could not understand why the Soviet official thought she would want reinstatement in the Party. He replied, "Otherwise what will you put in your curriculum vitae when you are offered a job?," and when they ask, "Were you ever a member of the Party and, if so, when and how did you leave it ... you’ll have to use the formula recorded in your case file: 'Expelled from the Party for counter-revolutionary Trotskyite terrorist activity.' So I suggest you phone this number!". 

Sometimes the motivation was ideological. One prisoner was sent to Kolyma, worked at hard labor 12 1/2 hours daily, was "freed" in 1942 in order to join a labor army, and went to the front in 1943. After that he was sent into exile. While working in Moscow in 1950, he was re-arrested, interrogated for 3 1/2 months, and released for "lack of crime". Despite these victimizations, he worked for many years toward getting reinstated in the Party, and finally achieved this goal in 1956. This story is not uncommon. Many victims considered themselves to be the "builders of socialism" and thus had abiding faith in the Party. Another survivor claimed that he always "found solace in his belief in the truth of the Party" during his years of repression. This long-time prisoner who spent from 1937-1956 in arctic camps and then in exile in Norilsk literally dreamed of reinstatement in the Party. He even wrote a poem to the effect that he would walk onto Staraya Ploshchad (i.e., the building of the Central
Committee of the CPSU) into a familiar office, someone would shake his hand and give him his Party card. "It may take a long time, but this day will come," ends the verse.  

Comparative context

Though the scale of repression (number of victims) may vary from one state to the next, the experience of all former victims of political repression raises similar issues on a personal and on a societal level. German and Soviet survivors have been most often compared to one another. Isaak Moiseevich Filshtinsky, ex-prisoner, philologist, and philosopher makes the following distinction: "German survivors came into a world that was screaming, here it was silent".  

Though his description of the world to which Nazi survivors returned is not completely accurate, by comparison the world was up in arms. Moreover, what the scream shares with the silence is that they are both traumatic victim-society interactions. It is beyond the scope of the present work to compare Soviet totalitarianism with Nazi totalitarianism or any other state repression. It is also inappropriate to measure one level of evil against the other. Suffice it to say that the large-scale repression of any system often leads to similar psychological symptoms and personal re-adaptation issues among survivors. However, rather than examine the human tragedy on a massive scale, we will trace its path through the personal lives of some of its victim-survivors.

Rehabilitations and de-Stalinization

The nature and scope of the problems faced by Soviet victims are particularly difficult to determine, because during the lengthy period of the dictatorship (1917-1991) relatively little information was officially provided. In the course of the forties, fifties, and sixties, as noted earlier, some millions did return to Soviet society. According to one official source, during the first wave of rehabilitation, from
1954-1962, approximately 30,000 victims were rehabilitated per year for a total of 258,322. Khrushchev stated at the secret session of the 1956 XX Party Congress that 7,679 people had been rehabilitated since 1954, while Dmitry Yurasov of Memorial maintains that 612,000 people achieved this status in the period between 1953 and 1957. Yet another source notes that between 1954 and 1961 737,182 individuals received rehabilitation (or were posthumously rehabilitated). Notwithstanding these discrepancies, given the large prison camp population, this is still a small percentage of victims. Major General Vladimir Kupets, head of the section on rehabilitation for Russian and foreign citizens of the Military Procuracy in 1996, offered an answer to the not very puzzling question of why there were not more rehabilitations at that time: "The CPSU couldn’t very well admit that it was the henchman of its own people". It is worth noting that the cumbersome rehabilitation process was made even more cumbersome, because it was carried out by "professional" procurators, many of whom had not even received higher education.

By 1962 rehabilitations started dropping off sharply, as only 117 cases (some involving more than one person) were examined. In 1963 only 55 cases were reviewed, and in 1964 the numbers dwindled even further still -- 27 cases were examined in all. The rehabilitation process had nearly come to a halt. It is not clear exactly how many rehabilitations were granted between 1964 and 1987, but the numbers can be counted in no more than some hundreds because of the political questions surrounding the issue of culpability. Under Gorbachev, the process resumed and in the two years between 1987 and 1989 almost 840,000 individuals were rehabilitated. Between the time the law "On rehabilitation of victims of political repression" was passed on October 18, 1991 and 1994, approximately 207,400 repressed persons were rehabilitated in the Russian Federation, while half a million were officially granted this status in the USSR.
These low figures on rehabilitation demonstrate the limited character of official de-Stalinization. They do not, however, reflect the number of ex-prisoners who were unofficially exonerating themselves. Former victims of Stalinist terror had been coming to terms with their social status and personal history since their release, starting in most cases in the fifties. Their unofficial efforts at de-Stalinization were expressed in *samizdat*, private conversations, etc. by those who were not too afraid to talk.

