

THE GULAG AND SOVIET SOCIETY IN WESTERN SIBERIA, 1929-1953

by

Wilson T. Bell

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
Graduate Department of History  
University of Toronto

© Copyright by Wilson T. Bell (2011)



Library and Archives  
Canada

Published Heritage  
Branch

395 Wellington Street  
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4  
Canada

Bibliothèque et  
Archives Canada

Direction du  
Patrimoine de l'édition

395, rue Wellington  
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4  
Canada

Your file Votre référence  
ISBN: 978-0-494-77745-9

Our file Notre référence  
ISBN: 978-0-494-77745-9

#### NOTICE:

The author has granted a non-exclusive license allowing Library and Archives Canada to reproduce, publish, archive, preserve, conserve, communicate to the public by telecommunication or on the Internet, loan, distribute and sell theses worldwide, for commercial or non-commercial purposes, in microform, paper, electronic and/or any other formats.

The author retains copyright ownership and moral rights in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

---

In compliance with the Canadian Privacy Act some supporting forms may have been removed from this thesis.

While these forms may be included in the document page count, their removal does not represent any loss of content from the thesis.

#### AVIS:

L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque et Archives Canada de reproduire, publier, archiver, sauvegarder, conserver, transmettre au public par télécommunication ou par l'Internet, prêter, distribuer et vendre des thèses partout dans le monde, à des fins commerciales ou autres, sur support microforme, papier, électronique et/ou autres formats.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur et des droits moraux qui protège cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

---

Conformément à la loi canadienne sur la protection de la vie privée, quelques formulaires secondaires ont été enlevés de cette thèse.

Bien que ces formulaires aient inclus dans la pagination, il n'y aura aucun contenu manquant.

Canada

*Abstract*

“The Gulag and Soviet Society in Western Siberia, 1929-1953”

Doctor of Philosophy 2011

Wilson T. Bell

Graduate Department of History

University of Toronto

“The Gulag and Soviet Society in Western Siberia, 1929-1953” examines the history of forced labour during the Stalin era in Western Siberia, or present-day Novosibirsk, Tomsk and Kemerovo Provinces. The region was a key site of Stalin-era repression, as it was home to numerous Gulag camps including Sibltag, one of the longest lasting and most economically diversified of the many prison-labour camps scattered throughout the former Soviet Union. Western Siberia was also one of the main areas of exile for peasants and, later, displaced ethnic groups.

The dissertation traces the seeming contradictions in the development of the Gulag by juxtaposing the very modern, bureaucratic “Gulag” as it appeared on paper, with the “Gulag” on the ground that relied heavily on informal practices, data falsification, and personal connections. The Gulag is thus emblematic of the “neo-traditional” modernization of the Soviet Union under Stalin. The dissertation also examines points of illicit and condoned interaction between the Gulag and surrounding population centres, thus challenging Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn’s seminal and enduring depiction of the Gulag as an isolated archipelago of concentration camps. Illicit interaction included widespread black-market activity, the smuggling of correspondence, sexual affairs, and, surprisingly, even instances of locals sneaking into the camps to use camp facilities. Condoned interaction took place at the level of local economic planning (the transfer of prisoners for help with specific projects), a striking overlap in cultural and propaganda campaigns, the

contracting out of prisoners to local enterprises, and the granting of unescorted status to large numbers of prisoners, who thus had the right to move outside of the camp zones without guard. Because many of Western Siberia's camps were located in and around major urban centres, including Novosibirsk and Tomsk, the region is important for examining issues of interaction.

The dissertation draws extensively on sources from four archives in Moscow and four archives in Siberia, as well as Gulag newspapers, published and unpublished memoirs, document collections, and archival collections available in the United States. Many of these sources are under-utilized, including Communist Party documents from the local camp administrations, personal files of prisoners, and NKVD operational orders.

## *Preface*

The West Siberian Plain bursts with life in the spring and summer, its rich green colours compensating for the long, cold winter. The plain is a swampy, forested lowland, cut dramatically by large, north-flowing rivers. The Ob' River and its tributaries constitute the sixth largest drainage area in the world, and the Ob' itself is one of the world's longest rivers. Even hundreds of kilometres south of the frigid Ob' Gulf, the plain rises barely a few hundred metres above sea level until it finally gives way to the foothills of the Altai Mountains. To the west, the rolling hills of the Ural Mountains divide the plain from European Russia; in the east, the land, as it approaches the Enisei River, gradually transforms from plain into the higher ground of the Central Siberian Plateau.

Novosibirsk Province in Western Siberia is today home to Siberia's largest city, Novosibirsk, a thriving metropolis of over two million inhabitants that matured as a city during the Stalin era. Novosibirsk is a key transit hub as the junction of the Trans-Siberian Railway and the Turksib Railway, connecting Siberia with Central Asia. The mighty Ob' river dissects the city and is today a major source of hydropower. One can cross the river via several bridges, even while riding the city's subway system. Although its extremely wide central boulevards and austere architecture owe their existence to Soviet urban planning, the city now boasts a smattering of gleaming office towers, rising up in tribute to Russia and Siberia's early-twenty-first-century economic boom: banking, oil and natural gas. Tomsk Province, to the north, was a crucial region for early Russian

expansion through Siberia, as its many fur-trading outposts dotted the numerous river routes. Tomsk as a city is today a pleasant university town, and wears its past more comfortably than many other former Soviet cities: monuments to the “victims of Stalinism” stand in the city’s centre, in a small park directly across from city hall. The park overlooks the Tom’ river, a meandering tributary of the Ob’. Both rivers had been key to the Russians’ rapid expansion across the Eurasian continent, centuries earlier. Kemerovo Province is today the most industrial and densely populated region of Siberia. It includes the key Kuznetsk Basin, an area with massive coal deposits that was crucial for Stalin-era industrial development. All three of these provinces were home to special settlers and Gulag prisoners during the Stalin era.

Choosing a region of the former Soviet Union for an examination of the Gulag is not easy, given that there were Gulag camps in almost every republic, province, and territory of the union. Gulag camp subdivisions were even located within the city limits of almost every major city. However, a strong case can be made for the importance of a study of the Western Siberian Gulag. The regime sent both prisoners and special settlers here in large numbers, and forced labour was a component of every major industry in the region, from coal mining to forestry to agriculture to defence. The region’s main camp, Siblag, was one of the longest lasting and most economically diversified camps of the entire Gulag, but it was also never a priority camp, and the day-to-day operations and lived experiences were thus not that different from most Gulag camps. Some of its subdivisions were in remote, rural areas, while others were in the heart of the region’s urban centres; prisoners worked in a wide range of economic activities, many under contract from non-Gulag, non-NKVD enterprises.

“Western Siberia” itself is difficult to define. Siblag, the main camp in the region, initially administered camp subdivisions stretching from Omsk to Krasnoiarsk, essentially the entirety of the enormous West Siberian Plain. Gradually, however, Siblag shed subdivisions to other jurisdictions, and came to be located in the urban and agricultural areas of present-day Novosibirsk, Tomsk and Kemerovo Provinces. For the purposes of the present study, then, “Western Siberia” will refer to these three provinces, unless otherwise specifically noted.

It is here that one can explore issues of interaction—both illicit and condoned—between the Gulag and Soviet society. It is this type of local history that can allow one to ask questions about the day-to-day operations of the system, the motivations of the camp personnel, and the lived experiences of the prisoners. And it is here that one can explore the seemingly inherent contradictions in the system: the tensions between the centre and the periphery, the political and economic motivations underlying the system’s operations, and the widespread prevalence of informal practices in what was supposed to be a highly bureaucratic, modern and efficient system.

Any such exploration, of course, requires the assistance of too many individuals and organizations to count, and I am profoundly grateful to everyone who aided me on this journey. I owe a huge debt of gratitude to my thesis advisor, Lynne Viola, who read and commented on numerous chapter and dissertation drafts, whose contacts in Russia proved invaluable, and whose generosity and kindness have been truly inspiring. My other committee members, Robert Johnson and Thomas Lahusen, have been instrumental in pushing me to look at the Soviet period in new ways. Alison Smith has also provided valuable advice concerning portions of the dissertation and conference papers, and I am

grateful for her role as the “internal” external reader. Kate Brown, as the external reader, has not only provided important feedback for improving the dissertation itself, but has pushed me to explore intellectually stimulating directions for developing this research, further.

Other professors have influenced my thinking on Russia and on history, and I thank especially Rick Halpern, Janet Hyer, Norman Pereira, Peter Solomon, Jr., Susan Solomon, Lawrence Stokes, and Ieva Vitins. At conferences and through correspondence and conversations I have also gratefully received help and insight from Golfo Alexopoulos, Alan Barenberg, Steve Barnes, Olga Cooke, William Chase, Michael David-Fox, Miriam Dobson, Heather DeHaan, Marc Elie, Simon Ertz, Sheila Fitzpatrick, Jehanne Gheith, Wendy Goldman, Bruce Grant, Patricia Grimsted, Jeff Hardy, Cynthia Hooper, Denis Kozlov, Jean Levesque, Cynthia Ruder, and many others. In Russia, Sergei Krasil’nikov aided my research in Siberia in countless ways, but I am perhaps most grateful for his unflagging generosity, kindness and optimism. Several other Russian scholars helped me with aspects of my research, and I am grateful to Simeon Vilensky, Oleg Khlevniuk, Boris Trenin, Leonid Trus’ and Vasilii Khanevich, the director of the Tomsk “Memorial” Society Museum.

For their help and friendship I thank my graduate student colleagues, particularly Sarah Amato, Ariel Beaujot, Auri Berg, Max Bergholz, Erin Black, Ed Cohen, Heather Dichter, Audra Diptee, Sveta Frunchak, Sean Guillory, Julie Gilmour, Alexandra Guerson, Maya Haber, Steve Jobbitt, Jenny Kaminer, Lauren Kaminsky, Michael Kogan, Brigid O’Keeffe, Steve Maddox, Oleksandr Melnyk, Jennifer Polk, Janine Rivière, and Mike Westren.

I owe a huge debt of gratitude to the staff and archivists at numerous libraries and archives, including Robarts Library at the University of Toronto, the staff of the government documents collection at Harvard University, and the staff and archivists at the State Archive of the Russian Federation, the Russian State Archive of the Economy, the Russian State Archive of Social and Political History, the Moscow Memorial Society Archive, the State Archive of Novosibirsk Province, the State Archive of Tomsk Province, and the Centre for the Documentation of the Contemporary History of Tomsk Province. In particular, I would like to single out Liudmila Pril' at the Centre for the Documentation of the Contemporary History of Tomsk Province, who brought me all the files I asked for and found numerous others, useful to my project, on her own; and Valentina Piskova, the reading-room director at the State Archive of Tomsk Province, who graciously offered cookies and tea almost everyday, and occasionally even homemade *mors*.

Numerous organizations and institutions have supported my research and conference travel. I am extremely grateful to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, the International Research and Exchanges Board, the Social Sciences Research Council, the University of Toronto (particularly the School of Graduate Studies, the Centre for European, Russian and Eurasian Studies, and the Faculty of Arts and Sciences), the Department of History at the University of Guelph, and Dickinson College. Deepest and warmest thanks go to my late Great Uncle James Cogan and my Great Aunt Yasuko Cogan, who financially supported my post-secondary education from the beginning.

I thank my parents, Tom and Jacquie Bell, for their unconditional support and for having enough curiosity and interest in my topic to make the trek to visit me in Moscow. To my sister and her family, my brother and his family, and my aunt and uncle and cousin in the Baltimore area, I say thank you for the many laughs and the willingness to read and discuss some of my early work on the Gulag.

Finally, I thank my partner in life, Martha Solomon. Martha has been a true partner in countless journeys, including that of this dissertation. From exploring Moscow and Siberia together, to debating issues for chapter revisions, to key life matters such as adventures in parenting and efforts to live a more environmentally sustainable lifestyle, Martha has been a wonderful companion, friend, and source of emotional support and advice. Most crucially, I thank Martha and our daughter, Maeve, for their love, kindness, humour, and for their constant reminders that it is the human connections and love that matter most.

## Contents

<b>ABSTRACT</b> .....	<b>II</b>
<b>PREFACE</b> .....	<b>IV</b>
<b>CONTENTS</b> .....	<b>X</b>
<b>LIST OF FIGURES</b> .....	<b>XII</b>
<b>SIBLAG MAP</b> .....	<b>XIII</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION: WHAT WAS THE GULAG?</b> .....	<b>1</b>
HISTORIOGRAPHY .....	4
UNDERSTANDING THE GULAG: PENAL, ECONOMIC AND IDEOLOGICAL CONCERNS .....	11
SPECIAL SETTLEMENTS, CORRECTIVE-LABOUR COLONIES, CORRECTIVE-LABOUR CAMPS ...	17
<i>Special settlements</i> .....	18
<i>Corrective-Labour Colonies (ITKs)</i> .....	19
<i>Corrective-Labour Camps (ITLs)</i> .....	21
THE IMPORTANCE OF WESTERN SIBERIA .....	23
CHAPTER OUTLINE .....	25
<b>CHAPTER I: FORCED LABOUR AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF SIBERIA: FROM PETER I TO THE SPECIAL SETTLEMENTS</b> .....	<b>28</b>
RUSSIA AND SIBERIA .....	31
FORCED LABOUR IN SIBERIA: AN OVERVIEW OF THE PRE-SOVIET YEARS .....	33
THE PACIFICATION OF THE COUNTRYSIDE.....	35
THE EVOLUTION OF PRISONER LABOUR IN THE SOVIET UNION .....	41
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE CAMPS AND THE SPECIAL SETTLEMENTS.....	51
NARYM: FORCED LABOUR IN THE REMOTE AREAS OF WESTERN SIBERIA .....	55
CONCLUSION .....	62
<b>CHAPTER II: THE GULAG IN WESTERN SIBERIA, 1929-1941</b> .....	<b>64</b>
SIBLAG, 1929-1941: ADMINISTRATIVE AND ECONOMIC OVERVIEW .....	64
SIBLAG: LIVING CONDITIONS OVERVIEW .....	82
<i>Cultural-educational activities</i> .....	88
<i>The Tomsk Camp for Family Members of Enemies of the People</i> .....	94
ONE SUCCESS, ONE FAILURE: TWO CAMPS FROM THE LATE-1930S.....	97
<i>Gornoshorlag</i> .....	99
<i>Tomasinlag</i> .....	103
CONCLUSION .....	110
<b>CHAPTER III: GULAG REGULATIONS ON THE EVE OF WORLD WAR II</b> .....	<b>112</b>
MODERNITY AND THE GULAG? .....	114
THE SHIFT AWAY FROM REHABILITATION IN SOVIET PENAL POLICY .....	126
THE RULES AND REGULATIONS OF THE LATE-1930S, EARLY-1940S .....	130
<i>Camp rations and hyper-bureaucratization</i> .....	141
PETITIONS AND COMPLAINTS .....	149
DE-CONVOYED PRISONERS.....	153
CONCLUSION .....	161
<b>CHAPTER IV: MOBILIZATION FOR WAR</b> .....	<b>163</b>
WARTIME ADMINISTRATIVE CHANGES.....	170
ECONOMIC MOBILIZATION.....	174
WARTIME RELEASE .....	187
MOBILIZING THE PRISONERS: CULTURAL-EDUCATIONAL WORK DURING WORLD WAR II....	189

CONCLUSION .....	201
<b>CHAPTER V: CAMP PERSONNEL DURING WARTIME, 1940-1945 .....</b>	<b>203</b>
SIBLAG'S PERSONNEL .....	209
<i>The Guards</i> .....	213
<i>Training</i> .....	218
<i>Turnover</i> .....	221
THE CAMP PARTY ORGANIZATIONS.....	225
<i>Party discipline</i> .....	228
ATTITUDES TOWARDS PRISONERS.....	240
CONCLUSION .....	243
<b>CHAPTER VI: THE GULAG IN WESTERN SIBERIA, 1945-53 .....</b>	<b>246</b>
THE EXPANSION OF THE CAMP SYSTEM .....	248
THE POST-WAR GULAG IN WESTERN SIBERIA .....	254
BLACK MARKET ACTIVITY .....	260
WOMEN IN THE CAMPS.....	263
RESISTANCE.....	275
CULTURAL-EDUCATIONAL WORK .....	283
SPECIAL SETTLEMENTS .....	287
CONCLUSION .....	288
<b>CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>290</b>
POST-SCRIPT: THE POST-STALIN GULAG IN WESTERN SIBERIA.....	300
<b>APPENDIX: DISTRIBUTION OF GULAG PRISONERS BY REGION .....</b>	<b>304</b>
<b>GLOSSARY .....</b>	<b>311</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>	<b>314</b>

## *List of Figures*

KEY SIBLAG SUBDIVISIONS CIRCA MAY, 1941 .....	XIII
FIGURE 2.1: 1 JANUARY PRISONER POPULATION OF SIBLAG, 1930-1941 .....	66
FIGURE 2.2: SIBLAG DIVISIONS ON THE EVE OF THE GREAT PATRIOTIC WAR.....	71
FIGURE 2.3: RECOMMENDED ALLOCATION OF SIBLAG PRISONERS, 1933.....	75
FIGURE 2.4: SIBLAG FARM.....	79
FIGURE 2.5: SIBLAG AGRICULTURAL MUSEUM .....	80
FIGURE 2.6: PHOTO OF THE <i>BOL'SHOI ZAL</i> AT THE IAIA CULTURAL CLUB.....	89
FIGURE 2.7: BERMAN SPEAKS WITH A “SHOCK-WORKER” .....	100
FIGURE 3.1: SIBLAG STAKHANOVITE .....	121
FIGURE 3.2: TRACTORS AT THE 2 <sup>ND</sup> ORLOVO-ROZOVO FARM .....	122
FIGURE 3.3: ESCAPES FROM CORRECTIVE LABOUR CAMPS, 1934-1953 .....	138
FIGURE 3.4: THE STANDARD RATION (GRAMS/PRISONER/DAY) .....	144
FIGURE 4.1: SIBLAG AND GULAG PRISONER POPULATIONS, 1940-1945 .....	172
FIGURE 6.1: GULAG AND REGIONAL PRISONER POPULATIONS, JAN. 1, 1946-53 .....	249
FIGURE 6.2: ECONOMIC ACTIVITY IN THE POST-WAR CAMPS OF WESTERN SIBERIA.....	255
FIGURE 6.3: PRISONERS IN WEST SIBERIAN CAMPS, 1 JAN 1946-53 .....	257
FIGURE 7.1: 1 JANUARY POPULATIONS FOR KEY WESTERN SIBERIAN CAMPS, 1953-1960 .....	300
FIGURE A.1: MAP OF FEDERALLY ADMINISTERED GULAG CAMPS .....	304
FIGURE A.2: 1 JAN PRISONER POPULATION, LOCALLY ADMINISTERED CAMPS .....	305
FIGURE A.3: GULAG PRISONER DISTRIBUTION, SELECTED YEARS .....	307
FIGURE A.4: LIST OF TERRITORIAL ENTITIES WITHIN EACH MEGA REGION .....	309

## Siblag Map

### Key Siblag Subdivisions circa May, 1941



The author created this map using Google Maps, the Map of the Soviet Union (1989) from <http://theneosr.egloos.com/1109595> (last accessed 26 July 2010) and Microsoft PowerPoint. For more information on the camp subdivisions, see Figure 2.2 of the present dissertation. The size of the triangle does not correspond to the size of the subdivision.

## INTRODUCTION: What Was the Gulag?

“Within society, the concentration camp was a *closed universe*. [...] *Its boundaries could not be crossed*; inmates were isolated and locked into a world of terror in which the camp personnel enjoyed a free hand.”  
- Wolfgang Sofsky, *The Order of Terror: The Concentration Camp*<sup>1</sup>

“Non-convoyed prisoners sell in the villages clothing, footwear, and other [items]. The nearby population is literally to a person dressed in the footwear, pants, padded jackets, pea-jackets, hats, blouses, [and] quilted jackets of the camp type”  
- Evsei Moiseevich L’vov, Sibilag prisoner, describing the Orlovo-Rozovo subdivision in 1941<sup>2</sup>

“Immediately and categorically cease allowing extraneous persons in the [camp] zone without relation to the camp (visiting the med[ical] stations, bath houses and so on)”  
- From a 1951 Gulag directive on strengthening regimen at Sibilag.<sup>3</sup>

"We must have reserves instead of borrowing people from the GULAG. [...] It's acceptable to use the GULAG in some remote corners, but in the machine industry, in the cities, where criminals work side by side with noncriminals, I really don't know. I'd say it's very irrational and not quite appropriate"  
- Iosif Stalin, at the July 1940 Plenum of the Central Committee<sup>4</sup>

If the ultimate goal of a concentration camp is to create a “closed universe,” completely cut off from society, then the Gulag by and large failed at this goal. Contrary to popular

---

<sup>1</sup> Wolfgang Sofsky, *The Order of Terror: The Concentration Camp* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997) 14. Emphasis added.

<sup>2</sup> Memorial Society Archives, fond 2, opis’ 1, delo 84 [L’vov Evsei Moiseevich (*Vospominaniia*)], list’ 46. Henceforth fond, opis’, delo, and list’ will be cited as f., op., d., l. (ll. for the plural).

<sup>3</sup> Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rossiskoi Federatsii (GARF) f. 9414, op. 1, d. 469, ll. 5-10.

<sup>4</sup> As quoted in Oleg Khlevniuk, ed., *The History of the Gulag: From Collectivization to the Great Terror*, trans Vadim Staklo (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004) 244.

belief, the Gulag's borders were porous. And, as the above quotations indicate, there was considerable interaction between the camps and the surrounding populations: a thriving black market brought alcohol and tobacco into the camps in exchange for camp goods, and on occasion local villagers even ventured into the camps to use the camp facilities. At certain camps, prisoners worked alongside free workers, a practice that clearly bothered Stalin. Some prisoners received permission to move outside of the camp zone without guard, or even to live outside of the zone.<sup>5</sup> The Soviet regime simply did not have the resources, and did not operate efficiently enough, to create a true archipelago of isolated camps.

If the Gulag does not fit the traditional image of the concentration camp, what, then, was the Gulag? Originally an acronym for the Stalin-era bureaucracy, Main Administration of Corrective-Labour Camps (*Glavnoe upravlenie ispravitel'no-trudovykh lagerei*), the term "Gulag" has gained widespread currency with varied meanings. For example, Amnesty International's 2005 Annual Report infamously described the United States' prison camp in Guantanamo Bay as the "gulag of our times," sparking wide-spread media coverage and debate.<sup>6</sup> One year earlier, Al Gore used the term at a speech at New York University in reference to the abuse of prisoners by US soldiers at Abu Ghraib, the notorious prison in Iraq.<sup>7</sup> In academia, scholars have used "Gulag" to describe Chinese camps, Vietnamese camps, British-run camps in colonial

---

<sup>5</sup> For more on prisoners living outside of the camps, see Alan Barenberg, "Prisoners Without Borders: Zazonniki and the Transformation of Vorkuta after Stalin," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, 57. 4 (2009): 513-534.

<sup>6</sup> The report is on Amnesty International's website: <<http://web.amnesty.org/report2005/message-eng>>. For some examples of the debate over Amnesty's use of the term, see Anne Applebaum, "Amnesty's Amnesia," *Washington Post*, 8 June 2005, A.21; and the *New York Times* editorial, "Un-American by Any Name," *New York Times*, 5 June 2005, Section 4, p. 13.

<sup>7</sup> Gore's remarks were quite controversial when they first appeared. "Gulag," however, continues to be used to describe alleged US extra-legal incarceration practices. See, for example, Eliza Griswald, "American Gulag: Prisoners' Tales from the War on Terror," *Harper's* 313, no. 1876 (September, 2006), 41-50.

Africa, various systems of incarceration under communist regimes in Eastern Europe, and even prison systems in some US states, to name just a few.<sup>8</sup> In these contexts, “gulag” is either a blanket term for communist prison camps; a designation for prison camps where inmates are incarcerated through extra-legal measures; or a penal system with an extraordinarily large number of inmates or unusually harsh conditions. In these uses, then, we see that the term is popularly associated with places of confinement where actual or perceived human rights violations take place.<sup>9</sup>

Certainly, of course, the Gulag was a system of places of confinement where there were many violations of human rights. So, in this sense, the growing use of the term in non-Soviet contexts is perhaps appropriate. Nevertheless, the off-hand use of the term obscures many of the historical specificities of the Soviet Gulag. Indeed, within the Soviet context itself, “Gulag” also has different meanings and uses. Many studies use the term not only for Stalin-era camps, but also to cover early Soviet concentration camps, such as those set up during the Civil War, or the prison camps of the Solovetskii Islands, often regarded as the precursor to the Stalinist camp system.<sup>10</sup> Other historians of the

---

<sup>8</sup> For some recent examples, see Caroline Elkins, *Imperial Reckoning: The Untold Story of Britain's Gulag in Kenya* (New York: Holt, 2005); Bethwell A. Ogot, “Britain's Gulag,” *Journal of African History* 46(3), 2005: 493-505; Nghia M. Vo, *The Bamboo Gulag: Political Imprisonment in Communist Vietnam* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2004); Ruxandra Cesereanu, “Prison Theatricality in the Romanian Gulag,” *Intermarium* 4(2), 2000-2001; Tsvetan Todorov, ed., *Voices from the Gulag: Life and Death in Communist Bulgaria* (University Park, PA: Penn State Press, 2000); Jean-Jacques Gandini, “Goulag fin de siècle: le laogai chinois,” *Gavroche* 16(91), 1997: 1-6; Harry Hongda Wu, *Laogai—The Chinese Gulag*, trans. T. Slingerland (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992); Ruth Wilson Gilmore, *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).

<sup>9</sup> Short excerpts from this section, and the following section, appear in Wilson T. Bell, “Gulag Historiography: An Introduction,” *Gulag Studies* 2-3 (2009-2010): 1-20. I thank Charles Schlacks, publisher, for permission to reprint.

<sup>10</sup> Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago, 1918-1956: An Experiment in Literary Investigation*, 3 vols, vol. 1 and 2 trans. T. P. Whitney, vol. 3 trans H. Willets (New York: Harper & Row, 1974-78); Anne Applebaum, *Gulag: A History* (New York: Doubleday, 2003); Tomasz Kizny, *Gulag: Life and Death inside the Soviet Concentration Camp* (Firefly, 2004).

Soviet period take “Gulag” to stand for Soviet repression as a whole.<sup>11</sup> Because the Gulag was technically a department of the OGPU/NKVD, some scholars argue that the term should not be used as a shorthand designation for the whole repressive apparatus.<sup>12</sup>

Founded in 1930 under the administration of the OGPU (Unified State Political Administration) and later NKVD (People’s Commissariat of Internal Affairs), “GULag” was the bureaucracy in charge of running what became a vast network of prison camps and colonies and, for a time, the extensive network of special settlements, places of peasant exile.<sup>13</sup> The Gulag’s camps and settlements were not simply bureaucracies, however. They were real places of almost unimaginable suffering, where millions perished and many more became invalids at a period of their lives when they should have been strong and healthy.

### ***Historiography***

Three main factors have influenced Gulag historiography in ways that have until recently obscured our understanding of the camp system. First, and perhaps foremost, archival information on the Gulag was almost entirely unavailable until the very end of the Soviet period. Early studies of the camps thus relied primarily on memoirs and information smuggled out from behind the “iron curtain,” including Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn’s seminal work, *The Gulag Archipelago*. Relying on these accounts of the camps left part of the

---

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, S. S. Vilenskii, “Vvedenie,” in Vilenskii et al., eds., *Deti GULAGa 1918-1956*, (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnyi fond “Demokratiia,” 2002), 7-12.

<sup>12</sup> Oksana Klimkova, “GULAG: Ot mifotvorchestva k izucheniiu,” *Ab Imperio* 3 (2005): 501-528, esp. 506.

