The Great Return: The Gulag Survivor and the Soviet System
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Citation for published version (APA):

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Download date: 17 Jan 2019
Chapter IV
The Impact of Repression on Re-adaptation

Overview

The scope of the repression did not begin with the arrest of the victims and it did not end with their release. Nor was it limited to the individuals who were arrested. Even those who were never arrested were still intimidated by the constant fear that they or their loved ones could suddenly be taken away. This pervasive threat stifled individual social expression in almost all spheres of life. After release, the deforming effects of the camps continued to wreak their havoc on the ex-prisoners, along with their social networks. That is why the deleterious effects of the repression could never be examined merely from the perspective of the individuals who were incarcerated. They extended to their families, their social circles, their jobs, and to the body politic.

Introduction

Although the repressed were taken out of the camps, for many, the camps could never be taken out of the repressed. The consequences of their experience as prisoners and the further consequences of their status as ex-prisoners hindered all efforts toward re-adjustment and re-assimilation. Not only did prisoners experience major assaults to their psychological stability by the trauma of the camps, but in their damaged condition they had to manage the stress of re-entering society. After their release they had to try to gain acceptance into a world that had changed while they were gone. The returnees had also changed. In discussing the moral impact of the camp experience on the individual, Shalamov says "it only makes a person worse ... there is a lot that happens in camps that a person should not see ... the main question becoming whether one remains a human being."¹

As the repression abated and the political climate thawed
in the mid-fifties, it might have been expected that society at large as well as their own social networks would have embraced the returnees and welcomed them back into the fold. However, the years of separation from their families as well as the emotionally disturbing culture of the camps had alienated many of them. Not only did many of them come back as strangers, but they came back as problems. They all needed, and some demanded, jobs, housing, rehabilitation, and often the restoration of Party membership. The general failure to achieve these goals served as constant reminders to ex-zeks of the system's repressive nature and its indifference to their plight. Compounding the problem of re-entry was the fact that both sides -- the government and the returnees -- lacked the material and social preparedness for the task. Housing and jobs were scarce. Political expression was dangerous. In addition, there was no socially established institutional process for re-entry. The social system exhibited what one journalist, in a different context, described as "the national failure to devise appropriate rituals of return that might have helped [these people] come to terms with [their] experience." While this journalist was referring to American soldiers returning from Vietnam, he could with more cogency have been talking about discharged camp inmates in the post-Stalin Soviet Union.

This chapter will diverge from the chronological format used thus far in order to present a collection of returnee experiences. From these narratives the predicament of the returnees in the Soviet state will emerge with a more human face.

Psychological and moral issues associated with the return

The need to speak about the unspeakable

Much of what we know about the experience of incarceration and the struggle to survive comes from the oral history and the memoirs of the victims of repression. They tell of the killing ground in which many people lost their families, their convictions, their spirits, their humanity, and their lives.
But some victims endured and some fewer prevailed. Their stories provide a kaleidoscopic view of both man’s inhumanity to man and the triumph of the human spirit.

These accounts are necessarily a selective sample. We do not know what the illiterate might have written. We do not know what many of the perished would have written or said. We do, however, have the accounts of some of the survivors. We also have the accounts that survived (even if their writers did not), as well as the information that we can infer from reading between the lines. What, we may ask, is the motivation for writing memoirs? Some people write memoirs out of a sense of responsibility, and in order to remember and commemorate. Mikhail Baitalsky, long-time prisoner, rails against the blind eye that society turns to their victimized fellow countrymen in his Notebooks for the Grandchildren:

Some say: The fate of those innocently condemned affects you because you yourself were imprisoned. No, the fate of those tormented and shot troubles me the more strongly the less others seem to know about it. It is not the dead who haunt me in my sleep, but the living who cause my anxiety.\(^3\)

Isaak Moiseevich Filshtinsky has similar sentiments. In My shaqaem pod konvoem (We Are Walking Under Armed Escort), he also warns of the dangers of relying too heavily on the accounts of a more fortunate few:

I don’t like it when former zeks who were not forced to do hard labor say that it wasn’t so bad in the camps, that people read there, learned languages ... it only attests to emotional dryness and moral detriment. I was lucky. I returned from the camp alive and relatively healthy, but I do not have the right to forget those whose lives were destroyed there.\(^4\)

Other memoirists write to redeem a vow, appease a ghost, or retaliate against tormentors. One former prisoner wants Soviet society and the state to suffer guilt, shame and disgrace about what happened in the camps:

sometime long ago, when I was standing next to the corpse
of a girl with a number tattooed on her back who had been murdered by the guards, I swore that I would someday tell people about it. As I finish writing my story, I turn to the distant shadow of this girl and say: 'to the best of my ability I fulfilled this promise'.

It was the incremental crescendo of stories like these that contributed to the destabilization of the Soviet system that cracked under Khrushchev and crumbled under Gorbachev. While the political system had already recognized the need to change, the cumulative impact of the (now permissible) public airing of individual accounts of repression further discredited the struggling system. But the writers had a more personal motivation — the need to tell their story. One of the habitual ways that people deal with distress is to transform it into a story and try to recruit a receptive audience. The mitigation of a trauma by coprocessing it with a compassionate listener is both an ordinary social remedy and an established psychotherapeutic practice. "Testimony psychotherapy" -- telling the story of trauma -- has proven to reduce symptoms and improve survivors' psychosocial functioning. However, for many of the early returnees the political atmosphere bred fear of discussion and disclosure of their experiences. So some wrote it down for a future audience. Others waited in silence for times to change. In the late eighties many of these suppressed stories found an audience, and their writers and tellers found some surcease.

More recently, as many of the tales of repression have already been recounted and recorded, the urge to tell and retell these stories of repression has decreased, as have the long lines waiting to get into Memorial's reception room. But many of those who registered with Memorial still requested that oral histories be taken. "Silence," as one author writes, was a "prime alternative when the exit option is foreclosed and one is subjected to a repressive power." Silence may help to maintain physical safety, but it increases emotional suffering. Now, it was no longer necessary to suffer in silence, and the repressed were eager for an audience.
Nightmares

One of the characteristics of the "concentration camp syndrome" is the persistence of symptoms of anxiety and depression long after the physical cessation of the threatening events. Leo Eitinger, an Auschwitz survivor and researcher on this phenomenon, reports that over half of the survivors that he examined still experienced posttraumatic stress symptoms for many years after the war. How does this finding compare with the experience of Gulag survivors? One author aptly observes that a friend who spent 18 years in an Arctic labor camp chopping wood "developed iron muscles and broken nerves." Evidence of the lasting psychological effects of incarceration is widespread and appears in many forms. Roy Medvedev records that upon their return many prisoners had the doorbells taken out of their homes: "they were afraid of doorbells, because that's what their arrest and misfortune began with.... You had to knock on the door when you visited. Some even feared telegrams." One former prisoner tells that though he was not threatened by "anything more than threatens every other human being" (it is presumably after 1956), fear persists in his dreams. There, he writes,

I am back in Lubyanka, Lefortovo, and Butyrki prisons and in camps.... In prison I had flown free as a bird when I snatched brief hours of sleep in damp, foul-smelling barracks. Here [in the outside world] I have nightmares in which I wallow in snow up to my neck, I shiver under the blasts of icy winds, I slip and fall on my face in the mud....

Many others like him experienced this manifestation of trauma. Another ex-prisoner described recurrent dreams of being in a prison or camp and feeling degraded and despondent in the grip of fears that her incarceration might never end. These dreams persisted for twenty years after her release. Yet another was haunted by nightmares in agonizing detail as she slept, and plagued by unremitting traumatic memories in her waking hours. She lamented, "rarely a day goes by when I don't remember those malignant years. This will go on until
the day I die."\textsuperscript{15}

In the case of one Gulag survivor, that was, indeed, what happened. In 1983, almost three decades after release from her 17-year incarceration in Kolyma, Berta Aleksandrovna Babina, age 97, sat up in her hospital bed. In response to efforts to get her to lie down, she uttered the words: "the convoy [armed escort] is waiting."\textsuperscript{16} The bedside nurse, who was unfamiliar with her history, was understandably perplexed. The convoy was Berta Aleksandrovna’s last image before dying. We may not know how often this victim of Stalinist terror was transported from one camp to the next, on foot, in temperatures of less than 40 degrees below zero, for sometimes a hundred kilometers across untrodden virgin taiga.\textsuperscript{17} But we do know that her journey never ended. At the moment of her death, the traumatic experience was still lodged in her psyche. The nurse’s ignorance of what Babina meant and what the epoch she had lived through meant reflected something else -- official amnesia, because in 1983 it was once again forbidden to recall the history of Soviet repression.

**Psychiatric treatment**

Survivors of the Soviet Gulag have regularly described the persistence of symptoms of anxiety, depression, and nightmares, long after the physical cessation of the threatening events. Despite this, doctors who worked with returnees in the fifties and sixties at Moscow Hospital No. 60, the clinic for Old Bolsheviks, dealt only with the somatic complaints presented by their patients. Although the doctors later admitted to having recognized the psychological aspects of the "camp syndrome" at the time, they were not at liberty to treat the ex-prisoners’ ailments psychotherapeutically, because of the proscribed political issues that they represented.\textsuperscript{18}

In the post-Soviet era, the doctors felt free to disclose their experiences of those years. On an afternoon visit to Hospital No. 60 in the course of this research, doctors informed of the theme anxiously gathered around a table. They seemed as eager to tell their repressed stories as many
returnees had been to tell their stories of repression, often interrupting one another with yet another account of post-traumatic sequelae in the camp survivors of the fifties and sixties. "These people were not like the others, they had the stamp of having been in the camps," asserted one of the doctors. Her colleague elaborated, "They were hardened, insulted, pushy, aggressive, and in need of extra attention." All agreed that the men were more difficult than the women patients, who seemed to adapt better. (The gender issue is beyond the scope of this study, but part of the explanation for this phenomenon may lie in the fact that the women victimized as wives of "enemies of the people" were sometimes sentenced to exile rather than camp internment, so they were exposed to less stressors. Moreover, those who were incarcerated seemed to process the experience better even while in camp, focusing on friendships and human relationships to help them adapt to their surroundings.) Another physician recalled that in 1960, quite a dramatic scene ensued in the cafeteria when a patient recognized his camp supervisor, who had later become a victim, and subsequently a patient in the clinic.

