The Great Return: The Gulag Survivor and the Soviet System
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Chapter VII
The Victims Strike Again: The Re-emergence of Returnees in the Eighties and Nineties

The story of the ex-prisoners who started trickling back into society in the fifties, as recounted in the preceding chapters, has a logical sequence: this is the story of the public return of these repressed people as well as the public revelation of their repressed history in the eighties and nineties. This final chapter documents what happened.

After the death of Stalin, state policy traversed the spectrum from de-Stalinization to re-Stalinization to de-Stalinization to de-Sovietization. While all these phases touched upon the issue of the Stalinist past, if even by glaring omission, the post-Soviet period was particularly challenged by the need to come to terms with the past. Indeed, the creation of a democratic Russia would involve the task of eradicating deep-rooted Soviet attitudes.

Yet, as the Soviet Union struggled to maintain stability and, later, to survive, the government could not acknowledge the culpability of massive crimes on the part of the Soviet system itself. Thus, the questions raised by the presence of returnees could not be adequately addressed. On a societal level, people could no longer excuse their own complicity or silence by claiming ignorance once the truth about the terror was in the open. (The problem of the Soviet people at that time was similar to that which the Germans faced after the Holocaust had become public.)

The victims of the Soviet system, by virtue of their very presence and status, compelled society to face an ignominious national past that extended well beyond the camp internments of the Stalin era. But the times (the fifties to the eighties) -- and the political and social system -- were not ripe for coming to terms with that past. This is evidenced by the fact that, for the most part, from the top down and from the bottom up, ex-prisoners were either persecuted, ignored or, at best, merely tolerated. A proper acknowledgement of
the returnees’ problems would have required a moral indictment of the system.

At a 1997 Academy of Sciences presentation of the book *The Gulag in the System of Totalitarian Government*, Semyon Vilensky, chairman of Vozvrashchenie, made the following comment on the achievements of national historians: "Our Soviet historians were truly great. They managed to record the history of the country without ever mentioning the Gulag." Indeed, despite the victims’ lingering problems, the returnee and Gulag questions were essentially relegated to the recesses of official memory in the sixties, seventies, and early eighties. Not only had returnees gone "out of fashion", but recognition of their existence and needs became politically incorrect. In this atmosphere of official amnesia, victims were compelled to suppress their memories and to become silent witnesses once again.

The Soviet repressive mechanism, meanwhile, re-gained momentum. A new generation of prisoners and returnees was created. Many of them, such as Arseny Roginsky, Aleksandr Daniel, Andrey Sakharov, and Sergey Kovalyov were later to join -- and lead -- the organization Memorial. That organization retrieved the history of Soviet repression, opened the discussion of its consequences, and defended the rights of its surviving victims. Kovalyov and Sakharov were not only Memorial chairmen, they were also elected to the Congress of People’s Deputies, where they continued to exercise their moral influence as watchdogs of human rights.

The need to remain vigilant: Sergey Adamovich Kovalyov

Sergey Kovalyov exemplifies a vital social force that propelled change. As an individual who consistently provided the self-corrective feedback in alerting the governors to remove sources of discontent among the governed, he came to be known as "the conscience of Russia" and "the second Sakharov". For reasons that should be evident, Kovalyov’s
history will serve as a basis for concluding our discussion of the fifties to the nineties. Let us begin by examining the environment which helped shape the thinking of this dissident turned politician.

Unlike some other dissidents’ development, Sergey Kovalyov’s was not directly influenced by the returnees of the fifties. In fact, he had his first real contact with Stalinist era zeks only after he had already joined the dissident movement and, more importantly, in the late eighties through Memorial. However, the silence and fear created by the Stalinist repression had an early impact on him, and he ended up being one of the most outspoken opponents of the social injustice and lawlessness that characterized the Soviet system. By extension, he also championed the returnee cause. Sergey Kovalyov went from Soviet dissident to Memorial co-chairman to parliamentarian to Russian government official (Commissioner for Human Rights) -- a position from which he was eventually compelled to resign. Ironically, in post-Soviet Russia, Kovalyov was dubbed by some officials as an "enemy of the state" for his criticism of Russian military actions in Chechnya. Kovalyov was just being himself, but so, too, were they. He took a critical stance, and Russian officials responded by labelling him a "state criminal". Witness Kovalyov’s deliberations on the question of Russian democracy, as addressed in a 1998 Izvestiya article:

Will we finally become free people? Are human rights being observed in Russia today? Can the concepts of freedom, democracy, rule of law, and human rights even be applied to our country? Many people are asking these questions now. I have always asked these questions. At one time this interest led me to imprisonment; later to a high government post....

Sergey Adamovich Kovalyov was born in 1930 and had the good fortune of having escaped the Stalinist repression, and his family remained untouched as well. Looking back on his childhood, Kovalyov recalled (in our 1998 interview) that his parents were very careful not to talk to Sergey and his brother about anything that would not be safe to repeat to
others. Even, and maybe especially, the subjects that the children were being taught in school -- history, literature, physics, etc. -- had to be avoided, because Kovalyov's parents did not want to lie, nor did they want to say that the teachers were lying. Nevertheless, the message that something was wrong with the system did come across to him. Kovalyov recollected how, in 1936, when the first Soviet elections were held, the radio reported, "all the Soviet people are rejoicing because they are headed for the polls. Everyone is united in their vote for the Communist bloc." When his mother came home, visibly not "rejoicing", Kovalyov asked why she looked so somber. She answered, "I just voted." Kovalyov remembers saying, "Yes, but on the radio they said everyone was thrilled, and you're not." Kovalyov does not remember his mother's exact response, but he does recall sensing that already at the age of six, he had touched upon an awkward, even tabooed theme.6

While Stalin's death did not effect Kovalyov greatly, he later realized that his indifference was potentially risky. Sergey was invited, for example, by his fellow university students to accompany them in paying their respects to the dead leader. As it happens, on that same day he had heard from a friend about a dog in a pound that was about to be put to sleep, because it had no owner. When Kovalyov explained to the students that he could not go with them, because he was going to pick up the dog, there was a painful silence. That silence was broken by Kovalyov's comment: "Better a live dog than a dead lion."7 There were no detrimental consequences for living by his own principles at that time, though there easily could have been and, indeed, later were.

The larger questions connected with the 'rule of law' government did not occur to Kovalyov in that year. Though he did not believe the charges that Beria was a British spy, he did think that Beria's arrest and execution signified the elimination of one of the worst exponents of the former regime. He never asked himself at that time if lawlessness was the proper way to combat lawlessness. In retrospect,
Kovalyov concluded that his attitude was evidence of how far people were removed from any sense of legal consciousness. That consciousness became well developed in Kovalyov in the ensuing years. He noted, "In 1993 if Rutskoy or Khasbulatov had been accused of espionage for China, I would have used all my energy to support them, despite the political antipathy I had toward both of these figures." 8

What had happened in the years in between? According to Kovalyov, the courts provided him with a ten-year opportunity to ponder the relationship between human rights and politics. 9 Let us briefly backtrack to the events that led to his incarceration. In the beginning of 1966, Kovalyov signed an open letter protesting the trial of Sinyavsky and Daniel on the grounds that it threatened the constitutionally guaranteed rights and freedom of the citizen. More letters in defense of other writers were to follow. Kovalyov also signed a letter in defense of the demonstrators convicted for protesting the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in August of 1968.