<sup>13</sup> The final form that the system took, moreover, owed much to early Soviet bureaucratic wrangling, as studies by Jakobson and Ivanova have discussed. This highlights the importance of understanding the Gulag as a bureaucracy. See Michael Jakobson, *Origins of the GULAG: The Soviet Prison-Camp System, 1917-1934* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1993) and Galina Ivanova, “Repressivnaia sistema i karatel’naia politika gosudarstva,” in *Vlast’ i obshchestvo v SSSR: Politika repressii (20-40e gg.)*, V. P. Dmitrenko et al., eds. (Moscow: Institut rossiskoi istorii RAN, 1999) 165-191.

story—even from the prisoners’ perspective—untold. Most memoirists had served sentences in the camps under the notorious Article 58 of the Criminal Code, “counter-revolutionary activity,” whether or not their behaviour was actually “counter-revolutionary.” Article 58ers, however, were not a majority of the camp prisoner population, and the Soviet regime generally held these prisoners in its harshest camps and camp subdivisions. Their experiences are not, therefore, representative of the entire camp population. This dearth of archival documents also meant that scholars could only speculate about important issues such as the size of the camps, their economic impact, and so on.

A second, related, influence on Gulag historiography was, undoubtedly, the Cold War. The Cold War polarized the issue of the Gulag. Intellectuals with sympathies on the left, such as the existentialist philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre, downplayed reports on the Gulag. In her Pulitzer-prize-winning *Gulag: A History*, Anne Applebaum goes as far as to imply that a left-wing academia purposefully focused its attention elsewhere.<sup>14</sup> The publication of Solzhenitsyn’s *Gulag Archipelago* in the early 1970s, moreover, caused a crisis in the European Left, and some French intellectuals renounced their communist sympathies as a result.<sup>15</sup> At the same time, the Gulag clearly became a tool for those with strong anti-communist sentiment. Martin Malia claimed the *Gulag Archipelago* exposed the true nature of the Soviet regime.<sup>16</sup> Years earlier, political theorist Hannah Arendt had argued that concentration camps—and here she equated the Nazi and Soviet camps—“are the true central institutions of totalitarian organizational power,” as the camps themselves

---

<sup>14</sup> Applebaum, *Gulag*, xx-xxiii.

<sup>15</sup> For a recent analysis of this see Jan Plamper, “Foucault’s Gulag,” *Kritika* 3.2 (2002): 255-280.

<sup>16</sup> See Martin Malia, “A War on Two Fronts: Solzhenitsyn and the Gulag Archipelago,” *Russian Review* 36, 1 (1977): 46-63.

are where totalitarian regimes practice and perfect “total domination” and “absolute terror”.<sup>17</sup> Some Gulag scholars continue to follow this model. Galina Ivanova, for example, refers to the Gulag camps as the “highest manifestation of totalitarianism”.<sup>18</sup>

The Holocaust has been a third major influence on Gulag historiography. This influence stems in part from a Cold War tendency in the West to focus on the similarities between the Nazi and Soviet regimes, rather than their differences.<sup>19</sup> It likely also stems from the Holocaust’s place as the epitome of violence and inhumanity in a century of violence and inhumanity. Thus Simeon Vilensky can lament that “Unlike the Nazis, not one of the Bolshevik leaders was ever tried and punished” for the Gulag, and Applebaum can express horror at the sale and purchase of Soviet *kitsch*, writing that “the crimes of Stalin do not inspire the same visceral reaction as do the crimes of Hitler”.<sup>20</sup> But the influence of the Holocaust on Gulag historiography is subtler than a simple accounting of which regime murdered more people and whether or not we should view the Gulag with the same sense of horror. Some studies of memoirs, for example, specifically look for survival strategies, a common trope in Holocaust studies, and even explicitly rely on Holocaust survivor literature as a tool for understanding the Gulag experience.<sup>21</sup> Even several of the questions in the present dissertation—about the Soviet “perpetrator,” for

---

<sup>17</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, 1968) 438.

<sup>18</sup> G. M. Ivanova, “Kak i pochemu stal vozmozhen GULAG,” in I. V. Dobrovolskii and Ivanova, eds., *GULAG: ego stroiteli, obitateli i geroi: Rossiia po dorogam fanatizma i muchenichestva* (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnoye prav cheloveka, 1998) 5-27, quotation 5. Another example can be found with Tim Tzouliadis’ *The Forsaken: An American Tragedy in Stalin’s Russia* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2008) esp 274, where he quotes Arendt.

<sup>19</sup> For an excellent recent discussion of the comparison between Nazism and Stalinism, see Michael Geyer, with assistance from Sheila Fitzpatrick, “Introduction: After Totalitarianism – Stalinism and Nazism Compared,” in *Beyond Totalitarianism: Stalinism and Nazism Compared*, Geyer and Fitzpatrick, eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009) 1-40.

<sup>20</sup> Simeon Vilensky, “Preface to the English Edition,” in Vilensky, ed., *Till My Tale Is Told: Women’s Memoirs of the Gulag* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999) xi; Applebaum, *Gulag*, xix-xx.

<sup>21</sup> See, for example, Leona Toker, *Return from the Archipelago: Narratives of Gulag Survivors* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000) and Nanci Adler, *The Gulag Survivor: Beyond the Soviet System* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2002) esp. 7-9.

example—stem from a well-developed literature on the corresponding subject in Holocaust studies. If, however, Holocaust historiography is a helpful tool for examining some aspects of Stalinist repression, we need to be wary of taking the analogy too far.<sup>22</sup> The Gulag, despite appalling mortality rates, did not include death camps; for most prisoners, the Gulag functioned as a penal system, with a very real possibility of release and at least the promise of rehabilitation; forced labour was a much more important part of the Soviet camps than the Nazi camps; and unlike the Nazis, the Soviets held a materialist as opposed to a biological worldview.<sup>23</sup>

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the lack of archival information is less of an issue. Although many documents on the Gulag remain classified, and contemporary researchers face the very real possibility that certain documents and collections are subject to re-classification, there are now thousands upon thousands of declassified central and local archival files on the Gulag, some of which are available in the United States.<sup>24</sup> Russian and Western scholars, as well as archivists, have worked tirelessly to

---

<sup>22</sup> As Wendy Goldman writes, “similarities between Hitler’s Germany and Stalin’s Russia can easily be overstated. In the Soviet case, an older Cold War emphasis on facile similarities may have discouraged a deeper exploration of institutional and social responses to the terror.” See Goldman, “Stalinist Terror and Democracy: The 1937 Union Campaign,” *The American Historical Review* 110.5 (2005): 1427-1453, quotation 1430.

<sup>23</sup> Soviet policy towards national minorities is incredibly complex. Even though the Soviets initially held that national characteristics were socially constructed, as time progressed authorities tended to see some of these characteristics as immutable. Nevertheless, Soviet policy was never about the domination of one master race, and many policies served to promote “ethnic particularism”. For more, see Yuri Slezkine, “The USSR as Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism,” *Slavic Review* 53.2 (1994): 415-452, and Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), esp. 442-443.

<sup>24</sup> I have direct experience with re-classification, as the entire *fond* P-260, party documents from the Novosibirsk Province Camp and Colony Administration, was re-classified while I was working on it, ostensibly because these documents contained a lot of personal information, protected under international privacy laws. Many central Russian archival documents related to the Gulag have been microfilmed and are available in the United States at Stanford’s Hoover Institute, Harvard University’s collection of government documents (open to the public), and the University of Chicago (which does not have a complete set).

publish thousands of documents, too.<sup>25</sup> There is no longer a dearth of information, as evidenced by the growing body of secondary literature on the camps and special settlements. The influence of the Cold War has faded, but not disappeared. Some scholars have attempted to revive the “totalitarian” approach to Soviet studies, but without the Cold War viewpoint. Peter Holquist, for example, argues that the totalitarian state shares many of its characteristics—information gathering, a propensity to categorize, surveillance measures, bureaucratization—with liberal democracies in particular and with “modernity” more generally.<sup>26</sup> The “modernity argument” for Soviet studies—and specifically for the Gulag with the work of Steven Barnes—also reveals yet another aspect of the enduring influence of the Holocaust. Historians have borrowed this idea largely from the work of sociologist Zygmunt Bauman, who argues in *Modernity and the Holocaust* that the modern state is a “gardening state” in its attempts to fashion society in a certain way while removing the undesirable “weeds.”<sup>27</sup>

Most importantly, Solzhenitsyn’s vivid analogy for the Gulag, the “archipelago,” has stood the test of time. In this analogy, there is little hope of return to the mainland (a

---

<sup>25</sup> For a list, see Wilson T. Bell and Marc Elie, “Selected Bibliography of Historical Works on the Gulag,” *Gulag Studies* 1 (2008): 143-60. See also Bell, “Gulag Historiography”.

<sup>26</sup> Peter Holquist, “State Violence as Technique: The Logic of Violence in Soviet Totalitarianism,” in *Landscaping the Human Garden: 20<sup>th</sup> Century Population Management in a Comparative Framework*, ed. Amir Weiner (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003) 19-45, esp. 21.

<sup>27</sup> See Steven A. Barnes, “Soviet Society Confined: The Gulag in the Karaganda Region of Kazakhstan, 1930s-1950s,” (Stanford: PhD Dissertation, Department of History, Stanford University, 2003); Weiner, ed., *Landscaping the Human Garden*; and Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989). Clearly population politics played an important role in interwar Europe, regardless of the political system. France, for example, in 1919 deported tens of thousands of Algerians who were thought to be incapable of integration. For more on the discrimination against minority groups in interwar Europe, see Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe’s Twentieth Century* (New York: Vintage Books, 2000) 51-64, information on France, 58. Mazower notes that in Eastern Europe during this period, it was not conservatives who discriminated against minority rights, but “was above all the work of modernizing liberals who were trying to create a national community through the actions of the state.” See Mazower, *Dark Continent*, 59.

“reverse wave”). Officials gave the Gulag clear orders to isolate prisoners from society.<sup>28</sup> The Gulag thus created its own world; and while Gulag society and Soviet society were certainly linked economically and shared many features (arbitrariness, bureaucracy, propaganda, etc.), their “citizens” did not mix.

The strict isolation of prisoners from Soviet society has come under question from a new analogy, that of the “revolving door”.<sup>29</sup> Police make arrests, criminals go to prison, prisoners are released at the end of their terms (some earlier, some later), and recidivists repeat the process. This second analogy, however, does not necessarily replace the first: perhaps there are more “reverse waves” than we had previously thought, but while in prison, prisoners remain strictly isolated. Steven Barnes focuses on the issue of release to argue that the Gulag was a tool that the regime used to decide who belonged and who did not belong within Soviet society.<sup>30</sup> But Barnes’ discussion only serves to emphasize that Gulag space was separate space, cut off from the “mainland,” but with a possibility of return.

Release was not the only moment of interaction. Two recent studies highlight issues of pre-release interaction. The first is Judith Pallot’s remarkable work on the Gulag in the northern areas of Perm’ Province (*oblast’*). Although far removed from any major population centre, Pallot describes the interaction between free and forced labour in the region. During much of the Stalin era, the regime essentially conscripted peasants to

---

<sup>28</sup> For example, see NKVD *prikaz* no. 00889 from 2 Aug 1939, concerning camp regimen. GARF f. 9401 op. 1a d. 35 l. 16.

<sup>29</sup> Golfo Alexopoulos, “Amnesty 1945: The Revolving Door of Stalin’s Gulag,” *Slavic Review* 64.2 (2005) 274-306. She cites Nanci Adler, Steven A. Barnes and David Nordlander as others to use the term, “revolving door” (see Alexopoulos, 275 n. 7). The high rate of turnover was first discussed by J. Arch Getty, Gabor T. Rittersporn, and Viktor Zemskov in “Victims of the Soviet Penal System in the Pre-War Years: A First Approach on the Basis of Archival Evidence,” *American Historical Review* 98.4 (1993) 1017-1049.

<sup>30</sup> Steven A. Barnes, “Soviet Society Confined.”

work in timber-felling and rafting logs, using prisoners and special settlers heavily in the same areas. As the Gulag set up more permanent camps, many local villagers gravitated towards the Gulag labour colonies, as “life there was evidently more congenial than in collectivised villages or remote forest stations”.<sup>31</sup> Local villagers even established relationships with Gulag prisoners. The second recent study highlighting pre-release interaction is Alan Barenberg’s work on Vorkuta. Barenberg shows that those prisoners permitted to move—and even live—outside of the camp zone “were important phenomena in the Soviet prison camp system from the 1930s to the 1950s,” and argues that “the very phenomenon seems to undermine one of the most fundamental principles of the Gulag: the enforced separation between the world inside the camps and the outside”.<sup>32</sup>

While both Pallot and Barenberg provide numerous instances of interaction between the camps and Soviet society, they both do so for very remote, isolated camps. Many of the labour camps and colonies of Western Siberia, on the other hand, were located within the city limits of major, established urban centres, such as Novosibirsk and Tomsk. Even in these urban areas, the degree of interaction is striking. The archipelago metaphor, while perhaps still suitable for the Gulag’s remote “islands,” may not apply to those camps that were clearly part of the “mainland.”

---

<sup>31</sup> Judith Pallot, “Forced Labour for Forestry: the Twentieth Century History of Colonisation and Settlement in the North of Perm’ Oblast’,” *Europe-Asia Studies* 54.7 (2002): 1055-1083, quotation 1068.

<sup>32</sup> Barenberg, “Zazonniki,” 514-515. See also his excellent dissertation, which includes numerous instances of pre-release interaction: “From Prison Camp to Mining Town: The Gulag and Its Legacy in Vorkuta,” (Chicago: PhD dissertation, Department of History, 2007).

### *Understanding the Gulag: Penal, Economic and Ideological Concerns*

One key to understanding the Gulag lies in the population figures for political and criminal prisoners. For most years, the percentage of political prisoners—those charged with counter-revolutionary activity under Article 58 of the criminal code—hovered between twenty and thirty percent.<sup>33</sup> While high, these numbers demonstrate that the Gulag was not *primarily* a place for the incarceration of innocent prisoners on fabricated charges of counter-revolutionary activity. In fact, it was primarily the Soviet Union’s *penal system* during the Stalin era. As such, the Gulag owed much of its growth to the vagaries of Stalin-era criminal justice. And criminal justice during the Stalin era grew increasingly harsh as time passed. Harsh sentencing for such issues as internal passport violations, theft from the collective farm, and violations of incredibly strict wartime labour laws (most of which were not rescinded at the end of World War II) played a major role in the Gulag’s expansion. In this way, while *political decisions* account for the Soviet Union’s incredibly large penal system, we should not think of the Gulag as populated primarily by *political prisoners*, in the traditional sense of real or perceived oppositionists.

This relationship between criminal justice and the Gulag is especially clear in the late Stalin era, when the Gulag reached its peak population. During this period, there were actually fewer prisoners sentenced, but the length of these sentences was in general much longer than in the pre-war period.<sup>34</sup> The regime also abolished the death penalty in 1947

---

<sup>33</sup> See the analysis Getty, Rittersporn, and Zemskov, “Victims of the Soviet Penal System in the Pre-War Years.” Here the authors only include numbers from Corrective-Labour Camps (ITLs). If one also includes the figures for Corrective-Labour Colonies (ITKs), then the percentage of Article 58ers relative to the overall Gulag prisoner population is even lower.

<sup>34</sup> Peter H. Solomon, Jr., *Soviet Criminal Justice under Stalin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) 404; and Document no. 100, “Spravki 1 spetsotdela MVD SSSR o kolichestve arestovannykh i

and only partially reinstated it in 1950, which increased the numbers of prisoners sent to the camps with lengthy sentences.<sup>35</sup> Thus, although there were fewer arrestees at this time, the number of prisoners still reached its peak.

The increasingly harsh criminal justice under Stalin's reign is a key factor, though not the only factor, in the Gulag's growth. Indeed, the explosion in growth of the camps in the early 1930s relates directly to the Soviet regime's attempt to control the countryside through the brutal collectivization and dekulakization campaigns.<sup>36</sup> The regime deported the so-called kulaks, supposedly comprising the wealthy stratum of the peasantry, to special settlements primarily in the North, the Urals, Western Siberia and Kazakhstan; many peasants were also arrested and sent to the camps. The pacification of the countryside was both a political campaign, in the sense that it was a clear attempt to re-shape society and eliminate the potential for peasant unrest, and an economic campaign, in that the desire to ensure a steady supply of grain for the cities and for export also motivated the regime's actions.<sup>37</sup>

The huge number of arrestees and deportees associated with this "war against the peasantry" created an issue for the authorities, who quickly realized that these peasants constituted a vast (forced) labour force for the "opening up" (*osvoenie*) of under-developed regions, as well as for key infrastructure projects all over the Soviet Union.<sup>38</sup>

---

osuzhdennykh v period 1921-1953 gg.," in A. I. Kokurin and N. V. Petrov, eds., *GULAG (Glavnoe upravlenie lagerei) 1917-1960* (Moscow: "Materik," 2002) 431.

<sup>35</sup> Most death sentences prior to 1947 and after 1950 were carried out immediately after sentencing: in other words, *before* a prisoner ever would have made it into the camp system. For more on the death penalty, see Miriam Dobson, *Khrushchev's Cold Summer: Gulag Returnees, Crime, and the Fate of Reform after Stalin* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), 47.

<sup>36</sup> Michael Jakobson, *Origins of the GULAG*, 143.

<sup>37</sup> For more on the special settlements see Lynne Viola, *The Unknown Gulag: The Lost World of Stalin's Special Settlements* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

<sup>38</sup> See Lynne Viola, V. P. Danilov, N. A. Ivnitskii and Denis Kozlov, eds., *The War Against the Peasantry, 1927-30*, vol. 1 of *The Tragedy of the Soviet Countryside*, trans. Steven Shabad (New Haven: Yale

The initial motivation was thus political—the isolation of unwanted groups and individuals—but economic considerations soon became very important, as well.<sup>39</sup> The growing number of prisoners led authorities to devise ways to use the prisoners, economically. Thus, a joint April 1929 memorandum from the People’s Commissariat of Justice, the NKVD and the OGPU requested that all prisoners sentenced for terms of three years or more be placed in new OGPU concentration camps “of the Solovki type” and used for the colonization and economic exploitation of northern areas.<sup>40</sup> This makes it *appear* as though economic concerns were foundational for the Gulag, but it must be kept in mind that dekulakization legislation began in earnest starting from late-1928, and a key Politburo proposal to increase repression against kulaks occurred on 3 January 1929.<sup>41</sup> Thus, in terms of timing, politically-motivated measures began slightly before economically-motivated ones, although we certainly should not view these motivations as mutually exclusive.

Economic considerations reinforced political ones, and made the Gulag appear to be an attractive option for both local and central authorities intent on fulfilling economic plans. Economic factors usually dictated the location of individual camps, and local officials even at times requested more prisoners in order to fulfil obligations under

---

University Press, 2005); and Viola, *Peasant Rebels under Stalin: Collectivization and the Culture of Peasant Resistance* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), esp. 13-44. The term “osvoeniie” is used sometimes in Gulag documents with regards to both the camps and the special-settlements. See, for example, GARF f. 9479, op. 1, d. 35, l. 8, a document concerning the allocation of funds for the “colonizing opening-up” of the north.

<sup>39</sup> That the motivations were first political, then economic, for the Gulag’s expansion is also an argument of Nick Baron in “Conflict and Complicity: The expansion of the Karelian Gulag, 1923-1933,” *Cahiers du Monde russe*, 42.2-4 (2001): 615-648.

<sup>40</sup> See Document 1, “Dokladnaia zapiska narkomatov iustitsii, vnutrennykh del i OGPU v SNK RSFSR o neobkhodimosti sozdaniia sistemy kontslageria,” in Sergei A. Krasil’nikov, ed., “Rozhdenie GULAGa: diskussii v verkhnikh eshelonakh vlasti,” *Istoricheskii arkhiv*, 4 (1997): 142-156, doc 143-144.

<sup>41</sup> Viola, *Unknown Gulag*, 18-19.

Stalin's Five-Year Plans.<sup>42</sup> During World War II, in particular, we see that provincial officials in Western Siberia treated Gulag labour in much the same way as "free" labour, ordering prisoners and free-workers alike to be sent to work on key projects for the war effort. Indeed, the actions of local officials, both inside and outside of the camps, reinforce an *economic* rationale for the Gulag, as these officials focused their efforts on fulfilling economic plans.<sup>43</sup>

Despite the interaction between the Gulag and society, the Gulag's penal function, and the Gulag's emphasis on economic activity, however, we should be wary of completely abandoning the term "concentration camp." The Politburo itself, when it referred to the Gulag at all, usually used the term "concentration camp" (*kontslager'*) to do so, although this was before the strong association of the term with the Nazi death camps. The various rules and regulations governing the Gulag suggest a desire to create well-regimented camps, complete with barbed wire, barracks and watchtowers, which would isolate prisoners completely from surrounding populations.<sup>44</sup> Certainly for most of the political prisoners and other prisoners serving time in strict regimen camps, the term "concentration camp" is apt, as the strict regimen camps offered few opportunities for outside interaction and most memoirists recall numerous incidences of incredibly inhumane treatment. The regime attached little value to prisoners' lives.

In *The Order of Terror: The Concentration Camp*, Wolfgang Sofsky argues that the concentration camp represents the most extreme form of terror precisely because it

---

<sup>42</sup> Paul R. Gregory, "An Introduction to the Economics of the Gulag," in *The Economics of Forced Labor: The Soviet Gulag* edited by Gregory and Valery Lazarev, (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2003) 1-22, esp. 19. James R. Harris, "The Growth of the Gulag: Forced Labor in the Urals Region, 1929-31." *The Russian Review* 56, April (1997): 265-80.

<sup>43</sup> See Chapters IV and V of the present dissertation.

<sup>44</sup> Chapter III of the present dissertation.

creates a “closed universe,” completely cut off from society.<sup>45</sup> The Gulag failed to do this. Many camp divisions and stations lacked barbed wire or even discernable borders. Many camp divisions, especially the corrective-labour colonies (ITKs), were located within the city limits of the Soviet Union’s major urban centres. The special-settlements, as well as some agricultural camp stations (*punkty*), resembled state farms (*sovkhozy* – a term often used in the documentation for agricultural camps) more than concentration camps. Gulag propaganda, moreover, saw prisoners as playing an important role in the Soviet economy, while “re-forging” themselves into productive Soviet citizens the process.

If the Gulag was an attempt at a modern, bureaucratic institution, it failed because everyday practices often appear more traditional than modern. Prisoners frequently performed economic activities (often with the modern goal of industrialization) with the most primitive of tools. A prisoner’s experience of an individual camp likely depended more on the individual camp director (or even brigade leader) than it did on central rules and regulations; directors ran camps much like individual fiefdoms. Individual connections and informal networks played a large role in the flow of goods within the camps and across the camps’ borders, thus affecting prisoners’ lives greatly. Even the regulations themselves shift from a very modern emphasis on reforming the individual prisoner’s soul in the 1920s (i.e. rehabilitation), to a focus on economic output and isolation by the late-1930s.<sup>46</sup> Many of these regulations, moreover, were designed in such a way that they were almost impossible to follow to the letter, thus increasing the likelihood of the greater influence of informal practices and arbitrariness.

---

<sup>45</sup> Sofsky, *The Order of Terror*, 13-14, 16. Sofsky, of course, focuses on the Nazi concentration camps, but he also frequently brings in other examples, including the Gulag, as if these are equivalent.

<sup>46</sup> It should be noted, however, that the Gulag never completely abandoned its rhetoric of reeducation.

Indeed, it is the contention of the present dissertation that the best analytical framework for understanding the Gulag, as it actually operated, is the idea of “neo-traditionalism.” While Stalin and the NKVD on paper created a modern system—highly regulated, bureaucratic, efficient, etc.—for its actual operations the Gulag relied frequently on informal networks of exchange and distribution, as well as a system of privilege that depended on personal connections, for the prisoners and camp personnel alike. This does not mean that the Gulag was not, ultimately, part of the modernization process in the Soviet Union. As Terry Martin writes, “Neo-traditional societies [...] represent an alternative form of modernization, one that includes the most characteristic processes of market-driven modernization (industrialization, urbanization, secularization, universal education and literacy), but one which likewise produces a variety of practices that bear a striking resemblance to characteristic features of traditional pre-modern societies.” Some of these practices, moreover, persist not necessarily as remnants of an earlier time, but are necessary outcomes of the “extreme Soviet statism”, where the state itself seeks to interject itself in almost every aspect of life.<sup>47</sup> Nowhere was this extreme statism more evident than in the Gulag itself. Indeed, extreme regulations, regulations that were nearly impossible to follow, encouraged and entrenched informal practices.

None of this detracts in any way from the harshness and the cruelty of camp life. The very unpredictability of the informal system no doubt made certain forms of violence and

---

<sup>47</sup> For the quotations related to neo-traditionalism, see Terry Martin, “Modernization or Neo-Traditionalism? Ascribed Nationality and Soviet Primordialism,” in *Stalinism: New Directions*, ed. Sheila Fitzpatrick (New York: Routledge, 2000) 348-367, esp. 360. My understanding of neo-traditionalism is also influenced by the work of Sheila Fitzpatrick, Alena Ledeneva, and J. Arch Getty. See Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); Ledeneva, *Russia’s Economy of Favours: Blat, Networking, and Informal Exchange* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998); and the unpublished conference paper by Getty, “The Fall of the Clans: The Rise and Fall of Vainov of Iaroslavl’.” presented at the conference, “Stalinist Terror: Contexts, Origins and Dynamics,” Aug 1-5 2010, Leeds University, Leeds, UK. I thank Getty for sending me this paper and for allowing me to cite it in this dissertation.

negligence more prevalent, as abuses by certain prisoners and especially certain personnel went unpunished. Violence, in other words, did not always come from the top down, but was pervasive in camp life. The Soviet Union was a “violent society,” to borrow from a recent study.<sup>48</sup> If ration regulations had been consistently followed, for example, there would have been less starvation in the camps. But officials and prisoners alike traded camp foodstuffs on the black market so that, combined with an extremely inefficient delivery of supplies and a widespread lack of attention to basic needs, many prisoners did not have enough nourishment to survive. The official mortality rates for some years are shocking, especially during the famine year of 1933 and the early years of the Great Patriotic War.<sup>49</sup>

### ***Special Settlements, Corrective-Labour Colonies, Corrective-Labour Camps***

As an administrative bureaucracy, the Gulag was in charge of three carceral-type institutions: the special settlements, the corrective-labour colonies (ITKs), and the corrective-labour camps (ITLs). The Gulag’s parent-organizations, the OGPU and later the NKVD, were also in charge of other penal institutions and punitive measures, such as executions, prisons and non-custodial punishment.<sup>50</sup> Although there were many

---

<sup>48</sup> For a recent discussion arguing that violence came not only from the state, but was pervasive throughout society, see Christian Gerlach and Nicholas Werth, “State Violence—Violent Societies,” in Geyer and Fitzpatrick, eds., *Beyond Totalitarianism*, 133-179.

<sup>49</sup> Official figures place mortality at 15.3 percent for 1933, 24.9 percent for 1942, and 22.4 percent for 1943. According to these data, there were seven years that exceeded 5 percent mortality from 1930-1953, five of which were the war years, 1941-45. See Applebaum, *Gulag: A History*, 594-595.

<sup>50</sup> Note that Steven Barnes includes executions, prisons and non-custodial punishment in his list of types of punishment under Gulag auspices. There were prisons *within* the camps themselves, as “penalty isolators,” for Gulag inmates who committed crimes or violated rules while incarcerated. However, in none of the specifically *Gulag* documents (as opposed to NKVD documents) have I found reference to the administration of investigative prisons, special prisons for particularly dangerous offenders, or non-custodial sentences, all of which were punishments outside of the ITLs, ITKs, or special settlements. Most executions in the Soviet Union also occurred before the individual had ever set foot in a camp. For more, see Barnes, “Soviet Society Confined,” 17-31.

executions in the Gulag (particularly during the 1937-38 period), the majority of executions during the Stalin era took place shortly after sentencing, and those prisoners would not have spent time in the camps themselves. Most inmates in prisons were there only while under investigation, although some prisoners spent time in solitary confinement after sentencing. Non-custodial punishments, essentially amounting to labour requirements and/or a fine levied from one's paycheque, were also common. The NKVD oversaw other organizations, too, such as the regular police and fire services. It is thus somewhat of a misconception to equate the NKVD with the term "secret police". There was nothing secret about many of the organization's activities, and one had to look no further than the heart of any given city to find most local NKVD headquarters.<sup>51</sup>

### *Special settlements*

The settlements were not quite penal colonies, nor did they resemble free settlements. They were populated first by deported peasants, and later by various non-Russian ethnic groups deemed suspicious or traitorous. Inhabitants' movement was theoretically severely restricted (despite this, escapes were voluminous, especially in the early 1930s) and conditions were generally horrendous, especially at first. In contrast to the camps, whole families populated the settlements, and authorities focused education and training efforts on the children of the special settlers. Settlers also had opportunities to re-gain "rights."