At that time, these patients were treated only for their physical ailments. There were also an unfortunate few who did not receive treatment of any kind. Shalamov, for example, reportedly suffering from "camp syndrome" later in life, was refused treatment by psychiatrists (and other doctors) out of fear for their professional safety. Not surprisingly, despite the presence of such a large group of cases, no scientific articles were published on this theme. Nor was there a field of specialization for dealing with post-traumatic stress syndrome in camp survivors, as had been developed in countries like West Germany or Holland.

The beginnings in Russia, however, are evident. Since 1992 Hospital No. 60 has been cooperating with the organization "Compassion" ("Sostradanie"), a (former) branch of Memorial that tends to the psychological rehabilitation of its elderly clientele of camp survivors. According to Dr.
Eduard Karyukhin, director of the 'in home help program', "Compassion" seeks to remedy the "postponed psychosomatic consequences of torture, enforced by age pathology and unfavorable living conditions." When home care cannot provide sufficiently effective treatment for these patients, they are admitted to Hospital No. 60 for psychotherapy, medication, and physical therapy. The "Compassion" doctors have observed that almost all of their clients, long after release from incarceration, manifest such symptoms as sleeping disorders accompanied by nightmares, muscular pains, and digestive disorders. Among some of the clients with "normal psychosocial adaptation," alcoholism and sexual disturbances have been noted.

The organization "Compassion" has a two-fold mission: research and treatment. This particular group of survivors constitutes a unique sample due to three main features: age (60-80 years and older), the postponed consequences of torture, and the extended length of the stressful period in their lives. The team of psychiatrists that surveyed the victim-clients came to some interesting conclusions. We shall review some of them here.

Among 200 subjects, one-quarter had managed to overcome the social, psychological, and somatic consequences of repression, and were in need of no special assistance. A larger group, 38.4%, had not completely overcome the consequences of repression, and this was manifested on a somatic level. Outpatient and inpatient treatment as well as psychotherapy was recommended for this group. In a third group, representing almost 15% of the sample, partial psychosocial dysadaptation was found. These former victims had not overcome the consequences of repression in the post-repression period, either on a social or psycho-emotional level, and continued to focus on the experience of repression. Dynamic observation and treatment, including outpatient and inpatient psychotherapy, was indicated for this group. Slightly more subjects (16.4%) experienced social dysadaptation in one or more major domains of their life,
accompanied by pathological fixation on the experience of repression and frequent outbursts. Active monitoring and consultation as well as outpatient and inpatient psychiatric treatment was prescribed for this contingent of camp survivors. Finally, about 7% of those surveyed were found to suffer from complete social dysadaptation in all major domains of life, for which constant inpatient and outpatient observation and treatment were recommended.26

To what did the victims themselves attribute their (sometimes damaged) mental state? Almost half of the clients connected their psychic trauma solely to the events of the repressive period, one-quarter traced their mental and emotional state to both the repressive period and the post-repressive period, and 20% connected their psychic trauma only with events of the post-repressive period. The researchers concluded that for the majority of these survivors, the experience of repression was their strongest stress factor, influencing their lives and remaining significant to this day. Social adaptation was frequently achieved by compensation on a somatic level.27

The fact that these former labor camp prisoners of the thirties, forties, and fifties were still alive in the nineties speaks volumes about their ability to adapt. Marina Berkovskaya, director of "Compassion," which began in 1989 as the medical group of Memorial, points out that the people who come to the organization have by definition great survival mechanisms, since many former prisoners died in the first five years after release.28 One of the physicians who treats survivor-patients at Hospital No. 60, Lia Grinshpun, concurs with this observation, further asserting that returnees are generally strong people. She adds that their psychological condition in the pre-camp period also had a great bearing on their post-camp experience.

It is not surprising that the physicians providing treatment to this group of patients are often wounded healers. Grinshpun was the child of repressed parents. And Karyukhin's grandfather was part of the forced labor brigade exploited to
He recalls how his grandfather "cried all his life but never said anything." He died relatively young. Eduard's mother only revealed the cause of her father's traumatized state after the onset of perestroika. Times were starting to change quickly. Sakharov was released from exile, and the organization Memorial began to flourish. In October of 1989, Eduard joined its ranks. He filled out the Memorial questionnaire with details on himself, and with what little information he had on his grandfather, hoping that Memorial could help him find more. When the Memorial staff member noticed Karyukhin's profession and sensed his involvement, she asked if he could help take care of the ailing Gulag survivors in Memorial's constituency. Karyukhin felt a professional, spiritual, and civil obligation to take on the task.

Almost ten years later, he is still dedicating his professional life to working with ex-prisoners -- talking to them, treating their pains, and trying to alleviate their fears. In 1998, for example, many of his patient-clients in their seventies, eighties, and even nineties, were afraid that under a new government they might be locked up again. They lament their broken families whose bonds were not repaired by the act of reunion. They regret their nearly life-long sense of stigmatization as second class citizens. They complain of not having been able to get desirable work, and not getting into universities. They suffer ill health. All this notwithstanding, Karyukhin reports some contradictory feelings toward the system among this group. Despite the relatively ruined lives which they describe, about one-third believed in the Soviet system (and to some extent still do) and thought that their personal suffering was a mistake, the result of certain problems in the system that were merely in need of correction; one-third felt just the opposite, and attributed their suffering solely to the "barbaric system"; and one-third changed their (earlier positive) views on the system as a result of what happened to them.

Karyukhin concludes that the heart problems, asthma,
hypertension, and other symptoms which his patients present constitute a "somatic mask that conceals neuroses" that are attendant to their experience of repression. He keeps constant and close contact with his patients, which in itself has a psychotherapeutic effect. He takes time to see them and listen to them, checks up on their living conditions, monitors whether they are being visited by social workers, and organizes hospitalization when necessary and admission to nursing homes when indicated. When he is not treating patients, Karyukhin is developing his specialization, occasionally attending training seminars abroad in order to learn more about psychotherapeutic approaches to former victims.30

A 1995 article in the Russian daily newspaper Trud, entitled "The Gulag is Not Only the Past," points out that in the Russian Federation alone more than four million people were registered with organizations for the repressed. Its author, a physician, argued that there is no way to compensate for the damage of the Stalinist terror, but specialized medical care could help alleviate some of its consequences. He proposed a medical center for this group of survivors to treat both the physical ailments sustained in the Gulag and their "traumatized psyches".31 Such a medical center would be out of financial reach and likely would not gain official approval in the present political climate of Russia. Nevertheless, it seems that the concept is slowly but surely being realized, in the efforts of organizations like "Compassion," doctors like Karyukhin, and treatment facilities like Hospital No. 60.

Channeling the traumatic experience -- art and religion

The writer Yuri Dombrovsky, who was in the camps from age 25 - 50, would awaken from his sleep crying, "they are going to cut me with an ax."32 Though he had spent much of his life in the camps, he could not write about them directly, but he did channel these unspeakable things into his art. This is not unusual. A number of visual artists who slaved at hard labor as well managed to secretly draw or paint, on notebook paper
or plywood, while imprisoned in the camps. The portraits, self-portraits, landscapes, animal pictures, and icons attest to the muted struggle for expression by the prisoners. Memorial has undertaken the task of gathering and displaying the works of repressed artists, both those who perished and those who survived. Its collection is extensive. In his appraisal of the portraits, Lev Razgon stated that, "If an album of these drawings were published without captions or any references to where they were made it would still be clear who these people are and why their faces carry the stigma of upcoming death". This is an apt, albeit finely-tuned assessment because very few inner-Gulag themes are directly expressed. Instead, many of the landscapes portray a world beyond the barbed wire -- perhaps the artist's creative escape into his recollection of or hope for freedom.

One particular ex-prisoner artist, Yefvrosiniya Antonovna Kersnovskaya, recorded in extensive memoirs and meticulously etched in hundreds of drawings much of what she endured. These are impressionistic scenes of exile, interrogation, transport, the camp hospital, prisoners at work in the mines, etc. Semyon Vilensky referred to Kersnovskaya’s life and work as representing "the triumph of the spirit over the system ... proof that a person can be independent of the state even under totalitarian conditions." Isaak Filshtinsky referred to her as an "unfettered soul." Kersnovskaya’s illustrated memoirs, written in 1963-64 to describe to her mother what happened in the fifteen years that they did not see each other, span 1,500 pages, and have yet to be published in their entirety. They are about the author herself and the people she met during the various phases of her journey: exile (1941), transport, wood-cutting, escape during which she wandered 1,500 kilometers in the Siberian forests until someone informed the authorities, re-arrest, interrogation, receiving a death sentence that was later reduced to ten years of camp, hard labor work in a mine, release (1952), exile. She returned to her life with her mother only in 1957. Kersnovskaya managed to assert her own will in the Soviet
penitentiary system. She frequently performed such altruistic acts as donating blood to get extra rations of food for the "goners" in the camp hospitals. Considering the weakened physical state of prisoners, this gesture was a significant sacrifice. She also taught other prisoners to maintain their dignity even in extreme conditions. It was often the practice of "convoy" guards to command the women being transported under armed escort to lay down in the mud. Prisoners could be shot for disobedience. When Kersnovskaya did not perform this senseless, demeaning act in the power game of victims and henchmen, one by one, the other prisoners literally took a stand, too, by rising from the ground. Kersnovskaya's courageous example helped the prisoners to win this round.