Official silence from the late fifties to the eighties made it difficult to follow the fate of the returnees. While it is hard to determine the exact nature of the resocialization experience, what we regularly find is a marked discrepancy between the official perspective (and traditional vision of Khrushchev’s de-Stalinization) and the victim’s own experience -- enough to make us skeptical of the official version. Vladlen Loginov (Gorbachev Foundation), a historian and member of a work group of Khrushchev’s 1956 rehabilitation commission, asserts that returnees of those years were more or less received (or perceived) by society as heroes. Likewise, Vladimir Pavlovich Naumov, a historian, an official in President Boris Yeltsin’s administration, and member of the rehabilitation commission set up under Aleksandr Yakovlev during Gorbachev’s de-Stalinization campaign, maintained that the victims on the whole did not remain on the fringes of society. In most cases they were released, they applied for rehabilitation, and they looked for and found work. Roy Medvedev concurs on this last point that those who returned (emphasizing that 80% did not live to return) had no trouble finding work quickly and in their specialty. Naumov went on to discuss that while there were some problems -- for example, those liberated around 1949 often feared re-arrest (and with good reason, as many were in fact re-arrested), in some instances, their children had died or had been given different names (like Nikolai Bukharin and Anna Larina’s son) -- at the same time, they considered themselves to be the
"builders of socialism" and sought reinstatement in the Party.\textsuperscript{142} This, of course, would be more likely to be the case with repressed members of the Communist Party like Lev Kopelev. But many non-Party members (i.e. kulaks or members of other parties) were among the ranks of the repressed.

Naumov calls attention to the diverse composition of the victim group. For example, many henchmen like Yagoda, head of the NKVD from 1934-1936, or Sudoplatov, high state security official, came to be included in this category. (Yagoda was executed as a traitor in March of 1938 -- see Chapter VII for a discussion of his case when it came up for rehabilitation review in 1998. Sudoplatov was incarcerated from 1953-1968. After release, KGB chief Andropov personally helped him find housing. Sudoplatov later lectured to young KGB officers, wrote memoirs, and petitioned for rehabilitation, which he finally achieved in 1992. He was granted the pension of a lieutenant general of state security, and his medals were posthumously returned in 1998.\textsuperscript{143} )

Furthermore, Naumov asserted that in general, returnees were not dogged throughout their lives by their status as former victims. The statistics on rehabilitation for 1992-1994, sometimes nearly fifty years after their release, however, would suggest a somewhat different reality -- that there had been at least an ambivalent attitude toward this group both during Khrushchev's de-Stalinization and in the ensuing years. We can infer this from the backlog, even fifty years later, of people still attempting to be rehabilitated.

Specifically, in the two-year period following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, over two million applications were filed for judicial rehabilitation, of which one million were examined. Half a million applicants were granted a "spravka" (rehabilitation certificate), while another half million of these were still being reviewed in 1995.\textsuperscript{144} In this "peak year" for rehabilitation, a total of 1.8 million applications were examined.\textsuperscript{145} Naumov expected another several million, because of a 1994 law regarding restoration of property and compensation which are contingent upon the
status of "rehabilitated". With regard to the motivation to change their status from "repressed" (those who directly suffered -- were incarcerated in prisons or camps) or "postradavshy" (this term applied to children of victims, who were not themselves incarcerated, but "suffering" by virtue of their family status) to "rehabilitated", we cannot look into the individual reasons of these post-Soviet period applicants. In the years between 1992 and 1997, four million applications for rehabilitation were filed. Approximately 1.5 million of these applicants received rehabilitation certificates, while 296,000 were declared to have suffered political repression. We can infer that if these few million, and likely many more, did not, or could not obtain rehabilitation in the years immediately following their return, and now are trying to, there were a host of official barriers during the post-release period.