How did these petitioners define themselves? According to Kovalyov, the words "dissident" and "human rights activist" did not really exist at the time. Instead, the word "democratic movement" was sometimes used, though Kovalyov considers "movement" to be too strong a description, since this group had no program, no particular social basis, no ideology, and no structure:

We were more like a loose union of various circles of friends who were really only united by the rejection of the official lie as well as the preparedness to publicly protest the officially ordained lawlessness ... the Soviet human rights movement was initially united by one thing: its moral irreconcilability with the governing regime. 10

In fact, these were the very principles that united Memorial twenty years later. As Roginsky pointed out, the direction of what would later be Memorial began to be determined in these years.

Kovalyov’s name was a common denominator on most petitions for human rights. He signed a letter in protest of
the psychiatric internment of Zhores Medvedev in 1970, worked on the Chronicle of Current Events, joined the "Initiative Group in Defense of Human Rights," supported Solzhenitsyn, Bukovsky, Plyushch, the return of the Crimean Tatars to their homeland, and just about every other person or issue that called into question Soviet compliance with law and basic human rights.11 Finally, in December of 1974 Kovalyov’s home was searched by KGB agents, who confiscated samizdat literature.

After the search, Kovalyov and his wife were invited to come to KGB headquarters. By this time, Kovalyov’s attitude toward this organization and the Soviet system of governance that it represented had taken shape. Witness the following story of his interrogation: In the course of his interview with KGB Captain Trofimov, Kovalyov declared that he refused to cooperate with the investigation. His refusal was noted, and Kovalyov and his wife were sent home. Kovalyov had another appointment to be interrogated the next day. He appeared at the appointed time, but after waiting for an hour, he grew impatient. When he asked an official about the delay, he was told that the interrogators were busy. Kovalyov replied, "tell them that I, too, am a busy man and I will no longer wait." With that, he left. Trofimov called Kovalyov later that day, offering his apologies for the delay. They made a new appointment, but on the morning of that day, something else came up that Kovalyov considered much more attractive than appearing before the KGB -- Andrey Sakharov had summoned Kovalyov to meet with him. Defying convention, Kovalyov once again adhered to his own sense of values and rescheduled his appointment with the rather annoyed KGB captain.12

Five years later, when Kovalyov was being tried by the Lithuanian Supreme Court for "anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda," Sakharov, who had travelled to Vilnius to testify in Kovalyov’s defense, was not permitted to gain entrance into the courtroom. Subsequently, Kovalyov refused to remain in the courtroom for the rest of his trial, because the witnesses
who had come on his behalf were not admitted. When he was summoned for sentencing, Kovalyov declined to go to the courtroom with the comment: "What should I do there? Don’t you think I know that you are giving me seven years?". Kovalyov was wrong about his sentence. They gave him seven years strict-regime camp plus three years of exile.¹³

Having served his term, it was not until the fall of 1987 that Kovalyov could legally move back in with his wife in their Moscow apartment. A month earlier, the Memorial initiative group had begun collecting signatures in support of a monument to victims of totalitarianism. Kovalyov took part in Memorial meetings and conferences and was elected as one of its co-chairmen in 1990. Three days before Sakharov’s death in December 1989, the revered dissident told Kovalyov, "it is your duty to run for parliament."¹⁴ The next year, Kovalyov was elected as a People’s Deputy to the Parliament of the RSFSR. When the RSFSR Supreme Soviet was dissolved in 1993, Yeltsin appointed Kovalyov as Chairman of the Presidential Commission on Human Rights. He was also head of the parliamentary committee on human rights. However, in March 1995, after Kovalyov’s sharp criticism of Russian military intervention in Chechnya, the Duma removed him from this post, and the following January he resigned from his presidential appointment.

A number of Kovalyov’s experiences in Russian government provide insight into the nation’s attempts to come to terms with its past. The reform of the security services is a particularly telling illustration. In 1994, Kovalyov participated in the work of a commission that ascertained whether officials were qualified for higher posts in the state security service (FSB, formerly KGB). Other members of the commission included the president’s National Security Adviser Baturin, Secretary of the Security Council Lobov, and Director of the Federal Security Service Stepashin. The commission’s mandate serves as an example of the Russian government’s ‘democratic’ efforts to reform itself. What Kovalyov ultimately discovered, though, was that the Russian government
was not willing or prepared to recognize that real progress could only be made by first exposing the crimes, and then distancing itself from the criminal system that had perpetrated them. We might recall that the same sequence occurred in the first and second periods of de-Stalinization. Former victims continued to be plagued by their status because the Soviet government was reluctant to officially recognize who the criminals were and what the crime was.

Kovalyov’s criterion for the advancement of officials to supervisory functions was quite simple. He would not recommend those candidates who had served in the 'fifth directorate' of the KGB (responsible for interrogating dissidents and waging the battle against "ideological diversion"), because of their tainted pasts. Kovalyov distinguishes this practice from that of lustration. "Lustration", or "ritual purification," also defined as "clarifying things by bringing them to light," as it was practiced in East Germany and Czechoslovakia, amounted to the exposure and the subsequent banning from all public service jobs of officials, and a wide range of others, who had collaborated with the state security service. Kovalyov made this distinction, because the commission’s aim was not to forbid individuals from working in the state service, but rather to prevent them from fulfilling important functions or working in sensitive divisions.

(Kovalyov was principally against lustration in Russia, because he did not believe that a democratic state should begin its existence with a witch-hunt, and that it was even a morally dubious and dangerous undertaking for a young democracy. He voiced this opinion in the public discussions on this theme in 1991-92. Later, as he drove past the ruins of houses in Grozny on his way back to Moscow in 1995, Kovalyov began to wonder if his rejection of lustration was justified.)

Kovalyov was initially convinced that Yeltsin really was determined to clean up his security service. As it turned out, all kinds of reasons were found -- for example, that
someone was close to retirement age, etc. -- to allow candidates with a dubious record to stay on, and even move up in the ranks. According to their testimonies and the subsequent official approval, Kovalyov remarked, "it seems that none of them played any part in the Soviet repressive apparatus -- except for the fact that I knew some of them personally". Kovalyov’s principle stance was not surprising: "A person who committed repressive acts has no place in an organization that claims that it no longer intends to commit repression."

All of his attempts to foster change were met with stubborn resistance. "I was a fool," Kovalyov regretfully admitted, "I thought Boris Nikolaevich wanted to make decisive changes in these special services ... when in fact he just wanted to remain surrounded by the trusted KGB people with whom he had maintained a close relationship since he was first secretary of the Moscow Provincial Committee." Kovalyov ended up disappointed by the commission’s cosmetic purges and disillusioned with Yeltsin. On an ironic note, in 1994, Kovalyov’s interrogator, Trofimov, became Chief of the Federal Security Service for the city and district of Moscow.