Kersnovskya also refused in other ways to quietly comply with the criminal system. Since she could not "demand justice" when she was sentenced to execution, she would also not ask for mercy. Moreover, she told her judges exactly what she thought of them and of the system they served. Instead of taking the opportunity to defend herself, she enumerated all the 'horrible things' she encountered in exile, on the run, and in the prisons. And when she was released, she refused to sign a pledge of silence about what she saw in the prisons and camps. Moreover, while performing relatively "light" work in the camp morgue, she discovered that certain prisoners had been beaten to death by rifle butts. She refused to give false testimony on their cause of death in order to help conceal this official transgression.

She later was able to capture the scene in the morgue in vivid detail. It is one of 700 other illustrations included in a volume published by former dissident Igor Moiseevich Chapkovsky and his family members, who inherited her twelve notebooks. In 1988, Chapkovsky's then 15-year old daughter, Dasha, left Moscow to care for the ailing Kersnovskaya in Yessentuki, in the Northern Caucasus, for the remaining six years of her life. Kersnovskaya's art work and writings were clearly the way in which she channeled her experience of repression. That was their individual function. But her
legacy is richer than what was recorded on paper. By the influence she had and still has on former Stalinist era prisoners and dissidents, her life and work also had a political and social function. When in 1990 the popular magazine Ogonyok published an extensive illustrated spread on Yefrosiniya Antonovna, hundreds of readers’ letters confirmed the veracity of her accounts. Kersnovskaya instilled in them and in countless former prisoners a greater sense of the dignity of the human spirit.

"Self-expression helped to stave off, however minimally, degradation and despair [allowing some escape] from [one’s] unbearable surroundings into a private world...," writes Memorial member and art historian Valentina Tikhanova. Art is an attempt to express deeply felt needs and to make sense of the world. So is religion, as Viktor Frankl so persuasively argued in Man’s Search for Meaning. Those who endured the inhumanity of the camps confronted the associated issue of God’s relationship to man. Mass terror and repression inevitably raise the question of victims’ unanswered prayers. Believers were faced with the question how God could be both good and omnipotent and yet permit such cruelty. The experience of repression and surviving the experience of repression generally compel people to evaluate or re-evaluate their religious convictions. Solzhenitsyn’s post-camp discovery of religion is one of the better known examples of a spiritual transformation as a consequence of repression. Another former Gulag inmate who shared this experience wrote that “imprisonment played a decisive role in my inner-development. Only there did I truly learn about life without distortions.” Upon his return in 1955 he became a devout Christian, entered a seminary and studied Orthodoxy. He went on to explain that he turned to Christianity to cure his tormented soul after the experience of the Stalinist camps. It appears that there are some hurts that are perceived to be beyond the power of humans to heal, and under these circumstances, only divine help may be sought.
A number of Gulag survivors claimed that they felt the presence of God during their incarceration. They sensed that he protected them, and helped them through the many trials and tribulations that they had to endure. This belief was not manifested in prayer or any other overt religious exercise, but rather was internalized.\textsuperscript{44}

For those people who were socialized, or politicized, to a completely secular society, turning to a deity was not an alternative even to be considered in any of their deliberations. God played no role at all in either their joy or their suffering. Without attempting to reach any conclusions because of sampling limitations, it is interesting to note some returnee responses to the following questions on religion: "Were you religious before repression? Did your attitude toward religion change after repression?" These questions were part of a 1995 questionnaire constructed for this research project and conducted among returnees primarily in Moscow, but also in St. Petersburg and Magadan. Among 31 respondents: 2 were atheist and became religious in the camps, 8 started out as religious and remained so, 4 became religious after the camp or later in life, 12 were not religious either prior to or after the Gulag, 2 experienced little change in their attitude toward religion (unclear what that attitude was), 2 were religious before camp and lost their faith afterwards, while one returned to religion later in life. Apparently for some, suffering confirmed the existence of God. Zoya Marchenko (one of this sample’s non-believers) describes female camp-mates who considered the suffering that was inflicted upon them in the camps to be punishment for their lack of faith.\textsuperscript{45}

This survey equated "belief" perhaps too narrowly with belief in God. For many Party members, "religious" zeal was invested in Stalin or the Party. One of the twelve irreligious respondents explained: "I was and remained a non-believer because I was raised in a family of Communists and professional revolutionaries."\textsuperscript{46} Another had his own brand of belief (as did many): "I was neither an atheist nor was I
religious, neither perspective affected me. That didn't change. I simply believed in Stalin and he turned out to be a scoundrel and a villain." Belief in the Party or socialism, sometimes even belief in Stalin, was a common sentiment among returnees. This influenced their later efforts to gain reinstatement in the CPSU.

**Victims and informants**

The pathology of the Soviet system extended to all of its components -- victims, victimizers, and informants alike. One of the systemic techniques used to fragment the opposition was to turn members of a social group against each other. There were strong inducements for people to become donoschiki (informers) and turn in their neighbors, friends, and even family members. This had lingering consequences, since some victims or their families had subsequent dealings with the informants.

In 1932, 13-year old Pavlik Morozov denounced his father to the local authorities of his Ural village for harboring fugitive kulaks. As a result, he was hacked to death by vengeful relatives. Subsequently he became a Communist folk hero because he put allegiance to the state above family loyalty. Pavlik Morozov's disturbing legacy was that this practice became an implicitly accepted way of protecting oneself or avenging one's neighbor during the subsequent years of Stalinist terror. One woman is said to have suffered a paralyzing stroke when prisoners started to return after Stalin's death, because she had denounced so many of her neighbors.

Polina Furman, a Jewish doctor, was arrested along with her husband and son in August of 1952. Another son, a medical student, had already been arrested in 1951. In the course of her interrogation in the Lubyanka, Polina was told that a certain Khukhrina had reported the "anti-Soviet activities" of the Furmans to the authorities. Furman was shocked that her friend of thirty years, a friend with whom she had gone through medical school, could be capable of such an act. Furman was released under the 1953 amnesty but her husband
continued to serve his ten-year sentence of hard labor. Immediately upon returning to Moscow, Polina telephoned her "old friend" who frightfully gasped, "You returned?!" They agreed to meet in the metro station. When confronted with how she could do such a base thing, the informer turned pale and lamely replied that "the interrogator said that you would never come back." Furman never saw Khukhrina again and tried to forget her. In 1954, after repeated inquiries, Polina was finally informed by the Supreme Court that her son Vladilen (from 'Vladimir Lenin') had been executed in March of 1952. In 1955 Furman's husband returned from the camps and the whole family was rehabilitated a year later. They emigrated in 1980.

Medvedev described the special psychological problems faced by camp informers. These were people who, in return for cooperating with the authorities, were rewarded by being placed in favorable assignments such as those of camp cooks. Medvedev records that "This was the fate and the heavy moral suffering of many [he cites Pyotr Yakir] ... it tormented them in their subsequent lives, because those lives had been bought at a very terrible price indeed." They lived in chronic fear of exposure because they were unaware of the "complete destruction of camp documentation" that revealed their roles. (Medvedev's assertion about the destruction of these materials is only partially true. In 1954 Khrushchev ordered that certain "operativnye dela" (operative files) be destroyed. These included files that contained incriminating information on 'honest Soviet citizens'. In Stalin's time such materials were preserved for potential future exploitation.)

The trauma and tragedy of these complicated issues plagued both victims and informers upon return. The former experienced anger, sorrow, and suspicion; the latter guilt and often self-reproach. These politically circumscribed questions could be addressed if they were cloaked in fiction. This literary mode was an acceptable way of portraying the plight of victims and informers, as witnessed by Solomon Shulman's heart-wrenching "Tupikovaya Situatsiya" (Dead End
Situation). While this tale did not actually happen, it easily might have, and will therefore be outlined here for illustrative purposes.53 The protagonist, Oleg, works in a research institute and is engaged to be married. When his fiancé admits to him that her parents were repressed, he decides to remain engaged but to keep it a secret for the time being. One day he is summoned by a supervisor and asked to fill out a questionnaire. Oleg becomes frightened because he assumes that the NKVD is watching him and is aware of his marriage plans. He is especially afraid of the NKVD because his father had fought on the side of the Whites during the Civil War. The fact that he had misrepresented himself as an orphan might have been discovered by the NKVD. Oleg cancels his wedding plans because he is afraid that if he were to marry the daughter of an "enemy of the people" the NKVD would expose his past. As it turned out, his worst fears were realized. Oleg’s fiancé was arrested and never returned from the camps.

Oleg suspected that someone had informed the NKVD of his marriage plans. He wondered if it might have been his friend and colleague Sergey. Oleg’s suspicions intensified when, quite by chance, he happened to see Sergey coming out of NKVD headquarters at Dzerzhinsky Square. Convinced that his colleague had informed on him, Oleg decided to avenge himself by killing Sergey. He staged a mishap with high voltage currency at the institute in such a way that Sergey’s death appeared to be accidental.

Some years later, Oleg received a letter from Sergey’s mother who had just returned from the camps. She wanted to meet with Oleg because he had been Sergey’s best friend. When Oleg went to see her, he found an old broken woman who had spent nearly twenty years in the camps. She had not been allowed to correspond with her son and knew little about him. Sergey’s mother clutched a book in her hand -- a work written by Oleg and Sergey. Afterwards, Oleg became so overcome with guilt that he went to the Party secretary, revealed the truth, and asked to be arrested for murder. The Party secretary
called the NKVD to search their archives concerning the matter. A paper was promptly brought in, revealing that the reason for Sergey's visit to the NKVD was to request permission to see his mother in the camps. He was innocent of the offense for which Oleg murdered him. He was not an informer after all!

The Party secretary suggested that Oleg forget the whole thing, because it would be easier for everyone involved. The secretary, thus, conveyed the message that coming to grips with the legacy of terror of individual trauma, guilt, and responsibility should be a private, rather than a public process.