In Western Siberia, these settlements were scattered throughout the region, but the majority were in the sparsely-settled area of what is today the northern part of Tomsk

---

<sup>51</sup> For more on the NKVD see Paul Hagenloh, *Stalin's Police: Public Order and Mass Repression in the USSR, 1926-1941* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009); and David R. Shearer, *Policing Stalin's Socialism: Repression and Social Order in the Soviet Union, 1924-1953* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

Province. In this sense there was more of a “colonization” component to the area’s settlements than to the camps, which were located closer to the region’s major population centres. A significant minority of settlements, however, were in the more densely populated Kuznetsk Basin, where settlers aided in the development of the crucially important Kuzbass coal industry. The main economic activities of the Western Siberian special-settlements were agriculture (particularly grain), forestry and coal mining. In terms of sheer numbers, the special settlers comprised the largest contingent of forced labourers in the region.

### ***Corrective-Labour Colonies (ITKs)***

The Corrective-Labour Colonies were penal camps, and the term “colony” is in this case euphemistic. The colonies have been almost entirely neglected in the historiography. They were supposed to hold prisoners with sentences of under three years and generally operated under a lighter regimen than the “camps.” The Corrective-Labour Colonies were also more likely than the camps to be located within the city-limits of urban centres. Despite running the Gulag until 1934, the OGPU did not at first control these penal colonies, which were under the jurisdiction of local NKVD administrations. Thus the Gulag came to operate these colonies only in 1934, when the administration of all places of confinement was brought under the auspices of the newly formed All-Union NKVD. Even after this, however, the NKVD at the provincial or territorial (*krai*) level was in charge of the day-to-day operations of most labour colonies, although central NKVD and Gulag operational orders had precedence. Camps like Sibltag administered both labour colony and labour camp subdivisions. Physically, the Corrective-Labour Colonies were not always set up like concentration camps, often lacking barbed wire or even borders.

The prisoners of Corrective-Labour Colonies were also more likely to have their labour contracted out to non-Gulag enterprises than prisoners of Corrective-Labour Camps.

In practice, however, the differences between the penal colonies and camps were not always clear-cut. Those sentenced for counter-revolutionary crimes (under Article 58) could find themselves in Corrective-Labour Colonies, despite serving terms greater than three years. In the post-war years, the largest group of prisoners in both camps *and* colonies were those with sentences of five to ten years.<sup>52</sup> Operational orders were often the same for both the colonies and the camps (indeed, in 1947 one set of operational regulations was issued that covered both the Corrective-Labour Colonies and the Corrective-Labour Camps).<sup>53</sup> Local authorities frequently referred to the labour colonies as “camps”. By the end of World War II, the regime incarcerated approximately the same number of prisoners in Corrective-Labour Colonies as Corrective-Labour Camps, and the number in the colonies would remain quite large thereafter. Scholarly works that focus almost exclusively on the camps—including the otherwise enormously useful reference guide to the Gulag’s camps, *Sistema ispravitel’no-trudovykh lagerei: Spravochnik* (The Corrective-Labour Camp System: A Guide Book)—thus tell only half the story.

Since Western Siberia contained a significant number of these penal colonies, the present dissertation fills a lacuna in the literature on the Gulag. Many of Siblag’s most important subdivisions, including the Tomsk Munitions Factory during the war and several subdivisions that contracted out prisoner labour to help develop the city of Novosibirsk, were, in fact, classified as labour colonies, and to tell the history of Siblag is to tell the history of the camps and colonies, together.

---

<sup>52</sup> J. Otto Pohl, *The Stalinist Penal System: A Statistical History of Soviet Repression and Terror, 1930-1953* (London: McFarland & Company, 1997), 28.

<sup>53</sup> The text of the 1947 Operational Order can be found at GARF f. 9401, op. 1a, d. 234, ll. 28-66 *s ob.*

### *Corrective-Labour Camps (ITLs)*

Although the camps technically held prisoners sentenced for terms of greater than three years, the Gulag administered the Corrective-Labour Camps similarly to the Corrective-Labour Colonies. There were a number of separate regimens within the penal camps, so that a prisoner could be placed in a regular or strict regimen subdivision or camp station. During World War II, strict regimen *katorga* camps—special camps set up for especially dangerous criminals and counter-revolutionaries—were formed. In 1948, the authorities also created the so-called “special camps,” which generally replaced the *katorga* camps and were also meant for prisoners deemed particularly dangerous. The *katorga* and special camps took on characteristics that we frequently associate with concentration camps, such as locked barracks and the wearing of numbers on camp clothing.<sup>54</sup> Western Siberia had only one special camp, Kamyshlag, founded in 1951, but Sibltag itself had a *katorga* subdivision.

Each Gulag “camp”—such as Sibltag in Western Siberia—was in fact a camp system, in charge of operating numerous camp subdivisions spread out over tens or even hundreds of kilometres, and also responsible for special settlements in the region. Each camp subdivision, in turn, usually operated several camp stations, which could also be tens of kilometres apart. Thus Sibltag, for example, on the eve of the war administered twenty-seven subdivisions scattered throughout the region. The central camp administration for each camp system was not located within the barbed wire, either. Indeed, plans for Sibltag’s new headquarters in Mariinsk in the 1930s showed a large, neoclassical building in the town’s centre.<sup>55</sup>

---

<sup>54</sup> Barnes, “Soviet Society Confined,” 22.

<sup>55</sup> See the “Memorial” Society photo archive in Moscow for a copy of a photograph of the Sibltag plans.

Most often, camp labour occurred outside of the camp zone, and guards would convoy prisoners to the worksite. While men and women prisoners were supposed to be isolated from one another, in many instances they worked at the same location, making contact not only possible, but frequent. While in the camp zones, prisoners in the Corrective-Labour Camps under regular regimen had the freedom to move about the zone, except after the signal for “lights-out”. Prisoners slept in barracks, which were frequently quite primitive. Sibltag prisoners engaged in a wide array of economic activities, but by the outbreak of World War II the camps’ prisoners worked mainly in agriculture or under contract to various non-Gulag enterprises.

The Gulag administratively oversaw several departments focused on specific tasks: economic production; guards and regimen; supply; medical; veterinary; cultural-educational; political (in charge of Communist Party activities in the camps); prisoner administration and record-keeping; accounting and finance; and oversight and inspection.<sup>56</sup> These departments were mirrored within individual camp systems, such as Sibltag, and many were then duplicated yet again within individual subdivisions. So, for example, the Cultural-Educational Section at Sibltag’s Orlovo-Rozovo subdivision reported directly to—and received its orders from—Sibltag’s Cultural-Educational Department, which in turn reported to the Gulag’s Cultural-Educational Department in Moscow. Other departments worked in a similar manner, except for the Third Department, which was in charge of investigating matters of breaches in regimen and

---

<sup>56</sup> This list comes from Edwin Bacon, *The Gulag at War: Stalin’s Forced Labor System in Light of the Archives* (New York: New York University Press, 1994), 65-80. Bacon notes that the variety of tasks for which the Gulag had responsibility made it not that dissimilar from the government of a nation state (p. 64). By this analogy, Sibltag/UITLK NSO, with its large geographic area, would have had the responsibilities of a sizable territorial government, although little autonomy.

internal camp security. The Third Department, instead of reporting to Gulag authorities in Moscow, bypassed the Gulag and reported directly to the central NKVD.<sup>57</sup>

Western Siberia featured all three of these forms of punishment—special settlements, Corrective-Labour Colonies and Corrective-Labour Camps. Although the focus of the present dissertation is on the area’s camps and colonies, the story of the Gulag in Western Siberia would not be complete without references to the special settlements, which are discussed at length, especially in Chapter I.

### ***The Importance of Western Siberia***

Why focus on Western Siberia, when other areas and camps—Kolyma, Vorkuta, the White Sea-Baltic Canal, Solovki—are better known?<sup>58</sup> What can a study of the Gulag in Western Siberia add to our general understanding of Stalin-era repression?

There are at least five important reasons for a study of the Gulag in Western Siberia. First, Western Siberia, as a key region for the special settlements and home to one of the Gulag’s largest and longest-lasting camp complexes, Siblag, makes for an ideal case-study of these two, related institutions. Although the present study focuses on Siblag and the region’s *camps*, it is clear that one cannot completely understand the camps—at least in this region—without attention to the special settlements. Second, despite the notoriety of Kolyma or Vorkuta, Western Siberia was clearly one of the key sites of Stalin-era repression. The regime targeted the area disproportionately in both the dekulakization campaigns and the “mass operations” of 1937-38—NKVD campaigns against certain

---

<sup>57</sup> Zhak Rossi [Jacques Rossi], *Spravochnik po GULAGu* (Moscow: Prosvet, 1991) 249-250.

<sup>58</sup> Western Siberia is well known as a place of peasant exile: see Sergei Krasil’nikov’s excellent monograph on the subject, *Serp i molokh: krest’ianskaia ssylka v Zapadnoi Sibiri v 1930-e gody* (Moscow: Rosspen, 2003), and also the pioneering multi-volume document collection, *Spetspereselentsy v Zapadnoi Sibiri*, Viktor Danilov and Sergei Krasil’nikov, eds. (Novosibirsk: Nauka, 1992-1996).

groups of people—and Western Siberia also received a large share of both the deported peasants and, later, the deported ethnic groups. The region was also crucial for the development of the repressive grain procurement measures during the period of collectivization.<sup>59</sup> Third, Western Siberia mirrored the Gulag’s activities economically. In the post-war period, for example, the top three Gulag activities in terms of numbers of prisoners were agriculture, contract-work, and forestry.<sup>60</sup> These were also the three main post-war Sibltag activities.

Fourth, many Sibltag subdivisions were located close to or within urban centres, meaning that a study of the camp provides the opportunity to gain a greater understanding of the interaction between the Gulag and Soviet society. Scholars have examined many of the more remote camps in great detail, but we know little about those camps that were located in and around already established urban areas.<sup>61</sup> A study of Sibltag can help fill that void.

Finally, and most simply, there has not yet been an English-language treatment of the area’s camps, and the Russian-language secondary literature is confined only to a handful of articles and sections of monographs.<sup>62</sup>

---

<sup>59</sup> James Hughes, *Stalinism in a Russian Province: Collectivization and Dekulakization in Siberia* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996).

<sup>60</sup> Donald Filtzer, *Soviet Workers and Late Stalinism: Labour and the Restoration of the Stalinist System after World War II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) 23.

<sup>61</sup> For just some examples of excellent work on the more remote camps, see Barenberg, “Prisoners Without Borders”; Steven A. Barnes, ““In a Manner Befitting Soviet Citizens: An Uprising in the Post-Stalin Gulag,” *Slavic Review* 64.4 (2005): 823-850; Nick Baron, “Production and Terror: The Operation for the Karelian Gulag, 1933-1939,” *Cahiers du Monde russe* 42.1 (2002); Leonid Borodkin and Simon Ertz, “Coercion vs. Motivation: Forced Labor in Norilsk,” in Gregory and Lazarev, eds., *The Economics of Forced Labor*; David J. Nordlander, “Origins of a Gulag Capital: Magadan and Stalinist Control in the Early 1930s,” *Slavic Review* 57.4 (1998): 791-812; Pallot, “Forced Labour for Forestry.”

<sup>62</sup> Krasil’nikov studies the area’s special settlements, run by Sibltag, in *Serp i molokh*; Lynne Viola also frequently discusses the Western Siberian special settlements in her *Unknown Gulag*. For a good discussion of the early years of collectivization and dekulakization in Western Siberia, see Hughes, *Stalinism in a Russian Province*. S. A. Papkov, *Stalinskii terror v Sibiri, 1928-1941* (Novosibirsk: Izd-vo Sibirskogo otd. Rossiskoi Akademii nauk, 1997), only briefly discusses Sibltag; several articles in S. A. Papkov and K.

## *Chapter Outline*

The dissertation is divided into six chapters. The first chapter provides background information related to the development of Siberia and penal labour during Russia's tumultuous history. The expansion of the camp system in the region provided—or at least appeared to provide—a solution to two major questions confronting the Soviet regime. These questions, the peasant question and the question of the extraction of Siberia's incredible natural wealth, had long plagued previous tsarist administrations. The chapter also examines, in-depth, the special settlements in the Narym area of Western Siberia as one “solution” to these two questions.

Chapter II begins the in-depth examination of Western Siberia's camps by providing an overview of the Gulag's development in the region during the 1930s. What began as a numerically very small penal apparatus in 1929 was, by the outbreak of the Great Patriotic War in June 1941, an enormous and variegated system of forced labour in the region. While the chapter's focus is on Sibltag, the region's main camp system, significant attention is also paid to two other camps: Gornoshorlag, a “success” in that it closed in early 1941 having completed its main assigned task, the construction of the Gornaia-Shorskaia Railway; and Tomasinlag, a camp in the particularly brutal system of Gulag forestry camps. A common thread between all of these camps is inefficiency and poor planning.

---

Teraïama, eds., *Ural i Sibir' v stalinskoi politike* (Novosibirsk: Sibirskii khronograf, 2002) discuss the area's camps; Marc Elie looks at the post-Stalin amnesties in the region in “Les politiques à l'égard des libérés du Goulag: amnistiés et réhabilités dans la région de Novossibirsk, 1953-1960,” *Cahiers du Monde russe* 47, no. 1 (2006): 327-348. Nicholas Werth's monograph on the Nazino tragedy has been translated as *Cannibal Island: Death in a Siberian Gulag*, trans. S. Rendall (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), but this only focuses on one particular incident in Sibltag's history.

The third chapter directly assesses the question of the modern versus the traditional in the Gulag through an examination of the detailed operational orders of the late-1930s that governed the camp system, as well as individual prisoner files from the region. Soviet authorities clearly *wanted* to create an efficient, modern penal system that would serve the purpose both of isolating individuals and groups deemed dangerous to the health of society, and of using these individuals and groups for the economic expansion of Soviet power. The day-to-day functioning of the camp system, however, at least partially undermined these goals, as individual relationships frequently countered central regulations.

The next two chapters relate to the Gulag at war. The Great Patriotic War was a turning point in Soviet history, and victory legitimized the regime both internally and externally. Western Siberia's important contributions to the war effort caused an economic boom in the region. Economically, mobilization for the war reveals the clear integration of the Gulag into Soviet society as a whole, as the Gulag in the region was involved in everything from sewing Red Army uniforms to manufacturing munitions and airplanes. Gulag prisoners helped to construct the region's main armaments factories, often as contract labourers working in close proximity to—or even alongside—free workers.

We can also learn much about Gulag personnel through an examination of the war effort, as this was a time when they were exhorted to be extremely vigilant, and also a time when a concrete goal—the defeat of Nazi Germany—temporarily trumped the more amorphous goal of building communism. The war thus provides a good case study for an examination of the Soviet “perpetrator”, an under-studied aspect of the general

historiography and little-understood even in the context of the camps. Who were the men and (few) women who ran the camps? After all, Stalin himself did not directly administer any single camp and generally showed little interest in the day-to-day camp operations.

Chapter VI examines the region's camps from the end of the war to Stalin's death in 1953. During this time, the area continued to expand as a site of repression. This was due in part to trends within the Soviet Union as a whole: harsher sentencing measures meant that prisoners were incarcerated for lengthier periods, slowing the camps' "revolving door"; and the deportations of the war years filled the special settlements, even as many of the original "settlers," the kulaks, had been emancipated. This chapter also briefly discusses resistance in the camps and the specific issues facing women in the camps; both of these issues reveal the continued difficulties Gulag authorities faced in completely controlling the camp population, despite drastic improvements in the prevention of escapes.

*CHAPTER I: Forced Labour and the Development of Siberia: From Peter I to the Special Settlements*

“Peter I established *katorga* coincident with his creation of the Russian service state; Stalin used the Gulag to amplify the power of his own version of that service state. However, bureaucratic malfeasance and corruption under both the Romanovs and the Communists undermined *katorga*’s functioning and purpose.”  
- Andrew Gentes, “Katorga: Penal Labor and Tsarist Siberia”<sup>1</sup>

In 1929, a group of Soviet agronomists, land-surveyors, botanists, forestry experts, soil scientists, statisticians and students set off to assess the viability for settlement of the area north of the Trans-Siberian railway, between the Siberian cities of Tomsk and Krasnoiarsk. The scientists’ report, submitted only in 1931 to the Commissariat of Agriculture, included numerous photographs of the region and an optimistic tone about the prospects of the area for settlement. Relying heavily on the reports of similar expeditions from the early twentieth century, the report noted that the Trans-Siberian railway had been a boon to colonization throughout Siberia, but that most settlers lived within 100 to 150 kilometres of the railway, making it difficult to extract the rich resources located further north.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Andrew W. Gentes, “Katorga: Penal Labor and Tsarist Siberia,” in *The Siberian Saga: A History of Russia’s Wild East*, ed. Eva-Maria Stolberg (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2005), 73-85; quotation 85.

<sup>2</sup> For the text of the 482 page report, see Rossiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv ekonomii (RGAE) fond 7486, opis’ 10, delo 5, beginning with list 1.

The 1929 expedition was one in a long series of Siberian expeditions dating back to Empress Anna's Great Northern Expedition in the 1730s, which had the purpose of mapping, cataloguing and categorizing Siberia's vast geography, resources and peoples. Occurring almost two hundred years later, the 1929 trek is thus also indicative of the difficulties successive regimes had in developing the region, which was still very much a "frontier" area even in 1929 at the time of Stalin's First Five-Year Plan.<sup>3</sup>

While members of the 1929 expedition recognized the need to colonize the area as quickly as possible, they implicitly advocated a gradual approach. In their report, the authors concluded that the region's natural resources could support many factories, which would in turn encourage mass settlement.<sup>4</sup> They noted that previous, tsarist-era initiatives to encourage settlement well north of the Trans-Siberian railway had failed precisely because of a lack of employment and infrastructure.<sup>5</sup>

The gradual approach advocated by the scientists and students who made the expedition to this central Siberian region placed them out of touch with the urgency of the times. Nineteen twenty-nine, as the "Year of the Great Turn,"<sup>6</sup> was a watershed year in Soviet history. Trotsky was deported from the Soviet Union; Stalin celebrated his fiftieth birthday, ushering in the "cult of personality"; and Stalin called for faster collectivization of agriculture in the countryside and the "liquidation of the kulaks as a

---

<sup>3</sup> For more on Western Siberia as a "frontier" for the Soviet Union, see David Shearer, "Mastering the Soviet Frontier: Western Siberia in the 1930s," in Stolberg, ed., *The Siberian Saga*, 159-172. This was actually a term used by some Soviet authorities. Kate Brown uses the term, too, in part to designate the new "spatial practices" of the Soviet authorities, a big part of which were played by the Gulag and the special settlements. See Brown, "Out of Solitary Confinement: The History of the Gulag," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 8.1 (2007): 67-104, esp. 89.

<sup>4</sup> RGAE f. 7486, op. 10, d. 5, l. 3.

<sup>5</sup> RGAE f. 7486, op. 10, d. 5, l. 4.

<sup>6</sup> This was the name of an article by Stalin relating to the need for increased collectivization rates. See Lynne Viola, *The Unknown Gulag: The Lost World of Stalin's Special Settlements* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007) 21-22.

class”.<sup>7</sup> This year also saw the creation of the Siberian Administration for Camps of Special Significance (SIBULON), which would later be called Siblag.<sup>8</sup>

The Gulag’s rapid growth during Stalin’s First Five-Year Plan was a result of the “war against the peasantry,” which sent many waves of peasants from the Soviet countryside to the Gulag camps and special settlements.<sup>9</sup> Thus, the *primary* causal factor for the Gulag’s early expansion was political: to control the countryside. Almost simultaneously, however, authorities realized that these vast numbers of peasants could be used as forced labourers for the fulfilment of the five-year plans and the economic exploitation of developing regions. This economic factor supported the political one (and at times may have superseded it) by providing further incentive to expand the Gulag system, especially during the “telescoped” development of the 1930s.<sup>10</sup>

In this way, the Gulag *appeared to be* an attractive solution to two long-standing questions in *Russian*—as opposed to specifically *Soviet*—history: the question concerning

---

<sup>7</sup> For a good timeline of Soviet history, see Ronald Girgor Suny, *The Soviet Experiment: Russia, the USSR, and the Successor States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998) 507-519, esp. 511.

<sup>8</sup> “Siblag” is short for “Siberian Camp”. For key data on Siblag, see *Sistema ispravitel’no-trudovykh lagerei v SSSR, 1923-1960: Spravochnik*, compiled by M. B. Smirnov, edited by N. G. Okhotin and A. B. Roginskii, (Moscow: Zven’ia, 1998) 391-393 (henceforth cited as *Sistema*). Except when necessary for clarity’s sake, the present dissertation will refer to this camp as “Siblag” until 1942, when the camp administration divided into two, separate, administrations. For more, see Chapter IV.

<sup>9</sup> This is the basic argument set forth in John L. Scherer and Michael Jakobson, “The Collectivisation of Agriculture and the Soviet Prison Camp System,” *Europe-Asia Studies* 45.3 (1993) 533-546. The author of the present dissertation finds this argument compelling, as other information in the present chapter should demonstrate. See also, Lynne Viola, V. P. Danilov, N. A. Ivnitskii and Denis Kozlov, eds., *The War Against the Peasantry, 1927-30*, vol. 1 of *The Tragedy of the Soviet Countryside*, trans. Steven Shabad (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005); Danilov et al., eds, *Tragediia sovetskoi derevni: kollektivizatsiia i raskulachivanie: dokumenty i materialy v piat’ tomakh, 1927-1939*, 5 vols. (Moscow, Rosspen, 1999); Viola, *Peasant Rebels under Stalin: Collectivization and the Culture of Peasant Resistance* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); and Viola, *The Unknown Gulag: The Lost World of Stalin’s Special Settlements* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

<sup>10</sup> For more on the telescoped development of Soviet institutions, see Peter Holquist, *Making War, Forging Revolution: Russia’s Continuum of Crisis, 1914-1921* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002). Holquist argues that many of the state-building developments we associate with the Stalin-era took place first during the Civil War. He describes the attempt to build these institutions simultaneously, and from the top down, as a telescoping of developments that had happened gradually in Western Europe. This process necessarily involved some form of state violence. One could make a similar argument for the period of Stalin’s First Five-Year Plan, a period of incredibly rapid change.

the exploitation of resources in under-developed regions and the so-called “peasant question,” the prevention of real and potential unrest in the countryside while securing a steady supply of grain.

### ***Russia and Siberia***

For centuries, Siberia’s resources had supplied governments in Moscow and St. Petersburg with the raw materials for indigenous industries or for the purchase of modern munitions and goods on the international market.<sup>11</sup> In the seventeenth century, Muscovy’s military might grew considerably due in large part to huge profits made from the lucrative trade of sable furs, collected by enterprising Russian explorers and trappers who brutally oppressed Siberia’s native peoples.<sup>12</sup> Realizing that Russia needed to develop its own arms industry in order to be competitive with the expanding European empires, Peter the Great encouraged the development of the iron industry on the eastern side of the Ural Mountains. By the end of the eighteenth century, Russia was the world’s largest producer of pig iron and indisputably a world power. Peter the Great’s forceful transfer of Russia into the realms of Western European scientific inquiry also provided the catalyst for the many scientific expeditions to Siberia that would follow his reign.<sup>13</sup>

The nineteenth century saw further economic development as rich poly-metallic ores were discovered in the Altai Mountains and geopolitics fuelled increased colonization of

---

<sup>11</sup> Much of the information presented here on Siberia’s pre-revolutionary development comes from W. Bruce Lincoln, *The Conquest of a Continent: Siberia and the Russians* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007; originally published 1994 by Random House).

<sup>12</sup> The best work in English on Siberia’s native peoples is Yuri Slezkine, *Arctic Mirrors: Russia and the Small Peoples of the North* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994).

<sup>13</sup> Willard Sunderland notes that Peter the Great was the first tsar to “view acquiring territorial knowledge as an intrinsically valuable pursuit”. This was part of a general shift towards Westernization. See Willard Sunderland, “Imperial Space: Territorial Thought and Practice in the Eighteenth Century,” in Jane Burbank, Mark von Hagen, and Anatoly Remnev, eds., *Russian Empire: Space, People, Power, 1700-1930* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2007) 33-66, esp. 33-34.

the region, especially the construction of the Trans-Siberian Railway, late in the century. The railway finally made mass colonization possible, and Siberia saw a huge influx of settlers.<sup>14</sup> From around 1900 until the outbreak of World War I, over 100,000 settlers came to Siberia *each year*, except during the Russo-Japanese War.<sup>15</sup> On the other hand, the Trans-Siberian snaked its way along the southern-most parts of the Siberian steppe and taiga, which meant that much of the northern Eurasian continent was difficult to access and remained sparsely settled.

Permanent settlement in Siberia had always posed difficulties. Early settlements were little more than wooden fortresses and trading posts along Siberia's extensive river systems. One could travel almost all the way from the Ural mountains to Lake Baikal (around 3,400 kilometres, approximately the same distance as Toronto to Vancouver) with minimal need to portage, due to navigable rivers and their tributaries such as the Irtysh, Ob', Enisei and Lena. Harsh climate and huge distances—before the railway it could take as long as a year or more to travel from the Siberian outpost of Tobolsk to St. Petersburg and back—meant that settlement was limited to government officials, fortune seekers, peasants fleeing bondage in European Russia, and, in small but increasing numbers, exiles and convicts.

---

<sup>14</sup> For more on the Trans-Siberian and colonization see Steven G. Marks, *Road to Power: The Trans-Siberian Railroad and the Colonization of Asian Russia 1850-1917* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991). Interestingly, Marks views the development of the Trans-Siberian Railway as almost “belong[ing] more to the Soviet period than to the tsarist” because of the relationship of the centralizing state to the economy and the overall inefficiencies of the project. See, particularly, 222-226 (quotation 225).

<sup>15</sup> Lincoln, *Conquest of a Continent*, 259. Lincoln notes that in some years the number of Siberian immigrants was around half-a-million.

### *Forced Labour in Siberia: An overview of the pre-Soviet years*

Due to the difficulties of administering places of confinement in Siberia and the Far East, and the slow pace of colonization, tsars in the eighteenth century issued directives calling for the use of convicts as colonizers, although the various proclamations on this issue were contradictory, just as they would be in the early years of the Stalin era in the Soviet Union. In both cases, the regimes, at least initially, seemed undecided as to whether or not convicts should be colonizers or confined to some sort of penal institution.<sup>16</sup>

Prisoner labour had played at least a small role in Siberia's economic activity from the mid-seventeenth century. Peter the Great's *katorga* system of penal-labour camps led to an expansion of the use of penal labour, especially in the latter half of the eighteenth century, as the state sent large numbers of convicts to help construct and work in the Nerchinsk Mining District near Lake Baikal. The infamous *katorga* penal system bore at least some resemblance to later Soviet practices, even if on a smaller scale.<sup>17</sup> The tsarist penal labour system in Siberia received a boost under the governorship of Mikhail Speranskii, the liberal reformer, whose 1822 Exile and Convict Regulations

---

<sup>16</sup> For more on the contradictory proclamations of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, see Andrew Gentes, *Exile to Siberia: 1590-1822* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), especially 95-114. On 103 Gentes notes that "For every ukase issued between 1725 and 1762 that designated the use of exiles as colonists there seems to have been one or more that assigned them to fortresses, factories and mines".

<sup>17</sup> See Gentes, "Katorga," 73 and 85. The Stalinist regime even resurrected the term, *katorga*, for its strict-regimen camps, in April 1943, despite the fact that *katorga* had been one of the most hated practices of the Tsarist regimes. For more, see Steven A. Barnes, "All for the Front! All for Victory! The Mobilization of Forced Labor in the Soviet Union during World War II," *International Labor and Working-Class History* 58 (Fall 2000) 251-252. The similarities noted by Gentes are significant. He writes that both tsarist *katorga* and the Soviet Gulag "depended upon penal labor to achieve statist goals. Peter I established *katorga* coincident with his creation of the Russian service state; Stalin used the GULag to amplify the power of his own version of that service state. However, bureaucratic malfeasance and corruption under both the Romanovs and the Communists undermined *katorga*'s functioning and purpose. Officials assigned to Siberia knew that the Tsar, and later, the Boss, was far away, and that distance allowed them certain liberties impossible to take nearer the capitals. These liberties were taken often at the expense of the convicts sentenced to Siberia." Gentes, "Katorga," 85. Gentes notes that the main differences were those of scale, and that cruelty was more by design than by negligence in the Gulag. In the view of the present writer, much of the Gulag's cruelty was also caused by negligence, thus pointing towards another similarity between the tsarist and Soviet systems.