Sergey Kovalyov’s story has been chronicled in this concluding chapter because it brings a number of issues to the fore. Kovalyov’s personal history is one of the better illustrations of Thomas Jefferson’s principle that "eternal vigilance is the price of liberty." He tested the limits first of de-Stalinization and then of de-Sovietization, and more generally, he monitored the moral state of the nation. Kovalyov served as a corrective mechanism to both the Soviet and the Russian government. His goal was to pressure government officials to respect the Constitution and the law, and to acknowledge and deal with the fact that the principles laid down in both had been violated. Sergey Kovalyov was an early and consistent "bottom-up" proponent of this philosophy. In the late eighties and early nineties, many more joined in his crusade. The consequences of decades of arbitrary rule had become too great to conceal.
"Top-down" influences and "bottom-up" pressures

The political atmosphere in the Soviet Union of the first half of the eighties proved to be anything but a predictor for what was to come. Let us briefly sketch the state of the government’s adaptation to repression just before it opted to allow the return of repressed history and the re-emergence of repressed people: Stalin was once again revered in Georgia and many other places; Soviet psychiatry had been transmogrified into a political tool for re-shaping "those who thought differently"; loyal Stalin followers like (the rehabilitated) Molotov were buried in honor; the Procuracy was stating that "the USSR has never had, nor does it have now, any 'concentration camps' or 'special camps' whose 'horrors' are described by ... 'experts'"; Anatoly Marchenko, Sergey Kovalyov, Arseny Roginsky, Pavel Negretov and numerous others were still or were once again political prisoners; eight months prior to his appointment as General Secretary, in a 1984 Politburo meeting, Gorbachev supported the restoration of Party membership to Malenkov and Kaganovich... The list goes on and on, but the practices could not.

According to Kovalyov, reform was imminent because:

- totalitarian methods were no longer sufficient in suppressing society. An economically dissatisfying and morally dubious regime, which was also internationally isolated and had lost a great deal of public support, simply could not go on in the old form. It either had to change or collapse. It ended up doing both.

But let us not get ahead of ourselves. First, the returnee question will be briefly examined through the prism of the Gorbachev years in order to provide insight into both the continuity and the change in the Soviet system.

There was a great contrast in the political atmosphere before and after Gorbachev launched perestroika. Nevertheless, after perestroika began, it was not the immediate past -- indeed the long-term legacy of Stalinism -- that became the focus of discussion. It was Stalin's Gulag
(the revelations about which ultimately exposed the nature of the Soviet system itself). Once it was initiated, discussion of Stalinist repression could neither be ignored nor avoided, because the many stories that had been suppressed for decades began to surface. Oral accounts and memoirs were being corroborated and publicly verified.

The returnee experience, however, was not being highlighted. Arseny Roginsky points out that once the official silence was broken in 1987, the main focus of discussion among former prisoners centered on the camp experience. He went on to say that "the [presumably officially and publicly accepted] mythology" dictated this focus. This phenomenon is noteworthy, because many individuals endured a five-year prison term, but suffered the consequences for 35 years thereafter. For most of their lives they were plagued by fear, a sense of "eternal instability", memories of the camp experience, and their status as ex-prisoners. Yet the focus was on the five years of imprisonment. While the camp experience was more traumatic than their post-camp experience, we know that returnees endured a number of prolonged ordeals as a result of their status. It may well be that officials hewed the public focus on repression to that which took place some time ago in the camps, because it was the existing system itself that was responsible for the difficult plight of returnees in the post-Stalin era.

The re-emergence of returnees in the eighties and nineties, like the emergence of earlier returnees, posed demands on the government -- demands for rehabilitation, restitution, privileges, information about the fate of lost loved ones, and revenge. There were scenes so aptly described by Anna Akhmatova when she wrote, "Two Russias are eyeball to eyeball -- those who were imprisoned and those who put them there." Some angry victims wanted only apologies, but others were calling for trials of Stalinist henchmen. Witness the railings of one former victim at the meager attempts at justice, as expressed in her 1988 memoirs: "Sure, some people
have been fired from their jobs, or sent into retirement -- but with [good] personal pensions. They still have their nice apartments, dachas .... [T]hose guilty of repression should be named, and Stalin should be condemned."²⁸ (Former victims often lamented that the pensions of KGB agents were higher than the compensation allotted to the rehabilitated victims of "unlawful repression"). Others used much stronger language and had much greater demands -- for trials and sentencing, even capital punishment, for those who were guilty of repression. The trials never took place. This outcome was encouraged and influenced by authoritative figures like Sakharov and Afanasyev. The former contended that the moral recovery of the nation could not be achieved by revenge, and organizations like Memorial should not play prosecutor; the latter essentially argued that Stalinism was so deep-rooted that there were too many Stalinists to try.²⁹

The reverberation of revelations and rehabilitations

There are still long lines to obtain rehabilitation certificates and permission to request the paltry compensation of two-months' salary.¹⁰ Outside of Moscow, the process is even more drawn out. In 1999, in Magadan alone 3,000 files awaited review.³¹ A 1996 article in a Buryatiya newspaper entitled, "Thousands are still waiting in line," addresses the problems related to assisting those who were refused rehabilitation because of the "unproven facts of repression". It comments that over 2,000 people (in this region) have to turn to the courts to establish juridical facts based on evidence. Considering that more than 60 years have passed since the moment the repression was carried out, this presents no simple task.³² Numerous ex-prisoners also experienced problems in obtaining documents on the trudovoy stazh (work record), which were necessary to establish compensation. Many of them requested and received help from Memorial in these matters.³³

For the most part, the government met the need to know about the fate of a family member. In the late Soviet and
post-Soviet period, relatives were granted access to the relevant KGB files. Victims' families could also send inquiries to the KGB. The following was written in the 1990s:

I sincerely request that you devote attention to my letter and inform me of the subsequent fate of my father: for what was he arrested and when? Which year did he die, is the date of death certified at the place where he is buried? If he is innocent, I request that you send me his certificate of rehabilitation ... if the documents cannot be sent, then at least send a photograph of him, I don't even know what he looks like...\(^{34}\)

Her request was honored and she became acquainted with the materials related to her father's life that had been concealed for 60 years. She was also given a photograph of her father, dressed in a prison uniform in the Butyrka. This was the only picture she had ever seen of him. Her father received posthumous rehabilitation in 1994.

Requests like these were about more than obtaining the necessary documentation for rehabilitation. On an individual level, finding out the truth that had been concealed for decades was the first step in coming to terms with the past. People needed to know what had happened to their relatives in order to put them, and themselves, to rest. Sometimes they needed a place to bring flowers, to mourn, or to say a prayer. Moreover, most children of "enemies of the people" endured their own share of avoidance by society, and fear of the "all-hearing ear" and the "all-seeing eye"\(^ {35}\), so it was important that they be officially recognized as having certain rights, such as the right to know. We will recall that the children of "enemies of the people" who had been in exile or orphanages were themselves declared "victims of repression" in the nineties.