It is interesting to note that the victims' children are also heirs to the problems of rehabilitation, as witnessed by the debate on their status that raged on in 1996. In May of the previous year, the Constitutional Court of the Russian Federation changed the official status of children of "enemies of the people" from "postradavshy" to "repressed". In November of that same year, Yeltsin signed a law declaring that "children who were together with their parents in places of detention, in exile, or special settlement are considered to have undergone political repression and are subject to rehabilitation". Under this law, the process is almost automatic -- if the parents have been rehabilitated, their children need only apply with proof. This, in turn, has caused consternation among many elderly survivors who appear to feel that their status as repressed has to some degree been devalued by extending it to people who have never had the common experience of being a zek. To confer this status upon those who have suffered only indirectly downgrades the martyrdom of those who suffered directly and those who died in the process.

While Naumov and others promote the official position
that the victim was welcomed back into society, the story that many of the victims themselves tell is quite different. They persisted in their fear that repression was an event waiting to happen again. For example, when asked if they felt a continuing sense of injustice after release, one former victim answered "always," another said, "yes, in my contact with people I was a white raven." And yet another, Zoya Dmitrievna Marchenko, at age 88, after having been arrested three times, spending 12 years in labor camps (nine of them in Kolyma and Dalstroy), and eight years in "bessrochnaya ssylka" (eternal exile) recounted the following:

I always lived with the sense of being a 'second-class citizen'. I was always prepared for any trouble. I understood that my life and fate did not depend on my personal qualities, but on the forces that governed the country and I simply had to somehow try to survive....

The clear discrepancy between the "top-down" official description of the re-adaptation process and the "bottom-up" victim's recollection of that same process suggests either distortion of facts by one side or the other or wide variations in the experience of returnees. These variations range between full social and political re-integration and non-assimilation, i.e., the rejection of the individual by society and the system. The latter can be described as a "mis-fit" between the system and the returnee.

The return: status as ex-prisoner

The general status of being an ex-prisoner has both personal and social consequences in all societies. In addition, the status of having been a Gulag prisoner has its own special problems. Let us approach the special problems of the Gulag returnee by first examining the larger issue of being an ex-prisoner. Even in open and relatively permissive democratic societies, the re-entry of ex-convicts is problematic, because it often requires a process of resocialization. It has been argued that prison can serve as an advanced course in how to
be a more proficient criminal. The incarceration separates the prisoner from day to day contact with the outside world, forces him/her into close physical contact with criminals, and provides the conditions for their bonding by stigmatizing them. To adjust and adapt to this is to become more socialized into the criminal sub-culture. The American system of criminal justice as well as many others use rehabilitation programs and parole officers in an attempt to counteract the criminalizing tendencies of prison and to facilitate the ex-convict’s resocialization process. Even so, re-entry into society is difficult.

The problem of resocialization becomes even greater when the detention was not the result of a criminal act committed by the (ex-)prisoner, but rather a consequence of political circumstances. The prisoner is thus innocent -- the victim of a criminal system. When that innocence is recognized by the society to which they are returning (as was mostly the case with victims of Nazi terror), then the problems are on a different scale than those of ex-prisoners returning to a society that does not recognize or not satisfactorily recognize their innocence. Victims of state terror in the Soviet Union were officially regarded as members of a conspiracy who had betrayed society at large, and so were to be viewed thenceforth as traitors with a pariah status. For those returnees released before the XX Party Congress, and especially for those released before Stalin’s death, the state, not its victim, was considered to be the offended party, and seemed to regard itself thereafter as perpetually entitled to harass the former “enemies of the people”. One consequence of this was that the prisoner and, by association, their family were made to feel like outcasts.

The pariah status of ex-prisoners was not unknown in the West. In *Stigma: Notes on the Management of a Spoiled Identity*, Erving Goffman describes the spread of what we can appropriately call a "social disease" throughout the stigmatized network. He refers to a letter from a girl to an advice columnist asking how to deal with being the daughter of
an ex-con. She signed the letter: "AN OUTCAST". Goffman notes that, "in general, the tendency for a stigma to spread from the stigmatized individual to his close connexions provides a reason why such relations tend to either be avoided or to be terminated, where existing." This is even more likely to occur when fear of official retribution and/or belief in the guilt of the relative are added to the predicament. To compound the assault on the returnee’s social status, it was not uncommon to find upon return from the Soviet labor camp that one’s spouse had married someone else.