The issue of victims and henchmen (NKVD'ers, camp guards, etc.) raises separate questions. In the post-Stalin era, a number of guards were perpetually afraid of running into the prisoners that they had guarded and often taunted. The victims generally remembered them well, and were also aware of the fact that many enjoyed personal pensions that were higher than the amount that their victims were compensated for their suffering. Whatever desire victims may have had for revenge, and many did, went unrequited, since henchmen were never brought to trial. To make matters even more complicated, the victim-henchman line was sometimes blurred, as no small amount of NKVD'ers later became victims. Pavel Sudoplatov, former NKVD'er, who unlike many other incarcerated former henchmen, lived to fight for his rehabilitation, called himself the system's "scapegoat." These core issues will be dealt with at greater length in the concluding chapter.

Semyon Samuilovich Vilensky: participant-observer

An inspiring example of a returnee who dedicated his life to exposing the historical truth and helping others to do the same can be found in Semyon Samuilovich Vilensky. For this reason, we will explore, in depth, the story of this man whose own fate is so inextricably intertwined with that of other returnees.
The historical literary society which Vilensky founded in 1989 is appropriately called "Vozvrashchenie" (The Return). He, and it, have two goals: to publish memoirs that salvage repressed history so as to preserve it in the public domain, and to assist survivors of the terror. To these ends, Vilensky has given the survivors a forum in which to tell their tales, and he has, among a host of other things, successfully lobbied the commission on rehabilitation of victims of political repression. He has pushed them to assist in the transfer of a rent-free estate to "Vozvrashchenie". Though Vilensky's own two-room Moscow apartment is cramped because it functions as a combination publishing house, archive, storage space, reception room, and living quarters, his efforts are aimed at finding space for others. For this purpose Vozvrashchenie has created a cultural, charitable center to which former prisoners can retreat. It is located on the Upper Volga in the province of Tver.

Semyon Samuilovich Vilensky is an ex-prisoner who has developed the extraordinary ability to observe his personal experiences from an outside perspective, and has dedicated his life to humanitarian pursuits. His camp experience shaped his life and perspective. His returnee experience is intimately connected with shaping the lives and perspectives of other returnees. As a prisoner, ex-prisoner, and a returnee Vilensky's story exemplifies the issues associated with the return of political prisoners to society.

Vilensky describes two aspects of the return: the external and the internal. The external aspect includes such problems as acquiring the propiska (internal passport system, i.e. residence permit), finding work, securing rehabilitation, and petitioning for compensation. The internal aspect addresses the problems associated with how the individual comes to terms with his/her inner psychological life. Here, fearful recollections of the past persecution merge with fearful suspicions of present surveillance. Vilensky reports that many ex-zeks were (and still are) perpetually afraid of committing even such minor infractions as jaywalking, for fear
of being caught and punished. The mindset of the terrorized prisoner is an enduring expectation of punishment. Vilensky recalls that he continued to walk with his hands clasped behind his back after release, and that it took him years to break the habit. It was a struggle to get used to walking on the sidewalk, because prisoners were always marched under armed escort in the middle of the road.58

Early on, there were indications that Vilensky had the kind of inquisitive mind, benevolent spirit, and steadfast courage that would put him on a collision course with a terrorist dictatorship. In 1945 he entered Moscow State University as a philology student and began his development as a free-thinking intellectual in these years. Vilensky did not mind studying Lenin, but was skeptical about the theories of Stalin. He did not like the attitude toward the intelligentsia who, he believed, could play a special role in society that was being neglected. Furthermore, he was against nationalistic politics and opposed the deportation of peoples. All told, these stances were later to amount to "anti-Soviet activities". At age 17 he was already questioning the system and defending the rights of others when he voiced that a friend was unjustly arrested. This was considered a form of "anti-Soviet agitation".

As a student he liked walking in the forest with his friends and reading poems aloud. One afternoon in 1948, in the presence of some fellow students, he recited a poem about Stalin and the intelligentsia. Its final line read, "agents are all around, and Stalin is the first".59 Someone informed the authorities of this, and it was interpreted as Vilensky's expression of a desire to destroy Stalin ("terrorist intentions"). He was arrested, and Semyon's nine-month interrogation began. The following year he was sentenced to ten years under the liter ASA (abbreviated letters for 'anti-Soviet agitation') and the article 58-8 (point 8 referred to "terrorist intentions").

Vilensky spent one month in the Lubyanka, from July 17 until August 18, 1948. He was then taken to the Sukhanovka,
notorious for 52 types of torture. Those who survived the Sukhanovka were the most physically destroyed. There Vilensky languished for 100 days with no walks, no interrogations, little light, and the awful sound of moans and screams. He contended that one could easily go crazy there. In spite of intense pressure to sign a false confession, Vilensky refused to do so. When he went on a hunger-strike to protest the false charges he was taken to a kartser (a cold, dark special punishment cell). When he insisted on seeing a Procurator, the authorities, in a Kafkaesque gesture, provided him instead with an interrogator. This is quite the opposite of what Vilensky needed since he had been put in the kartser in the first place for not signing a confession. The interrogator did not like his original story, but Vilensky had nothing to add to it.

Vilensky recalls that in the kartser he began hallucinating. The next thing he remembers is waking up in the cell to find a local doctor standing over him. She diagnosed Vilensky as having mental problems and recommended that he be taken to the Serbsky Institute for expert examination. The role of this institution at that time was almost diametrically opposed to its later task of punishing dissidents. In the Stalinist period, the Serbsky Institute assessed the authenticity of the psychiatric diagnosis to make sure that the patient was not faking illness. There were ample incentives to fake mental illness because such a diagnosis could save the patient-prisoner’s life. Later, as we have already noted, the Institute practiced the fine art of faking diagnoses and providing inappropriate, physically painful treatment in order to punish patient-prisoners. Vilensky was in fact rescued by the institute’s validation of his psychological condition of nervous exhaustion. The doctors said that he could not be interrogated at night, and Vilensky was sent back to the Lubyanka.

According to the ex-prisoner, there was a short interval at the Lubyanka during which the beating of prisoners was suspended in favor of other forms of coercion. One such form
was the use of psychological torture by the arrest of family members. Another was the so-called "conveyor" method in which prisoners are deprived of sleep in order to extract false confessions. Vilensky was subjected to a prolonged interrogation, but because of the medical recommendations he was allowed to sleep at night. Subsequently, he was transferred to the Butyrka, where he was charged under the liter ASA (see above), and also accused of the preparation of a terrorist act. He was sentenced by the Special Conference to ten years in a special camp in Kolyma.

In May of 1949 Vilensky set out on his nearly two-month train journey. Then came the ship, where they were "transported like slaves, but that's another story," Vilensky chuckled, as he realized how many issues he was bypassing, and how during our interview we were able to reduce such a tremendous amount of personal tragedy into this narrative of events.

At the special camp at Kolyma, zeks wore numbers on their backs, caps, and knees. Vilensky's number was 1-1620. He recalled one camp-mate who drew his numbers larger than the standard size. When the supervisors asked why he had done this, the prisoner replied, "I want the Americans to see me from their planes". No one saw him for the next ten days. He was confined to the kartser. While prisoners were allowed to write home twice a year, the "supervisors" (nadzirateli) were not required to send the letters. Prisoners soon learned that if they wanted the heavily censored letters they had written to be mailed, they would have to confine their writing to the subjects of working, being healthy, and living well. Prisoners could ask for packages with things they needed, so that people could guess how they were really living.

(One story culled from the Memorial archive of memoirs provides a poignant example of how family members learned to read between the lines for the real content of the message. A prisoner's wife correctly inferred from a simple statement about clothing, scribbled on a receipt (for items delivered) that she got back from the prison administration, that her
husband had been sentenced to death. She had been told that he was being sent to Kolyma. From a list of items that he would still be needing he crossed out the words "blanket" and "coat". The climate in Kolyma has been described by prisoners as twelve months of winter and the rest summer. His wife realized that he knew he would not be getting there.  

Sometimes prisoners pushed letters through the cracks in the floor of transport trains while enroute. Remarkably, these letters often reached their destinations. Although people who found them along the tracks must have known the status of the letter-writers, they nevertheless stamped them and mailed them. Even in the depths of the terror there were still "free" individuals who maintained their humanity.

Vilensky remained in the special camp in Kolyma for over six years, until the fall of 1955. In the winter of 1953-54 after Beria's execution, he helped to organize the expulsion of a rebel from the camp. This "prisoner" had started to agitate young people toward insurrection. From his experience, Vilensky knew that such open provocations would never be possible unless the camp leadership wanted it to happen, so he rallied opposition against the provocateur. Because he had foiled their plot, Vilensky was persecuted by the supervisors. He was sent to a camp in Kolyma where only common criminals, not political convicts, were held. Then he was sent to a camp that incarcerated privileged criminals, the so-called "suki" (thieves who agreed to be in the service of the camp supervisors). Vilensky was perceived by his new campmates to be an agent of their arch-enemies, because he had not been killed in the camp from which he came. One of the suki clans set out to burn Vilensky and the young Ukrainian nationalist prisoners with whom he had arrived in their barracks, but ultimately failed.

Vilensky was freed from camp in the fall of 1955. He explained that at that time Kolyma had a liberation system that was linked to work output. For example, if a prisoner exceeded the normal work quota by 110%, then one working day
equalled two days of the sentence; 151% made one work day count for three days. Thus, extra productivity could reduce the days spent in prison and result in early release. If the prisoner had less than a year to go, he was allowed to grow hair, a mark of privileged status among the shaven inmates. Zeks could also earn some money to which they were entitled upon release. However, from this sum the camp administration subtracted the costs of feeding the prisoner, clothing him, and guarding him! The clothing in which the prisoner was arrested ten, twelve, or fifteen years earlier was taken out of storage (if it had survived the various transports) and returned to him. On discharge, Vilensky received a certificate of release, and some money that his brigade-mates had saved up for him.