**Mass graves**

Any official attempt to suppress history could not hide those aspects of the terror that were too big to either ignore or even to minimize. Mass graves began to be discovered and from 1988 on they were written about in newspaper articles on a regular basis. Memorial even appointed a special coordinator
for mass grave discovery projects. The grisly burial sites were widely scattered -- in places like the Kuropaty forest near Minsk, Bykovnya outside of Kiev, Kolpashevo, alongside the Ob River in the Tomsk region, on 'Golden Mountain' near Chelyabinsk, Butovo, near Moscow, and in the Katyn forest near Smolensk.\textsuperscript{36} The search continues even today. As late as 1997 a mass grave was discovered in a pine forest north of St. Petersburg.\textsuperscript{37}

\textbf{Deported peoples}

The unresolved problems associated with the deported peoples are yet another major challenge. The enormity of this problem can be seen from the numbers. A 1989 census records the following numbers of some of the former ethnic deportees: 957,000 Chechens, 2,039,000 Germans, 237,000 Ingush, and 85,000 Balkars.\textsuperscript{38} In 1989, after decades of equivocation about their legal status, the Supreme Soviet passed a law "on recognizing as illegal and criminal the repressive laws against peoples who were subjected to forced resettlement, and on the securing of their rights." In 1991, the legislation was reformed to include further abolition of the decrees that had served as the basis for the "anti-legal" deportations. The 1991 resolution also permitted fuller inquiry into past abuses by providing for the declassification of the related state and KGB documents.\textsuperscript{39} Though this law envisaged full rehabilitation for the repressed nations in the Russian Federation, it also stressed that, "In the process ... the rights and lawful interests of the citizens currently residing on the territory of the repressed people mustn't be infringed."\textsuperscript{40} In effect, it acknowledged a problem, but did not resolve it.

In 1995, a decree issued by President Yeltsin "on measures for the realization of territorial rehabilitation of the repressed peoples," went further. It not only recognized the problem, but it also recommended the broad use of regional and local self-governance, the development of which the federal government would support.\textsuperscript{41} Indeed, the issue had become too large to remain unresolved without having a
destabilizing effect. For example, between 1989-1997 approximately 250,000 Tatars returned to the Crimea (now part of Ukraine), a migration that created considerable tensions with their Russian and Ukrainian neighbors. In the late Soviet and post-Soviet period many of the Volga Germans, never having been restored their autonomous republic on the Volga River, opted to leave for Germany. The problems associated with the deported peoples are among the most visible legacies of Stalinism because they remain too complicated to permit a simple resolution.

**Victim compensation**

Financial assistance and privileges, however inadequate, are among the state’s only means of compensating former victims for their suffering in the camps and for their years of living with a "tainted past". In February of 1998, the amount of compensation for victims of Stalinism was up for discussion in the Russian State Duma. At issue was the Russian Duma’s decision to reduce by half the compensation that was planned by the government "for the defense of the rights of those who suffered illegal repression." In the debate that ensued, witness the raving of Vladimir Zhirinovsky in support of reducing or eliminating restitution to deported peoples:

Comrade Stalin, head of our government, did not just deport people. When the KGB informed him that thousands of Kalmyks organized brigades, joined the ranks of the Red Army, and destroyed thousands of Soviet fighters, yes, then he naturally deported those who were still alive....

In addition to justifying the deportations, Zhirinovsky also went on to declare that there were no "victims of repression," and that all of Russia was repressed in the twentieth century.

Although this performance barely merited a response, Memorial objected to the fact that Zhirinovsky’s "scandalous" behavior did not summon indignation or condemnation among the majority of deputies. In fact, even after the deputy’s outbursts, the Duma still voted in favor of the reduction in compensation for which he had argued. More significant and worrisome, however, was what Memorial called the "gradual
rehabilitation of Stalinism," a trend which was actively supported by some, and passively observed by others. Memorial registered its protest by sending petitions to the Duma, and organizing hundreds of demonstrators who picketed in front of the parliament building with signs like: "Stalin imprisoned [them], the deputies robbed [them]." Official reaction was reminiscent of Memorial's early days -- the organizers were rounded up and taken to the police station for carrying out an unsanctioned activity. Memorial then appealed to its constituency to approach their elected officials for clarification on the question of reduced compensation. Letters of protest from regional Memorial organizations against Zhirinovsky's statements and the Duma's decision were published in Nezavisimaya Gazeta, Moskovskie Novosti, and other influential newspapers. One of these letters, signed by 155 Memorial members, made the following point: "It's funny to think that economizing on the compensation allotted to victims of repression could improve the economy of the country, and resolve the problems in industry, science, and education." Indeed, while not significantly improving the country's economic health, the decreased compensation could certainly have a harmful effect on a great number of individuals. According to a list compiled by Memorial, there were approximately 2,000 survivors of political repression in Moscow alone in 1996. This estimate did not include exiles, deportees, or the children of "traitors of the motherland."

The ambivalent struggle to come to terms with the past

Remembrance

Acknowledging past injustices, restoring rights, and providing compensation to victims all constitute concrete efforts at coming to terms with the past. Organizations like Memorial and Vozvrashchenie have aided in further promoting the moral-ethical, non-material expression of rehabilitation. In this context, the ever-vigilant Semyon Vilensky, chairman of Vozvrashchenie, brings our attention to the fact that Magadan
has the dubious honor of being the only city in the world to have erected a monument to the former supervisor of a labor camp.

Magadan began to be constructed in 1932 under the supervision of Edvard Berzin, who was the first person to head the NKVD division called "Dalstroy". Vilensky recounts that Berzin was considered a "liberal", despite the fact that he commanded the "thousands of new prisoners" who were brought to Magadan. A number of these prisoners subsequently died of illness or exhaustion from forced labor, or they were simply executed. Like many others before and after him, Berzin himself eventually came to be counted as one of the victims of the terror, since he too was arrested and executed.

On June 12, 1996, "The Mask of Sorrow," a monument to the victims of Stalinism designed by the sculptor Ernst Neizvestny, was also erected in Magadan. With regard to the continued presence of Berzin's statue, Vilensky notes how the two monuments "look at each other, like the [Memorial] Solovetsky stone and the Lubyanka in Moscow" -- indeed, Anna Akhmatova's "two Russias" all over again.

**Rehabilitation for henchmen**

A highly controversial issue presented itself in 1998 when the Russian Supreme Court declared that a re-evaluation of the cases of Stalin's henchmen would take place. This, in turn, had the potential to lead to their rehabilitation, or at least partial rehabilitation. Yagoda, Yezhov, Beria, and Abakumov (Minister of State Security from 1946-1951) had been arrested, tried, and executed under the same types of trumped-up charges that they themselves had used against many innocent victims. These charges included espionage, sabotage, Trotskyism, treason, and other "anti-Soviet" activities. The four under discussion were guilty of a host of other crimes, but not these. According to the Court, some of these key figures in the implementation of the Soviet terror should have received 25-year prison camp terms rather than the death penalty.