“astronomically expanded the number of convicts and vagrants banished to Siberia”.<sup>18</sup> Speranskii had been named governor of Siberia in 1819, and he explicitly sought to transform Russian convicts into colonists, in order to boost Russia’s economic and imperial power. Between 1823 and 1872, authorities forcibly exiled around half a million persons to Siberia.<sup>19</sup>

If the forced labour of *prisoners* played a small but important role in tsarist-era Siberia, forced labour, more broadly defined, had been a huge component of resource extraction for a large portion of the Imperial period. It is a misconception to think of Siberia as a land free from serfdom. While peasants in the Siberian countryside were free from bondage, and this contributed to a flourishing agricultural sector, particularly in Western Siberia,<sup>20</sup> the state used huge numbers of factory-serfs in the region, most prominently in mining. In 1861, on the eve of the emancipation of the serfs, for example, some 310,752 factory-serfs were working in mines and smelting ores in the Altai Mountains. This compares with only 43,522 free workers in the industry at the time.<sup>21</sup> These factory serfs frequently faced violence and lived and worked in harsh conditions.<sup>22</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup> Abby M. Schrader, “Unruly Felons and Civilizing Wives: Cultivating Marriage in the Siberian Exile System, 1822-1860,” *Slavic Review* 66.2 (2007): 230-256, quotation 236.

<sup>19</sup> Schrader, “Unruly Felons,” 237.

<sup>20</sup> Siberian dairy products, in particular, were considered luxury goods in parts of Western Europe in the years before World War I. See Eva-Maria Stolberg, “The Genre of Frontiers and Borderlands: Siberia as a Case Study,” in Stolberg, ed., *The Siberian Saga*, 19.

<sup>21</sup> The factory serfs, mostly state peasants forcibly converted to factory workers, mined and smelted polymetallic ores containing important metals such as silver, copper, lead and gold. See Richard E. Lonsdale, “Siberian Industry before 1917: The Example of Tomsk Guberniya,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol. 53, No. 4, (Dec., 1963) 479-493, esp. 482.

<sup>22</sup> Note that there is some debate over the living conditions of factory serfs. For the Urals, where factory serfs worked in huge numbers in the pre-emancipation period, the general consensus is that living/working conditions were terrible. See, for example, William Blackwell, *The Beginnings of Russian Industrialization, 1800-1860*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968) 155-163. However, Thomas Esper, who looked more closely at archival materials and first-hand accounts of the metallurgical industries in the Urals, concluded that factory serfs there were relatively well-off, both in comparison to field serfs in European Russia, and even in comparison to factory workers in similar industries in Western Europe at the time. See Thomas Esper, “The Condition of the Serf Workers in Russia's Metallurgical Industry, 1800-1861,” *The*

The Soviets were thus hardly the first to make use of a vast pool of forced labourers, largely peasants, for the extraction of Siberia's resources. Nor were they the first to use exiles and convicts as colonizers. The Soviet state's decision to use forced labour in the Siberian periphery, in order provide raw materials to feed the needs of the centre, was a long-standing solution for the economic exploitation of the region, and, indeed, the country as a whole.

### *The Pacification of the Countryside*

The extraction of resources for the modernization of the country was a centuries-old issue in Russia's history. The "peasant question," however, in many ways loomed even larger in the country's development. In the seventeenth century, the final codification of serfdom came about in part because of the modernizing needs of the Muscovite state.<sup>23</sup> Actual and potential peasant rebellions also caused persistent fear in the empire's capital. Beginning under Catherine the Great, the growing sympathy amongst some educated nobles for the plight of the peasantry, not to mention the influence of enlightenment ideas of rights and equality, meant that serfdom was increasingly seen as untenable, at least in the long term. The abolition of serfdom in 1861—an attempt at a final resolution of the question—in some ways exacerbated the problem, as the onerous settlement terms did nothing to quench the peasantry's desire for land and more independence.<sup>24</sup> Prime

---

*Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 50, No. 4. (Dec 1978) 660-679. Some of Esper's arguments, for example that factory serfs in the Urals would not have felt the cruelty of forced migration, as they had been in the region for at least a generation, do not apply to the metallurgical industry in the Altai.

<sup>23</sup> See, for example, Richard Hellie, "The economy, trade and serfdom," in *The Cambridge History of Russia: Volume 1: From Early Rus' to 1689*, ed. Maureen Perrie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) 539-558.

<sup>24</sup> There is some debate about the actual situation in the Russian countryside in the years between emancipation and World War I. Wheatcroft has concluded that "The growth in peasant unrest over this period [1880s-1914] was probably more a consequence of the decline in governmental authority, regional

Minister Piotr Stolypin's early-twentieth century agrarian reforms, designed to create prosperous individual farmsteads to supersede the traditional peasant commune, were yet another attempt at ensuring the loyalty of the countryside to the regime, while at the same time providing for the needs of the empire in terms of agricultural production.<sup>25</sup>

World War I, however, seemed to prove that successive tsarist regimes had failed to pacify the countryside. The length and harsh conditions of the war meant that many of the army's troops, the vast majority of whom were conscripted peasants, wanted nothing more than to return to the countryside. In the countryside itself, the clamouring for land grew louder, especially when the collapse of the tsarist regime in early 1917 provided a clear opportunity for reform.

Seeking to seize this opportunity, the Bolsheviks initially promised the land to the peasants in an effort to gain support for the revolution and, later, their side in the Civil War. Despite this promise, the Bolsheviks met fierce resistance in some parts of the countryside, particularly in Ukraine and Western Siberia. In Siberia the resistance was strong in part because of the long-standing tradition there of private agricultural enterprise, which made collectivism less appealing.<sup>26</sup> On the whole, the peasantry wanted

---

problems, and the specific problems of wage laborers, than any increase in overall peasant destitution". See Stephen G. Wheatcroft, "Crises and the Condition of the Peasantry in Late Imperial Russia," in Esther Kingston-Mann and Timothy Mixter, eds., *Peasant Economy, Culture, and Politics of European Russia, 1800-1921* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991) 128-174, esp. 166.

<sup>25</sup> Only a small number of peasants actually left the commune. See David Moon, *The Russian Peasantry, 1600-1930: The World the Peasants Made* (London and New York: Longman, 1999) 351.

<sup>26</sup> For more, see N. G. O. Pereira, *White Siberia: The Politics of Civil War* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995) 156-171, 175. The Siberian peasantry, while hardly fond of the Whites, tended to be suspicious of (and at times hostile towards) the Bolsheviks as well. For a discussion of peasant resistance to Bolshevik rule in Siberia see also, V. M. Suverov and E. V. Suverov, "Povstancheskoie dvizhenie v Sibiri. 1920-1923 gg.," in S. V. Makarchuk, ed., *Sibir': XX vek* (Kemerovo: Kuzbassvuzizdat, 1997) 53-60. For more on general resistance to the Bolsheviks in Siberia during the Civil War, see Paul Dotsenko, *The Struggle for a Democracy in Siberia, 1917-1920: Eyewitness Account of a Contemporary* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1983). See also John Channon, "Siberia in Revolution and Civil War, 1917-1921," chapter 9 of Alan Wood, ed., *The History of Siberia: From Russian Conquest to Revolution* (London: Routledge, 1991): 158-180, esp. 161.

to be left alone, and the forced grain requisitions by both sides during the Civil War threatened this aspiration. It was not until Lenin's implementation of the New Economic Policy, which provided for limited private enterprise in the countryside, that opposition to Bolshevik rule finally appeared to wane. Interestingly, as punishment for Siberia's fierce resistance to the Bolsheviks during the Civil War, the Bolsheviks delayed implementing the New Economic Policy in the region.<sup>27</sup>

The New Economic Policy led to growing prosperity in the countryside, including Siberia.<sup>28</sup> Successful peasants were hardly successful socialists, however, at least as far as many Bolsheviks were concerned. Central attempts to control grain prices and prices for consumer goods meant that the peasantry, at times, had little incentive to produce for the needs of the state, a regular cause of concern for central planners. Private enterprise, however limited, also seemed anathema to Bolshevik ideology. From a strict Marxist perspective, of course, peasants were capitalists, or at best representatives of a backward, feudal relationship. Lenin famously adapted Marxism to Russia's peasant question (he had no choice, given that the vast majority of Russia's population was rural).<sup>29</sup> He argued that social stratification existed in the countryside, which was divided into poor, middle, and wealthy (*kulak*) peasants. In this scenario, the kulaks exploited the poor peasants, who were thus obvious allies to the exploited workers and could be considered akin to the proletariat, while the middle peasant wavered between bourgeois aspirations and

---

<sup>27</sup> Pereira, *White Siberia*, 161.

<sup>28</sup> The extent of that "prosperity" is, of course, debatable. Moshe Lewin notes that "Soviet rural 'capitalism' barely existed," although the birth-rate in the countryside during the period of the New Economic Policy (NEP) increased, helping the country recover from the disastrous Civil War. See Moshe Lewin, *The Making of the Soviet System: Essays in the Social History of Interwar Russia* (New York: The New Press, 1994 {original publication: Pantheon, 1985}) 213-215. It is clear, however, that NEP brought economic recovery to parts of the countryside. By 1926, for example, Siberia's grain-yield exceeded pre-war figures. See Lincoln, *The Conquest of a Continent*, 320.

<sup>29</sup> See Vladimir Lenin, *The Development of Capitalism in Russia* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1956), especially Chapter 2.

revolutionary goals. Although revolution, civil war, and famine had done much to level any social stratification that had actually existed amongst the peasantry,<sup>30</sup> many Bolsheviks held fast to the view of a stratified countryside, and, moreover, felt that the New Economic Policy had promoted kulak behaviour. The grain crisis of 1927 contributed to this perception, as peasants appeared to be withholding grain at the expense of the workers. Something had to be done, and Stalin had a solution: collectivization and dekulakization.

Collectivization and dekulakization took place in the context of Stalin's First Five-Year Plan. The plan, which invested primarily in heavy industry, called for nothing less than the transformation of the Soviet Union from a rural, primarily agrarian society into an advanced, industrial state. Collectivization, attempted previously on a smaller scale during the Civil War, provided the solution, at least in the eyes of some Bolsheviks,<sup>31</sup> as it would facilitate both the requisitioning of grain and the important transition from private enterprise towards what was seen as a more communist organization of the countryside. Whatever the ideological justification, the resultant collective farms acted essentially as "grain collection apparatuses."<sup>32</sup> At first, Stalin called for voluntary collectivization, but

---

<sup>30</sup> There is considerable debate over the extent of economic stratification amongst the peasantry in the pre-revolutionary countryside. Due to the way in which the peasant commune traditionally allotted land parcels, peasant families generally would cycle through periods of relative prosperity and relative poverty. In other words, the commune seems to have had a long-term levelling effect, rather than creating a "class structure" in the Leninist sense. For more, see Robert E. Johnson, "Family Life-Cycles and Economic Stratification: A Case-Study in Rural Russia," *Journal of Social History* 30.3 (Spring, 1997): 705-731; and Teodor Shanin, *The Awkward Class: Political Sociology of Peasantry in a Developing Society: Russia 1910-1925* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972).

<sup>31</sup> The Bolsheviks were divided on this issue, at least at first. Nikolai Bukharin, in particular, felt that collectivization would cause unrest in the countryside, ruining the *smychka* (union) between the workers and peasants, ultimately undermining Soviet power. He sought a continuation of the New Economic Policy. For more on the debates within the Bolshevik leadership, see Stephen F. Cohen, *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution: A Political Biography, 1888-1938* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), esp. 270-286.

<sup>32</sup> Ronald Grigor Suny, "Stalin and His Stalinism," in *Stalinism: The Essential Readings*, edited David Hoffman (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003) 27.

when that failed to produce the desired results, peasants were, essentially, forced to volunteer. Collectivization/dekulakization, then, was the Stalinist solution to the age-old “peasant question” in Russian history.

The forced collectivization and the accompanying dekulakization campaigns of 1928-32 were, moreover, in effect a “war against the peasantry”.<sup>33</sup> This “war” caused a greater upheaval of the peasant way of life than either the abolition of serfdom in 1861 or the revolution of 1917.<sup>34</sup> It was a “war” that took many prisoners. And many of those prisoners ended up either in the Gulag camps themselves, or in the Gulag’s extensive network of so-called special settlements.

If peasants comprised most of the first wave of prisoners into the Gulag, they also were the main contingents of many subsequent waves, emphasising the key role of the peasantry in the Gulag. Contrary to popular understanding, intellectuals were not the primary targets of Stalinist repression. In fact, it was the peasantry that was crucial for the Gulag’s growth throughout the 1930s.<sup>35</sup> Even during the “Great Terror” of 1937-38, which of course affected intellectuals, officials and party members, the main target of the so-called mass operations (as opposed to individual investigations of anti-Soviet behaviour) was once again the peasantry.<sup>36</sup> “Mass operations,” whereby the NKVD established high arrest and execution quotas for targeted groups, hit former kulaks particularly hard.<sup>37</sup> Other laws during the 1930s, in particular laws concerning “crimes

---

<sup>33</sup> See Viola et al., eds., *The War Against the Peasantry*; and Viola, *Peasant Rebels under Stalin*, 13-44.

<sup>34</sup> This is David Moon’s argument. See Moon, *The Russian Peasantry, 1600-1930*.

<sup>35</sup> See also Anne Applebaum, *Gulag: A History* (New York: Doubleday, 2003), 47, where she notes that peasants formed the vast majority of Gulag prisoners throughout the 1930s.

<sup>36</sup> The show trials commonly associated with the Great Terror were a separate phenomenon from the mass operations. For a discussion, see Paul Hagenloh, *Stalin’s Police: Public Order and Mass Repression in the USSR, 1926-1941* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009) 410-411 n. 105.

<sup>37</sup> Document 170: “NKVD operational order [no. 00447] ‘Concerning the punishment of former kulaks, criminals and other anti-Soviet elements,’ 30 July 1937” in J. Arch Getty and Oleg V. Naumov, eds., *The*

against state property,” and the infamous passport laws, in effect targeted peasants,<sup>38</sup> and contributed to making the Gulag an institution populated predominantly by peasants. Stalin’s obsession with the countryside and agricultural production also underscores the importance of the peasant-question to Stalin-era development.<sup>39</sup>

While economic factors were initially secondary to the repressive measures aimed primarily at the countryside, they were not unimportant.<sup>40</sup> Some scholars have argued that local authorities encouraged the Gulag’s expansion for economic reasons. James Harris notes that local officials in the Urals spurred the Gulag’s growth by requesting more forced labourers to fulfil the demands of the First Five-Year Plan.<sup>41</sup> Local authorities certainly treated the Gulag and its prisoner-labourers as an economic resource.<sup>42</sup> Central officials used the language of colonization, too, when discussing the special settlements. In March 1931 the Andreev Commission<sup>43</sup> discussed the resettlement of kulak households in the Western Siberian Territory. From May to July of that year, 40,000 households were

---

*Road to Terror: Stalin and the Self-Destruction of the Bolsheviks, 1932-1939* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999) 473-480. The presence of these mass operations has actually led one historian to argue recently that the “Great Terror” has largely been misinterpreted. According to Kate Brown, the 1937-38 period should be considered as part of the larger efforts, dating back at least to collectivization and dekulakization, to “check and purify” zones of potentially harmful elements, and in the process ensuring that large numbers of people had a criminal record. The main difference of 1937-38, according to Brown, was the targeting of elites and urbanites, but most of those who ended up in the Gulag were there for more “mundane” reasons: failed passport checks, arrests in border regions, harsh sentences for minor crimes, and so on. See Brown, “Out of Solitary Confinement,” esp. 98-99.

<sup>38</sup> See Applebaum, *Gulag*, 47; and, for an excellent discussion of the internal passports, Hagenloh, *Stalin’s Police*, 119-132.

<sup>39</sup> For more on Stalin’s personal interest in agriculture, see R. W. Davies, “Stalin as Economic Policy-Maker: Soviet Agriculture, 1931-36,” in Sarah Davies and James Harris, eds., *Stalin: A New History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 121-139.

<sup>40</sup> For another example of an argument showing a move from a repressive to an economic rationale, see Edwin Bacon, *The Gulag at War: Stalin’s Forced Labor System in Light of the Archives* (New York: New York University Press, 1994). Bacon argues that the Gulag gradually took on an economic rationale as authorities attempted to make the camps self-sufficient and to use the increasing number of prisoners at their disposal.

<sup>41</sup> See James R. Harris, “The Growth of the Gulag: Forced Labor in the Urals Region, 1929-31.” *The Russian Review* 56, (April, 1997): 265-80.

<sup>42</sup> See Chapters IV and V of the present dissertation.

<sup>43</sup> The Andreev Commission was created by the Politburo in March 1931 to administer kulak operations. For more, see Viola, *Unknown Gulag*, 96-97, 114-115, 128-129.

to be sent to northern areas of the territory with the explicit purpose of “opening up black earth land tracts [*chernozemnykh massivov*]” and working in the forestry industry.<sup>44</sup>

Widespread use of forced labour thus helped address both the need to exploit the Soviet Union’s natural resources and the need to find a solution to the “peasant question,” both long-standing issues for the rulers in Moscow and St. Petersburg. This does not mean, however, that the Gulag—or even forced labour more generally—was a foregone conclusion.

### ***The Evolution of Prisoner Labour in the Soviet Union***

The Bolsheviks established prison camps not long after the revolution.<sup>45</sup> They founded these early camps in the context of the Civil War and repressive policies against those who opposed the revolution. While the Bolsheviks were not the first to use the “concentration camp” in a wartime context,<sup>46</sup> they certainly learned from this Civil War experience. The Bolsheviks’ militant rhetoric surrounding class-enemies, their constant fear of counter-revolution, their hostility towards the viewpoints of other parties and those of non-working-class origin, and even the Bolshevik Party’s foundation as a clandestine organization are, taken together, evidence that some sort of large penal

---

<sup>44</sup> Rossiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv sotsial’no-politicheskoi istorii (RGASPI) f. 17, op. 162, d. 9, ll. 176-178.

<sup>45</sup> This has prompted some scholars and others to conclude that the concentration camp was fundamental to Soviet rule. See, for example, Applebaum, *Gulag*, 5-10. Applebaum notes that the “Red Terror was crucial to Lenin’s struggle for power. Concentration camps, the so-called ‘special camps,’ were crucial to the Red Terror” (8). Thus, according to Applebaum, concentration camps were a key component of Soviet power at least from the earliest days of the civil war.

<sup>46</sup> The Bolsheviks were hardly the first to set up concentration camps in the context of war. The English term “concentration camp” was first used to describe camps for civilians (as opposed to POWs) set up by the British during the South African War (1899-1902). For examples of British documents describing these camps, see the Stanford University Libraries webpage at: <<http://www-sul.stanford.edu/africa/boers.html>> (last accessed: 15 February 2009). British parliamentarians sympathetic to the Boers borrowed this term from the widely condemned *reconcentrado* camps set up in Cuba in 1897 for those who opposed Spanish rule.

system was *likely* to evolve.<sup>47</sup> So on the one hand, one could clearly argue that the Civil War camps led to the Gulag and that Soviet power, to a certain extent, relied on the concentration camp.<sup>48</sup>

A closer examination, however, reveals a constantly evolving system, one that developed in more of an *ad hoc* manner rather than as the result of any master plan.<sup>49</sup> Revolutionary movements in tsarist Russia had naturally been highly critical of tsarist penal labour practices, and there is little doubt that some tsarist-era revolutionaries would have seen the vast Gulag system as a betrayal of the revolution.<sup>50</sup>

Whatever the continuities from the early Soviet camps, the Stalin-era Gulag represents an important break. Three factors ultimately reveal that a large penal apparatus was not a necessary outcome of early Bolshevik rule. The first, and perhaps most important, factor was the very *mild* Bolshevik approach to criminal justice during the early Soviet period. Second, as the 1929 expedition to Siberia indicates, there were alternatives to forced labour that were seriously attempted—and never abandoned—by the authorities. Under a leadership less inclined towards rapid industrialization and

---

<sup>47</sup> Richard Pipes's examination of Lenin's unpublished writings notes, "As far as Lenin's personality is concerned, we note, first and foremost, his utter disregard for human life, except where his own family and closest associates were concerned". See Pipes, ed., *The Unknown Lenin: From the Secret Archives* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996) 9. Pipes' work represents a strand within the historiography that attempts to make a direct link from Lenin to Stalin, particularly where repressive policies are concerned.

<sup>48</sup> Many scholars have argued that the experiences of the Civil War had a profound effect on later Soviet practices. See, for example, Shiela Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994) 68-92; and Donald J. Raleigh, *Experiencing Russia's Civil War: Politics, Society, and Revolutionary Culture in Saratov, 1917-1922* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

<sup>49</sup> While very few historians would argue that anything is "inevitable," some scholars of the Soviet Union fall into this trap and argue essentially that repression in the Soviet Union was, indeed, inevitable. Martin Malia, for example, traces a direct link from Marxist-Leninist ideology to Stalinist repression (and in doing so rejects a continuity from Imperial to Soviet practices). See Malia, *The Soviet Tragedy: A History of Socialism in Russia, 1917-1991* (New York: The Free Press, 1994) esp. 1-3, 16-17, 52. Malia's link between ideology and repression is evident in such statements as, "it was the all-encompassing pretensions of the Soviet utopia that furnished what can only be called the 'genetic code' of the tragedy" (16).

<sup>50</sup> For more on pre-revolutionary condemnation of the tsarist prison system by socialists, see Michael Jakobson, *Origins of the GULAG: The Soviet Prison-Camp System, 1917-1934* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1993), 15-16.

collectivization, it is certainly conceivable that such a large penal/exile system never would have developed. And, third, even as the system began to expand rapidly, there were high-level attempts to limit its growth and to find alternative forms of punishment. We will now deal with each of these in turn.

Initially, the Bolsheviks approached crime and punishment much more leniently than their tsarist predecessors. Many Bolsheviks understood crime through a Marxist lens as an aspect of the inequalities and class exploitation inherent in capitalist economic systems. Thus, they expected crime—and therefore prisons, too—to wither away under the new, socialist state.<sup>51</sup> Despite the very clear indications that crime persisted under Bolshevik rule, Soviet incarceration rates were relatively low through the 1920s, and early camps, including those at Solovetskii Islands, were not involved in economic activity to the same degree as the Stalin-era Gulag.<sup>52</sup>

Criminal justice developed in an *ad hoc* manner, at times almost exclusively the domain of local authorities and at times relying even on tsarist-era penal codes.<sup>53</sup> The Soviet Union's first criminal code (1922) partially followed tsarist-era law and European tradition, although it added a “socialist” component, particularly in the case of economic crimes such as “speculation,” that is, buying and selling to make a profit.<sup>54</sup> Sentencing practices also showed “class favouritism” towards the proletariat, reversing the discrimination of the tsarist-era estate system, but effectively “ascribing class” in much

---

<sup>51</sup> Jakobson, *Origins of the GULAG*, 5.

<sup>52</sup> Natalia Kuziakina, *Theatre in the Solovki Prison Camp*, trans. Boris M. Meerovich (Luxembourg: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1995) 14-15.

<sup>53</sup> Peter H. Solomon, Jr., *Soviet Criminal Justice under Stalin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) 24.

<sup>54</sup> For more, see Solomon, *Soviet Criminal Justice*, 26-30.

the same way.<sup>55</sup> Again, however, leniency of punishment characterized the Bolshevik approach. As Peter H. Solomon, Jr. writes, “For most offenses the range of sentencing options revealed a leniency that was new to Russian law. In place of the short prison terms that tsarist law used for lesser crimes, the Bolsheviks used noncustodial sanctions. Even for serious crimes, the terms of imprisonment rarely exceeded a few years”.<sup>56</sup>

Throughout this period there were debates about the nature of internment. Early camps were run either by the Cheka<sup>57</sup> or the People’s Commissariat of Justice (NKIu), while beginning in 1922 most were run by the People’s Commissariat of Internal Affairs (NKVD) at the republic level (there was no all-Union NKVD, at this time, but each republic had its own commissariat of internal affairs). The Justice Commissariat, based on a Marxist understanding of the human as malleable, stressed the need to re-educate inmates into useful members of Soviet society.<sup>58</sup> The Justice Commissariat, however, ran into trouble due to the rising costs of its penal system.<sup>59</sup>

---

<sup>55</sup> Sheila Fitzpatrick argues that, instead of basing class on economic factors, the Bolsheviks inadvertently through their policies “ascribed class,” that is, made class dependent on the state, similarly to the tsarist regimes (with a different hierarchy, of course). Criminal justice during the 1920s is one area where this is evident. See Fitzpatrick, “Ascribing Class: The Construction of Social Identity in Soviet Russia,” in Fitzpatrick, ed., *Stalinism: New Directions* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000) 20-46.

<sup>56</sup> Solomon, *Soviet Criminal Justice*, 30.

<sup>57</sup> The Cheka, (or VChK – *Vserossiiskaia chrezvychainaia komissia po bor’be s kontrrevoliutsiei i sabotazhem*: All-Russian Special Commission for Combating Counter-revolution and Sabotage), was meant to be a temporary security force to fight counter-revolution following the Bolshevik takeover of 1917. It was the precursor for other internal security-police forces, sometimes referred to as the “secret police”. “Secret” may be somewhat of a misnomer, as the Cheka, in particular, operated relatively openly. See, for example, Fitzpatrick, *Russian Revolution*, 77. Here Fitzpatrick writes, “The Cheka, in fact, operated much more openly and violently than the old police: its style had more in common with the ‘class vengeance’ of Baltic sailors dealing with their officers in 1917, on the one hand, or Stolypin’s armed pacification of the countryside, on the other. The parallel with the Tsarist secret police became more appropriate after the Civil War, when the Cheka was replaced by the GPU (Chief Political Administration)—a move associated with the abandonment of terror and the extension of legality—and the security organs became more routine, bureaucratic, and discreet in their methods of operation”.

<sup>58</sup> For more on ideas of reeducation as they relate to the Gulag, see Wilson T. Bell, “One Day in the Life of Educator Khrushchev: Labour and *Kul’turnost’* in the Gulag Newspapers,” *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 46, 3/4 (2004), 289-313, esp. 292-295.

<sup>59</sup> Jakobson, *Origins of the GULAG*, 53.

Many of the Justice Commissariat's prison institutions were transferred to the republican-level NKVD in 1922, although the Justice Commissariat maintained some penal facilities through the 1920s. The republican-level NKVD did not emphasize reeducation to the same degree as the Justice Commissariat.<sup>60</sup> The NKVD instead gained favour by promising to make its camps self-sufficient. These ideas—reeducation and self-sufficiency—were not necessarily incompatible, and both became stated goals of the Gulag itself, formed under the OGPU<sup>61</sup> (Unified State Political Administration) in April 1930 as the administration responsible for both ordinary and special camps.<sup>62</sup> Up to this point, however, the criminal justice system had given little indication that the Soviet system would produce such huge numbers of convicts and exiles.

This brings us to our second reason why the Gulag may have been a somewhat unexpected development. If the Gulag was primarily an economic institution (and this is certainly debatable), then there were alternatives to the forced labour of prisoners and special settlers for the settlement of under-developed regions, the extraction of resources, and the completion of important construction and infrastructure projects.

The 1929 expedition to Siberia, for example, had called for investment in infrastructure in order to attract settlers. Certainly massive infrastructure investment in

---

<sup>60</sup> Jakobson, *Origins of the GULAG*, 70: here he notes that the *Glavnoe upravlenie mest' zakliucheniia* (GUMZ), the NKVD's prison agency in the 1920s, attempted to destroy ideas of reeducation while still speaking in those terms. Note, however, that Jakobson's sources heavily favour the NKIU point of view, and there is evidence to suggest that some within the NKVD took ideas of reeducation seriously in the 1920s. See the review by Peter H. Solomon, Jr., in *Slavic Review*, 54, 1 (1995): 190-192.