To recapitulate, and emphasize the Soviet problem, there are at least three types of return situations: prisoners returning to a changed system (i.e., Holocaust survivors), prisoners returning to a social system that is essentially unchanged from the one that they left (Stalin-era returnees), and rehabilitated prisoners (those who served their terms in a "correctional labor camp" and subsequently received exoneration, mostly post-1956 returnees) returning to an unreformed system. Once on the outside, Gulag returnees were confronted with many barriers: physical (restriction of movement), psychological, professional, etc. Thus, they often referred to society as the "big zone" (bolshaya zona), the "little zone" (malaya zona) being the camps. The fact that even after release, many continued to think of themselves as inhabitants of a zone illustrates how deeply ingrained their prisoner status was.

The ensuing discussion focuses not so much on the nature of the terror, but on its aftermath, the place that the camp experience occupied in the victim’s post-camp life -- the effect that the status of having been in the camps had on the victims, and on others. It will include examining the psychological impact of the camp experience and its sociopolitical consequences. This status is reflected by the way victims viewed their future, and in the behavior and feelings between the victim and family members, the social
The issue has been raised regarding whether the incarceration politicized the victims and led them to question or challenge the legitimacy of the system. In *The Survivor*, Des Pres quotes from *The Fixer*, a story based on the Beilis trial in Kiev in 1913. He uses this well-known case of anti-Semitism in a discussion on victims as scapegoats of power. The protagonist, a Jew, is accused of killing a Christian child and is held in prison for two years under barely survivable conditions. Anti-Semitism is the government’s only basis for its case, thus it must try to break his spirit, obtain a confession, and create conditions that will ensure illness or death. If the prisoner has perished, the problem is resolved. But the prisoner is determined to stay alive, and force the government to bring him to trial, so that he can prove his innocence: "at first he insists that he is not a ‘political person’. But gradually his suffering brings home to him the pain of all men in extremity, and he comes finally to realize that when the exercise of power includes the death of innocent people, ‘there’s no such thing as an unpolitical man’."\(^{160}\)

Aside from such spontaneous, implicit politicization that can arise from the condition of being in the death grip of the state, some ex-prisoners’ attitudes demonstrate a very conscious, deliberate development of a re-orientation toward the Soviet political system. In addition, there were also involuntary, psychopathological changes that were caused by the physical and mental suffering imposed on the victims of repression. These were the psychological and emotional derangements associated with a post-traumatic stress disorder which persisted even after incarceration. A further determinant of the ex-prisoner’s course would be whether the injustice that they had experienced continued to plague them. It is thus essential to explore to what extent, if any, after release from internment (in labor camps or prisons) victims of Stalinist terror experienced an ongoing process of injustice. Such unjust treatment would be exemplified by job rejections
and/or assignment to work far below levels of qualification, harassment, loss of rights to housing, or social ostracism. The practical and personal problems associated with the victim's resocialization were manifested in the victim's professional prospects and family relationships, including the creation of new families. Alternatively, we must look at the attitude of society, the regime, and family members toward the victim, specifically considering what the existence of such a group of returnees with demands for housing, pensions, justice, etc. meant to society and the system.

Briefly coming back to the issue of the Soviet state's maladaptation, let us consider a few additional points with regard to the returnee. Gulag prisoners had to have been distorted, at least temporarily, by the very process of adaptation that permitted them to survive. This was manifested by the jargon and other symbols and carryovers -- the sub-culture -- of camp life with which they returned. To this extent they would be reshaped as "misfits" in the context of a "normal" system to which they would be returning. Hence they could be expected to have had major adjustment problems even if people had been awaiting them with open arms. For their part, the social networks that the repressed had left had been forced by their needs for political and psychological adaptation to find ways to get along without them. The mechanism included self-protective "distancing" attitudes which, in effect, blamed the victim for their predicament.

Oral history, social memory

There are a number of problems that complicate the task of accurately depicting the course of the victims' return and subsequent resocialization into society. To begin with, the information on this subject can only be culled from a number of scattered sources. In addition, even when found it is meager. In the many published and unpublished camp memoirs, typically as many as a few hundred pages are devoted to the camp experience, but only two pages describe the release,
exile, rehabilitation, and possibly reinstatement in the CPSU. It is not surprising that the writers of camp memoirs dwell on their most traumatic years. Their preoccupation bears similarities to a Posttraumatic Stress Disorder which is relived in flashbacks, hoping to resolve itself. Not only is their mind drawn back to the camp experience by its intensity, but the status of being a martyred victim has its own sacred satisfactions. They are witnesses for themselves and for those whom they saw perish. By contrast, post-camp frustrations with family, jobs, and housing would seem to be trivial. But they are not. They are the reverberating evidence of a dysfunctional social and political system. All of the survivors encountered during this present research felt that the camp experience had a tangible effect on their subsequent lives, yet when asked about post-camp events, they invariably bring the discussion back into the camp setting. Thus, oral history is an essential tool for exploring the aftermath of incarceration, because it gives us the opportunity to probe, and to discover how ex-prisoners often remained victims of the Soviet system. This examination is not just an exploration of individual memories, although the information that we will use will be gathered from individuals. Rather, we will be employing an oral history methodology not to look at individuals, but to look through them to the political system.