Each of the men in question had sowed such "immeasurable evil" that new words, like "Yezhovshchina," (the bloody reign
of Yezhov) had to be created in the Russian language to describe the phenomenon. Posthumous rehabilitation of these men who had personally committed and/or ordered atrocious criminal acts, but who were indeed not guilty of the crimes of which they were charged, raises a tricky legal question in Russia's quest to be a 'rule of law' state. As Kovalyov stated with regard to Beria's trial and execution: injustice cannot be rectified with injustice. That may be so, but the rehabilitation laws of the 1990s did not envisage benefits to (former) henchmen. They were established in order to restore the honor of innocent people who had suffered the consequences of Stalinist repression for crimes that they did not commit. With all the crimes that can be attributed to these Stalinist henchmen, their exoneration would be an affront to their victims. Russian human rights activists also argued that this action would set a bad example for a country that is struggling to establish a democratic state. (Yezhov was ultimately denied posthumous rehabilitation, but the very contemplation of even partial exoneration raised considerable ire among those striving to build a civil society. The Supreme Court ruled that Yezhov could not be considered a victim of the terror which he himself organized. Beria was not recognized as a victim of political repression. Abakumov received partial rehabilitation. To date, Yagoda's case is still open. Another former henchman, high state security officer Pavel Sudoplatov, spent years after his 1968 release struggling for rehabilitation. He defended his terrorist acts as "military operations carried out against evil opponents of the Soviet government." He eventually received rehabilitation, in 1991.)

An Izvestiya article analyzes the problem. It points out that it is incumbent upon society to be aware of the political and moral consequences of the fact that, according to the Soviet Criminal Code of the thirties to the fifties -- the legislation which must guide the re-evaluation of their cases -- these four men were not guilty of state crimes. However, the article goes on to argue that "common sense, conscience,
memory, and historical responsibility to the past and the future" dictate against such reasoning, because the consequences would be too great. If the culpability of the Lubyanka henchmen were to be minimized, by extension, the blood would also be removed from the "generalissimo’s" hands. This issue makes clear, according to the article’s author, how necessary a Russian "Nuremberg Trial" would have been. The court would have been able to render judgement on the nature of Stalinism, and to determine the personal culpability of the main inspirer and organizer of genocide against his own people, the personal culpability of his comrades in arms ... as well as those who carried out orders (let us remember that the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg decreed that the execution of a criminal order does not free one from the burden of responsibility.)

The author goes on to explain that the oft-quoted expression "'Stalin died yesterday,'" essentially means that the system invented by him was not yanked out by its roots, the people did not condemn it, a [cancer grew] in our society ... Signs at demonstrations like 'Glory to the Soviet state,' portraits of the 'leader of all peoples,' and the nostalgic longing for a 'firm hand' prove that society did not recover from its ailment.

He cautions that the threat of a return to a repressive regime is not unrealistic.

The judgement criterion for rehabilitation raises complicated questions. The rehabilitation procedures have been criticized by Memorial for legitimizing Stalinist laws, because they focus on whether the sentences were appropriate to the laws that existed at the time. That means that those who committed acts against the Soviet system are not eligible for rehabilitation. It also means that those who did not commit acts against the Soviet system are eligible for rehabilitation.

Commemoration
What we choose to publicly remember and commemorate is largely determined by the direction in which the political wind is
blowing. In a gesture marking continuity with the Soviet past, at the end of 1995, Yeltsin decreed that December 20 would be officially recognized as the "Day of Secret Service Workers." It was on this day in 1917 that Lenin's dreaded secret police organization, the "Cheka", was established. It is remarkable that an organization with so much blood on its hands would be celebrated by a president who claims to be striving for democratization.

November 7, the Day of the Revolution, is still a free day in Russia. On this holiday, Soviet leaders traditionally took the opportunity to use the October Revolution for legitimizing whatever their current political situation was. On the 80th anniversary of the Bolshevik revolution, Yeltsin proposed that this day henceforth become the "Day of agreement and reconciliation." That raises a number of interesting questions, considering that Stalin is still buried in the Kremlin wall, and Lenin's mummy still rests in the mausoleum on Red Square. Aleksandr Yakovlev, one of the architects of perestroika, and later head of the rehabilitation commission, remarked,

With whom should we reconcile, with whom should we agree? [Should we] reconcile with people who still adore Lenin and honor Stalin? The state should make it clear that the country suffered under a criminal regime from 1917 on. [It should state] that Lenin was a murderer and Stalin was a mass-murderer. I can imagine November 7 as a day of mourning and repentance.

Yeltsin's proposal never got off the ground.

The trial issue - who or what was responsible and what should be done about it
Throughout this book, we have been dealing with the complicated issues surrounding exoneration and restitution -- concepts that Stephen Cohen aptly defined as the "official admissions of colossal official crimes" (see Chapter I). We have shown that the grudging nature and contradictory quality of rehabilitation were directly related to this reality. To date the problem of culpability has not been adequately
resolved. It stands to reason that the omission of this admission of guilt in the rehabilitation process has not escaped the victims. Witness the sentiments of the son of an executed "enemy of the people," who spent years in various state orphanages. After expressing regret that the culprits could no longer be punished, he argued that they could and should be exposed, as should the malfeasance of the system itself: "They did that in Germany and they are doing it in South Africa ... how can someone be [considered] a victim of a regime that has not been officially declared criminal?"  

Herein lies a complex question. Soviet Russia could not condemn its own system of governance, because in many instances, people would be judging themselves. But what about post-Soviet Russia? Though the 1992 trial to establish the constitutionality of banning the Communist Party might also have used this legal forum to examine the Communist system itself, it did not venture beyond the issue at hand. Sergey Kovalyov maintains that if at that time national or international legal proceedings, made up of unbiased participants, had been held to assess juridically the Communist Party, they would have constituted nothing short of a Nuremberg Trial: "The CPSU would have been declared a criminal organization, and any activity, under any possible past or present name, would have been forbidden". He maintained that it would have been very healthy for a young democracy to do so. Kovalyov lamented the fact that incriminating documents from the Party archives that "unambiguously showed the Party to be the main organizer of large-scale terrorist activity against its own people," were ruled inadmissible at the 1992 trial, because it was not a "historical trial".  

Kovalyov was called as a witness at these proceedings. In his testimony, he accused the Party of gross transgressions of the law. He also added that a part of the responsibility lay in every individual. Much to his dismay, Kovalyov was thanked afterwards by a Communist official for his honest testimony about everyone’s complicity. Apparently it had made
the Party itself seem less culpable. In the ensuing years, the Communist Party was re-invigorated, and even thrived, as worsening economic conditions turned the public attitude away from its Gorbachev-era anti-Stalinist orientation. After the outcome of the trial of 1992, Zyuganov’s candidacy (Russian Communist Party) in the later presidential elections was no surprise to Kovalyov. (Zyuganov’s opinion on the repressions of the past was that they did not concern him or his party: "We are a new generation. We can’t answer for the mistakes of the past." Those who would challenge that attitude held up a poster in the December 1995 parliamentary elections that read: 50,000,000 victims of civil war, collectivization and repression would not vote for Zyuganov." The communists ended up doing well in the elections, the liberals did not.)

Pro-communism also gave way to pro-Stalinism. In a 1998 poll taken by Argumenty i Fakty, 34% of the 6,000 respondents gave Stalin a positive assessment. "Stalin didn’t die yesterday ... he’s still alive," remarked the 90-year old ex-prisoner Lev Razgon.