Vilensky was initially instructed to go to Yagodnoe, the center of the Northern Mining Industrial Complex where he was to obtain necessary additional documents. Those who were in the special camps did not receive a passport, but instead received a paper. Those who had certain 'points' (subdivisions of criminal articles, like Vilensky’s 58-10) were not subjected to colonization (compulsory settlement) in Kolyma, and thus had the right to obtain passports, albeit restricted ones. One former prisoner described these passports as an open advertisement of official disapproval. With their distinctive numbers and letters, "as soon as the passport is opened, people know with whom they are dealing. It is like a stigma". Nevertheless, it was better than a simple piece of paper, because it gave the bearer permission to live in a certain place. In 1955 when the first soviets and raikoms (district committees) came to Kolyma, Vilensky turned to the new administrators for help, since the camp administration had refused to issue him a passport. He was one of the first zeks that had come to the secretary of the raikom. Fortunately, Vilensky’s father was successful in enlisting the help of the writer Ilya Ehrenburg, whose intervention had a powerful effect on the authorities. Vilensky received his passport, albeit with all the standard
restrictions. Ehrenburg proceeded to work on the young writer's rehabilitation.

Vilensky's return could now begin. He describes the scene at the Ugolnaya railroad station on the Moscow-Vladivostok line: "there were a thousand former zeks at the station, almost all criminals that the trains wouldn't take. I left Kolyma alive and almost got killed at the station!" It was impossible to get tickets going West, so Vilensky headed for his cousin in Blagoveschensk, near the Chinese border in the south-east. He had no legal right to go there because of his passport restrictions, but he got help from an unexpected source. Seated next to him on the train was a lieutenant-colonel to whom he told his story. Near the border, when documents were being checked, the officer said that Vilensky was with him.

Vilensky was picked up at the Blagoveschensk train station by his physicist cousin, Iosif, who took Semyon back to his house. That evening, when they were out taking a walk in town, Iosif pointed to a little side street and said, "Our relative lives here with his family. He works for the KGB and also wants to see you." There was a meeting of sorts. Vilensky looked across the street and saw a man, a woman, and two children staring at him. There they stayed, at a safe distance -- close enough to see that Vilensky was alive and well, and far enough not to have to inform on him.

Shortly after his arrival in the east, Vilensky called Moscow to inquire about his prospects for a legal return. He was informed that his case was being examined, and that his father and Ilya Ehrenburg were working on it. That was incentive enough for Semyon to go back to Moscow. He returned to the communal apartment where he had been living. As a former prisoner he was received cautiously. One friendly neighbor promised Vilensky that she would not tell the authorities about his presence in Moscow. Other neighbors judiciously refrained from asking questions.

In the meantime, Ehrenburg called Vilensky's procurator. This young man supported the rehabilitation, but his superiors
were against it, preferring amnesty, because they suspected that there was a subversive quality in Vilensky’s poetry, confiscated upon arrest in 1948. In consequence, his poems were sent for review to determine if any anti-Soviet themes could be found. They were not, and the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court, which was responsible for issues of terrorism, instituted a re-examination of his case. The sentence was revoked and rehabilitation eventually followed in July of 1956. While he was awaiting the determination of his legal status, Vilensky officially lived with his uncle in the province of Kostroma, beyond the 101-kilometer range.

During this time, Semyon could not get work in his field of literature, so he took a job as a dispatcher at a truck company. Through this job he was able to (illegally) travel from Kostroma to Moscow frequently, while his rehabilitation process dragged on. Vilensky found his co-workers in the truck company to be much more receptive to his ex-prisoner status than were his peers in the intelligentsia. As it happened, so many of these workers had been imprisoned that they had developed an attitude that someone who had not been incarcerated was somehow inferior. In assessing this stance, we must bear in mind that many of the workers were likely to have been sentenced under criminal articles for intentional acts. As a rule, this sentiment was not held by ex-article 58’ers, since they generally were not incarcerated as a result of any act they had committed.

In 1957, the year following rehabilitation, Vilensky obtained contract work at a publisher, Sovetsky pisatel, translating poems by Balkars, an ethnic group that had been deported en masse during the war, and had now returned from exile. He was not allowed to express his own sentiments through publishing his own poetry, but the themes of war and deportation depicted in the Balkars’ writings served to convey Vilensky’s message. In the meantime, the KGB kept a close watch on Vilensky. His apartment was once searched for the poems of an ex-zek from Kolyma, but nothing was found there. The rehabilitated Vilensky wrote an indignant letter to the
authorities about the invasion. Meanwhile, Vilensky kept one step ahead of them by concealing in other locations manuscripts that he had gathered. During this time, he re-registered at the University in order to finish his studies in Russian philology. As compensation for over seven years of imprisonment, Semyon was given a two-month stipend.

In 1962 Vilensky returned to Kolyma in the capacity of both a special correspondent for Literaturnaya gazeta and as a representative of the Writers' Union. He was not troubled by his return to the place of his imprisonment, but apparently the local authorities were because he was not well received by them. Kolyma lagged behind Moscow in accommodating to the political changes that were taking place. In Moscow at that time many publicists valued and sought out friends who had been former prisoners because they expected that the "thaw" would last. In Kolyma, change was much slower in coming, and hard to sustain. A branch of the Writers' Union was created there in the early sixties. In this setting Vilensky made the acquaintance of Nikolai Vladimirovich Kozlov, director of a publishing company and secretary of the Magadan branch of the Writers' Union. The vicissitudes of Kozlov's struggle to publish a book on Kolyma compiled by Vilensky, and the fate of Kozlov can serve as indicators of the persistent repression in the post-Stalin era Soviet Union.

The book that Kozlov tried to publish was an attempt to fill a void in official Soviet history. It was an effort to present the memoirs and stories of Kolyma prisoners. Up to that time, nothing had been published in Kolyma on the camps, so the book's compilers were venturing into politically uncharted and, as it turned out, forbidden territory. Opposition did not develop immediately because the First Secretary of the Magadan Regional Communist Party was in favor of the idea. However, when the work was compiled and his assistant, the ideological secretary, informed Moscow of its content, things changed quickly. An order was issued from the censor requesting that the manuscript be sent to the Soviet capital, because by then it had been labeled an "ideologically
unsound volume". In consequence Moscow decreed that the book could be published only if it was limited to the stories of those who had a propiska (registration) in Magadan. In other words, only the writings of those who had survived the camps (and did not mention their existence), or those who were employed in the camp press could be published. Those writers who had perished in Kolyma were disqualified as authors. Kozlov's determined efforts to prevail against the censoring authorities resulted in his being admitted to a psychiatric hospital with the diagnosis "obsession with the struggle for justice". The message that the authorities were sending was that either it was insane to try to challenge the system or the futility of the undertaking would drive one insane.

To make matters worse, even the attenuated and sanitized camp themes that had been initially approved were gradually weeded out from the collection. The final product was described by Kozlov as a "castrated book". When it was published under the title Radi zhizni na zemle (For the Sake of Life on Earth), Kozlov was listed as one of its editors, even though he had demonstratively removed himself from this position. Kozlov was deeply upset by this inclusion. The date of publication was September 1963; the city of publication was Magadan. The perceptive reader could infer the book's political tale by its omission of certain authors and subjects.

Despite the testimony of the coercive influence of the state in Kozlov's determined but failed struggle, Vilensky continued what he had already started -- the collection of manuscripts of former zeks. In doing so, he was willing to risk his own life and freedom to preserve the stories of those who had lost both. Had he been found to possess even one manuscript, he would have lost his residence permit in Moscow and perhaps much more. Nevertheless, by the beginning of the seventies he had already gathered dozens of manuscripts, which he often placed with friends in villages outside of Moscow. This undertaking was particularly courageous because all the while Vilensky still suffered from recurrent nightmares about
the camps. The stories that he believes must never be forgotten are also too traumatic to remember. In the interests of their mental health, he and other ex-zeks have become accustomed to practicing a useful form of denial. He says that when he meets ex-zeks, "we don’t talk about the terrible things. We all know them. We talk about the amusing things," – a particularly poignant example of gallows humor. He also wistfully admits that whenever he sees people of the age that he was when he was arrested, he realizes that he can never replace his lost youth. But he has achieved a different form of potency. Semyon Samuilovich Vilensky has been able to validate the suffering and salvage some of the pride of his constituency of ex-zeks, most of whom feel that they remained second-class citizens.69 Through his efforts, he has made a reluctant world bear witness to their sacrifice and in so doing give it some redeeming value.

Camp culture

The experience of the camp put its subcultural stamp on all of its inmates, who acquired distinctive clothing, language, and traditions. Generally those who had shared the experience were marked for life, and their comradery reflected the cohesiveness borne of sharing a common ordeal. They had spent so much time learning how to stay alive in a diabolic world that the conventional world often seemed strange to them. An ironic convergence of these two worlds can be found in the tale of Snegov’s return, or rather, the tale of his being brought back. After Beria’s arrest, it was necessary to find witnesses who would implicate Beria for his early activities as first secretary of the Transcaucasian Committee of the CPSU. After searching prisons and camps, the authorities finally tracked down Aleksandr Snegov, who had worked under Beria in Tbilisi.70 This prize witness was actually brought to the Kremlin as he was found -- in prison garb with numbers on his back and sleeves! Apparently, the camp supervisors did not know the purpose of Khrushchev’s summons.71
The ex-prisoners who came back from the camps were not the same people who entered them. They had a different past and a different future and often felt alienated from the larger society. That society also felt apprehensive in their presence because the returnees disturbed the world into which they came with reminders of the world from which they came. So there was sometimes pressure on both sides to avoid each other. In questionnaires done for this project, we found that returnees often preferred the company of former zeks because they felt that no one else could understand what they had seen, done, and endured. While some were greeted with compassion by old friends, others concealed their status from friends in the interests of re-establishing their relationships.