<sup>61</sup> The OGPU was created in 1923 out of the Russian NKVD as an all-union organization responsible for state security. In 1934, the newly formed all-union NKVD came into existence and re-absorbed the OGPU. The best treatment of policing under the NKVD and OGPU can be found in Hagenloh, *Stalin's Police*.

<sup>62</sup> The initial proposal came in April 1929. See Applebaum, *Gulag*, 50. There is also a good discussion in Oleg Khlevniuk, *The History of the Gulag: From Collectivization to the Great Terror* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 24-39. The decision to transfer most of the republican-level NKVD's prisoners to the OGPU took place in 1929, but was made public in April 1930. The NKVD retained a small number of prisoners, which were later transferred to the NKIU. It was not until 1934 and the creation of the All-Union NKVD, that all prisoners came under the NKVD's jurisdiction. There was certainly bureaucratic infighting between the OGPU and NKVD. See also Hagenloh, *Stalin's Police*, 62-65, 149-161.

places such as Magnitogorsk, during the First Five-Year Plan, attracted large numbers of free labourers, while relying only minimally on forced prisoner labour.<sup>63</sup> The Soviet government also actively encouraged voluntary settlement to Siberia even in the 1930s. The All-Union Resettlement Committee (*Vsesoiuznyi Pereselencheskii Komitet*) promoted resettlement in Siberia with advertisements in newspapers offering various incentives, and met with some success. In the first half of 1935—well after the regime was already using forced labour in many remote areas—there were 1,700 requests for resettlement submitted to the Committee, representing around 12,000 households, although it is not clear how many households actually resettled in Western Siberia.<sup>64</sup> Twelve thousand households is not insignificant, showing that the gradual approach like the one advocated by the 1929 expedition, and practiced by the All-Union Resettlement Committee, was working at a slow pace. Indeed during the 1920s the region's population growth was slightly higher than the Soviet average.<sup>65</sup> From 1926 to 1939 Greater Western Siberia (including the areas of Tiumen' and Omsk, all the way east to the Enisei River) saw a twenty percent increase in its population (from 10.6 to 12.8 million), compared with a sixteen percent increase nationally, although the census figures are not reliable. Immigration from European Russia accounted for 875,000 new settlers over this period, a lower rate than during the first years of the twentieth century, but nevertheless a significant number.<sup>66</sup> Even by the late 1920s, however, authorities realized that voluntary schemes had not worked to bring settlers to many areas. Gradual, voluntary resettlement,

---

<sup>63</sup> Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995).

<sup>64</sup> Shearer, "Mastering the Soviet Frontier," 163.

<sup>65</sup> See N. I. Gushchin, "Demograficheskoe razvitie sovetsskoi Sibiri," in R. S. Vasil'evskii and N. I. Gushchin, eds., *Istoricheskaiia demografiia Sibiri: sbornik nauchnykh trudov* (Novosibirsk: Nauka, 1992) 125.

<sup>66</sup> Robert W. North, *Transport in Western Siberia: Tsarist and Soviet Development* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1979) 122.

moreover, was anathema to the forced, violent transformation of society called for by Stalin's regime.<sup>67</sup>

Investment in mechanization was another possible alternative to forced labour. Forestry—particularly timber—would eventually become one of the Gulag's most significant industries, and Gulag prisoners frequently felled trees with only the most primitive of tools. By the end of the 1930s, the Gulag had mechanized 67 percent of timber production, but the rate was 90 percent for non-Gulag timber production.<sup>68</sup> The Soviet Union's vast forests were crucial for the First Five-Year Plan, as they supplied much of the fuel needed for industrial development and the timber needed for construction. The Politburo met in February 1931—when the Gulag was growing rapidly—to discuss the expansion of the forestry industry, and focused on mechanization. Clearly central authorities sought to create a modern, industrial, and mechanized economy, even at the same time as they were resorting to the growing use of forced manual labour throughout the union. A Central Committee decision confirmed by the Politburo on 20 February 1931 stated,

Considering the escalating growth of timber felling, production, and export programs, especially in the main forested areas, and also the rapidly increasing deficiencies in the labour force and animal-drawn [*guzhevoi*] cartage, which create limits for the continued growth of these key industries for the economy as a whole, the C[entral] C[ommittee] deems it necessary to take decisive measures for the mechanization of all aspects of timber production (tree felling, rafting, shipping, and so on) in order to encourage further growth for the forestry industry, and also to decrease the cost of its products.<sup>69</sup>

---

<sup>67</sup> See Nick Baron, "Conflict and Complicity: The expansion of the Karelian Gulag, 1923-1933," *Cahiers du Monde russe* 42.2-4 (2001) 615-648, esp. 628. Here Baron discusses the lack of patience for voluntary settlement schemes.

<sup>68</sup> Khlevniuk, *The History of the Gulag*, 339.

<sup>69</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 3, d. 815, ll. 17-19.

Throughout the Stalin era there was a tension between the use of free and forced labour in the forestry industry. When new forestry camps were created in the late 1930s to accommodate the increase in prisoners due to the Great Terror, authorities transferred forestry tracts from local forestry trusts to the Gulag. Gulag officials, however, complained that they did not have the same number of specialists as the local trusts, thus hindering their ability to exploit the forests efficiently.<sup>70</sup> On the other hand, the “free” workers in some of these areas may not have lived and worked in much better conditions than the prisoners. As geographer Judith Pallot demonstrates, local villagers in some of these remote areas began to migrate to the vicinity of the forestry camps, as the camps at times had better infrastructure than the nearby collective farms. Pallot argues that the distinction between free and forced labour was not always clear-cut, as the regime conscripted peasants, seasonally, to work in timber felling, skidding, and rafting, and these peasants worked—and even lived—in similar conditions to the prisoners and special settlers.<sup>71</sup>

By the early 1930s, it was clear that the regime had available huge numbers of convicts and peasant exiles who could be forced to work for the needs of the industrializing, modernizing state. But it is certainly worth noting that the rapid influx of prisoners into the system took both local and central authorities by surprise. As Applebaum writes, “[i]f the arrests [during the First Five-Year Plan] were intended to populate the camps, then they did so with ludicrous inefficiency,” catching even camp

---

<sup>70</sup> See, for example, the complaint from Tomasinlag officials about a lack of specialists in comparison with Tomles, the local forestry trust. Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Tomskoi oblasti (GATO) f. R-1152, op. 1, d. 4 [Doklad o rabote i proizvodstvennykh perspektivakh Tomsk-Asinovskogo lageria NKVD ot 20 maia 1939 goda], l. 15.

<sup>71</sup> Judith Pallot, “Forced Labour for Forestry: the Twentieth Century History of Colonisation and Settlement in the North of Perm’ Oblast’,” *Europe-Asia Studies* 54.7 (2002): 1055-1083 esp. 1064-1068.

authorities off guard.<sup>72</sup> The OGPU initially had considerable difficulty finding work for all of its inmates.<sup>73</sup> Before the upheavals caused by collectivization and dekulakization, authorities had envisaged a relatively small system. The Gulag was originally intended to hold no more than 50,000 prisoners, and, according to Oleg Khlevniuk, were it not for the “powerful wave of terror” associated with dekulakization, this might have been an achievable goal.<sup>74</sup>

The OGPU had also considered forced *colonization* for prisoners, much like the solution for the dekulakized peasants, as opposed to internment in prison camps. In some areas prison *camps* ended up playing a colonizing role, especially in remote regions such as Vorkuta, Norilsk, and Kolyma, where whole cities eventually formed as a result of the Gulag’s growth.<sup>75</sup> Underscoring early ambivalence about the use of concentration camps, however, Genrikh Iagoda, then deputy head of the OGPU, in 1930 called for a transformation of the camps into “colonization settlements” where prisoners would live more freely and work “more voluntarily” as a stimulus to improve both their character (reeducation through labour) and the economy, mostly through forestry work.<sup>76</sup>

These potential settlement colonies, of approximately 1,500 prisoners each, were in some ways similar to what the special settlements turned out to be. The most infamous

---

<sup>72</sup> Applebaum, *Gulag*, 56.

<sup>73</sup> Khlevniuk, *The History of the Gulag*, 24.

<sup>74</sup> Oleg Khlevniuk, “Vvedenie,” in Khlevniuk, ed., *Istoriia Stalinskogo Gulaga: Tom 3: Ekonomika Gulaga* (Moscow: Rosspen, 2004) 26. [Henceforth cited as *ISG* 3]

<sup>75</sup> For an excellent study of this phenomenon, see Alan Barenberg, “From Prison Camp to Mining Town: The Gulag and Its Legacy in Vorkuta,” PhD dissertation (Chicago: University of Chicago Department of History, 2007).

<sup>76</sup> Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rossiskoi federatsii (GARF) f. 9479, op. 1, d. 3, ll. 23-24. Iagoda’s proposal has also been published in English translation. See Document 6: “G.G. Yagoda’s proposals to convert camps into colonization settlements 12 April 1930,” in Khlevniuk, *The History of the Gulag*, 23-25. See also Viola, *Unknown Gulag*, 4-5. This also contains echoes of the past. In the Siberian Reforms of 1822, M. N. Speranskii (Governor-General of Siberia) attempted to integrate *katorga*, the harshest form of penal exile, and “exile to settlement” (*ssylka na poselenie*). See Gentes, *Exile to Siberia*, 174.

attempt along these lines—and no doubt an indication that these types of prison colonies would fail—was “cannibal island” located in Nazino, Western Siberia.<sup>77</sup> In one of the most tragic episodes of Stalin-era repression, in 1933 a group of 10,000 prisoner settlers<sup>78</sup> from Moscow and Leningrad were forcibly resettled to an island where the Nazina river flows into the mighty Ob’, some 800 kilometres north of Tomsk, while thousands more languished in an over-crowded transit camp in Tomsk. As Nicholas Werth describes, authorities really did not know what to do with this contingent, and the main Communist Party official in the region, Robert Eikhe,<sup>79</sup> even fought against sending this group to the region’s remote areas. Bureaucratic negligence and the general hardships of the devastating famine sweeping the country combined to hold up the delivery of foodstuffs. When a huge shipment of flour finally arrived, many on the island ate it raw. Some eventually resorted to cannibalism. After only two months, half of the prisoner settlers had starved to death.<sup>80</sup> This incident helped convince central authorities that prison camps, as opposed to settlement colonies, were necessary.

To summarize, then, although the Bolsheviks had established concentration camps early in their rule, these camps were initially fairly small, Soviet criminal justice initially quite lenient, and the rapid influx of prisoners during the First Five-Year Plan caught

---

<sup>77</sup> Kate Brown argues that this incident confirmed for authorities that independent prisoner colonies would not work. She writes: "Most important, the Nazino tragedy discredited Iagoda's notion of flourishing, self-sufficient, penal settlements on the frontier. Instead of self-reliant, the settlers became emaciated dependents or victims of violence". See Brown, "Out of Solitary Confinement," 92. Nicholas Werth has recently published a book on the Nazino tragedy. See Werth, *Cannibal Island: Death in a Siberian Gulag*, translated from the French by Seven Rendall (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2007).

<sup>78</sup> These were “socially harmful elements”, many of them peasants who had fled the countryside, who had been living in Moscow and Leningrad.

<sup>79</sup> Robert Eikhe was an Old Bolshevik. He had been a party member from 1905 and served as secretary of the Western Siberian Party Committee in the 1930s. From 1937 to 1938 he was the People’s Commissar of Agriculture. He was arrested in 1938 and shot in 1940. See Khlevniuk, *The History of the Gulag*, 347.

<sup>80</sup> For more, see Werth, *Cannibal Island*, esp. 106-107, 120, 121-170; Sergei Krasil’nikov *Serp i Molokh: Krest’ianskaia ssylka v Zapadnoi Sibiri v 1930-e gody* (Moscow: Rosspen, 2003) 99-107; and A. V. Bol’shakova, Sergei Krasil’nikov, B. P. Trenin, eds. *Nazinskaia tragediia: Iz istorii zemli Tomskoi: Dokumental’noe nauchnoe izdanie* (Tomsk: Nauka, 2002).

most officials by surprise. Even as the Gulag began to expand rapidly, moreover, highly placed officials sought alternatives to prison camps.

### *The Relationship between the Camps and the Special Settlements*

While the Nazino disaster helped to convince authorities that settlement colonies for prisoners would not work, the Gulag nevertheless continued to rely on exile colonies in the form of “special settlements” for peasants. Often these settlements were little more than designated spots in swampy woodlands, where the peasants were forced to build a new life from scratch. Although not the same as the camps, the special settlements should not be studied separately from the Gulag, at least for the 1930s. Administratively, the Gulag was directly in charge of the settlements from 1931 until 1944, at which point special settlement administration became its own department within the NKVD.<sup>81</sup> The Sibltag administration had its own Department of Special Settlements. I. I. Dolgikh directed this department from 1930 until 1938.<sup>82</sup>

The link between the settlements and the camps remains under-explored in the historiography, but for Western Siberia in particular an awareness of the two together adds to our understanding of the geography of Stalinist repression. The camp subdivisions and stations themselves were mostly located close to Western Siberia’s

---

<sup>81</sup> For a brief summary of the relationship between the special settlements, the Gulag, and the NKVD see the introduction to Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rossiiskoi federatsii (GARF) f. 9479, op. 1. Because of the administrative difficulties confronting the Gulag, there was an attempt in 1933 to reorganize the system with a separate Main Administration of Labour Settlements, but the settlements remained under the Gulag’s direction at this time. See N. V. Petrov, “Vvedenie,” in *Istoriia Stalinskogo Gulaga: Tom 2: Karatel’naia sistema: struktura i kadry* [henceforth cited as *ISG 2*], Petrov and N. I. Vladimirtsev, eds. (Moscow: Rosspen, 2004) 29.

<sup>82</sup> Dolgikh would go on to have a long career within the Gulag and the NKVD and later MVD. Following his work at Sibltag (where, it should be noted, he was one of the longest tenured senior administrators), he later was the director of Viatlag, Ivdel’lag, and Iuzhkuzbasslag (another West Siberian camp) and also spent time as vice-director for the administration for prisoners-of-war and internees of the MVD. See Krasil’nikov, *Serp i Molokh*, 181.

major urban centres, and often even within city limits. These areas were growing rapidly at this time, of course, and, as elsewhere, had work-force issues, but the geography of the camps on their own suggests that for Western Siberia, the extraction of resources from difficult-to-reach areas or the extreme isolation of prisoners may not have been the main motivating factors for camp location.<sup>83</sup> The Western Siberian *camps* of the Gulag were hardly isolated from the surrounding towns, and interacted with them regularly.

Many of the *special settlements*, on the other hand, were located in remote areas such as Narym, scattered along the region's northern river routes.<sup>84</sup> Narym had long been a site of tsarist-era exile: Stalin himself was exiled there in 1912.<sup>85</sup> The Stalin-era settlements focused on agricultural work, fishing, and forestry, and it was in places like Narym where attracting a free labour force would have required enormous effort and resources. It is quite possible that authorities saw little need to establish a forestry *camp* in the area,<sup>86</sup> as the special settlements were already providing a huge forced labour force to fell timber and transport logs.

---

<sup>83</sup> Paul Gregory gives the location of camps as evidence to support his contention that the motivation behind the camp system had more to do with economics than political considerations. He writes, "However, the main reason for location in the Far North and Far East was the presence of such valuable resources as Norilsk's nickel ores..., Magadan's gold ores..., or the forestry reserves of Siberia, which all required large infrastructure investments to develop and which were shunned by free labor". See Paul R. Gregory, "An Introduction to the Economics of the Gulag," in *The Economics of Forced Labor: The Soviet Gulag* edited by Gregory and Valery Lazarev, (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2003) 1-22, esp. 19. For Western Siberia, this was not quite the case. Camp prisoners worked in agriculture in regions with already considerable settlement or as contract labourers to *supplement*, rather than take the place of, free labour. There is little doubt, however, that local authorities and enterprises struggled to keep free labour, as elsewhere during the 1930s, so it would be misleading to dismiss the obviously crucial economic considerations for the camps of the region. The settlers, however, worked in the more remote areas.

<sup>84</sup> There were special settlements located all over the region, including close to population centres (particularly in the Kuznestk Basin), but the majority of the settlements were located in remote areas to the north, particularly Narym. See Shearer, "Mastering the Soviet Frontier," 163.

<sup>85</sup> Robert Service, *Stalin: A Biography* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005) 84.

<sup>86</sup> Indeed, when the seven new forestry camps were founded in 1937 (re-formed in a different configuration as the Administration of Camps of the Forestry Industry (ULLP) in 1939), there was only one in Western Siberia, Tomasinlag, despite the region's vast forests. See Khlevniuk, *The History of the Gulag*, 178.

There are even more direct links between camp and settlement locations. The three Corrective-Labour Colonies for young offenders founded in the city of Tomsk in 1933-34 housed mostly the children of special settlers who had either escaped the settlements or committed various crimes in the region. Tomsk was the closest major urban centre to the special settlement areas.<sup>87</sup> The Tomsk camps were among the largest in the entire USSR for young offenders.<sup>88</sup>

Financially, too, central authorities treated the camps and settlements almost identically, at least in their early years. Both were supposed to be self-sufficient, but both needed help. A 1931 Politburo resolution on the kulaks called for a supply fund for the settlements that would be distributed “analogously” to that of the Gulag camps.<sup>89</sup> In Western Siberia, Sibltag was deeply involved in settlement administrative matters, concerning itself with everything from the agricultural expansion of the settlements to the taxation of settlers in Naryn.<sup>90</sup>

The special settlements, moreover, share two key characteristics of the “concentration camp” that, interestingly, the Gulag’s camps do not share. First, the inhabitants of the settlements were not charged with or convicted of any particular crime. And second, the settlements targeted *groups* of people (first, the “kulaks,” then various national minority groups) rather than *individuals*. Yet the settlements were not concentration camps in the sense of enclosed spaces with well-ordered barracks, barbed wire, and watchtowers. Thus, these settlements are difficult to categorize. The regime restricted the settlers’

---

<sup>87</sup> See Danila Sergeevich Krasil’nikov, “Lageria i kolonii na territorii Novosibirskoi oblasti v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny (1941-1945),” (diplomnaia rabota for the Department of Fatherland History, Humanities Faculty, Novosibirsk State University, 1999) 34.

<sup>88</sup> Shearer, “Mastering the Soviet Frontier,” 165-166. For more on these camps for young offenders, including some documents and articles by specialists, see V. P. Zinov’ev, I. M. Rudaia, and V. O. El’blaus, eds., *Neizvestnyi Seversk: Sbornik statei* (Tomsk: Izd-vo TGU, 1996).

<sup>89</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 162, d. 10, ll. 51-54.

<sup>90</sup> See, for example, GARF f. 9479, op. 1, d. 30, ll. 6, 7-8.

movement, but the settlers themselves were asked to recreate the collective farm, with the purpose of exploiting the region's economic resources. The settlers were not prisoners, nor did they have the rights of regular Soviet citizens. One scholar even likens the settlements to the forced re-settlement of Native Americans onto Reservations.<sup>91</sup>

Recent advancement in the study of the special settlements has been quite fruitful.<sup>92</sup> There are several key points worth noting in the context of the Gulag's history in Western Siberia and the development of the region during the Soviet period. First, special settlers comprised the largest pool of forced labourers in the region. By 1 January 1933 Western Siberia held 227,684 special settlers, and that number rose to 289,431 the following year. This number would decrease to around 200,000 by the end of the decade, as the regime restored the rights of many settlers.<sup>93</sup> Even given that many of these settlers were children, there would have been more workers in the settlements than the area's camps.<sup>94</sup> Second, conditions in the special settlements, at least initially, were frequently *worse* than in the camps. And third, as already noted, it was the special settlements, as opposed to the camps, that were located in the region's most remote areas (although the settlements could be found in more densely populated areas as well), and were thus the driving force behind the forced colonization of the region.

---

<sup>91</sup> Shearer, "Mastering the Soviet Frontier."

<sup>92</sup> See Viola, *Unknown Gulag*, Krasil'nikov, *Serp i Molokh*, V.N. Zemskov, *Spetsposelelentsy v SSSR, 1930-1960* (Moscow: Nauka, 2005), and many document collections, including Danilov et al., eds, *Tragediia sovetskoi derevni*; Viktor Danilov and Sergei Krasil'nikov, eds., *Spetspereselentsy v Zapadnoi Sibiri 1930-vesna 1945 g.*, 4 vols (Novosibirsk: Nauka and Ekor, 1992-1996); A. N. Iakovlev, N. L. Pobol' and P. M. Polian, eds., *Stalinskie deportatsii 1928-1953: dokumenty*; T. V. Tsarvskaia-Diakina, ed., *Spetspereselentsy v SSSR*, vol 5 of *Istoriia Stalinskogo Gulaga*, ed. V. P. Kozlov et al. (Moscow: Rosspen, 2004); and Viola et al., eds., *The War against the Peasantry*.

<sup>93</sup> For the figures, see Table 4 and Table 7 of Zemskov, *Spetsposelelentsy v SSSR*, 24-25 and 40-41. For more on the restoration of rights, see Viola, *Unknown Gulag*, 150-159.

<sup>94</sup> Table 8 of Zemskov's *Spetsposelelentsy v SSSR* (p. 43) indicates that about 1/3 of the special settlers in 1938 were children under the age of fourteen.

### *Narym: Forced Labour in the Remote Areas of Western Siberia*

The Narym area, downstream from Tomsk, is enormous, consisting of almost 350,000 square kilometres of swampy, forest-covered lowlands.<sup>95</sup> By 1938, Novosibirsk Province held the largest number of special settlements (517) in the entire Soviet Union, over twice as many as the next highest, Sverdlovsk Province in the Ural Mountains.<sup>96</sup> Many of these settlements were located in the Narym area.

In 1931, Narym's special settlements were "noticeably ahead" of other regions in collecting hay, sowing winter crops and root vegetables, and in the grain harvest, at least if official documents can be believed.<sup>97</sup> Agriculture was one of the main areas of focus for these settlements. In 1931 the Politburo called for the end of shipments of bread, fodder, and vegetables to Narym within two year's time, to be replaced by internal production. The Politburo designated four administrative districts (*komendatury*) within Narym for agricultural production, totalling 55,700 persons with a workforce of 25,000.<sup>98</sup> The majority of work by special settlers in the region, however, was initially in forestry-related activity, and others also worked in handicraft industries, fishing, transport/shipping, coal, and medical services.<sup>99</sup> After only a couple of years over half of the special settlers in Narym were involved primarily in agriculture.<sup>100</sup>

The area of sown land increased dramatically. Only 8,000 hectares of land in Narym had been sown in 1930, compared to 166,700 hectares in 1935. Wheat was the main crop,

---

<sup>95</sup> Werth, *Cannibal Island*, 23.

<sup>96</sup> For more on the 1938 special settlement population, see Zemskov, *Spetsposelentsyy v SSSR*, 33.

<sup>97</sup> GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1947, l. 45.

<sup>98</sup> The discrepancy between these two numbers is because the 55,700 include children.

<sup>99</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 162, d. 11, ll. 102-106. The four agricultural *komandatury* were Galinskaia, Parbinskaia, Toinskaia and Shegorskaia.

<sup>100</sup> See "Tablitsa 17: Raspredelenie spetspereselentsev po otrasliam ekonomiki v Narymskom krae na 1 iiunia 1932 g. (chel.)," in Krasil'nikov, *Serp i molokh*, 219.

and oats also played an important role in the region's agricultural production.<sup>101</sup> Fishing was also a crucial industry for the area.<sup>102</sup> Problems remained, however. It was difficult to transport necessary equipment to the northern areas, which were also disadvantaged due to poor climate and, in the opinion of central authorities, poor leadership.<sup>103</sup> The Politburo itself worried about the poor organization of handicraft industries and the sometimes rocky relationship between the People's Commissariat of Forestry, local forestry trusts (e.g. Zapsiblestrest – The West-Siberian Forestry Trust), and the special settlements, which supplied much of the labour.<sup>104</sup>

Although special settlers supposedly had more freedom than prisoners, conditions in the settlements may have at first actually been worse. The camps, at least, generally provided some sort of infrastructure, however primitive and inefficient. Special settlers often had to fend entirely for themselves, and it would be years before homes dug out of the earth were no longer the norm. In the early 1930s, proper medical facilities were sorely lacking and local enterprises often treated the settlers as prisoner-labour, falling far behind on wage-payments.<sup>105</sup> Many settlers fell victim to starvation or severe illnesses due to hunger and a lack of proper shelter. Suicides were also quite common.<sup>106</sup> The mass influx of special settlers certainly placed local authorities in an almost impossible

---

<sup>101</sup> GARF f. 9479, op. 1, d. 35, l. 13 and GARF f. 9479, op. 1, d. 16, l. 9.

<sup>102</sup> See RGASPI f. 17, op. 162, d. 12, ll. 75-77

<sup>103</sup> Eikhe's report on the economic development of Naryn noted the need to increase the numbers and strengthen the condition of the leadership in the region. He writes that "In the majority of kolkhozes of the northern areas there are no party organizations and even not a single communist." He goes on to recommend dividing the area into smaller administrative divisions and improving radio communication in the area in order to improve the situation. See GARF f. 9479, op. 1, d. 35, ll. 19-20.

<sup>104</sup> RGASPI f. 17, op. 162, d. 12, l. 76,

<sup>105</sup> GARF f. 9479, op. 1, d. 3, ll. 81-85.

<sup>106</sup> GARF f. 9479, op. 1, d. 16, l. 12. For more on the severe living conditions in the special settlements, see Viola, *The Unknown Gulag*, esp. 132-141.

situation, even if they had shown much care for the special settlers' living conditions. As Dolgikh noted in 1933:<sup>107</sup>

In [the prior] 25 years of the railway's existence in Siberia 1,000,000 persons were delivered [*bylo zavezeno*] from Cheliabinsk to the nearby Gulf of Saint Olga in Siberia[.] By us in just 3 years, [and] only to one Narym region, were sent more than 200 thousand persons. You see the enormous scope [of the operation] and what enormous work has occurred and all of this has been done without the presence of cadres specially trained for this work.

Special settlers technically had more living space than prisoners. According to official regulations, each settler had at least three square metres of living space (compared to an official regulation of two square metres in the camps, which was in practice usually lower),<sup>108</sup> but in reality often had less. A joint NKVD-Gulag report from 1935 complained that in some areas of Western Siberia where settlers worked for the People's Commissariat of Forestry, they had an average of around only 0.8 square metres of living space per person, and the Commissariat of Forestry had no plans to build more housing.<sup>109</sup> For Narym as a whole, however, the average at the time was 4.2 square metres per person.<sup>110</sup> Within the Soviet Union more generally, moreover, the rapid urbanization caused by the five-year plans and the upheavals of collectivization/dekulakization meant that living space was an issue almost everywhere, not only in places of forced labour. In the new industrial city of Magnitogorsk, for

---

<sup>107</sup> I. I. Dolgikh, quoted in Krasil'nikov, *Serp i molokh*, 177.

<sup>108</sup> According to a 1943 NKVD operational order; the average living space per prisoner during the war in practice was 1.8 square metres per person which, according to reports, was more than during the pre-war years). The information on the average living space per prisoner comes from materials collected for an NKVD report on its activities during the war. See GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 328, l. 19. For the 1943 NKVD Operational Order, see Document no. 94, A. B. Bezborodov, I. V. Bezborodova and V. M. Khrustalev, eds. *Istoriia Staliniskogo Gulaga: Tom 4: Naselenie Gulaga: chislennost' i usloviia sodержaniia* (Moscow: Rosspen, 2004), 217-218 [*ISG 4*]. The special settler living space information comes from GARF f. 9479, op. 1, d. 12, l. 41. For information on the living space in camps, see Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Novosibirskoi oblasti (GANO) f. R-20, op. 1, d. 404, l. 9 and GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 469, l. 159.

<sup>109</sup> GARF f. 9479, op. 1, d. 29, ll. 7-8.