The oral memoir, however, has its own set of limitations, especially in places where freedom of speech has been curtailed for decades. Galina Skopyuk, a Gulag survivor who remained in Norilsk, Siberia after release in 1954, did not begin to discuss her camp experience until 1985. But even a decade later, in 1995, this former "enemy of the people" was still hesitant to disclose details of the Stalinist terror, so deeply ingrained was her fear that the Soviet system may somehow have survived the dissolution of the Soviet state. Reflecting on the post-camp decades, she told an interviewer:

the whole time we were silent, careful not to say anything anywhere, so that we were not sent back to where
we had been. And now I’m talking to you, and maybe I’ll say something wrong and be punished again and I’ll sit (in prison camp) again. So you’re afraid your whole life....

Isak Dinesen (the author of *Out of Africa*) writes, "All sorrows can be borne if you put them into a story or tell a story about them." Clearly she was not spied on by secret police. There is a persistent conflict between the former victim’s therapeutic necessity to release memory, and "through expression ... put it to rest," and the victim’s fear of speaking lest they become vulnerable to their enemies or to their own traumatic memories. It is said that there are two kinds of survivors -- those who cannot speak and those who cannot stop speaking. In the early days of Memorial, during the late eighties, streams of clients lined up at the Moscow reception room to describe their experiences. Their task was a therapeutic one: "the pressure in these victims to tell their story was so great that they poured out their hearts to one foreign observor even though they had been informed that he did not understand Russian." We can term this the psychological function of oral history.

There are also altruistic motives for giving testimony. Many Gulag returnees, like Holocaust survivors, feel that it is their moral imperative to bear witness. Des Pres calls this "response-ability", conscience being the guide to one’s responses. He also quotes a prisoner’s markings on the walls of a latrine in a Soviet camp, "May he be damned who, after regaining freedom, remains silent." For this group of returnees there are at least two reasons to tell and retell their stories: one is the issue of guilt among survivors toward the many who did not return (addressed in the citation above), and the other is to serve as a warning so that such catastrophic evil can never manifest itself again. When the threat of a Communist president in Russia seemed very real in 1996, many of the Gulag survivors who had given oral histories or written memoirs, said that they did whatever they could to prevent Communism’s upsurge by telling their personal stories of Soviet repression. Hence oral history can serve a
political function.\textsuperscript{168}

Another problem associated with gathering an oral history is accuracy. What it is about the past that is relevant to remember is always to some degree determined by the needs of the present. Thus post-camp experiences can influence what is recalled. Also, the need to be a member of a group can influence what is remembered. Social memory "as an expression of collective experience ... identifies a group, giving it a sense of its past and defining its aspirations for the future."\textsuperscript{169} But how and what memory was to be preserved among survivors of the Gulag whose traumatic experiences were for years at variance with both accepted morality and official description? It was risky to attempt to get social validation for the camp experience after leaving the camp. Openly recalling events of the Stalinist repression did not serve to legitimize the (then) present from the late-fifties to the mid-eighties. Official social memory was systematically imposed from above through schooling, newspapers, books, radio and television, etc.,\textsuperscript{170} so the reference points of the victims of Soviet terror were often blurred by the total absence of collective remembering of the repression during those (post-Khrushchev, pre-Gorbachev) years. It is little wonder, then, that the flood of memories of individual experiences that surfaced in the Soviet Union in the late eighties was deeply influenced (and supplemented) by the experiences of others.

For the victims of Stalinism, memory of repression became so collective after 1988, that one has to diligently and critically explore the individual's own experience. An interview with Paulina Stepanovna Myasnikova, a woman who had been a camp-mate of Evgeniya Ginzburg's, revealed such a similarity between her story and that of Ginzburg's personal description from Into the Whirlwind, that it appeared that she had merged her memory with Ginzburg's story. Like Goethe, who accounts how he threw the family china onto the street after the birth of his sibling, and was later unsure as to whether his memory of the incident was real or a reconstruction in his
childish imagination of a story repeated by his parents, Paulina seemed, albeit unwittingly, to be conveying someone else's story as her own.