It was difficult for those who had not been imprisoned to engage the prison experience, even second-hand through contact with a survivor. This was made even more difficult because those ex-prisoners who had survived, and what it was that survived in those ex-prisoners, could be very disagreeable. In his realistic novel *Forever Flowing*, Vasily Grossman describes the ambivalence and pangs of conscience of Nikolai Andreevich who is about to see his recently liberated cousin, Ivan, for the first time since his return. The meeting generated an unwanted antipathy toward someone whom he expected to welcome back into the fold:

... with Ivan there in front of him, he experienced a turnabout of feeling. This man in a padded jacket, in soldier's shoes, his face eaten away by the cold of Siberia and the foul air of overcrowded camp barracks, struck him as alien, spiteful, hostile.

Because many of the ex-zeks no longer fit into their previous social and vocational networks and because they shared a common experience of suffering, many developed and maintained what might be called a post-liberation sub-culture. According to Isaak Moiseevich Filshtinsky, the ex-zeks celebrated their ritual holidays -- their day of liberation, the anniversary of Stalin's death (March 5) -- and shared
unique linguistic expressions. This "language of symbols" referred to things that had meaning only to those who had been in the camps. Evgeniya Ginzburg has described this phenomenon:

Even now, many years later, as I am writing these memoirs, all of us who have tasted the blood of the lamb are members of one family. Even the stranger whom you meet on your travels, or at a health spa, or at someone else's house, immediately becomes near and dear to you when you learn that he was there. In other words, he knows things that are beyond the comprehension of people who have not been there, even the most noble and kind-hearted among them.

The uniqueness that united zeks and distinguished them from others was also sustained by their jargon and special uses of language. In the greeting ritual among former zeks, the phrase, "Where did you come from and when did you get back?" was often used to establish orientation points, and to confirm the common experience. Additionally, special words entered the daily lexicon of former zeks. Words like "tufta" (exaggerating results to fulfill norms), "dokhodyaga" (goner, prisoner on his last legs) and "lagernaya pyl" (camp dust, an expression describing what prisoners were to become, since they were not properly buried when they died) resonated with meaning even to those who had not been through the camps.

Other words were invented for collusive communication to evade detection by the authorities. For example there were coded terms for "knife" (a forbidden object), or "message", or "letter", or "meeting", or to indicate a lower-ranking official, or a person who hides the truth, or the act of concealing something, and so on. Much of the covert communication was not particularly political, but rather criminal slang. This touches upon the issue raised earlier of criminalization that results from incarceration. Perhaps the adaptation of criminal language not only reflects the linguistic aspects of criminalization, but also reflects a certain psychosocial adaptation to the criminal status.

Tamara Davidovna Ruzhnetsova

An example of how some aspects of camp culture remained a part
of the returnee and how other people responded to this can be
found in the story of two sisters, one of whom was
incarcerated. Tamara Davidovna Ruzhnetsova (interviewed for
this project) grew up with her older sister, Rita, after they
were orphaned in 1931. Tamara was fourteen at that time.
They had been born Jewish, but their father converted to
Christianity and had them baptized, because he wanted a
military career. In 1938 Tamara was arrested as an English
spy. The charges seemed to have originated from the fact that
she had danced with a musician from a Western jazz band at the
"National" restaurant in Moscow. She was shifted back and
forth between camps and exile until her release in 1946. Her
sister Rita was not arrested, but she was harassed by the
authorities. They demanded that she denounce Tamara, which
she refused to do. For her refusal she was stripped of the
medals that she had earned for working as an interpreter in
the Spanish Civil War.

Upon her return, Tamara was not permitted to live inside
Moscow because of her passport restrictions. However, she
secretly visited Rita in her Moscow apartment. Fortunately,
the building elevator operator whose function it was to report
on residents' activities, was sympathetic toward Tamara, and
would run into the apartment and tell her to hide whenever
passports were about to be checked. On Tamara's first visit
to Moscow, Rita arranged a whole "festival of art" for her
sister's entertainment. They went to the theater, to
exhibitions, and to concerts. There was an activity planned
somewhere for every evening.

According to Tamara, on her second visit, a year later,
things were different. She recalls that they sat home on the
first night and some friends stopped by. On the second night
friends visited again. By the fourth day, Tamara could no
longer contain her curiosity and exclaimed, "Rita, last time I
was here you got me tickets for everything, and now I'm just
sitting at home -- with your friends. How come?" Rita's
answer surprised Tamara and reflected the personal and social
problems created by the camp culture that still resided in
Tomochka, please don't be insulted. The thing is that when you came last year you were such a lagernitsa (camp inmate), that I was simply ashamed to show you to my friends. You barely spoke a sentence without cursing, you were full of camp jargon. Now you have already returned a bit to your former self, and once again become an interesting person. And my friends want to socialize with you.\[^8\]

To add to the misery of the returnee, the ordeal of the camp had not elevated Tamara to the status of heroine, let alone martyr, but rather profaned her in the eyes of "proper" society. She was an outcast. Rita was not anticipating that her friends would experience discomfort or anxiety when confronted with her ex-zek sister. Rather, she feared their revulsion. It was not the fact that Tamara had been in the camps that would impress this complacent group, but rather that the camps were still in her. Tamara evoked images of a world that they did not want to deal with. Though it appears that her sister Rita also felt repelled, their family bond was strong enough to overcome it. Many returning zeks had no such family bonds and suffered in isolation.

The rest of the details revealed by Ruzhnetsova's story do not specifically relate to the culture of the camps. However, since they address the larger issue of this chapter -- the effects of repression -- it adds to our understanding of returnees and will be chronicled here.

When Rita was handed Tamara's rehabilitation certificate in July 1956, she received along with it a request from the authorities that she convey their apologies for past mistakes to Tamara. Tamara's response was that she would like to excuse them, but she could not because their cruelty was too great. She went on to explain that during her incarceration she developed night blindness. The prisoners were forced to work from dawn until dusk, so they went to and from the work site in the dark. A misstep to the right or left was considered an escape attempt, so Tamara lived in constant fear. She had reason to be afraid. Tamara recalls the
brutality of the guards:

We worked from darkness to darkness. There were cases in which the guards shot prisoners. We were not allowed to tell anyone, although many of us were questioned. We had to answer, 'attempted escape'. Otherwise the next day it was your turn. Our shooters also amused themselves by shouting the commands: 'lay down, stand up, lay down, stand up...'. And since it was damp, dirty and cold, we went to work already exhausted and wet. We had to work like that until it was dark again.  

More than once, Tamara's life was saved by her camp-mates when they kept her from falling during the journey to and from work. But they could not save her eyesight. Tamara had dreamed of becoming a heart surgeon ever since her father's death from a heart attack. But after camp, instead of becoming a surgeon, she became a typist. Eventually she lost the vision in one of her eyes. "So what should I forgive," she asks, "forgive a ruined life?" I have no family [her sister died in the 1990s]. I have no children. At that time they deprived me of everything of which a person could be deprived."  

Today Tamara lives in Moscow and works with Memorial, transcribing oral histories. When asked on the eve of the May 1996 Russian presidential elections her opinion regarding the Communist Party candidate Zyuganov's popularity, Ruzhnetsova replied: "I'm 78 years old. I can't cut wood, I can't do anything. They shouldn't waste a bullet on me." She had been asked her opinion of the politician. Her answer did not address the question that was posed, but rather reflected her own feelings of worthlessness and her persistent fear of the political system that he represented. Tamara Ruzhnetsova's story illustrates why the burden of the camp experience could never be lifted. It justifies the expansive title of the book in which her memoirs have been included, *Our Whole Life*.

Adaptation to the environment is one of the basic survival mechanisms for all life forms. But it can create a number of problems. The adaptation to one environment can result in a maladaptation to another environment. Survival in
the camps necessarily required the incorporation of attitudes and behaviors which could not and, indeed, should not be tolerable in a humane society. In consequence, this "zekification" of individuals who have experienced incarceration in Soviet labor camps sometimes resulted in dysfunctional behavior after release. The following fictitious tale illustrates well how difficult it is for prisoners to escape their past and their identification with prisoner (or victim) status. It is as if returnees come to belong to a different world, a secret clan of former zeks. In "Karzubyi," as the story is told, there was a man who served a term in the camps as the son of an "enemy of the people". Upon release, he could not resume a normal life -- he could not find work, he could not re-unite with his family, etc. His feelings of hatred toward everything that was not like the camp further hindered his adjustment to society. He arranged his own room like a cell, he ate primitive food, and he apportioned it into camp rations. Meanwhile, all of his efforts were directed at helping relieve the suffering of those who still remained in the camps. The ex-zek wrote letters and leaflets, told people of the horrors of the camps, and publicly accused the authorities of inhuman behavior toward prisoners. He was not arrested, but his efforts yielded nothing.

One day the former prisoner made the acquaintance of a man who belonged to a group of people wanting to change the system. They did not expect to accomplish this through agitation and propaganda, but rather through a (successful) Decembrist type revolt. But first it was considered necessary to man important posts in the government in order to work from within the establishment. On the group's orders, the former prisoner joined these "Soviet Decembrists", changed his name, fabricated a new biography, and got a job in the camp administration. But he could not play the assigned role. His inability to free himself from his past allegiances impeded his ascent in the Gulag career hierarchy. He could not find common ground with his co-workers, his "fellow" supervisors...
felt estranged from him, and he got into conflicts with those who were supposed to be his peers. In the depths of his being, he remained a victim of the regime, and despite his avowed intentions, was unable to overcome his past and convincingly play the part of victimizer. While this story is fiction, we do know that former victims did, indeed, join the Soviet establishment, even the Gulag administration. The story is overdramatized, but it demonstrates how victims experienced an inherent and lasting sense of belonging to the world of ex-zeks.