<sup>110</sup> GARF f. 9479, op. 1, d. 30, l. 19.

example, in 1931 there was only 1.9 square metres per person (less than the regulated amount for a prisoner), and during the entire decade of the 1930s there was never more than an average of four square metres per person in the city, less than the average for Narym.<sup>111</sup>

The harsh conditions of the settlements meant that, especially in the early years, there were likely tens of thousands of excess deaths, and that many settlers sought to avoid this outcome by fleeing, often in search for family members. The Gulag administration recognized that poor living conditions directly caused escapes. A 1931 circular called for three measures to lessen escapes in the settlements, the first of which was “the creation of [proper] living conditions such that the reasons [*stimuli*] for escapes will cease”.<sup>112</sup> Statistics in 1931 for Narym attest to incredibly harsh conditions. The region only became heavily populated starting in mid-1931, but from 1 June to 1 September there were 10,534 deaths amongst the special settlers, and another 4,961 escaped. The 1 June settler population was 50,687, growing to 215,261 by 1 September. From 1 October to 1 January 1932, another 7,499 died and 11,473 escaped. Escapes remained at around 3,000 settlers per month until April 1932, with numbers recaptured numbering only in the hundreds.<sup>113</sup> During 1933, the main famine year, in the Western Siberian special settlements 26,709 settlers died and 49,718 escaped, while only 12,647 returned from escape attempts.<sup>114</sup>

---

<sup>111</sup> Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*, 161.

<sup>112</sup> “Tsirkuliarnoe pis'mo GULaga OGPU ob organizatsii bor'by s pobegami spetspereselentsev,” Danilov and Krasil'nikov, *Spetspereselentsy v Zapadnoi Sibiri 1931-33*, 58. The other two measures were to strengthen agent-operative work and to strengthen the guard.

<sup>113</sup> These figures come from the document, “Iz statisticheskikh prilozhenii k otchetnomu dokladu SIBLaga OGPU ob itogakh khoziastvennogo osvoeniia spetspereselentsami Naryma za period s maia 1931 po iiun' 1932 g.,” in Danilov and Krasil'nikov, eds., *Spetspereselentsy v Zapadnoi Sibiri 1931-33*, 288-289.

<sup>114</sup> The 26,709 deaths represent approximately 6.5 percent of the total number of special settlers in the region at one point or another during the year, or approximately 10.3 percent of the average number of

Conditions improved over the course of the decade. In 1936, the Narym Party Secretary, P. P. Levits, noted that most schools and orphanages were now well supplied with educational materials, and that medical services had reached a satisfactory state. However, he also complained of continued housing problems, with many settlers living in run-down barracks or earthen dugouts (*v zemliankakh*).<sup>115</sup> Birth rates now exceeded death rates and the number of settlers with illness was on the decline. By mid-decade there were also many more hospitals and bathhouses, as well as 215 elementary and twenty-one middle schools. At least according to official reports, the average special settler household in Narym now actually worked more land than that of the native population (*korennogo naseleniia*) (4.2 hectares compared with 2.6 hectares).<sup>116</sup> According to historian Sergei Krasil'nikov, the special settlements at times showed statistically better results than the nearby collective farms in terms of the size of the harvest (although not in all areas). He notes, however, that capital expenditures were much higher in the special settlements.<sup>117</sup>

By mid-decade, too, significant numbers of settlers had already had their rights reinstated, although this usually did not mean that they could legally leave the region. Iagoda himself argued that allowing settlers to leave would “hinder measures to open up

---

settlers during that year. The numbers come from Zemskov, *Spetsposeleltsy v SSSR*, 24-25. Note that Western Siberia began the year with 227,684 special-settlers, but there were 181,222 new arrivals (as well as 119,475 departures of various types, including deaths and escapes). The high turnover makes precise mortality rates difficult to calculate.

<sup>115</sup> GARF f. 9479, op. 1, d. 35, ll. 1-4. Note that by this time, while most settlers lived in heated homes or barracks, twelve percent still resided in earthen dugouts (*zemlianki* and *poluzemlianki*)

<sup>116</sup> GARF f. 9479, op. 1, d. 30, l. 19: a *dokladnaia zapiska* from Matvei Berman, the director of the Gulag, to Iagoda, regarding the state of special settlements in Narym.

<sup>117</sup> S. A. Krasil'nikov, “Spetspereselentsy, spetsarteli i spetsorgany: makhazimy i rezul'taty spetskolonizatsii severa Zapadnoi Sibiri v 1930-e gg.,” in *GULAG: Ekonomika prinuditel'nogo truda*, ed. L. I. Borodkin, P. Gregori [Paul Gregory], and O. V. Khlevniuk (Moscow: Rosspen, 2005) 279-316, esp. 287, 291. This type of comparison—between conditions and economic activity inside the Gulag and out—is lacking in the historiography, and Krasil'nikov's work represents a step in the right direction.

uninhabited areas,” thus emphasizing the colonizing function of the settlements. Matvei Berman,<sup>118</sup> head of the Gulag, also argued that settlers should not be allowed to leave once rehabilitated.<sup>119</sup> In response, the Central Executive Committee (TsIK) amended its decree (*postanovlenie*) from May of 1934 on the restoration of rights to say, “The restoration of citizenship rights for exiled [*vyslannykh*] kulaks does not give them the right to leave [their] place of settlement”.<sup>120</sup> In 1935 and 1936 alone, some 53,579 special settlers were rehabilitated in Western Siberia, a much larger number than elsewhere at the time.<sup>121</sup>

Children of special settlers could receive certain rights upon reaching the age of majority. This occurred only if they had not run afoul of the law, had cut themselves off from their parents, and were engaged in “socially useful” labour.<sup>122</sup> Whether or not kulaks could be “re-forged” or reeducated into Soviet citizens is a matter up for debate,<sup>123</sup> but

---

<sup>118</sup> Berman had a connection to Western Siberia. He had been the chair of the Tomsk Cheka from 1920-1923, and thus no doubt played an important role in the Bolshevik victory in Siberia during the Civil War. He held various posts within the OGPU, rising to the position of deputy-director of the OGPU’s camp administration in July 1930 and director of the GULAG in June, 1932. He received numerous awards, including the Order of Lenin in 1933 for his role in the construction of the White Sea-Baltic Canal and the Order of the Red Star in 1937 for the construction of the Moscow-Volga Canal. He was eventually arrested in December 1938 and shot in March 1939. For more, see A. I. Kokurin and N. V. Petrov, eds., *GULAG (Glavnoe upravlenie lagerei) 1918-1960* (Moscow: “Materik,” 2002), 804.

<sup>119</sup> Viola, *Unknown Gulag*, 157.

<sup>120</sup> For Iagoda’s letter and the TsIK’s response, see GARF f. 9479, op. 1, d. 29, ll. 10-11.

<sup>121</sup> Viola, *Unknown Gulag*, 157.

<sup>122</sup> GARF f. 9479, op. 1, d. 35, l. 5.

<sup>123</sup> Steven A. Barnes argues that the criminal justice and penal systems (including the special settlements) worked together as a way of weeding out undesirable elements from society and also re-integrating those suspect individuals or groups who could be re-integrated. He sets up a ranking of punishment related to the ability to be released back into regular Soviet society. In this hierarchy, the special settlers are relatively “redeemable”. From the unredeemable to the easily redeemable, his ranking reads as follows: execution, prison confinement, *katorga* and special camp confinement, corrective-labour camps (ITL), special settlements, corrective-labour colonies (ITK), and sentences for corrective-labour without deprivation of freedom (essentially a fine taken off one’s wages). See Barnes, “Soviet Society Confined: The Gulag in the Karaganda Region of Kazakhstan,” (PhD dissertation submitted to the Department of History, Stanford University, 2003) 17-30. On the other hand, Lynne Viola’s authoritative study of the special settlements shows clearly that, on the ground, at least, authorities made few attempts at training the special settlers for reintegration (“Theory could not be translated into practice”), and the language used to describe settlers was often worse than that reserved for prisoners (at least at first, too, conditions and death rates were likely worse in the special settlements than in the labour camps). See Viola, *Unknown Gulag*, 102-104. See also

day-to-day dealings with officials meant that there were definite benefits to behaving in a Soviet manner, or “speaking Bolshevik” to use Stephen Kotkin’s formulation.<sup>124</sup>

Clearly, authorities focused most of their education efforts in the settlements on the children: an operational order from 1932 noted that settler children should receive a “communist education” and that they had the right to enter into preschools (*doshkol’nye uchrezhdeniia*) and be educated on the same level as the children of workers, with the possibility of obtaining full rights in the future. According to the order, the children of settlers “should have a full understanding that through preschool and further schooling they will be builders of socialism and communism”.<sup>125</sup> Yet many of the teachers in the settlements were themselves dekulakized peasants, despite efforts to replace the settlers with “civilian teachers” (*vol’nonaemnymi uchiteliami*).<sup>126</sup> Also, as Lynne Viola has demonstrated, despite a rhetoric associated with reeducation and building communism, the re-forging of special-settler children was at times “nothing short of cruel travesty”.<sup>127</sup>

Authorities, moreover, continued to see the settlements as a major component of “colonization,” by which they seem to have meant the “opening up” (*osvoeniia*) of new lands for economic activities.<sup>128</sup> Note that the settlers themselves, by and large, ran the

---

Viola, “‘Tear the Evil from the Root’: The Children of the *Spetspereselentsy* of the North,” *Studia Slavica Finlandensia* 17 (2000). For more on the language used to describe prisoners, see Brown, “Out of Solitary Confinement,” 84.

<sup>124</sup> There were, at times at least, certainly privileges for (over-)fulfilling work norms and even for behaving in a Soviet-like manner. For more on this see Bell, “Gulag Newspapers.” On “Speaking Bolshevik,” see Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*, 198-237.

<sup>125</sup> GARF f. 9479, op. 1, d. 12, ll. 75-79: document on the education of children of special settlers.

<sup>126</sup> GARF f. 9479, op. 1, d. 12, ll. 6 and 46: a letter from Iagoda concerning cultural-educational work in the special settlements and a document on schools in the special settlements.

<sup>127</sup> See Viola, *Unknown Gulag*, 177.

<sup>128</sup> GARF f. 9479, op. 1, d. 35, l. 8. This is roughly how the term is used in the document. See the following: “*Na meropriiatiia po khoziastvennomu ustroistvu i kolonizatsionnomu osvoeniuiu trudpereselentsev v severnykh raionakh ZSK izraskhodvano iz bezvozvratnykh assignovaniia 33 milliona rublei i vydano trudpereselentsam vozvratnykh ssud 30 millionov rublei*” [“Measures for the economic development and the *colonizing opening up* [emph. added] of the labour settlers in the northern areas of the W[est] S[iberian] T[erritory] [...]”].

special settlements, underscoring the colonization element. Up to seventy percent of the administrative personnel in the northern districts were special settlers, and non-settler personnel in medical and educational fields frequently left the area due to the harsh conditions.<sup>129</sup> The regime had little choice but to rely on its own exiles, a practice that partially echoed the tsarist Siberian exile system.<sup>130</sup>

### ***Conclusion***

The rapid changes of Stalin's First Five-Year Plan required both a high level of enthusiasm and a high level of coercion and repression in order to succeed. Yet before the pivotal year of 1929, Soviet criminal justice had been relatively lenient, and although prison camps existed, the massive scale of the Stalin-era Gulag would have been difficult to anticipate. The "telescoped" development of the early Stalin era, however, required coercion, given the massive changes imposed on Soviet society. At the same time, the Gulag *appeared* to address long-standing issues in Russia's history: the difficulty of extracting the natural wealth of the empire, and the perceived need to control the countryside. In this manner, the Bolsheviks' solution to these issues was different in scale, and certainly more brutal, than the penal labour and serfdom of the tsarist era, but the motivations underlying the system were not new. Indeed, what is remarkable is the inability of the Bolsheviks to escape the solutions of their tsarist predecessors.

While the special settlements seemed to provide a partial solution both to the peasant question and the question of the extraction of resources from remote areas, instances such

---

<sup>129</sup> GARF f. 9479, op. 1, d. 35, ll. 10-11.

<sup>130</sup> Many exiles to Siberia in the 19<sup>th</sup> century were encouraged to take up official posts following the end of their sentences and, especially after the reforms of 1822, well-behaved exiles could join the state peasantry or merchant guilds and were treated in many ways as colonists. Schrader, "Unruly Felons and Civilizing Wives," 235-236.

as the Nazino disaster indicated that colonization settlements were not necessarily suitable for convicts and other undesirable elements. Despite the efforts of some key figures within the OGPU, moreover, the Gulag's camps were expanding rapidly during the 1930s. One of these camps was Sibilag.

## CHAPTER II: *The Gulag in Western Siberia, 1929-1941*

“That day we covered 25 kilometres. As usual, we were lied to – they told us there were only around 10 kilometres to go. Barely able to drag our feet, we reached the camp in the evening. Its lights shone through the darkness of the forest. We stopped on a hill overlooking a number of dilapidated barracks. [...] Along the walls [in one barrack] stretched three rows of bunks. The room was fully stocked with sweaty, half-naked, emaciated "zeks". Their faces seemed brutalized to us. We recoiled in fear [...] this is the shack that became our new home.”  
- Iosif Berger, describing his arrival at Siblrag’s Akhpunsk subdivision<sup>1</sup>

“Our current key task is to make our state farms progressive and profitable, so that all state farms will have the right to take part in the All-Union Agricultural Exhibition, following the example of the progressive state farm, Antibess”  
- G.N. Kopaev, Siblrag’s director, discussing agriculture at Siblrag in early 1941<sup>2</sup>

### ***Siblrag, 1929-1941: Administrative and Economic Overview***

Initially in charge of camp subdivisions and stations (*punkty*) from Omsk to Krasnoirsark, at 1,400 kilometres, a distance roughly equivalent to a road trip from Paris to Vienna, Siblrag was one of the country’s main camp systems.<sup>3</sup> Although it would prove to be one of the longest-lasting systems in the Soviet Union, economically Siblrag was neither a resounding success nor a dismal failure. Through the 1930s, as central authorities shifted

---

<sup>1</sup> Iosif Berger, *Krushenie pokoleniia. Vospominaniia*, trans. Ia. Berger (Florence: Aurora, 1973) 102.

<sup>2</sup> See Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Novosibirskoi oblasti (GANO) fond P-260, opis’ 1, delo 1, list’ 5

<sup>3</sup> Distances cited here come from the *Novyi atlas avtomobil’nykh dorog: Rossii, stran SNG, Pribaltiki*, ed. V.N. Paikhvasser (Minsk: Trivium, 2005-2006) 8-9, 12.

the focus of Gulag labour to important infrastructure and resource-extraction projects, Sibltag declined in relative importance to the camps of Kolyma (gold), Vorkuta (coal), Noril'sk (nickel), the Far East (railroads), and those involved in infrastructure projects such as the Moscow-Volga Canal. Although Sibltag prisoners worked in a variety of sectors of the Western Siberian economy, the very lack of economic focus probably hurt Sibltag's chances of becoming a priority camp. Sibltag is an important camp for inquiry precisely because there was little extraordinary about it.

Although Sibltag was rarely involved in priority projects, it nevertheless engaged in a large variety of regional economic activities—most notably agriculture, forestry, construction and mining—and in this sense replicated the Gulag as a whole. Sibltag was one of the larger Gulag camp systems, and its population growth shows some similarities (but also some important differences) with the growth of the Gulag (see Figure 2.1, below). The population figures underscore Sibltag's initial importance for the Gulag, followed by its decline starting in 1933-34, and especially 1938-39.

The creation of new camps and the prioritization of other camps explain this trend. BAMlag in the Far East, for example, was founded in 1932 and reached a peak population of just over 200,000 inmates in January, 1938, over twenty percent of the Gulag's total.<sup>4</sup> Sibltag also shed several subdivisions in the mid-1930s, with the creation of Omsk Province and Krasnoïarsk Territory.

---

<sup>4</sup> In other words, although there were more inmates going into the system, there was also more competition for place of confinement. Other major camps founded in the 1930s include Karlag (Karaganda, Kazakhstan, in 1931), Dal'stroi (or Sevvostlag, Far-Eastern Territory, 1932), Noril'lag (Noril'sk, Krasnoïarsk Territory, 1935), Vorkutlag (Arkhangel'sk Province, 1938). Note that the regime divided BAMlag into several smaller camps in 1938. See *Sistema ispravitel'no-trudovykh lagerei v SSSR, 1923-1960: Spravochnik*, compiled by M. B. Smirnov, edited by N. G. Okhotin and A. B. Roginskii, (Moscow: Zven'ia, 1998) 153-155 (henceforth cited as *Sistema*) and the entries for these camps for more information (also on-line in an interactive map: <http://www.memo.ru/history/NKVD/GULAG/maps/ussri.htm>).

**Figure 2.1: 1 January Prisoner population of Siblag, 1930-1941<sup>5</sup>**

Year	Siblag's 1 January population	The Gulag's 1 January population	Siblag's population as a percentage of the total
1930	4,592	179,000	2.6%
1931	21,149	212,000	10.0%
1932	*28,073	*271,000	10.4%
1933	*48,136	*456,000	10.6%
1934	45,422	510,307	8.9%
1935	58,609	725,483	8.1%
1936	65,447	839,406	7.8%
1937	51,473	820,881	6.3%
1938	78,838	996,367	7.9%
1939	46,382	1,317,195	3.5%
1940	40,275	1,344,408	3.0%
1941	43,857	1,500,524	2.9%

\* Numbers for these years represent averages for the year, rather than the 1 Jan population. Note that the 1 January population tended to be lower than the yearly average population, for reasons that are not clear. These figures also do not include the special settler populations. The 1 January prisoner population for Siblag is not available for 1932 or 1933.

The most noticeable anomaly between Siblag and the Gulag as a whole is the difference in growth from 1 January 1938 to 1 January 1939. The Gulag's overall population increased by almost 321,000 prisoners (a 32 percent *increase*) between 1 January 1938 and 1 January 1939, while Siblag's population *decreased* by 32,456 prisoners (a 41 percent *decrease*). Part of Siblag's decrease (around 10,000 prisoners) occurred due to the creation of Gornoshorlag (discussed below) from Siblag's Akhpunk subdivision. In other words, many of the prisoners actually remained in the same locale, despite official statistics registering this as a decrease for Siblag. There is no clear explanation for the remaining difference, but it is possible that many of Siblag's prisoners were sent to priority camps or to some of the newer camps founded at this time (largely as a response to the "Great Terror") including Tomasinlag, which was located in the

---

<sup>5</sup> See *Sistema*, 392, and Document 96: "Report on the number of prisoners in NKVD camps," in Oleg Khlevniuk, *The History of the Gulag: From Collectivization to the Great Terror* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 307.

region. Thus, while the overall numbers of prisoners within the Gulag increased during this time, for individual camps this was not always the case.

From its founding in the fall of 1929 to the outbreak of the war in June 1941 there were at least seven changes in the directorship of Sibltag (including at least seven different directors).<sup>6</sup> Although the Gulag as a whole had probably achieved a small measure of operational stability by the war's outbreak due to a more centralized structure and a fairly unified set of rules (a stability that was shattered, of course, by the war itself), the frequent turnover of top personnel clearly would have made stability difficult to achieve at the local level.

The camp administration also changed as a result of the changing political divisions of the region, as Moscow regularly carved the region into smaller political units. On 30 July 1930, the Central Executive Committee divided the Siberian Territory into the West

---

<sup>6</sup> *Sistema* 392. Note that the term “at least” is used because the exact number is difficult to know: there are small gaps for which information is unavailable. The longest serving director during this period was the first, M.M. Chuntunov, who held the position for just over two years from September 1929 to October 1931 and again for over two years from February 1934 to April 1936. Chuntunov was also the director of Karlag from 1932 (exact date unknown) to August 1933, the Baikalo-Amurskii ITL (BAMLag) from August 1933 to February 1934 and the acting (*vrid.*) director of Belbaltlag for July and August 1937. Given that August 1937 is his last listed employment within the Gulag, in all likelihood he was arrested during the “Great Terror”. See *Sistema*, pp. 153, 163, 285, 392. Other directors from the pre-war period include I.M. Bikson (October 1931-August 1932), A.A. Gorshkov (August 1932 to November 1933), P.P. Sokolov (acting director from November 1933 to an unknown date), A.P. Shishmarev (October 1936 to September 1938), A.S. Sviridov (September 1938 to April 1940), and G.N. Kopaev from April 1940 until after the outbreak of the war (note that *Sistema* does not include Kopaev, here, but information on him as director can be found in GANO f. P-260, op. 1, d. 1, as well as Chapter IV of this dissertation. There are a couple of gaps in the data from *Sistema*, making it unclear exactly how many directors ran the camp system in the pre-war period. Several of these directors also served elsewhere in the Gulag: Gorshkov was also briefly director of KazULON in 1931 (*Sistema*, 278) and Viazemlag in 1939 (*Sistema*, 199); Shishmarev was acting director of Dal’lag from 1932-33 (*Sistema*, 209) and of Sredneaziatskii ITL from 1934-36 (*Sistema*, 399); Sviridov had a long career in the Gulag, as he also directed Granitinyi ITL in 1950 (*Sistema*, 206), Zapoliarnyi ITL from 1941-42 (*Sistema*, 225), Karagandzhilstroii ITL from 1946-48 (*Sistema*, 284), Kotlaskii otdel GULZhDS from 1942-43 (*Sistema* 298), Kotlaslag from 1943-44 (*Sistema*, 300), Stroitel’stvo 508 i ITL from 1951-52 (*Sistema*, 430), and Stroitel’stvo 509 i ITL as acting (*i.o.*) director from 1953-date unknown (*Sistema*, 431); Kopaev also served as acting (*vrid.*) director of Sredneaziatskii ITL (Sazlag) briefly from late 1937 to early 1938 (*Sistema*, 399) and directed Volgolag from 1946-1950 (*Sistema*, 191), Karakumskii ITL from 1950-51 (*Sistema*, 286), ITL “BZh” briefly in 1952 (*Sistema*, 233), and ITL “GB” from late 1952-unknown date (*Sistema*, 236).

Siberian Territory and the East Siberian Territory. In late 1934, the West Siberian Territory lost several regions to the newly created Omsk Province and Krasnoiarsk Territory. Then, in September 1937, the Central Executive Committee again divided the remaining territory into two administrative units: Novosibirsk Province, centred in Novosibirsk and consisting mostly of present-day Novosibirsk, Tomsk and Kemerovo Provinces, and the Altai Territory, with its capital in Barnaul. These political changes affected camp administration, as well.

In August 1935 the NKVD created the Administration of Camps, Labour Settlements,<sup>7</sup> and Places of Confinement of the NKVD Administration of the West-Siberian Territory, located in Novosibirsk.<sup>8</sup> This new entity replaced the Siblag administration, although the director, M. M. Chuntonov, remained the same and the camp was generally still referred to as “Siblag.” Chuntonov, a career Chekist, served as Siblag’s director for two years from September 1929 to October 1931, and again from February 1934 to April 1936. He had been awarded at least one medal for his service in the 1920s in the OGPU in Krasnoiarsk, but his many years of service came abruptly to a halt in August 1937, suggesting that he was repressed during the Great Terror like so many of his peers.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> Note that in 1934 the official term for the settlements became “labour settlements” and their inhabitants “labour settlers” (*trudposeletsy*), although they were still often referred to as special settlers (*spetsposeletsy*), a term that came back into official use in 1944 for the de-kulakized peasants. See Lynne Viola, *The Unknown Gulag: The Lost World of Stalin’s Special Settlements* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 199n4.

<sup>8</sup> Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rossiskoi Federatsii (GARF) f. 9401, op. 1a, d. 6, l. 95: “Ob organizatsii Upravleniia lagerei, trudposelenii i mest zakliucheniia UNKVD ZSK” (7 August 1935).

<sup>9</sup> Aside from the information from *Sistema*, 392, a small amount of information about Chuntonov can be found on a website auctioning several rare Soviet-era medals. The reliability is, of course, unclear. See <http://www.numismat.ru/au.shtml?au=54&per=&descr=&material=&nominal=&lotype=&ordname=&or derdirection=ASC&num=10&page=19> (last accessed 22 June 2010)

In 1935, the administrative centre for the camp system moved from Mariinsk to Novosibirsk. In 1937, with the creation of Novosibirsk Province, the administration's Corrective-Labour Colonies became part the Department of Corrective-Labour Colonies for Novosibirsk Province (OITK NSO). Two years later, an NKVD operational order signed by Lavrentii Beria—the new NKVD director—created the “Administration for Corrective Labour Camps and Colonies of the NKVD Administration for Novosibirsk Province” (with the rather awkward acronym, UITLiK UNKVD NSO).<sup>10</sup> Often official documents indicate a joint jurisdiction, naming the camp system, “UITLiK UNKVD NSO (Siblag).”<sup>11</sup> The official name reveals a cumbersome jurisdictional nightmare, whereby Siblag received its operational orders officially from central Gulag authorities, central NKVD officials, and the provincial NKVD administration. In practice, directives came even from provincial and city Communist Party and governmental officials.<sup>12</sup> For simplicity's sake, the present study will translate UITLiK UNKVD NSO as the “Novosibirsk Province Camp and Colony Administration.” The present study will also retain the word Siblag for this camp system for the period of 1929-1942, when “Siblag” was the shorthand name for the camp regardless of its official title.

Shortly after the 1935 order creating the West-Siberian Camp Administration, the NKVD ordered Siblag's Krasnoiarsk area subdivisions (now located in Krasnoiarsk Territory, in Eastern Siberia) removed from Siblag's jurisdiction.<sup>13</sup> It was now

---

<sup>10</sup> GARF f. 9401, op. 1a, d. 35, l. 4: *NKVD Prikaz no. 00871: O reorganizatsii Siblaga NKVD i upravlenii OITK UNKVD po Novosibirskoi oblasti* (29 July, 1939).

<sup>11</sup> See *Sistema*, 392 n5. UITLK NSO (Siblag) remained the administrative body for the area camps until April 1942, when it was divided into two separate administrations: UITLK NSO in Novosibirsk, made up mostly of the subdivisions involved in contract work, and Siblag in Mariinsk, made up mostly of subdivisions engaged in agricultural work. For more, see Chapter 3. For the purpose of simplification, I will refer to the camp system as Siblag for the period prior to the April 1942 split.

<sup>12</sup> For examples of orders from local Party organizations, see especially Chapter IV.

<sup>13</sup> GARF f. 9401, op. 1a, d. 6, l. 131.

exclusively a West-Siberian camp. Two years later, with the creation of the Novosibirsk Province Camp and Colony Administration, its jurisdiction became even smaller, and would divide into smaller units again during World War II. Siblag also shed subdivisions to create an entirely new camp, Gornoshorlag, which lasted from 1938-41. It was founded out of the Akhpunsk camp subdivision of Siblag, where prisoners had already been working on the Gornaia-Shorskaia Railway, a task they would continue under Gornoshorlag's administration.<sup>14</sup> Tomasinlag, a camp founded near Tomsk in 1937, also partially merged with Siblag in late 1940, when much of the camp became a receiving centre for "refugees" (*bezhtentsy*) from western Ukraine and Belarus, and its largest subdivision, Asino, joined Siblag shortly thereafter.<sup>15</sup>

By the outbreak of the war, Siblag administered twenty-seven camp subdivisions, separate camp stations (OLP), and corrective-labour colonies (see Figure 2.2, below). Many of these were also divided into several camp stations, so that geographically Siblag was dispersed throughout much of the southern part of Novosibirsk Province.

Some of these Siblag subdivisions are noteworthy in their own right. For example, prisoners at the Krivoshchekovsk subdivision helped to develop much of Novosibirsk's left bank. The transit stations in Mariinsk and Novosibirsk at various times held thousands of prisoners headed for camps all over the Soviet Union. The Antibess subdivision was economically a success, and even participated in the 1940 All-Union Agricultural Exhibition. The Iask subdivision included one of the Gulag's largest enterprises, a garment factory. The Siblag economy was incredibly diverse.

---

<sup>14</sup> *Sistema*, 204. For more on Gornoshorlag, see the discussion, below.

<sup>15</sup> *Sistema*, 482-483. These "refugees" were from territories annexed by the Soviet Union at the outbreak of World War II in Europe. For more, see the discussion of Tomasinlag, below.