Besides the problems of meager sources, official censors, self-censure, poor memory, inaccurate memory, and collective memory, there is also the problem of helping the person to focus on the issue at hand. Leopold Haimson, who headed an interviewing program between 1960 and 1965 on the Menshevik movement, remarks that a major task was "to eliminate major digressions from the narrative flow (usually biographical details concerning secondary figures...)." He also discusses the problems that subjects have in reconstructing memories of events that took place a number of decades earlier. Myasnikova's case illustrates how the cognitive difficulties associated with advanced age can distort the accuracy of recollections. Furthermore, events are not always recalled as they really happened, but rather as individuals and the group wished them to be. Memory is sometimes not far from mythology -- assigning a heroic role to one's self in order to make the unbearable a little more bearable.

In Haimson's Menshevik project, a variety of sources was utilized to converge on the memory. The subjects were provided with primary sources, speeches they had written, and records of events in which they had participated, in an effort to refresh their memories. He was also trying to fill in the gaps and to illuminate the "sometimes deliberate obscurities in the written record". The life journeys of those who contributed to the political history of the Menshevik Party were, clearly, different from those who were victims of Stalinist terror, so Haimson's observations may be of only limited value here. He reports that the

...interview experience ... appeared at least partially to confirm the common sense rule that, especially many years after the event, the mind recalls most easily and vividly moments of victory rather than moments of defeat, times of hope rather than times of despair.

These findings are not confirmed by my own interviews with
former victims which reveal that survivors of Stalinist terror tend to focus on the victimization rather than their survival. Nor do the recorded oral histories of Memorial (done around 1990) generally concur with this rule. Haimson’s generalization is understandable when applied to a political party -- the Mensheviks were striving toward a particular goal, they would most likely remember well the steps that were made in achieving it. Moreover, Gulag victims had few victories to recall. Despite its limitations and its selective nature, oral history is one of the best methods we have for reclaiming and reconstructing part of the social history of the group that shared the common experience of Soviet repression.

Limitations of the Study

This study does not represent a complete picture of the experience of resocialization of the Gulag survivor or the significance of the returnee to the Soviet social and political system. The sample is obviously limited to the information available, and is thus biased. Those who survived and emigrated are largely not relevant to this research, because it is assumed that they did not re-adapt to Soviet society. There remains a relatively small number of returnees still alive and able to give interviews, so the selection of subjects is based more on availability than on any other factor. A great majority of the oral histories are taken from the urban intelligentsia; the experiences in the provinces and of workers and the peasantry will surely have parallels, but will not be identical.

Furthermore, we are only dealing with the group that wrote memoirs, that came to social organizations such as Memorial and Vozvrashchenie, that either needed assistance or wanted to unite with others who had shared their fate. Those returnees who never registered with organizations for the repressed or took part in public life as former victims were perhaps completely re-assimilated. Maybe they were so
successful in re-adapting to Soviet society that their status was not remarkable, and they were not in need of any support. On the other hand, perhaps they never adapted at all, not even enough to publicly and privately join the ranks of their fellow ex-zeks. Aside from others' descriptions and official archives, we have no way of learning about the experience of those who never came forward about their past. We can, however, learn a great deal about a part of the group that shared the common experience of being incarcerated in labor camps and prisons during the Stalinist terror. That part should be a very good indication of the whole.

2. The railroad from Igarka to Salekhard, for example, was one of the last main forced labor projects under Stalin. It was never completed and the camps were abandoned after Stalin’s death.


4. Ibid.


11. Stephen F. Cohen, Rethinking the Soviet Experience: Politics and History since 1917 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 97, and "The Victims Return: Gulag Survivors and the Soviet Union after Stalin." I am particularly grateful to Professor Cohen for providing me with this unpublished 1983 paper. As far as I know, it is the first analysis on the social dimensions of the return.

12. My own Victims of Soviet Terror: The Story of the Memorial Movement (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1993) examines the history of the organization Memorial, the history of Stalin's crimes, and the personal stories of a number of those who were repressed. The oral histories (interviews with former victims and Memorial leaders) were gathered after 1988, during the second period of de-Stalinization. The book addresses some of the issues of the post-camp period, particularly the revelations about the Stalinist past and their impact under glasnost, as well as the psychological effects of decades of silence. However, Victims of Soviet Terror does not specifically deal with the resocialization process.