Family reunion

A primary goal for most returnees was to reunite with their families. House and home are the physical, psychological, and social place to which they would most naturally be drawn. Because the family is the most likely point of re-entry into society, the first problems of assimilation often manifested themselves in the familial setting. The family-returnee interactions were often difficult and complex. Many families waited vainly for the return of loved ones who had perished in the camps. One returnee who went to visit the families of his friends who had not survived felt guilty about his own survival. He could hardly bring himself to tell them what he knew. Sometimes the equation was reversed and prisoners returned to find that their families had not survived the terror. All that they could do then was to try to find work, repair their legal status, and attempt to create new families. Many women who had been in Kolyma and were in their fifties when they were released, took up with strangers for shelter and protection, and married them within a month.

As a rule the prisoners returned in a completely deteriorated state. One unfortunate returnee who had been in prisons and camps from 1936-41 and again from 1948-54 was finally allowed to go back to Moscow in June of 1954 at the age of 56. He was reunited with his wife and daughter, but was too debilitated by the ravages of camp life to enjoy his
freedom. Two days after his arrival in Moscow, he dropped dead of a heart attack in the middle of the street. This was clearly an extreme case, but the same hardships that had killed so many prisoners left those who survived with enduring health problems for the rest of their lives.

The official organs of communication had not acknowledged the cause of the returnees' problems, nor had the government provided a socially approved procedure for attempting to heal these problems. On a practical and emotional level, families did not quite know how to deal with the re-adjustment of their returning loved ones. Once again let us turn to literature for a glimpse into some realities of the returnee experience. Okudzhava might just as well have entitled his Devushka moei mechy (Girl of My Dreams) "Mothers and Sons", (like Turgenev's (1862) work on generational conflict, "Fathers and Sons [Children]"), since it poignantly portrays the plight of the generation of surviving widows of "enemies of the people" who returned from the camps and sought their children. Bulat Okudzhava's narrative is filled with the kind of authentic detail that only an autobiography can supply. It describes the return of a mother to her son in 1947, after ten years of separation. It portrays the incapacity of outsiders (even family members) to fully comprehend what it meant to be inside, which complicated family unification and contributed to functional problems among returnees. The narrator prepared himself psychologically for the arrival of his mother from Karaganda, expecting a physically frail, but emotionally intact old woman to step off the train and greet him warmly. He anticipated that he would pick her up at the train station, they would have dinner at home, she would tell him about her life, he would tell her about his, and then they would go to the movies where she could relax.

What might have been an appropriate homecoming for a return from a trip, was inappropriate for a return from the ordeal of the Gulag. The narrator did not find his mother at the station, so he returned home. When he arrived he was surprised to see his mother, tall of stature and graceful of
movement, walking toward the house. Her looks were at once familiar and yet deceiving. He had anticipated that their meeting would be a tearful reunion, and rehearsed how he would comfort his mother by saying that he was healthy, that everything was going well, that she was healthy and just as pretty, and everything would be okay. But when he looked into her eyes, they were dry, and her expression was one of detached aloofness. With bewilderment, he recalls, "she looked at me, but didn't see me, her face was hardened, frozen..." When he asked her if she wanted to eat, she replied, "what"; when he repeated the question, she asked, "me?" She was alive, but something warm and vibrant and open to emotional experience had died. They went to the movies, but his mother needed to leave in the middle of the feature. And so it went.

The narrator realized that her experience "there" was hard for him to understand and even harder for her to talk about. The survivor who was standing before him could not let him inside her emotional life because even she dared not go there. We are reminded of the character in Shalamov's *Kolyma Tales* who did not want to go back to his family because of what he had seen and what he knew. The comfort of the homestead stood in such stark contrast to the destitution of the camps that returnees had difficulty fitting in again. The adjustments necessary for survival in one atmosphere are often ill-suited for survival in a different one.

It could be assumed that the family would exert a salutary and normalizing influence on the returnee. But it was also possible for the reverse to happen -- for returnees to have an unsettling influence on their families, and particularly on their spouses. This was especially the case when the spouses of prisoners had formed other attachments. Viktor Nekrasov's fictional story *Kira Georgievna*, one of the better known returnee tales, portrays this predicament. Interestingly, the novella was published in 1961 and was initially favorably received by the critics, but a year later,
Nekrasov was attacked for it. Apparently the issues raised were still too politically unsettling to be presented to the public, even as a work of fiction. The protagonist, Kira, is married to a successful well-known artist and enjoys the good life. But the past intrudes on her idyllic life with a summons from the NKVD. In 1936 Kira had been married to Vadim, who was arrested in 1937 and charged with being an "enemy of the people". Shortly thereafter, she received a letter from her husband releasing her from the marriage. Kira accepted her husband’s altruistic offer and divorced him. She put her life with Vadim behind her, and eventually married someone else. But Vadim did not perish in the camps. One day, he returned to Moscow in connection with his rehabilitation process. He had been living in Kolyma for twenty years and had a wife and two-year old son there. (He was probably released between 1953 and 1955 and had been restricted to that region.) When Vadim and Kira met again, their youthful love was rekindled. They wanted to forget the last twenty years and start all over again. But Vadim’s outlook on life was too thoroughly shaped by twenty years of camp experience for him to start anew. Even for his beloved Kira, he could not take on the social trappings of a "rehabilitated person." One emigre literary critic insightfully describes what was expected of such a role. "In accordance with the unwritten law of the last few years [late fifties, early sixties], the ‘rehabilitated person’ should express joy and thank the Party for its kindness. He should strive to restore his membership in the Party, and 'look forward into the future'." The problem was that Vadim could not give up his past. He never ceased talking about the past, not out of anger, but because he was not able to put aside such an authentic part of his being. His impassioned entreaty to himself and to his listeners was, "this cannot happen again, you understand, this cannot be repeated." In an effort to restore their lost compatibility, Vadim and Kira travelled to Kiev, the city of their youthful ardor. But the friction between them increased. It was difficult to
share the present and future because they each had such a
different past. She could not understand his preoccupation
with the past; he could not understand her obliviousness to
the past. Vadim agreed to try to look ahead and start
thinking in terms of the future, but Kira reluctantly came to
believe that he just did not understand contemporary life, and
that his attitudes and judgments were outdated. In the past
twenty years they each had lived in different worlds and each
had married spouses who were from those different worlds.
Kira’s new husband was from Moscow; Vadim’s new wife was from
Kolyma. Each spouse brought with them the experience that
came with these territories. In the end, Kira and Vadim were
unable to revive their old bond, and reluctantly parted.
Still, Kira longed for what she and Vadim had once had. She
became restless and, like the problems of re-entry faced by
ex-prisoners, could not resume living as she had prior to
their reunion. It would take a long time for her to find a
new balance in life, and even then, maintaining stability
would be a balancing act.

Once again the (emigré) literary critic Burg provides us
with a contrast between the official returnee literature and
realistic literature. According to the Party line, normal
"Soviet people help the ‘victim of the personality cult’ to
take his position in society."96 Burg observes that in this
novel, the writer reverses this situation by revealing how the
zek Vadim’s experiences in the camps affected the normal life
of Kira. This realistic story portrays the impact that
victims had on the society to which they returned. It was not
simply the case that those who stayed behind affected changes
in the lives of returning victims. It was also the case that
the victims, by virtue of their camp socialization, affected
changes in the lives and perspectives of those to whom they
returned. It appears that generally no one in the social
network escaped being a victim. All were affected. It was
just a matter of degree.

In Kira’s case, her husband Vadim had released her from
marriage and she had accepted. This practice was fairly
widespread. Husbands were uncertain that they would survive their incarceration and wanted to protect their wives and families from being harrassed and ostracized as relatives of "enemies of the people". For their part, wives of an arrested spouse might be able to protect themselves by denouncing their husbands and divorcing them. But even this might not guarantee their safety. A number of wives did maintain their marriages to their incarcerated husbands, but the stresses of separation and the deforming acculturation to the camp life took its own toll on the marriages. According to Medvedev, few men returned to their previous wives after camp. Snegov, for example, married a 19-year old. Although Shalamov did return to his wife, they divorced within a few years.\(^{97}\)

When it happened that returnees were reunited with spouses who were also returnees, their chances for compatibility were better because they each had been "there". One former victim recalls the vicissitudes of her parents' marriage. Her father was released in 1951, with five years "deprivation of rights" (numerous restrictions including loss of civil liberties), while her mother was still serving a fifteen-year sentence. They had been divorced, and her father had acquired a new wife and son. When her mother was released under a 1955 amnesty, her father returned to his first family even though his second wife never officially granted him a divorce.\(^{98}\)

The circumstance of wives of "enemies of the people" remaining incarcerated, even after their husbands' liberation, was rare, but it happened. One memoirist tells of a camp-mate whose husband was released and rehabilitated while she lingered on in the camps for another two years. Despite the fact that her imprisonment had been related purely to her husband's "crime", they were unable to budge the process of her release.\(^{99}\) Another prisoner serving an eight-year term in Akmolinsk as the wife of an "enemy of the people" received a letter in her third year from her husband in Moscow. To her amazement, his rights had been fully restored, and their apartment was given back. Even with his apparently privileged
status, it took this former prisoner at least a year to obtain the release of his wife.\textsuperscript{100}

In spite of the official inducements to sever the marital bonds, the years of separation, the uncertainty of return, the forming of other alliances, and the problems of incompatibility associated with return, some marriages not only endured, but prevailed. Evgeny Aleksandrovich Eminov, an accomplished engineer, was drafted into the army as a specialist in 1941. According to his biography, he survived many brushes with disaster. Eminov’s division was crushed by the Germans in the fall of 1941. He sustained a serious stomach wound and was taken into captivity. He was then sent to a P.O.W. camp and operated on by a captive surgeon. He survived, but contracted typhoid. He was thrown into the morgue, but again survived because he was saved by a nurse. The following year he refused to work for the Germans and was sent to Auschwitz and then Buchenwald. In 1944 he was sent to an invalid camp to be destroyed, but he escaped. In 1945 he was liberated by the Americans and sent for convalescence first to an American hospital in Hamburg and then to a Soviet hospital in Breslau. He then returned to Moscow and was reinstated in his former high position of chief engineer. In 1952 Eminov was arrested and sentenced to 25 years of hard labor and five years of deprivation of rights. He believes that the reason for this was that he had let the Germans capture him alive. He was sent to Vorkuta. He survived all of that and was released in May of 1956.\textsuperscript{101}

When Eminov came home he was greeted by a wife who had waited for him and who had also endured her own set of problems. At the time that he was sent to Vorkuta, their son was a student at the Mendeleev Institute, but the arrest had so damaged his son’s standing at the institute that he was dismissed. Now he was in the army in the Far East. Eminov’s wife was not permitted to defend a dissertation that had already been completed. In addition, she was forced to leave her position as a specialist in the All-Union Central Council of Professional Unions, where she had worked for twenty years.
In order to keep the apartment, she took a lowly engineering job. The authorities had provided her with divorce papers that she was encouraged to fill out and file, but she never completed them.¹⁰² This spouse did not take the opportunity to distance herself from her "criminal" husband in order to avoid hardships. There were a number of others who had that kind of determination, but such does not seem to have been the rule.