**Figure 2.2: Siblag divisions on the eve of the Great Patriotic War.**<sup>16</sup>

Economic activity	Name of subdivision/OLP/ITK	Population (May 1941)
Agriculture	Mariinsk OLP	657
	Orlovo-Rozovo	3187
	Novo-Ivanovo	3062
	Suslovsk	3762
	Chistiun'sk	2877
	Arliuusk	2158
	Iurginsk	2280
	Berikul'sk	1899
	Antibess	1911
	(TOTAL) 21,793	
Forestry	Kuzhukovsk OLP	492
	Taiginsk	2326
	(TOTAL) 2,818	
Factory work	Iask	4201
	Mariinsk	5801
	Iskitimsk OLP	744
	Novosibirsk OLP	436
	(TOTAL) 11,182	
Contract work	Burginsk	270
	Novo-Kuznetsk OLP	1817
	Novosibirsk	4186
	Kemerovo	2906
	Asinovo	2369
	Akhpunsk	4086
	Krivoshchekovsk	7807
	(TOTAL) 23,441	
Corrective Labour Colonies (ITKs)	Tomsk ITK no. 2	63
	Tomsk invalid colony	2254
	Berdk ITK no. 4	600
	Mariinsk transit station	156
	Novosibirsk transit station	1339
	(TOTAL) 4412	
	TOTAL in Siblag, May 1941:	63,646

In the beginning, there was not a coherent economic plan for Siblag, or indeed even much central control. Officially, the OGPU in Moscow was in charge of Siblag. Unofficially, however, Siblag minded its own business. Authorities in Moscow complained in April 1930 that Siblag's administration was "entirely independent [*v polne samostoiatel'no*]" and that it refused to consider demands from the centre. Communication was so poor, in fact, that Moscow had "no idea" about Siblag's financial

<sup>16</sup> Source: S. A. Papkov, *Stalinskii terror v Sibiri, 1928-1941* (Novosibirsk: Izd-vo Sibirskogo otd. Rossiskoi Akademii nauk, 1997), 134-135.

state. Nevertheless, the area's camps were involved in important economic activities—from brick production and distribution to coal mining, forestry and fishing—that promised to make it “comparatively the best camp” from the perspective of its internal economic production.<sup>17</sup> The report thus admits that Moscow has little control over the camp, while referring to Sibltag as one of the better camps, indicating the haphazard nature of the Gulag's early development.

In these early years, central authorities at times struggled to supply the necessary prisoners to keep up with regional demand, and at other times attempted to limit the numbers of prisoners in the camps. The lack of coherent planning is striking. In July 1930, the Gulag's then deputy director, Matvei Berman, along with the deputy chair of the OGPU, S. A. Messing,<sup>18</sup> listed Sibltag as one of several camps in need of expansion. They felt that the Siberian camps' work on the Tomsk-Eniseisk Railway, brick production for Sibkomstroi and Kuznetskstroi, services for the gold enterprise Lenzoloto, and forestry work required a prisoner increase to 30,000 from the then current 24,000.<sup>19</sup> It is certainly noteworthy that, in 1930, Sibltag was involved in the major economic activities of the region and, perhaps even more significantly, that top OGPU and Gulag officials were clearly enamoured with the economic potential of forced labour. Only three years later, however, Berman sought to limit Sibltag's growth, but was unsuccessful (see below).

---

<sup>17</sup> Document 1, “Spravka ULAG o khoziastvennoi deiatel'nosti lagerei” (no earlier than 1 April 1930), Oleg Khlevniuk, ed., *Istoriia Stalinskogo Gulaga: Tom 3: Ekonomika Gulaga* (Moscow: Rosspen, 2004) [henceforth, *ISG 3*], 62.

<sup>18</sup> Stanislav Adamovich Messing, like Berman, was a long-time Chekist; he lost his position in the OGPU in 1931, but held various other Party and governmental posts for the next several years. He was arrested and shot in 1937 and rehabilitated posthumously in 1957. See <http://www.hrono.info/biograf/messing.html>

<sup>19</sup> For the Gulag as a whole, Berman and Messing called for an additional 120,000 prisoners. See Document 3, “Dokladnaia zapiska zamestitelia predsedatelia OGPU S.A. Messinga i zamestitelia nachal'nika ULAG M.D. Bermana v SNK SSSR o khoziastvennoi deiatel'nosti OGPU i peredache v lageria novykh kontingentov zakliuchennykh” (31 July 1930), *ISG 3*, 67.

Along with the activities mentioned above, in the early-1930s Sibilag ran four coalmines in the Cheremkhovsk Basin as well as one in the Kuznetsk Basin, an area rich in coal that would soon become Siberia's industrial heartland and a key industrial region for the entire Soviet Union. Sibilag's prisoners also helped construct other mines in the Kuznetsk Basin. In all, as of April 1931, about 4,000 Sibilag prisoners worked in these mines.<sup>20</sup>

Many Sibilag prisoners worked in agriculture, on what were frequently referred to as state farms (*sovkhozy*) in the documentation. Typically, this meant that prisoners would be housed at a camp station within two to three kilometres of the state farm, and would be taken to work under convoy for fieldwork or animal husbandry. By the end of the 1931 spring sowing season, Sibilag prisoners had sown 8,570 hectares of land, over-fulfilling the plan.<sup>21</sup> Agriculture became increasingly important for Sibilag during the pre-war years, to the point that by the war's outbreak, central planners considered Sibilag an "agricultural camp," despite the wide variety of economic activity still under its jurisdiction.<sup>22</sup>

By 1933, economic reports for Sibilag place greater emphasis on agriculture. A report from Genrikh Iagoda, then acting director of the OGPU, to Stalin on the economic activities of the camps lists three main sectors for Sibilag: the supplementation of the workforce of Kuzbass Coal (*Kuzbassugol'*), the major coal-mining enterprise of the Kuznetsk Basin; contracted forestry work; and large-scale, internally-run agricultural

---

<sup>20</sup> Document 8, "Dokladnaia zapiska nachal'nika GULAG L.I.Kogana rukovodstvu OGPU o proizvodstvennoi deiatel'nosti lagerei. 6 iulia 1931," *ISG* 3, 76.

<sup>21</sup> If statistics can be believed, in any case. Economic statistics from the Gulag are notoriously unreliable.

<sup>22</sup> See, for example, *Rossiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv ekonomii (RGAE) f. 7733 op. 36*, which includes files that contain budgets for various camps. The budget reports are grouped by camp economic activity, and Sibilag is included amongst the agricultural camps.

work.<sup>23</sup> Sibltag agricultural activities were meant to help feed the camp system as a whole. In what was a classic case of Soviet bureaucratic double-speak, authorities reduced the potato and vegetable supplies to the Gulag in 1933 (the main year of the famine), claiming that the Gulag was reaching a state of self-sufficiency.<sup>24</sup> Official Gulag mortality rates for 1933 were the highest recorded in peacetime (15.3 percent), illustrating the absurdity of the claims.<sup>25</sup>

There were attempts to limit Sibltag's growth. In May 1933, Berman, now the Gulag's director called for improvements in the use of prisoners in production. Berman felt that over-crowding was leading to inefficiency. He suggested that Sibltag should not house more than 31,000 prisoners (despite a 1 January 1933 prisoner population of around 48,000), a figure similar to his 1930 order to increase Sibltag's prisoner population to 30,000. He recommended allocating more than one-third of the contingent to agricultural production (See Figure 2.3, below). Of the seventeen camps Berman discusses, Sibltag had the widest variety of economic activity.<sup>26</sup>

---

<sup>23</sup> Doc 13, "Dokladnaia zapiska zamestitelia predsedatelia OGPU G.G. Iagody I.V. Stalinu ob itogakh khoziastvennoi deiatel'nosti lagerei za 1932 i pervyi kvartal 1933 g. Ne ranee 26 apr 1933," *ISG* 3, 96. Note that this is also a good document for a discussion of living conditions in Sibltag. Note, too, that Iagoda's plan for prisoner colonies had not failed completely by this time, either, although the focus had shifted to ex-prisoners. He informs Stalin that as of 1 January 1933 there were twelve "colonization settlements" with a total population of 6,062 people (3,570 ex-prisoners and their family members).<sup>23</sup> Sibltag was one of five camps to run these types of settlements, which in West-Siberia were tied to specific "industrial enterprises," unnamed in the documentation. See Doc 13, *ISG* 3, 106. Such settlements, of course, reveal the ambiguous nature of "release" as it applies to the Gulag. These settlements were for ex-prisoners and their families, but they were still run by Sibltag itself.

<sup>24</sup> We know from memoir accounts and other sources that prisoners did not always receive even the meagre rations allotted to them, so it is quite possible that central authorities declared that the Gulag was self-sufficient in these areas when this was not at all the case. It is also likely that even if the agricultural camps produced enough food, distribution difficulties, corruption (Gulag foodstuffs ended up on the black market – see Chapter V and VI), negligence and outright malice prevented sufficient food from reaching each prisoner.

<sup>25</sup> For camp mortality rates during the Stalin era, see Anne Applebaum, *Gulag: A History* (New York: Doubleday, 2003), 582-583.

<sup>26</sup> Chart adapted from Document 14, "Zapiska nachal'nika GULAG M.D. Bermana, nachal'nika finansovogo otdela GULAG L.I. Berenzona i nachal'nika stroitel'stva kanala Moskva-Volga L.I. Kogana

**Figure 2.3: Recommended allocation of Siblag prisoners, 1933**

Agricultural production:	11,800
Coalmining and production:	6,000
Kuznetskstroï:	3,000
Chuisk roadway construction:	3,000
Production-operational ( <i>proizvodstvo-ekspluatatsionnykh</i> ) enterprises:	2,500
Camp construction:	1,500
Handicraft ( <i>kustar'</i> ) industries: <sup>27</sup>	1,200
Internal (as opposed to contracted) forestry work:	1,000
Meat-packing:	200

Despite the variety of economic activity, Siblag did not become a top-priority camp. In an October 1932 Politburo discussion on the construction of the Baikal-Amur Railroad (BAM), V. M. Molotov<sup>28</sup> and Iagoda listed six core OGPU projects, and none of Siblag's activities made it: "1) completion work at Belmorstroï, [/] 2) the construction of the Volga-Moscow canal, [/] 3) the construction of the Baikalo-Amur Railroad, [/] 4) Kolyma, [/] 5) work at Ukhta and Pechora, [/] [and] 6) preparation of firewood for Leningrad and Moscow in existing programs [*v sushchestvuiushchikh programmakh*]"<sup>29</sup>

---

zamestiteliam predsedatelia OGPU G.G. Iagoda i G.E. Prokof'evu ob uluchshenii ispol'zovaniia zakliuchennykh lagerei na proizvodstve," (17 May 1933) in *ISG* 3, 108-109.

<sup>27</sup> This is certainly a curious recommendation. Some Siblag prisoners were involved in furniture making and the manufacture of musical instruments in Tomsk; there was also a Siblag sewing factory in the settlement of Iaia. It is unclear, however, what exactly is meant by "*kustar'*," in this case.

<sup>28</sup> V. M. Molotov was a member of the Bolshevik Central Committee from 1921-57, and the Politburo from 1926-57. From 1930-41 he was Chair of the Council of People's Commissars (SNK, or *Sovnarkom*). See J. Arch Getty and Oleg V. Naumov, *The Road to Terror: Stalin and the Self-Destruction of the Bolsheviks, 1932-1939* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999) 605.

<sup>29</sup> *Rossiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv sotsial'no-politicheskoi istorii* (RGASPI) f. 17, op. 162, d. 13, l. 132 (pt 18, prot 120 O stroitel'stve Bakalo-Amurskoi magistrali (proekt predlozhenii) PB ot 16.10.32g pr. No 119, p.21"). Note that two of these projects, the Moscow-Volga Canal and firewood for Leningrad and Moscow, were located in the very heart of European Russia, and that only two (the BAM and Kolyma) were east of the Urals. This underscores the point that we should not think of the Gulag as primarily an institution of Siberia or the Far East. See Appendix of present dissertation for more information on the distribution of prisoners.

Priority camps often received healthy contingents, while prisoners in weak physical shape—likely due to long periods of custody elsewhere—were sent to camps such as Sibltag.<sup>30</sup> Sibltag was centrally located for the Soviet Union as a whole, and huge numbers of prisoners passed through the Mariinsk or Novosibirsk transit stations. Indeed, memoirs devoted exclusively to Sibltag are relatively difficult to find,<sup>31</sup> although many former prisoners mention passing through Mariinsk or Novosibirsk on their way to other, more remote, camps.<sup>32</sup> Many unfit prisoners and invalids remained in Sibltag, rather than continuing along arduous transit routes further east.<sup>33</sup>

By the middle of the decade, central reports relating to Sibltag took on a negative tone. In a September 1935 NKVD operational order, numerous deficiencies were noted: the Mariinsk subdivision was in an unsatisfactory state, with unsanitary living conditions, poor food, and unclean barracks; many of the camp's Third Department workers drank frequently, a particularly unsettling occurrence given the Third Department's key role investigating internal camp security issues. Indeed, several members of the Third

---

<sup>30</sup> Leonid Borodkin and Simon Ertz have concluded that unfit prisoners were rarely sent to arctic camps such as Norilsk. See Borodkin and Ertz, "Coercion vs. Motivation: Forced Labor in Norilsk," in Paul Gregory and Vasily Lazarev, eds., *The Economics of Forced Labor: The Soviet Gulag* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2003), 79-80.

<sup>31</sup> The most famous Sibltag memoir is that of Anna Larina, Nikolai Bukharin's widow. This was published in English in 1993 as *This I Cannot Forget: The Memoirs of Nikolai Bukharin's Widow*, trans. Gary Kern (New York: W.W. Norton, 1993). Her memoir, however, mostly focuses on Bukharin, rather than her time in the camps. The large memoir database housed by the Sakharov Center (<http://www.sakharov-center.ru/asfcd/auth/>) (now around 1500 memoirs or excerpts) does not contain many memoirs devoted to Sibltag. A search for "Sibltag" on October 2, 2005 revealed 32 memoirs that mention Sibltag. Of these 32, only 20 were by former prisoners who had spent time in Sibltag – the other 12 mention Sibltag in passing. The Memorial Society archives in Moscow contained only a handful of Sibltag memoirs when I was there for my research in 2004-2005: eight files for seven separate memoirs: Memorial f. 2, op. 1, dd. 56, 84, 97; Memorial f. 2, op. 2, d. 14, 27-28, 48; Memorial f. 2, op. 3, d. 28. For a full list of published memoirs cited in this dissertation, see the bibliography of this dissertation under "Memoirs cited".

<sup>32</sup> For examples of memoirs that mention either the Novosibirsk or Mariinsk transit camps in passing, see "My Autobiography" in "Chapter One: Evgeniia Isaakovna Iaroslavskaiia-Markon 1902-1931," Veronica Shapovalov, ed., *Remembering the Darkness: Women in Soviet Prisons* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001) 25-70, esp. 56; and "Chapter Five: Ekaterina Nikolaevna Mikhailova," Shapovalov, ed., *Remembering the Darkness*, 107-123, esp. 114.

<sup>33</sup> See pages 81-82, below.

Department had been arrested, censured, and/or lost their jobs by this time. High-level Militarized Guard (VOKhR) and Cultural-Educational Department (KVO) officials faced similar fates. This was hardly a well-disciplined group.<sup>34</sup> The arrest of Gulag officials and guards, moreover, underscores one of the difficulties in separating the perpetrators from the victims in the Soviet system. In the aftermath of the “Great Terror,” for example, four of the five highest-ranking Gulag officials were shot.<sup>35</sup>

Some of Siblag’s economic problems in the mid-1930s may also have come directly from the outside, via contract work. The use of prisoners as contract workers in non-Gulag enterprises remains an understudied aspect of Gulag historiography,<sup>36</sup> reinforcing the general view that the Gulag largely operated in isolation from surrounding populations. Forestry enterprises made extensive use of special settler labour under contract from the Gulag.<sup>37</sup> But the Gulag also contracted out significant numbers of prisoners from within its camps, which is noteworthy in part because the Soviet Union was hardly alone in using prisoners as contract labourers in key industries.<sup>38</sup> In January 1935, 12,000 Siblag prisoners, or 20.5 percent of the camp’s 58,609 total prisoners, worked as contract labourers, particularly in forestry and construction.<sup>39</sup> The number of

---

<sup>34</sup> See GARF f. 9401, op. 1a, d. 6, l. 125 (NKVD prikaz no. 00356, “O neporiadkakh v Sibirskom Ispravitel’no-Trudovom Lagere NKVD,” 25-go sentiabria 1935).

<sup>35</sup> G. M. Ivanova, “Kadry GULAGa,” in I. V. Dobrovol’skii and Ivanova, eds., *GULAG: ego stroiteli, obitateli i geroi: Rossiia po dorogam fanatizma i muchenichestva* (Moscow: Mezhd. obschestvo prav cheloveka, 1998), 40-59, esp. 47.

<sup>36</sup> One of the few scholars to discuss the issue of Gulag contract labourers in any detail is Donald Filtzer, *Soviet Workers and Late Stalinism: Labour and the Restoration of the Stalinist System after World War II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), esp. 15-17, 23-24.

<sup>37</sup> Quite early on, Soviet authorities realized that using the special settlers in forestry could benefit the regime, especially in remote areas. See Viola, *Unknown Gulag*, 60-61.

<sup>38</sup> See Michael Mancini, *One Dies, get Another: Convict Leasing in the American South, 1866-1928* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1996); and Alex Lichtenstein, *Twice the Work of Free Labor: The Political Economy of Convict Labor in the New South* (London: Verso, 1996)

<sup>39</sup> Document 18, “Dokladnaia zapiska nachal’nika finansovogo otdela NKVD SSSR L.I. Berenzona narkomu vnutrennikh del SSSR G.G. Iagode ob izliskakh rabochei sily v lageriakh” (10 Jan 1935), *ISG* 3, 115-116.

contract labourers rose to over one third of Siblag's total by the eve of the war.<sup>40</sup> This meant that prisoners at times worked alongside free workers, even though authorities attempted to limit contact.<sup>41</sup> At the July 1940 Central Committee Plenum, Stalin himself questioned the tendency of free workers and prisoners working together, stating that "It's acceptable to use the GULAG in some remote corners, but in the machine industry, in the cities, where criminals work side by side with noncriminals, I really don't know. I'd say it's very irrational and not quite appropriate".<sup>42</sup> Despite Stalin's worries, contract labour appeared to solve multiple problems: on the side of the enterprises it mitigated the effects of high labour turnover, labour shortages, and cost constraints; on the part of the Gulag it allowed for increased financial stability and shared responsibility for prisoner welfare. However, contract operations did not always run smoothly.

For Siblag itself, contract labour was not always profitable. The NKVD's financial department complained in 1935 that a "noticeable portion of the contractors are insolvent [*malokreditosposobnymi*], [therefore] receiving money from them for the work force will be delayed for a long period, which will bring financial strain to the camp system".<sup>43</sup> Nevertheless, the area's camps continued to contract out their prisoners to a significant extent.

If contract labour posed specific problems for Siblag, perhaps internally run "state farms" were more successful. By the mid-1930s, agriculture at Siblag was growing

---

<sup>40</sup> See Figure 2.2, page 71 of the present dissertation.

<sup>41</sup> An NKVD operational order concerning the prevention of escapes, from November, 1940, notes that "[b]rigades of prisoners, working at contract sites and other places, where there is the possibility of personal contact [*obshchenie*] with the civilian population, must undergo thorough searches at the gates [*na vakhtakh*]." GARF f. 9401, op. 1a, d. 60, l. 41. For more on instances of free workers working alongside Gulag prisoners see Filtzer, *Soviet Workers and Late Stalinism*, 145; and Document 39, on the isolation of prisoners at Ukhta-Pechora, in Khlevniuk, *The History of the Gulag*, 121.

<sup>42</sup> As quoted in Khlevniuk, *The History of the Gulag*, 244.

<sup>43</sup> Document 18, *ISG* 3, 115-116.

considerably. Along with Karlag in Kazakhstan, Siblag supplied meat products and grain to the whole Gulag system, making it an important distribution centre.<sup>44</sup> Siblag was particularly important for pork production. While ultimately the level of distribution to other camps is difficult to discern, agriculture also fit nicely into a colonization narrative. A sketch in Siblag’s newspaper, *Sibirskaiia perekovka*, from January 1935, nicely illustrates this, tying in Gulag labour with the development of the country (see Figure 2.4). Note the quaint, almost idyllic depiction of this Gulag farm. The caption reads, “The second pig-farm of Arliuk. Six months prior there was only the empty steppe”.<sup>45</sup>

**Figure 2.4: Siblag farm**



The Antibess subdivision even attended the All-Union Agricultural Exposition in 1940, which in and of itself should challenge some commonly held assumptions about the isolation of the Gulag.<sup>46</sup> Some prisoners evidently felt pride in agricultural production, although this could vary considerably from subdivision to subdivision.<sup>47</sup> Siblag even

<sup>44</sup> Document 20, “Dokladnaia zapiska narkoma vnutrennikh del SSSR G.G. Iagody I.V. Stalinu o rabote lagerei v 1934 g. i o plane rabot na 1935 g.,” in *ISG* 3, 123.

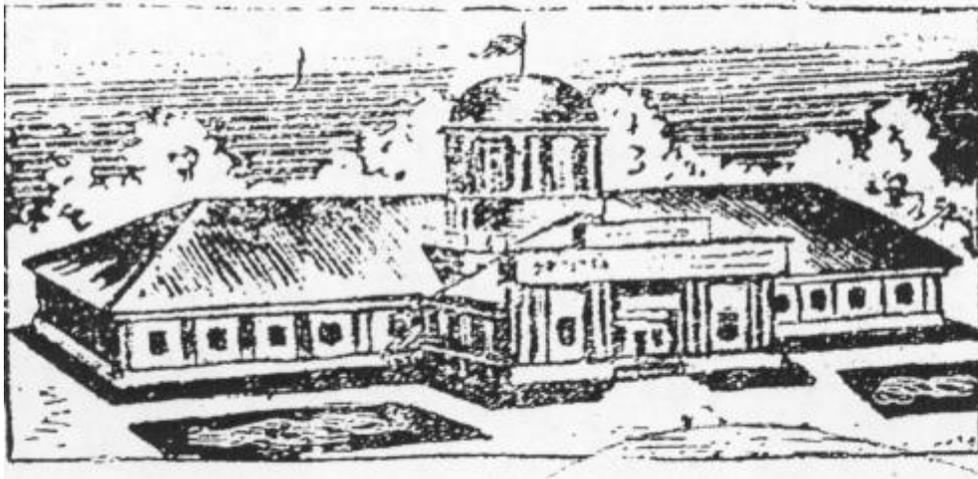
<sup>45</sup> *Sibirskaiia perekovka*, 27 January 1945, *The GULAG Press 1920-1937* (The Netherlands, IDC Publishers, 1999), fiche 485.

<sup>46</sup> See Papkov, *Stalinskii terror v Sibiri*, 130; and GANO f. P-260, op. 1, d. 1 [Protokol partiino-khoziastvennogo aktiva UITLK UMVD po NSO], l. 5. Unfortunately, I was unable to find out more information about the involvement of Antibess at the expo. One can speculate that it would not have been prisoners who travelled to the expo, and that the division’s exhibit would not have had references to prisoner labour. On the other hand, it might have been held up as propaganda, showing the supposed progressive nature of the Soviet penal system.

<sup>47</sup> See the discussion of S.S. Potresova’s memoir, on pages 87-88.

constructed a large agricultural museum, in a neo-classical style, in 1934 at the Kalininsk camp station (see Figure 2.5). Unfortunately, information about the operation of this museum is not readily available.

**Figure 2.5: Siblag Agricultural Museum**<sup>48</sup>



By 1938, the Siblag administration continued to operate one of the more extensive camp systems: its 45,295 prisoners as of 1 October made it the fifth largest Soviet camp system in prisoner population.<sup>49</sup> But Siblag continued to have problems with its workforce, a common problem throughout the Gulag. Large numbers of prisoners were too ill to work.<sup>50</sup> A 1938 report estimated that twenty percent (179,000 prisoners) of the Gulag workforce was idle due to illnesses, invalid status, pending investigations, work

---

<sup>48</sup> *Sibirskaiia perekovka*, 11 October 1934, *The GULAG Press*, fiche 463. The same image was used in several issues of *Sibirskaiia perekovka* to show, first, the model of the museum and then the museum itself. A photograph was not included, and I have not found other information about this museum, so it is not clear that it ever existed.

<sup>49</sup> Document 8, “Iz spravki GULAG i Uchetno-raspredelitel’nogo otdela GULAG o sostave zakliuchennykh, soderzhashchikhsia v lageriakh NKVD po kharakteru sovershennykh prestuplenii po sostoiqnniiu na 1 oktiabria 1938 g,” in A. B. Bezborodov, I. V. Bezborodova and V. M. Khrustalev, eds. *Istoriia Staliniskogo Gulaga: Tom 4: Naselenie Gulaga: chislennost’ i usloviia sodержaniia* (Moscow: Rosspen, 2004), 71-72 [henceforth, *ISG 4*]. The four camps larger than Siblag: Amurskii (125,313), Belbaltlag (79,232), Volgolag (70,345), and Dal’lag (64,400). BAMlag had been the largest Gulag camp on 1 January 1938, but later that year was broken up into several, smaller, camp administrations.

<sup>50</sup> Document 19, “Spravka GULAG ob ispol’zovanii kontingentov ispravitel’no-trudovykh lagerei NKVD na 11 ianvaria 1935 goda,” in *ISG 3*, 116-117.

refusal and even lack of work.<sup>51</sup> The report identified Siblag as one of the worst offenders. Due to what the report termed a surplus of prisoners, fifty percent of idle days (*prostoev*) for the Gulag as a whole came from just three camps: Siblag, Karlag, and Sazlag.<sup>52</sup> Interestingly, all three camps were designated as agricultural camps.<sup>53</sup>

Siblag's key position as a supplier of foodstuffs to the rest of the Gulag logically should have led to greater emphasis on the health of its prisoner contingent. However, Siblag continued to receive prisoners in comparatively poor health. In 1937, for example, the NKVD administration for Sverdlovsk Province in the Urals was ordered to send 2,500 healthy prisoners to BAMLag in the Far East. On their way, in Novosibirsk, authorities transferred 570 of these prisoners to Siblag because they were unfit for work.<sup>54</sup> One Siblag prisoner, Ananii Semenovich Gebel' remembered a similar occurrence. He was sent to Siberia in early summer, 1939, and authorities initially placed him with a transfer contingent to Norilsk, a high priority camp in the north. The medical commission, however, held him back, along with over three hundred other prisoners, because he and the others were too ill to work. According to Gebel', those who had spent time in the Mariinsk transit station were in especially poor shape.<sup>55</sup> The Mariinsk transit station itself

---

<sup>51</sup> "Work refusal" is a difficult category to decipher. Authorities complained regularly about "work refusers" in the camps. Some of these may have been members of criminal gangs who tended to run their own affairs. Some may have simply been too ill to work, but were not awarded invalid status. Given the staffing shortages in the Gulag, it is also possible that some "refusers" were indeed relatively healthy individuals or groups who successfully refused to work.

<sup>52</sup> Document 27, "Ob'iasnitel'naia zapiska nachal'nika GULAG I.I.Plnera k svodke o trudovom ispol'zovanii zakliuchennykh v lageriakh NKVD za mai 1938 goda," *ISG* 3, 144-145.

<sup>53</sup> For more on Sazlag – Sredneaziatskii ITL, see *Sistema*, 399. All three were centred in the more southerly regions east of the Urals (Siblag in Novosibirsk, Karlag in Karaganda, Kazakhstan, and Sazlag in Tashkent, Uzbekistan), making transport somewhat easier but where one might expect healthier prisoners than in the far north, where weather conditions were much harsher. Given the practice of sending healthier prisoners to priority camps, it is not clear what is meant by a "surplus" in this case, other than a general acknowledgement that these camps suffered from over-crowding. In any case, the practice of sending unhealthy contingents to Siblag likely contributed to the high proportion of idle days at Siblag.

<sup>54</sup> GARF f. 9401, op. 1a, d. 15, ll. 111-112.

<sup>55</sup> Memorial f. 2, op. 2, d. 14, l. 88.

may have acted almost literally (and cruelly) as a filtration camp: intense overcrowding exacerbated health issues amongst prisoners in transit, and generally the healthy ones were sent to the Gulag's furthest reaches (although unhealthy prisoners certainly also made it as far as Kolyma), while unhealthy contingents found themselves distributed amongst Sibltag's many subdivisions and camp stations.<sup>56</sup>

The problem became more acute after Beria took over from Ezhov<sup>57</sup> as head of the NKVD in 1938. Beria emphasized forestry, construction, and industrial camps; as a consequence, many unfit prisoners were filtered into those camps designated for agriculture, as these were less of a priority.<sup>58</sup> The lack of emphasis on healthy prisoner contingents for Sibltag contributed to the overall poor living conditions of the camp, where epidemics were common, barracks were generally filthy and over-crowded, and mortality rates very high.