14. Ibid., p. 32.


19. Ibid., p. 48.


21. Adler and Gluzman, "Soviet Special Psychiatric Hospitals: Where the System was Criminal and the Inmates were Sane".


25. Ibid., p. 198.

26. Ibid.

27. Ibid., p. 199.

28. Ibid.


32. Conquest, p. 310.

33. Ibid.

and function of the Soviet forced labor camps see also the valuable Memorial reference work, N.G. Okhotin, A.B. Roginskii, eds., Sistema ispravitel'no-trudovykh lagerei v SSSR (Moscow: Zven'ia, 1998); and Stettner.


36. Ibid., p. 3.


38. The year 1934, rather than 1930, has been chosen because most of the information in this study relates to victims of the Great Terror.


40. Ibid., pp. 10-11.

41. Ibid., p. 18.

42. Ibid., pp. 20, 39.

43. Ibid., p. 48.

44. Ibid., pp. 94-95.

45. Even the very term "revisionist" has been subject to debate. Stephen Cohen notes, in the past the term referred to historians who accepted and reinterpreted data. It is now applied to a 'particular school of thought that has accepted falsification, dismissed established evidence and misinterpreted newer materials,' cited in Robert Conquest, "Small Terror, few dead," Times Literary Supplement, 31 May 1996, p. 3.


According to Memorial researchers who have culled data from the KGB archives, no less than one million prisoners were executed between the years 1921-53 (Ofitsial'naia Spravka 'Memoriala' k dniu politzakliuchënnogo v 1997gg., 30 October 1997).


49. Bacon, p. 18.

50. Ibid., p. 27.


60. Cohen, Rethinking Russia, chapter 4.

61. It is not possible to calculate exactly how many victims survived the terror to return to society, but former exiles and deportees, effectively living in prisons without walls, should be counted in the category of "returnees", since
they generally shared the problems attendant to that status. It is likely that well over five million victims (including population groups) returned in the fifties. See also endnote 92.

62. Bacon, p. 45. The author’s cautious assertion is based on new archival material.

63. Ivanova, pp. 19-20. See also p. 29.


65. Ivanova, pp. 31, 47.

66. Bacon, pp. 46-47.


68. V. Rogovin, Partiia Rasstrelannyykh (Moscow, 1997), p. 457. See also Argumenty i Fakty, no. 5, 1989.

69. Ugolovni Kodeks RSFSR (Moscow, 1950), pp. 35-43.


72. "National operations" in 1937-38 were directed against various ethnic groups for alleged collaboration or suspicion of being agents of foreign intelligence services. Approximately 250,000 of these victims (half of them Poles) received the death penalty. See N.V. Petrov, A.B. Roginskii, "'Pol’skaya operatsiia' NKVD 1937-1938gg.," in Repressii protiv poliakov i pol’skich grazhdan (Moscow: Zven’ia, 1997), p. 33.


74. Ivanova, p. 110.


76. Gleb Iosifovich Anfilov, "Materialy k biografii: Vyderzhki iz pisem, dnevnikov i drugie dokumenty," Memorial, f. 2, op. 1, d. 4, l. 0001 2909 0267.


79. Medvedev, questionnaire.


83. Graziosi, p. 430.


85. Van Goudoever, p. 11.


89. Medvedev and Medvedev, p. 19.

90. Ibid., p. 20.

92. According to V.N. Zemskov, 113,735 individuals charged with "counter-revolutionary" crimes remained in the camps and colonies on January 1, 1956 ("GULAG," Sots. Is. 7: 14). However, to this estimate should be added a great number of others who were also victimized by the terror. Many incarcerated prisoners and exiles had exiled spouses, children, siblings, aunts, etc. In this study, these individuals are also considered returnees.

93. Medvedev and Medvedev, p. 20.
94. Van Goudoever citing Medvedev and Sakharov respectively, p. 46.
95. Ibid.
97. Adler, pp. 42-44.

Khrushchev’s son, Leonid, fell into the hands of the Germans during the war and was recaptured by the Soviets. On the basis of collected documents, he received a sentence of capital punishment. Apparently Khrushchev pleaded to, among others, Stalin for the sentence to be revoked, but his efforts were to no avail. For thoughts on Khrushchev’s motivation for the Secret Speech, see Vadim Udilov, "Za chto Khrushchev otomstil Stalinu," Nezavisimaia Gazeta, 17 February 1998.