The public record in Russia and elsewhere
In post-Soviet Russia there seems to be an official and public tendency toward forgetting, or at least not being reminded of the tragic aspects of the Soviet past. There are a number of explanations for this trend. On a political level, opening or keeping open old wounds could undermine, rather than strengthen, a new democracy and the building of a civil society. The question, then, arises as to what ends would be served by continued or new discussions of past repression. A trial at this stage would be complicated for at least three reasons: many of the victims and perpetrators are already dead, the totalitarian mechanism was so pervasive that a number of victims were also at some level implicated, and the scope and duration of the Soviet Communist dictatorship would make the reach of the trial enormous. On a societal level as well, remembrance is complicated. In Lev Razgon’s words, "people wish to avoid spiritual discomfort," and develop anew a sense of national pride. In an already divided society,
the truth about the criminal nature of a regime that represented the only belief system known to many people for much of their lives could prove even more divisive.

Despite all the problems associated with dredging up an onerous past, understanding past mistakes may well help to prevent their repetition. Memorial is well recognized for its efforts at chronicling the history of Soviet terror. This organization has succeeded in documenting tens of thousands of individual cases of repression through its questionnaires, and it has also examined the bases for mass repression by ascertaining official policy and practice through research in the KGB and Party archives.

The French publication of the work Le Livre Noir du Communisme76 (The Black Book of Communism) was timed to coincide with the 80th anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution. Lest there be any doubt as to the criminal nature of Communism as it has been practiced, this 800-page volume documents the crimes of the regimes of the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, Communist China, Cambodia, North Korea, Vietnam, and others. Though these countries varied in their brand of communism, the facts indicate that mass murder to force conformity, to serve as a prophylaxis for potential opposition, or simply to sow fear and obedience, was a common denominator to all of these governments.77

The unwanted legacy of association with crimes against humanity also is a challenge for non-Communist formerly autocratic nations, such as Chile, Argentina, and South Africa, where a different kind of state tyranny had to be overcome. South Africa ambitiously followed the lead taken by Argentina in 1983 and Chile in 1990. The new government set up "truth and reconciliation" commissions, which have the power of granting amnesty (from amnestia - (to be) forgotten) to perpetrators, in exchange for a full confession. The philosophy behind these "public morality plays" is to achieve a kind of "collective catharsis," and then put the experience behind.78 Not surprisingly, the operation of these commissions evoked mixed emotions.79 Some South Africans,
like Russians in the eighties and nineties, were shocked at the truth on the extent of the crimes, and incensed that the torturers could remain free. But while some experienced shock and outrage, others relived their pain. Rather than helping the victims to recover, the process of truth-telling merely opened old wounds.

Newspapers are filled with stories of twentieth century totalitarianism and the accounts of terror’s children -- the survivors of those who disappeared in Argentina, or those who were murdered in Cambodia, or those who fell victim to the death machine of the Nazi Holocaust, or the repression of the Soviet state, or the Chinese Cultural Revolution.... Issues of remembrance and compensation still rage. For example, more than half a century later, the children of Holocaust victims are still trying to reclaim confiscated property, bank accounts, and moral restitution. Moreover, only in 1998 did the German parliament pass a law that in effect provided moral rehabilitation in the form of a mass pardon to people who were punished unjustly by Nazi courts. This category included resistance fighters, homosexuals, and deserters. For the victims and survivors, recognition of their rights is a matter of dignity.

Governments, too, have the need to re-gain dignity, even in the face of acknowledgement of tremendous national wrongs. Japan, for example, is still battling with the ghosts of Imperial Japan’s wartime atrocities. As late as 1998, Emperor Akihito was snubbed by British war veterans on an official visit to England. They demanded financial compensation and an imperial apology for their wartime victimization.

Rethinking Soviet history again

History is once again being rethought in Russia. This liberalizing process has also, as in the past, been followed by the re-emergence of old, questionable practices. One of them is that a number of archives that were once de-classified have become re-classified. The quest for freedom of information is an ongoing part of the battle against
forgetting. After August of 1991, many of the archives documenting the terror became accessible to researchers and family members of the repressed, and the Soviet tradition of providing as little documentation as possible was replaced by new procedures.\textsuperscript{65} These procedures made stacks of inventories and their corresponding documents available upon request. Part of the research for this book was indeed facilitated by the de-classification of the "Special Files" of Khrushchev and materials of the Party archive. However, documents of the Party Control Commission containing information on Party reinstatement (in the former Party archive) that were provided to me in 1996 were no longer available in 1997, because they had become re-classified. When I pointed out that I had already had access to these materials and simply wanted to re-examine them, my request was denied, with the qualification, "well, you've already seen them." These new restrictions were not specifically directed at foreign researchers.

Memorial researchers spotted this trend and even wrote about it in \textit{Izvestiya} and \textit{Nezavisimaya Gazeta}. The chairman of the Krasnoyarsk Memorial, Vladimir Sirotinin, writes, for example, that he and his colleagues have encountered problems in working in the archives since 1996. He laments that certain documents are being withheld on "legal" grounds:

The joke is that the 'Law on archives' is formulated very cleverly. The preamble is marvelous, [it basically reads that] any Russian citizen or foreigner for that matter may become acquainted with the materials that are preserved in the archive. But then the "buts" begin. Access to personal files is prohibited. This is motivated by the fact that materials on individuals can be used for ignoble ends .... [T]here is no mechanism for contesting the rules.\textsuperscript{86}

He goes on to say that access to the former Party archive (the archive of the CPSU Central Committee, now in the Center for Preservation of Contemporary Documentation) is especially blocked. The director examines all the documents and if they mention the repression, "they are immediately treated as personal files, to which access is prohibited." Furthermore,
only with great difficulty did these researchers manage to obtain (de-classified) documents on the camps from the former KGB archive. Another author with similar experiences concludes in Izvestiya that this trend may be attributable to the increasing mid-level and perhaps high-level influence of the Communist Party.87

On the other hand, there are also some encouraging developments on the archival front toward rediscovering the past. In April of 1998, Yeltsin ordered the transfer of documents on Soviet repression from the largely closed Presidential Archive to the Rehabilitation Commission for further examination.88 These documents, some containing Stalin’s personal markings, consist of lists of victims, letters of individuals who were arrested and convicted, and transcripts of hearings, among other evidence of terror. When the transfer would take place was still in question. As Memorial researchers warned, "at present it is only a promise."89 It is also not clear as to how broad the access to these materials will be.

A museum at Perm

In the postscript to her book, The Gulag in the System of Totalitarian Government, historian G.M. Ivanova notes that post-war Europe made the concentration camps an important theme in its efforts to expose the ideology and practices of fascism.90 Post-Soviet Russia has the potential to do the same. The beginnings are evident: the camp in the Urals, approximately 950 miles east of Moscow and 130 miles northeast of the city of Perm, is now a historical site.91 The physical structure of the Gulag itself, a "visible trace of [Russia’s] recent, harrowing past,"92 serves as a significant condemnation of the nature of the Soviet system. For that reason, closely observing its mandate as a historical enlightenment society and watchdog organization, Memorial is in the process of transforming the partially bulldozed ruins of the notorious Perm 36 (opened in 1946, closed in December 1987) from a Soviet labor camp into a living museum of Russia’s past -- "The Memorial Museum of the History of
Political Repressions and Totalitarianism in the USSR: Perm-36," or simply the "Museum of totalitarianism". The complex will constitute a memorial to those who perished as a result of Soviet repressive practices. As one journalist wrote in 1997, "In a nation bent on forgetting, the museum is the most tangible attempt to illustrate the darkest corners of the Communist system."93