One ex-prisoner, Evgeny Edvardovich Gagen, returned to his wife after a 14-year separation. He spent from 1937-47 in Kolyma, and from 1947-54 in exile in the Magadan province. He said that his wife could have joined him when his exile began, but she did not want to leave the children alone in Moscow and she was afraid to bring them. Only when their daughter entered the university did she join her husband in exile. Despite the fact that they had a son 9 1/2 months after their reunion, the fourteen-year interval, and the experiences associated with it were difficult to overcome. Gagen's wife could not relate to his friends, and avoided meeting with them. He felt that he had grown in those years while she had remained the same.¹⁰³ Although his life in the labor camp was harsher than her life at home, as the spouse of a prisoner she had endured considerable social stigmatization. While it might have been accurate for Gagen to say that they grew apart, he was incorrect in his assessment that his wife remained the same. No one associated with the repression remained the same.

The pathological consequences of repression extended to the lifetime of the victim and beyond that in ever widening circles. The large and small difficulties created by repression found their way into every corner of the psychological, social, and political life of the victim. Some returnees attempted to blend back into the social fabric; other returnees would not go gently back into a society that had taken their freedom and now wanted to deprive them of dignity. These returnees rightfully demanded whatever small
entitlements the state would allow.

In the immediate post-Stalin era, there was only a slight drift toward liberalization but not a clear direction nor a clear policy. Old repressive attitudes still prevailed, but there was recognition (exemplified by Khrushchev’s secret speech to the XX Party Congress) that in order to continue functioning, the system’s characteristic adaptation to repression had to change. Eventually it did, but lasting change was a long time in coming for the returnees. Gorbachev’s two favorite concepts glasnost (publicity, openness) and perestroika (re-structuring) were still three decades away.

Though the lot of returnees improved significantly as a result of the era of rehabilitation, the effects of their experience of Soviet repression continued to haunt their lives and the lives of everyone in their network. In the following chapter we will explore Khrushchev’s "de-Stalinization" of 1956 and subsequent years, and the implicit social contract it made with returnees.
References


14. V.V. Lapshin, "Vsëtechët, vsëizmeniaetsia...," Memorial, f. 2, op. 1, d. 80, 1. 1993 0810 0697.

15. Iosif Il'ich Peiros, "Chast' 3: 'Poluvolia'," Memorial, f. 2, op. 1, d. 93, 1. 1993 1510 0894.


17. Eugenia Ginzburg, Within the Whirlwind, pp. 97-98.

18. Larisa Nikolaevna Suprun, deputy chief doctor of endocrinologic therapy, interview held at Hospital No. 60, Moscow, October 6, 1997.

19. Suprun, interview, and Irina Aleksandrovna Berdisheva, department chief, interview.


22. Since 1992 "Compassion" has had a status independent of Memorial, although they still work together.

23. Eduard Kariukhin, report delivered during the XII Training Seminar on Rehabilitation of Torture Survivors and Their Families, Copenhagen, Denmark, 1993.


25. Kariukhin, Copenhagen report.


27. Ibid., pp. 4, 6, 10.
28. Marina Iosifovna Berkovskaia, interview held at the "Compassion" office in Moscow, October 7, 1997.

29. Kariukhin, interview held at his Moscow office, April 21, 1998.

30. Ibid.


33. Memorial's headquarters at Malyi Karetnyi Pereulok 12 in Moscow house a museum containing a number of works of repressed artists that were donated to the organization by their families. The collection also includes tattered dresses, shoes, glasses, handcrafts, photos and other remnants and reminders of camp life. After years in production, a catalog was published in 1998 under the title, Tvorchestvo i byt GULAGa. Katalog muzeinogo sobrania obschestva 'Memorial' (Moscow: Zven'ia, 1998). See Anna Iakovleva, "Iskusstvo pod okhranoi gosudarstva," Russkaia Mysl', 29 October - 4 November 1998.


35. It seems that Nazi concentration camps scenes have been more vividly portrayed in art. See for example, "The Holocaust, 'Spat Out' by Artist Who Survived," International Herald Tribune, 2 November 1995, p. 22. Of course, the political climate in the post-Stalin Soviet Union influenced the artist's choice of subjects. See also, Teatr Gulaga: vospominaniiia, ocherki (Moscow: Memorial, 1995) for biographies of artist-prisoners in particular I. Sooster (pp. 91-102) and B.M. Erbshtein (pp. 111-122) who could not get work through the Artists' Union after release. Erbshtein committed suicide in 1963.

36. Vilenskii, discussion held at Chapkovskii home in Moscow, April 22, 1998.


39. See Ogonék nos. 3 and 4, 1990; also Znamia, nos. 3, 4, and 5, 1990.

40. Igor’ Moiseevich Chapkovskii, Daria Igor’evna Chapkovskaia, interview held at their Moscow home, April 22, 1998.


44. Many of Eduard Kariukhin's clients talked of this, interview.

45. Zoia Dmitrievna Marchenko, response to questionnaire designed for this project, April 6, 1995.


47. Pavel Albertovich Ivensen, response to project questionnaire.

48. A poignant illustration can be found in the rumors circulating in the camps of cases in which "convoy" guards committed suicide after having recognized their father or mother among the prisoners (Maia Ulanovskaia, Cohen questionnaire, Jerusalem, 1980).


See also Etkind's essay on Aleksandr Fadeev in "Sovetskii pisatel' i smert'," (Vremia i My 26 (1978): 132-46). The General Secretary of the Writers' Union, whose signature condemned many writers to death and imprisonment, committed suicide in 1956. Etkind argues that the return of these writers put Fadeev in an unbearable situation.

On the fine line between loyalty to individuals and loyalty to the system, and on the struggle for survival in a totalitarian system, see Tina Rosenberg, The Haunted Land: Facing Europe's Ghosts After Communism (New York: Random House, 1995).


56. The information in this section has been gleaned from personal interviews carried out by the writer over the course of several years. Most of the interviews were held at the home of Semën Samuilovich Vilenskii, which also served as the headquarters of "Vozvrashchenie," Moscow, December 2 and 5, 1995, May and November, 1996, September-October, 1997, April, 1998.


58. Vilenskii, interview held at his Moscow home, April 4, 1995.


60. The "liters" like KRD (counter-revolutionary activities), KRTD (counter-revolutionary Trotskyite activities), SOE (socially dangerous element) and others were eventually replaced by articles.

61. "Goriachii kartser diktatury".

62. see Lidiia Golovkova, "Tikhaia Obitel' (Sukhanovka)," Biblioteka Zhurnala Volia 1 (Moscow: Vozvrashchenie, 1996).


64. Vilenskii, interview, December 2, 1995.

65. Varvara Mikhailovna Azarova, "Chernoe krylo," Memorial, f. 2, op. 1, d. 3, l. 0001 2909 0121.

66. Boris L'vovich Brainin, "Vospominaniia Vridola," Memorial, f. 2, op. 1, d. 27, l. 0001 2909 0258.


69. Details of Vilenskii’s story were also added in interviews held at his Moscow apartment in May and November of 1996 and on later occasions.


71. Medvedev, interview, pp. 6-7.


73. Isaak Moiseevich Fil’shtinskii, interview held at his Moscow home, April 20, 1995.

74. Ginzburg, Within the Whirlwind, p. 157.

75. Nina Ivanovna Gagen-Torn, Memorial, f. 1, op. 1, d. 967, l. 0013 0612 0907.


77. Evsei Moiseevich L’vov, "Vospominaniia," Memorial, f. 2, op. 1, d. 84, l. 1993 0810 1574 and Gleb Isifovich Anfilov, "Materialy k biografii: vyderzhki iz pisem, dnevnikov i drugie dokumenty," Memorial, f. 2, op. 1, d. 4, l. 0001 2909 0269.

78. Tamara Davidovna Ruzhnetsova, interview held at her Moscow home, April 21, 1996.


80. Galina Ivanovna Levinson, Vsia nasha zhizn’ (Moscow: NIPTs Memorial, 1996), pp. 78-79.

81. Ruzhnetsova, transcript, pp. 23-24, and Levinson, p. 78.

82. Levinson, p. 76.

83. Ibid., p. 79.

84. Ruzhnetsova, interview, April 21, 1996.

86. This is listed as the first goal for many upon return in Cohen's questionnaires, though there were some respondents whose primary desire was to re-matriculate at institutes or be re-hired at their jobs. They may have returned together with their families (from exile, for example), or their families may not have survived.


91. Ibid., p. 113.

92. Ibid., p. 114.


95. Nekrasov, p. 79.


100. RTsKhIDNI, f. 560, op. 1, d. 37, l. 308.


102. Ibid., 11. 0008 3111 1213-1215.