103. GARF, f. 461, op. 8s, d. 395, 1. 2.
105. Ibid., p. 115.


109. Davies, Soviet History in the Yeltsin Era, p. 213. At this meeting, Gorbachev spoke in favor of the restoration of Party membership to Malenkov and Kaganovich.

110. Ibid., pp. 1-2.

111. Only after he fell from power did Gorbachev (feel safe enough to?) reveal information about how his own family was repressed. He told two American reporters, Jonathan Sanders and David Remnick, that members of his and Raisa Maksimovna’s family had been arrested as kulaks and exiled to Siberia. Clearly he knew that this fate was shared by many more than ‘thousands’.

112. Adler, p. 45.


114. Ibid.

115. Ibid.


118. Shapiro, "Rehabilitation Policy," p. 310.

119. Labedz, p. 51.

120. Zoia Dmitrievna Marchenko, answer to questionnaire, April 6, 1995.

121. Evgenii Aleksandrovich Gramp, interview with Memorial members (transcribed oral history), 16 July 1990.


123. Ginzburg, pp. 412-413.

125. Lev Gavrilovich Gavrilov, "Zolotoi Most", Memorial, f. 2, op. 1, d. 5, l. 2909 1511.

126. Ibid., l. 2909 1691.

127. Isaak Moiseevich Fil'shtinskii, interview held at his Moscow home, April 20, 1995.

128. For further examination of this question see Ian Kershaw, Moshe Lewin, eds., Stalinism and Nazism: Dictatorships in Comparison (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

Among the newest of memorials to victims of state repression, Cambodia's museums of sun-bleached skulls are a particularly graphic reminder of that regime's loss of humanity and humankind, International Herald Tribune, 8-9 June 1996.


132. Rogovin, p. 487.


134. GARF, f. 461, op. 8s, d. 3223, l. 18.


136. See Wheatcroft, "Glasnost", p. 208; Rogovin, p. 487.

137. Rogovin, p. 487.


140. Vladlen Terent'evich Loginov, interview held at his Moscow home, March 3, 1994. This was probably the case for a few prominent Party members and some members of the intelligentsia.

141. Roy Medvedev, response to Cohen questionnaire.


144. Naumov, interview. See also "Ob ispolnenii organami vnukhrennikh del zakonodatelsstva o reabilitatsii i ob arhivnom fonde RF," in Otechestvennye Arkhiy 6 (1995): 27; Memorial Aspekt 15, August 1995.


147. For a discussion on the meaning and legal consequences of the status of "postradavshii" see Rossiiskaia Gazeta, 31 May 1995, p. 5.


150. Rossiiskaia Gazeta, 31 May 1995. An interesting discussion on this theme was presented in Sudebnie vedomosti (Krasnodar) 12, December 1995, p. 5; see also "Zhertvy repressii nuzhalutsia v zashchite," 58er nos. 9-10 (October 1995), p. 3; Anatoliy Karpychev, "Deti GULAGa: ran’she ikh nazyvali ‘stalinskimi sirotami’ seichas nazyvaют ‘postradavshimi’," Trud, 19 August 1997.


152. Semën Samuilovich Vilenskii, interview held at "Vozvrashchenie" headquarters (his Moscow home), May 2, 1996. "Zek" is often applied as a term for prisoner ("zakliuchennyi").


154. E. Repa, spring 1995 response to a questionnaire developed for this project.
155. Zoia Dmitrievna Marchenko, interviews held at her Moscow home on April 6 and April 13, 1995.


166. Des Pres, p. 46.

167. Ibid., p. 38.

168. In his "Intellectuals on Auschwitz: Memory, History and Truth," Omer Bartov argues that it is a false distinction to separate the emotional need to bear witness from the moral imperative, to distinguish between "those who write so as to rid themselves of a burden which otherwise would make their
existence impossible and those who feel charged with a moral mission and direct their writing at the public ... thereby [fulfilling] a social and moral function without becoming necessarily politicized”. He does not take into account here that politicization depends on the political climate in which that story is told. History & Memory 5, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 1993): 102.


170. Ibid., p. 134.

171. Ibid., p. 22.

172. At age 88, Miasnikova, who plays a small role in the "Sovremennik" production of Ginzburg’s story, was already in her ninth season. See "Krutoi Marshrut Sud’by," Trud, 15 January 1998.


176. Ibid., p. 17.