The Perm project is partially being completed by historians. This has caused consternation among some survivors, because they feel that people who did not experience the Gulag personally cannot really understand. Historians may have some comparative perspective to add, though. Speaking about the significance of the project for the historical record, Viktor Shmyrov, historian and organizer of the restoration effort, points out that no films or photographs of the Soviet prison system exist, "unlike the Nazis, who were proud of their actions, our government knew it was doing something wrong. They hid what they were doing."94

He further revealed some interesting information on arrest policy in the Stalin era, which he had unearthed in the KGB archives in Perm. There he found a telegram from Moscow ordering the arrest of an additional 100 people in order to fulfill a work quota at a particular camp. Shmyrov pointed out that, "they'd literally just take the phone book and go through it until they found a foreign-sounding name, then go and arrest them for spying ... the saying was 'Give us the man, we'll find the statute to convict him.'"95

The Perm camps housed such dissident-era political prisoners as Josef Begun, Vladimir Bukovsky, Sergey Kovalyov, Natan Sharansky, Gleb Yakunin, and Anatoly Marchenko and Vasily Stus, both of whom died during incarceration.96 Visitors to the museum will be able to visit their dismal barracks and cells, see the prisoners' uniforms, feel the flimsiness of the blankets that were allotted to them in sub-zero temperatures, and view the so-called "exercise blocks" (essentially steel cages), punishment cells, and holes in the floor that functioned as latrines.97 Semyon Vilensky
cautions, however, that it will be very difficult to portray the real conditions in the camp, because re-built structures and fresh paint could make the place appear to be less brutal than it actually was.  

Perm seems as good a site as any, maybe even better than most, for the museum. By 1995 Perm had not yet changed its Soviet street names. Perm’s primarily dissident-era ex-prisoners experienced many of the same kinds of obstacles to re-assimilation as their Stalin- and Khrushchev-era predecessors. Witness the ironic circumstance conveyed by one former prisoner who received his rehabilitation document in 1994: "I was rehabilitated in the Dzerzhinsky district of the city of Perm, on Communist Street. That says it all."  

The museum was initiated and dedicated in 1995, after which construction efforts began. Organized tours of specialists and foreign groups as well as excursions for the local public began in 1998. 1,500 visitors in all came to the Perm museum in that year. The aims of the museum, much like those of Memorial itself, are research, exhibition, and public education activities. Exhibition plans include the following themes: "Strict Regime Political Incarceration," "Living Voices of the GULag," and "The People and Power in Russia." The "Living Voices" exhibition will feature photographs, documents, and other materials on the arrest, exile, and deportation of the Stalinist-era prisoners. These visual documents will eventually be accompanied by oral memoirs in the form of recorded interviews of life stories.  

Thus far, the funding for conservation and re-building efforts at Perm-36 has been provided by the local government and local businesses, by start-up grants from the Ford Foundation, by special project support from, among others, TACIS, the Open Society Institute, Soros, and the Jewish Community Development Fund, and by revenues from the sawmill that Memorial revived (in fact, the very place in which Kovalyov had labored). The list of people outside of Perm who are involved in the project looks a bit like a Who’s Who of former Soviet political prisoners. The Perm memorial
museum is being overseen in Moscow by Arseny Roginsky, Aleksandr Daniel, Sergey Kovalyov, and Semyon Vilensky, among others, while the Board includes such well-known dissident symbols as Vladimir Bukovsky and Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn.

Conclusion

The significance of the returnee question lies in the fact that it can help us to better assess the nature of de-Stalinization and, more importantly, the nature of the Soviet system itself. Throughout this book, we have travelled with returnees on their journey from the camps back into society, from the late Stalin era, through the Khrushchev and Brezhnev eras, and into the Gorbachev era. We have also explored the re-emergence of returnee questions in the post-Soviet era. A rather consistent trend has presented itself with regard to former victims of Soviet terror. With some exceptions, returnees’ efforts at re-assimilation and re-adaptation were by and large impeded by individuals, officials, and even family members, to say nothing of the impact of their own psychological scars. Family reunion was exceedingly difficult, because both sides of the equation had changed in the course of the prisoners’ incarceration. Jobs were hard to find and hard to keep, because employment depended on the political climate. So, too, did housing and rehabilitation.

Rehabilitated status was all but unattainable for some early and even some late returnees. A number of former prisoners had to wait four decades for exoneration and official recognition of their plight. In the course of these decades, most of the ex-zeks had numerous confrontations with the often clashing rehabilitative and repressive forces of Soviet officialdom. Their thwarted efforts to attain a social and legal status equal to that of individuals who had not experienced incarceration led to an ongoing sense of injustice among many returnees.

In the continued debate on whether the Soviet system can be defined as totalitarian, the experiences of returnees
contribute an excellent illustration of how total the system indeed was -- from the "top-down," from the "bottom-up," and horizontally. As a political system adapted to repression and generally intent on denying the extent of its history of repression for purposes of self-preservation, de-Stalinization often proved cosmetic. This was well reflected in the individual and official attitude toward returnees over the course of time.

The existence of returnees discredited the Soviet system for reasons that have been amply elucidated. But it was not the Stalin-era ex-zeks or the dissidents that ultimately brought about the major changes, and later the downfall of the Soviet system. It was the nomenklatura. As noted by Kovalyov, forced with economic crisis and international isolation, the Soviet leadership implemented change in the system in their own interest, so that it would serve to strengthen their position nationally and internationally. Yet, this was not to be the long-term result, a fact that was apparently anticipated by some. Aleksandr Yakovlev, for example, concluded as early as 1987 that "the building was rotten internally in all its most important parts," and what was necessary were new foundations.103

Once public discussion of the camp and returnee themes had been initiated, overt and covert efforts at damage control (like Gorbachev's low-range public estimates of victims and subsequent limitation of Memorial) did little to stem the tide, or rather tidal wave of revelations. The mass of evidence of the systemic and systematic repression that came to characterize Soviet governance presented a serious challenge to its legitimacy. The newly reformed leadership was not well equipped to deal with the challenge presented by this question, because it still wanted to maintain the Soviet regime. To this end, the CPSU did not assume moral responsibility for repression under Soviet rule. Thus, many issues involving responsibility lingered even after the collapse of the Soviet Union.
At the end of the violent twentieth century, the Russian government and people are struggling to cope with the past, move forward, and prosper in the aftermath of over seven decades of Soviet rule. Lev Razgon, who survived 17 years in the Gulag and most of the Russian century, pointed out that the mentality and political traditions of Russia were formed over a long period of time. As a result of that, the changes that have been made are too few and were too slow in coming. He went on to assert that a deeply-ingrained element of that mentality and political tradition is that it suppresses the dignity of the individual. This is the element that Razgon believed must first be eradicated. In order for real changes to occur, it will take a new generation. (This thinking has historical precedent. Moses led the Israelites within a short time across the Sinai desert to the "Promised land," but they were too timid to take it by force. So he took them back into the desert to wander for forty years until a new generation, not socialized to slavery, grew up, and it was they who took the "Promised Land." [105]) At age 90 Razgon concluded, "my hope rests on those who are entering the first class today."[105] Indeed, these six and seven year olds were born in Russia, not the Soviet Union.

Returnees of the Stalinist era are a dying breed. The task of this work was to record and investigate a number of their stories in search of commonalities. The evidence that former political prisoners in the Soviet Union largely remained in a stigmatized status is abundant and consistent with corroborating data. It is crucial that their experiences continue to be documented in Russia, along with the stories of their children, and those of the dissidents. The archives containing these damning testimonies on the Soviet brand of Communism should be stamped with the order: "khranit vechno" ("to be preserved forever"). These chronicles of the fate of victims of Soviet terror can help to serve as a safeguard against any kind of return to that system under any other name. The Great Return should remain that of the victims, and not of the system that victimized them.
References


This autobiography is written straightforwardly and with a sense of humor. The Russian version, which is considerably longer, was yet to be published in 1998. It includes an additional 100 pages on Kovalëv’s dissident years.


6. Kovalèv, interview.

7. Kowaljow, p. 34.

8. Ibid., pp. 36-37.

9. Ibid., p. 108.

10. Ibid., pp. 55-56.


13. Ibid., pp. 96-99.

While Kovalëv served his time in Perm, his son Ivan became active in the human rights movement and ended up in the same camp.


18. Kovalëv, interview.


24. I encountered this same trend in numerous interviews. While I tried to steer the discussion to the post-camp experience, former prisoners tended to dwell on the incarceration itself in their oral histories. Once we finally did get into the post-camp sphere, their stories of the return and its aftermath were abundant.

25. Arsenii Roginskii, interview held at Memorial headquarters, Moscow, April 26, 1996.


27. See, for example, Sergei Kiselev, "Kto zhe predal 'Molodyu Gvardiiu': o dramaticeskoj sud'be odnogo iz deistvuushchikh lits fadeevskogo romana," Literaturnaja Gazeta, 27 June 1990.


31. Herschberg, "De gijzelaars van het Russische hoge noorden," p. 34.


33. Numerous newspaper articles and letters to Memorial addressed this theme. See, for example, Memorial, f. 1, op. 1, d. 475, 11. 0011 0112 0159-176.

34. Vladimir L'vovich Timoshin, "Obrashcheniia i zaiavleniia grazhdan po voprosam reabilitatsii zhertv policheskikh repressii kak istoricheskii istochnik po izucheniiu mentaliteta rossiiskogo obshchestva," (Po
materialam Upravleniia FSB RF po g. Moskve i Moskovskoi oblasti), diplomnaia rabota RGGU (Moscow, 1997), pp. 63-64.

35. This is well described in some of the interviews conducted by the Memorial oral history group in 1990. See, for example, Aleksandr Danilovich Viaskov, "1937," transcribed by Memorial.


44. Informatsionnyi Biuleten', vypusk 1, (Moscow: Rabochaiia Kollegiia Mezhdunarodnogo istoriko-prosvetitel'skogo pravozashchitnogo i blagotvoritel'nogo obshchestva "Memorial", February 1998).

45. Ibid.


49. See Lidia Golovkova's introduction to Butovskii Poligon: Kniga paniati zhertv politicheskikh repressii (Moscow: Moskovskii Antifashistskii Tsentr, 1997), pp. 5-30;


56. Izvestiia, 8 September 1998.


According to a staff member of the Russian General Procuracy, an official list of former NKVD officials exists, and those on it are by definition not subject to rehabilitation. If this is indeed the law, the public has not been sufficiently informed of its existence, as witnessed by the heated and emotional debates surrounding the question of exonerating Stalinist henchmen, see Anatolii Karpychev, "Kogda istina torzhestvuet," Trud, 26 January 1999.


60. Piliatskin, "Reabilitatsiia GULAGa".

61. Ibid.

62. Consider, for example, the cases of disaffected East Europeans or Russians, who had spied on the Soviet government for the Americans. Rehabilitation and compensation is still denied to many of them, even though in hindsight, their anti-Soviet stance proved to be largely legitimate. See, for example, Jane Perlez, "Eastern Europeans Keep Ex-U.S. Spies in the Cold," The New York Times, 22 January 1998.


68. d’Hamecourt, "Stille ...".

69. Koval’ev, interview.

70. Kowaljow, pp. 141-142.


74. See Garton Ash, pp. 35-40; Assen Ignatow, "Vergangenheitsaufarbeitung in der Russischen Föderation," Berichte des Bundesinstituts für ostwissentschaftliche und internationale Studien, 42 (1997); Varoli, pp. 35-41.

75. Latsis.


78. Garton Ash, p. 38.


89. Nikita Petrov, discussion at Memorial headquarters, Moscow, April 14, 1998.

90. G.M. Ivanova, GULAG v sisteme totalitarnogo gosudarstva (Moscow: MONF, 1997) p. 213.

91. As early as the 1920s, the Western Urals came to function as a "second Kolyma." It was there, in the northern province, that the NKVD created the USSR’s first model labor camp of 10,000 prisoners. See Evgenii Kliuev, "Tam, gde zona byla, segodnia - muzei," NG-Regiony No. 10, 1998.


93. Ibid.

For an insightful probe into reforms in the penal system today, see Frank Westerman's (Dutch language) report on his visit to the Krasnoiarsk Prison Number 1. He describes, among others, a Center for Social Adaptation -- a resettlement organization for former prisoners. The men he met there returned from their abnormally long prison terms as 'zombies'. This center in Siberia provides food, shelter, counselling, job assistance, and help in the search for family members. "Gekooid in Gevangenis Nummer 1: De moeizame hervorming van de Goelag gevangenissen in Siberië," NRC Handelsblad, 20 September 1997.

94. Ibid.

96. For the history of the Perm camps and a breakdown of which prisoners were housed in which of the camps, see "Informatsionnyi biulleten' Perm'skogo oblastnogo otdeleniia Vserossiiskogo dobrovol'nogo pravozashchitnogo, istoriko-prosvetitel'skogo i blagotvoritel'nogo obshchestva 'Memorial'," no. 4, 28 February 1998.

97. Alan Philps, "Gulag is now a memorial to liberty," The Daily Telegraph, 15 November 1997.

98. Vilenskii, interview held at his Moscow home, April 15, 1998.

99. Since the early 1990s, a small museum has been set up on Solovki (Marc Jansen, "Het eerst eiland van de Goelag Archipel," NRC Handelsblad, 18 August 1990.) A room in the Magadan museum is also devoted to the Gulag. Its exhibition includes photos of camp commanders, copies of execution orders, and the primitive tools used by the slave laborers (Bart Rijs, "In Magadan zijn beulen en slachtoffers buren, de Volkskrant, 3 December 1998).


102. Scott.


104. A similar sequence is described by Thomas Kuhn in his The Structure of a Scientific Revolution (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962). He argued that new theories gain sway not primarily because of their scientific power, but because the old men who held the previous theory have died out.


The younger generation of Russians, with its focus on the future, does seem to be moving further and further away from (even awareness of) the Soviet past. In 1995 I gave a guest lecture on the returnee experience to first-year political science students at the Russian State Humanitarian University.
To my surprise, this group knew close to nothing on the topic and had no family members who had been victims of the terror, although one claimed a grandfather who was an NKVD'er.