### ***Sibltag: Living Conditions Overview***

Living conditions at Sibltag, as one might imagine, were generally terrible. However, individual experiences could vary considerably depending on the time, place, and type of incarceration within the Sibltag system, not to mention one's own place within elaborate prisoner hierarchies. Dallin and Nicolaevsky's well known early study of the Gulag even

---

<sup>56</sup> See Ertz and Borodkin, "Coercion vs. Motivation: Forced Labor in Norilsk," esp. 79-80, where they note that Norilsk received mostly healthy contingents.

<sup>57</sup> N.I. Ezhov had been a party member from 1917. He became the deputy commissar for agriculture in 1930 and from 1936-38—the period of the "Great Terror"—he directed the NKVD. He was arrested in April 1939, and shot in 1940. For more see Khlevniuk, *The History of the Gulag*, 357, and J. Arch Getty and Oleg V. Naumov, *Yezhov: The Rise of Stalin's "Iron Fist"* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008).

<sup>58</sup> This is the argument of S. A. Papkov. See Papkov, *Stalinskii terror v Sibiri*, 135.

concluded, based on memoirs available at the time, that Sibilag was one of the harshest camps in the entire system.<sup>59</sup> Some ex-prisoners certainly support this contention.

O. Feldheim, who spent time in the mid-1930s in Sibilag's Osinovsk division, recalled that when he arrived at the camps, the "Old residents [*starozhily*] of the barracks met us optimistically: they told us that no one makes it more than three months and, if [you] don't die, [you'll] be sent on 'rest'," a euphemism, according to Feldheim, for agricultural work.<sup>60</sup> Indeed many prisoners were shocked by their first experience of the barracks. Iosif Berger, who also spent time in Sibilag in the mid-1930s, described the barracks at a camp station in the majestic foothills of the Altai Mountains as "dilapidated." On the inside, however, it was the condition of the prisoners that shocked him: "The room was fully stocked with sweaty, half-naked, emaciated "zeks". Their faces seemed brutalized to us. We recoiled in fear".<sup>61</sup>

Most Sibilag subdivisions were poorly prepared for the influx of prisoners that accompanied the First Five-Year Plan. One free worker wrote directly to Viacheslav Molotov in 1932 after having visited the Corrective Labour Colony at Iaia, which at that time housed mostly prisoners in poor physical shape who had been sent from other camps.<sup>62</sup> He noted that "[t]here are those who are completely blind, with eyes burnt by mine drilling cartridges, as well as those who are paralyzed, disfigured, and completely mutilated, without hands or legs, and those dying of consumption." He then argued that the prisoners "have more than once paid for their crimes, have lost strength and health,

---

<sup>59</sup> See David J. Dallin and Boris I. Nicolaevsky, *Forced Labor in Soviet Russia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1947) 215. Here they write that "living conditions were exceptionally bad" at Sibilag.

<sup>60</sup> See O. Fel'tgeim", "Konets ssylki," *Annales contemporaines/Sovremennia zapiski* LXVIII (1939), 413. From his description, it is unclear what activities the prisoners were engaged in for the first three months.

<sup>61</sup> Berger, *Krushenie pokoleniia*, 102.

<sup>62</sup> See Document 9, "Letter from worker S. I. Verkhoturov to V. M. Molotov, 5 June 1932," in Khevniuk, *The History of the Gulag*, 38-39. Note that this also supports the contention that Sibilag received prisoners in poor physical shape.

eyesight and sanity,” and that “many of them suffer almost without guilt, slandered by their co-workers and enemy neighbors”. Camp conditions could create almost unimaginable suffering.<sup>63</sup>

The influx of prisoners caused problems with over-crowding. In Tomsk, for example, a camp subdivision meant to hold not more than 1,000 prisoners instead counted 3,100 as of September 1931. Tomsk Procurator Smirnov noted that most prisoners were poorly clothed, filthy, and had suffered considerably due to lengthy travel. A typhus epidemic hit the camp in August.<sup>64</sup> Death rates were very high, although difficult to calculate. In 1932, 900 prisoners in the Tomsk corrective labour establishments had already died by October, and 276 died in June alone. By this point another 453 had escaped.<sup>65</sup> High prisoner turnover makes both rates of escape and of mortality almost impossible to calculate, but the average of approximately one hundred prisoner deaths per month in this relatively small camp subdivision is certainly striking, and would seem to be well above the Gulag’s overall mortality for 1932 of 4.81 percent. By this time, the famine of 1932-33 was already making itself felt. Even outside of the camps in Western Siberia there was a massive increase in the mortality rate, although precise statistics are unavailable.<sup>66</sup>

Prisoners attempted to supplement their meagre rations with food packages or money (that could be spent at the camp commissary) sent from relatives. An Orthodox Archpriest, Sergei Alekseevich Sidorov, who briefly spent time in a Siblag “state farm” in Mariinsk in 1932, wrote many letters to family members during his incarceration.

---

<sup>63</sup> It should also be noted that this particular letter resulted in an inspection of the camp (by Siblag authorities). The report, not surprisingly, supported the camp’s directors. See Khlevniuk, *The History of the Gulag*, 39.

<sup>64</sup> Tsentr dokumentatsii noveishii istorii Tomskoi oblasti (TsDNI TO) f. 80, op. 1, d. 139, l. 22.

<sup>65</sup> TsDNI TO f. 80, op. 1, d. 163, l. 49.

<sup>66</sup> According to V. V. Kondrashin, there are no reliable data for Western Siberia’s population during the famine, but he notes that the population of the region “*balansirovalo na grani depopulatsii*.” See V. V. Kondrashin, *Golod 1932-1933 godov: tragediia rossiskoi derevni* (Moscow: Rosspen, 2008), 191.

Although most of his letters are upbeat, frequently describing the beautiful Siberian countryside (no doubt he wished to allay any concerns his family may have had, and also pass the letters by the censor), the lack of proper food in the camp was a major concern. As he wrote in a letter dated 4 March, “I feel well, but the wounds on my legs (swelling of the feet) are bothering me. They say I need fats [*Govoriat, neobkhodimy mne zhiry*]. Thus I again risk asking you about [sending] a parcel. Forgive my harassment. How are the children? How is Tania? Kisses to you all. Sergei Sidorov”. His next letter, from 23 April, also ends by asking for a food parcel: “I am waiting for a parcel with impatience. If possible, send biscuit cakes”.<sup>67</sup> Parcels could play an extremely important part in life in the camps, and not only because they carried food and money. The psychological connection to one’s family members was just as important. As one Siblag prisoner, sentenced under Article 58, recalled, “Yes, money, sent from relatives, played an enormous role not only because it offered the possibility of improving one’s rations, but most of all as moral support: the realization that [one’s relatives] had not forgotten you. Loneliness is nowhere else so terrifying, as in a prison or a camp”.<sup>68</sup>

The physical space of the camps could vary considerably. In some subdivisions barracks were earthen dugouts, spaced haphazardly. The harsher camp subdivisions and stations of Siblag, on the other hand, resembled well-ordered concentration camps. Nikolai Nikolaevich Boldyrev, an engineer, describes the ninth penalty station of Siblag’s Akhpunsk subdivision in the mid-1930s as complete with barbed wire, watch towers, and crowded barracks where prisoners slept in their clothes to prevent theft. Guards led

---

<sup>67</sup> Sergei Alekseevich Sidorov (Archpriest), *Zapiski sviashchennika Sergiia Sidorova: S pril. ego zhizneopisaniia, sost. docher’iu, V. S. Bobrinskoi* (Moscow: Pravoslav. Sviato-Tikhonov. Bogoslov. In-t, 1999) 240.

<sup>68</sup> N. I. Sats, *Zhizn’ – iavlenie polosatoe* (Moscow: Novosti, 1991) 332.

prisoners to work under the threat of death if the prisoners broke rank. Insufficient rations led to a slogan common at Akhpunk: “You die today, and I, tomorrow [*Umri ty segodnia, i ia – zavtra*]”.<sup>69</sup> Because of its status as a penalty station (i.e., meant for those with particularly harsh sentences and those who had committed crimes while in the camps), Akhpunk cannot be considered representative of Sibltag as a whole. Even in this harshest of camp stations, moreover, the barracks were not permanent buildings, but large tents (*palatki*) with wood-burning stoves for heat, hardly fitting the image of machine-like efficiency.

Another prisoner, A. S. Gebel', who spent time in Sibltag's second Suslovsk subdivision in the late 1930s and early 1940s, also remembers the horrible living conditions. The bathhouse, for example, was more than one kilometre from his camp station and only had room for seven to ten people, while authorities usually brought twenty-five to thirty at any one time. For him, the worst aspect of camp life was the dehumanization, as camp personnel “valued [prisoners] lower and cheaper than livestock, fed [them] worse than livestock, and related to [them] as if [they were] slaves”. The prisoners worked ten to twelve hour days, slept on hard bunks with no blankets, and did not receive proper food. Gebel' was later transferred to the first Suslovsk subdivision, where the work (in both cases, fieldwork) was not as difficult and the conditions generally better, but extremely cold temperatures meant that what little food the prisoners received was often frozen.<sup>70</sup> In theory, prisoners were not supposed to work in extreme cold, although it is not clear how this worked at Sibltag's agricultural subdivisions.

---

<sup>69</sup> N.N. Boldyrev, “Zigzagi sud'by,” in *Pozhivshi v GULAGe: Sbornik vospominanii*, compiled by Aleksander Solzhenitsyn (Moscow: Rus. put', 2001) 73-140, esp. 93-95. This slogan was common throughout the Gulag.

<sup>70</sup> See Ananii Semenovich Gebel', “Kratkie epizody ternistigo puta s 1937 (iun') do 1956 g. (ianvar'),” Memorial f. 2, op. 2, d. 14, ll. 94-99.

Elsewhere, many memoirists report working even in temperatures lower than –40 degrees Celsius.<sup>71</sup>

Remarkable differences in prisoners' lives can be seen from place to place. Sof'ia Sergeevna Potresova, who spent ten years in Sibltag from 1937 to 1947, remembers the pre-war years almost fondly. She was sent to the Antibess subdivision, like Suslovsk, an agricultural subdivision. Yet according to her account the prisoners were fed well, properly dressed, lived in clean, earthen dug-out barracks (*zemlianki-barraki*), and were taught properly how to work in the fields. The subdivision's director, F. I. Kazachenko, treated the prisoners with respect, telling them that they were "not considered prisoners, but temporary detainees".<sup>72</sup> The prisoners even received pay for their labour.<sup>73</sup> Potresova's experiences at other Sibltag subdivisions also show that Antibess was atypical. She describes the Orlovo-Rozovo subdivision as a place with dirty barracks, poorly fed and under-dressed prisoners, and an extremely high mortality rate, especially in the men's zones.<sup>74</sup> Interestingly, the prisoners at Orlovo-Rozovo "refused to believe" what she told them about Antibess, but there is other evidence that Kazachenko was well-liked and that the Antibess division operated differently and had greater success than other Sibltag divisions. Male prisoners remember Kazachenko fondly, too, suggesting that Potresova's experience was not gender specific.<sup>75</sup> Kopaev, director of Sibltag in the

---

<sup>71</sup> Applebaum, *Gulag*, 227.

<sup>72</sup> S. S. Potresova, "O Kazachenko," Memorial f. 2, op. 1, d. 97, l. 1. I have been unable to locate information as to why, specifically, Antibess operated differently than other camps, although Potresova gives full credit to Kazachenko.

<sup>73</sup> Potresova, "O Kazachenko," l. 2.

<sup>74</sup> Potresova, "O Kazachenko," l. 4

<sup>75</sup> Potresova, l. 5. I have come across one other memoir where Kazachenko is described in glowing terms. Apparently, Kazachenko during the war ended up directing the very division, Orlovo-Rozovo, that Potresova compared unfavourably to Antibess. One former prisoner during this time, Evsei Moiseevich L'vov, describes Kazachenko as a "Blestiashchii chelovek, kommunist, khoziain i administrator!" who

immediate pre-war years, pointed to the Antibess subdivision as an example for other agricultural subdivisions to follow: “Our current key task is to make our state farms [sovkhozy] progressive and profitable [*peredovymi i rentabel’nymi*], so that all state farms will have the right to take part in the All-Union Agricultural Exhibition, following the example of the progressive state farm, Antibess”.<sup>76</sup>

The case of Kazachenko reveals that individual camp administrators could have significant impact over the day-to-day lives of prisoners, regardless of central orders and directives. In the words of a Russian scholar, “The life of [those] sentenced in a large part [*vo mnogom*] depended upon the staff of the camps, who guarded them, brought [them] to work, [and] provided [them] with food.”<sup>77</sup>

### ***Cultural-educational activities***

Many Gulag camps were surprisingly active in the cultural sphere, with newspapers, theatre troupes, orchestras, film-screenings, and so on. Why did the regime devote resources to cultural activities?<sup>78</sup> In short, the Gulag never abandoned the idea that at least some prisoners were redeemable, and thus should be reeducated as proper Soviet citizens. As time went on, though, even cultural activities in the camps were geared mostly

---

really knew how to supervise agricultural production. See E. M. L’vov, “[Vospominaniia],” Memorial f. 2, op. 1, d. 84, l. 34.

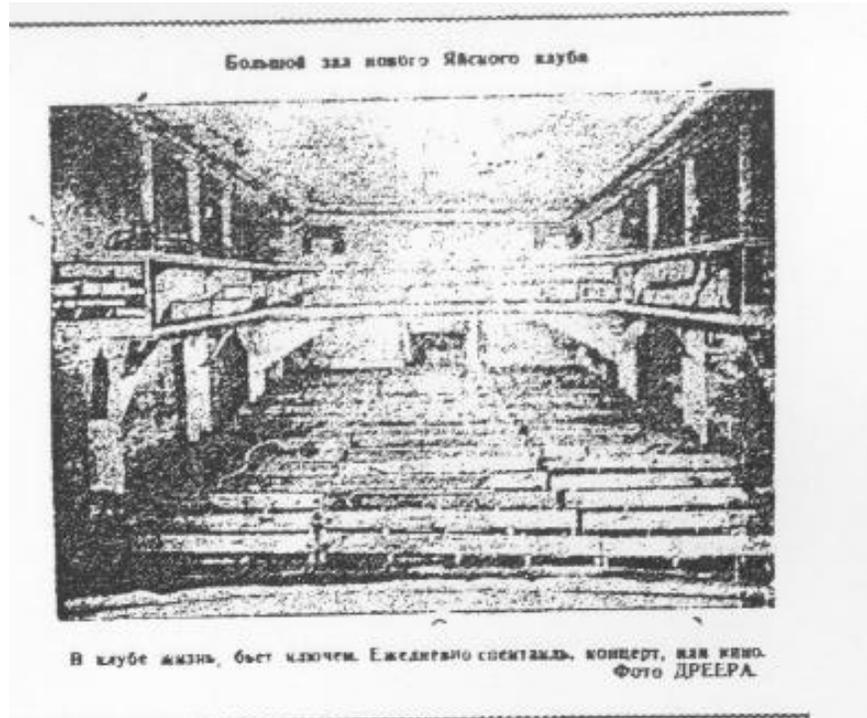
<sup>76</sup> For more on Antibess in Kopaev’s report, see GANO f. P-260, op. 1, d. 1, l. 5

<sup>77</sup> I. V. Bezborodova, “Vvedenie,” *ISG* 4, 44.

<sup>78</sup> It is also not clear that, in reality, the regime actually focused much attention on Cultural Educational activities. Nick Baron reports that at the Belomor canal camp in 1936 the authorities devoted 323,000 rubles to cultural-educational work, or roughly 2.7% of the camp budget. In the forestry camps of the region, less than one percent of the funds devoted to prisoner upkeep went towards cultural-educational activities. See Baron, “Production and Terror: The operation of the Karelian Gulag, 1933-1939,” *Cahiers du Monde russe* 43.1 (2002): 139-179, esp. 152.

towards increasing the camps' economic output. Reeducation campaigns also explicitly excluded Article 58ers, as well as prisoners sentenced for harsh crimes such as banditry.<sup>79</sup>

**Figure 2.6: Photo of the *bol'shoi zal* at the Iaia cultural club.**



The Cultural-Education Department (KVO) technically held responsibility for the reeducation of prisoners. Each camp system had its own Cultural-Education Department, with individual Cultural-Educational Sections (KVCh) associated with each particular camp subdivision. The Cultural-Educational Department and Sections published newspapers, organized political lectures, ran cultural events such as theatrical performances and chess tournaments, and also frequently reported on the individual character of prisoners. The emphasis on cultural activities is at times striking. For

---

<sup>79</sup> “Banditry” was considered an especially severe crime, as it usually meant that one had committed a crime while in the camps.

example, in December 1935 the division at Iaia opened its new cultural club, which included the “*bol’shoi zal* [large hall]”. A photograph (see Figure 2.6, above) shows that the hall was a two-level theatre, and the caption claims that there were “performances, concerts, or films” every day.<sup>80</sup> The intended audience for these activities appears to have been the staff of the camp itself, as well as those prisoners serving relatively light sentences.

Sporting events within the camps were also common, and Siblagn’s Cultural-Educational Department had its own soccer and volleyball teams, which regularly played against teams representing individual camp subdivisions or camp stations.<sup>81</sup>

Although central authorities banned prisoners sentenced for counter-revolutionary activities from participating in camp cultural activities, in practice Article 58ers at times found ways of doing so. One of Siblagn’s better-known prisoners was Nataliia Il’inichna Sats, who before her arrest and sentencing under Article 58 had been a theatre director at the Moscow Children’s Theatre and had even travelled abroad to Berlin and Buenos Aires as part of her theatrical work. She spent two years in Siblagn from 1937-1939. While recovering from typhus, she was assigned light work in the records office at the Mariinsk subdivision. One day, while passing by the camp’s cultural club, she heard the choir practicing and asked if she could accompany the choir on piano. The choir director allowed her to do so, since playing the piano was “technical, not ideological” work. She was popular with prisoners because she frequently received parcels, and popular with camp personnel (except, evidently, the subdivision’s director) due to her work with the choir. Eventually, the camp administration allowed Sats to put on a play. The play—

---

<sup>80</sup> *Sibirskaiia perekovka*, 28 December 1935, *GULAG Press*, fiche 493.

<sup>81</sup> See “Na futbol’nom pole,” *Sibirskaiia perekovka*, 12 August 1934, *The GULAG Press*, fiche 462. Applebaum briefly discusses soccer teams at the camps. See Applebaum, *Gulag*, 269.

Aleksandr Ostrovskii's *The Dowerless Girl* (1879)—was so successful that Sats' "troupe" went on tour, so to speak, performing at several different Siblaga subdivisions. The camp's Third Section, in charge of internal security, even provided set decorations and costumes. For Sats this was a taste of freedom: "It was a joy to switch into the world of Ostrovskii, to bear his words, to live in his brilliant play, forgetting about the barbed wire... This was the one piece of heaven in my life".<sup>82</sup>

Siblaga's Cultural-Educational Department also had an active press, at least into the late-1930s. The main newspaper for the camp system, *Sibirskaia perekovka*, or "Siberian re-forging" was a relatively high quality paper, usually published once or twice per week, with a typical print-run of 3,000 copies.<sup>83</sup> Although the department's director was a party member, and individual section directors were all supposed to be party members, prisoners carried out much of the work of the department and individual sections. *Sibirskaia perekovka*, for example, in May 1934 claimed to have 198 prisoner "camp correspondents".<sup>84</sup> Thus prisoners produced what essentially amounted to propaganda regarding production, reeducation, and events within the Soviet Union, for

---

<sup>82</sup> For her description of cultural activities at Siblaga in the late 1930s, see Sats, *Zhizn' – iavlenie polosatoe*, 327-340, quotations pp. 329, 334. The ellipses in the final quotation are in the original. Sats was transferred to Temlag in 1939 and later Rybinskii camp. She was "released" in August 1942 (at the end of her five-year sentence) but continued to work in a camp cultural club until the following year. She was involved in theatre for the rest of her life, was "rehabilitated" in the 1950s, and even won the Lenin Prize in 1982. She died in December 1993 in Moscow.

<sup>83</sup> Most issues of *Sibirskaia perekovka* for 28 February 1934 (issue no. 1) – 27 October 1936 (issue no. 198 {issue no. 69 of 1936}) can be found in *The GULAG Press*, fiches 461-464, 485-493, and 481-484. The paper was published usually one-two times per week. It most often included four pages, although quite a few issues had only two pages; some contained six-eight pages, and even one had ten pages. The print-run usually ranged from 2,000-4,000, with "3,000" and "3,200" the most common. The peak listed print-run was 6,000, on both 16 October and 24 December, 1935. The first four issues of 1936 had a print-run of 5,000 copies, but most subsequent issues for 1936 do not list the print-run. The editor, when listed, is identified as V. I. Berezin. Interestingly, *Sibirskaia perekovka* was published in Mariinsk and listed as the "*Organ KVO upravleniia Siblaga NKVD*" until late-August, 1935; from this point, it is the "*Organ KVO upravleniia lagerei, TP i MZ UNKVD po ZSK*," and published out of Novosibirsk. See *The GULAG Press*, fiche 491. This corresponds with administrative changes in the camp. Unfortunately, it is unclear what happens to the publication after issue no. 198. The same microfiche collection also includes several issues of three different 1934 Siblaga production bulletins. See fiche numbers 316, 319-320, and 583.

<sup>84</sup> *Sibirskaia perekovka*, 6 May 1934, p. 1, *The GULAG Press*, fiche 461.

other prisoners, some of whom no doubt felt resentment towards these efforts.<sup>85</sup> Yet work in the cultural sections certainly provided a respite from the harsh conditions, for those privileged enough to receive positions.<sup>86</sup>

Front-page articles in *Sibirskaia perekovka* often focused on production-related issues, and in language that was unmistakably Soviet. To cite one example, the rather cumbersome headline of the 9 September 1934 issue reads, “*Shock-workers of the Siberian camps: the dir[ector] of the Gulag, c[omrade] Berman has exhorted us to strengthen tempos, [and to] improve the quality of our work; Let’s fulfil the wishes of the Gulag dir[ector], and achieve first in the competition with Karlag.*”<sup>87</sup> Competitions between camps (such as Sibltag and Karlag) and between individual subdivisions, camp stations, and even brigades were omnipresent within the camp system, mirroring labour competitions in Soviet society at large. In this case, however, there was one important linguistic difference. Competitions between groups of prisoners were usually termed “labour” competitions, instead of “socialist” competitions, the generally accepted term outside of the camps.

Many *Sibirskaia perekovka* articles showed prisoners that if they worked harder, rewards would follow. The 12 April 1934, issue, for example, included three articles related to the early release of shock-workers from the camp, all under the main headline, “The way to early release is through shock-work, high [political] consciousness [*vysokuiu soznatel’nost’*], [and] participation in cultural-educational work.” One of the articles

---

<sup>85</sup> For an in-depth examination of this question, see Wilson T. Bell, “One Day in the Life of Educator Khrushchev: Labour and *Kul’turnost’* in the Gulag Newspapers,” *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 46, 3/4 (2004), 289-313. On prisoner hostility to the messages of the KVO/KVCh, see Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago, 1918-1956: An Experiment in Literary Investigation*, vol. 2 (III-IV), trans. T. P. Whitney, (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), 468.

<sup>86</sup> Bell, “Gulag Newspapers,” 310. Stas, discussed above, clearly felt this way.

<sup>87</sup> *Sibirskaia perekovka*, 9 September 1934, *The GULAG Press*, fiche 462.

featured two ex-prisoners, who had both been shock-workers in the camp, discussing how they had achieved early release.<sup>88</sup> Other general types of articles in the paper include short pieces on cultural or sporting events, examples of poetry, general information about major events (such as a lengthy article, with no sense of irony given the context, on the history of the First of May holiday), and articles related to leading a healthier way of life (on personal hygiene, for example).<sup>89</sup> These are quite similar both to other newspapers within the Gulag, and to the Soviet press more generally, although international news is rare in the pages of *Sibirskaia perekovka*, even in comparison with the papers of some other Gulag camps.<sup>90</sup> As Jeffrey Brooks writes of the regular Soviet press, the Gulag press also “presented a normative standard” for behaviour.<sup>91</sup>

Young offenders received special consideration for reeducation. The Gulag issued several orders, one in 1932 and again in October 1933, to separate young offenders from adult prisoners, in their own barracks and preferably in their own camp stations.<sup>92</sup> To this end, three corrective-labour colonies were founded in Tomsk in 1933 and 1934.<sup>93</sup> Berman emphasized that each camp should dedicate one cultural department worker from “among the best” solely to work amongst young offenders. Not surprisingly, reeducation remained an important aspect of young-offenders’ colonies throughout the Gulag’s

---

<sup>88</sup> *Sibirskaia perekovka*, 12 April 1934, *The GULAG Press*, fiche 461.

<sup>89</sup> See, for example, “Lichnaia gigiena lagernika,” *Sibirskaia perekovka*, March 1934, *The GULAG Press*, fiche 461; “Pervoe maia (istoricheskaia spravka),” *Sibirskaia perekovka*, 1 May 1934, *The GULAG Press*, fiche 461; the poems “Gremit taiga,” “Maloletkam,” and “Gornoshorets,” *Sibirskaia perekovka*, 25 July 1934, *The GULAG Press*, fiche 462.

<sup>90</sup> For more on the similarities between the Gulag press and the regular Soviet press see Bell, “Gulag Newspapers,” esp. 305-06, 312-13.

<sup>91</sup> See Jeffrey Brooks, *Thank You, Comrade Stalin! Soviet Public Culture from Revolution to Cold War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000) xvii.

<sup>92</sup> GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 4, ll. 79ob-80: *PRIKAZ GULAGa OGPU No 154: O sodержanii nesovershennoletnikh z/k z/k v lageriakh OGPU*, 4 Oct 1933.

<sup>93</sup> David Shearer, “Mastering the Soviet Frontier: Western Siberia in the 1930s,” in *The Siberian Saga: A History of Russia’s Wild East*, ed. Eva-Maria Stolberg (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2005), 159-172.

history. Location was part of this, moreover: young offender barracks and stations needed to be located as close to the places of work as possible, so that the young offenders would be able to work and complete their studies.<sup>94</sup>

The Tomsk corrective-labour colonies for young offenders more-or-less followed Berman's instructions. The prisoners lived and worked within the Tomsk city limits, in enterprises that produced shoes, furniture, and musical instruments (balalaikas and guitars). If their educators were from "among the best" of the Cultural-Educational Department's personnel, however, the department clearly had serious personnel issues. The problem was severe enough to attract the attention of the central NKVD in Moscow, which noted that the top personnel of the Tomsk colonies were often drunk and committed other infractions, "compromising them in the eyes of the pupils".<sup>95</sup>

Interestingly, there was one Siblag subdivision that does not appear to have conducted any cultural-educational activities, nor were its prisoners actively involved in any type of economic production. This was the Tomsk camp for family members of so-called "enemies of the people."

### *The Tomsk Camp for Family Members of Enemies of the People*

Given its lack of economic and cultural activities, the "Tomsk Camp for Family Members of Traitors to the Motherland," a Siblag subdivision in existence from December 1937 to October 1939, is a curious chapter in Siblag's history.<sup>96</sup> This camp is most famous for briefly housing Anna Larina, the wife of Nikolai Bukharin (Larina also

---

<sup>94</sup> GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 4, l. 79ob.

<sup>95</sup> GARF f. 9401, op. 1a, d. 5, l. 143: NKVD Operational Order no. 325 from 8 December 1934: *O nedochatakh v rabote trudkommun AKhU (AKhO) UNKVD i trudkolonii molodezh GULAGa NKVD SSSR.*

<sup>96</sup> For more information on this camp, see Shapovalov, ed., *Remembering the Darkness*, 238-239 n. 1-2.

spent time in the penalty isolator at Antibess, and at other Sibltag subdivisions).<sup>97</sup> Larina was in the Tomsk camp from December 1937 to March 1938, while her husband was on trial.<sup>98</sup> Although the camp was ostensibly for family members of “traitors to the Motherland,” while Larina was there it housed only women, except for the two-year-old son of one of the prisoners.

Larina remembers her time at this camp with a trace of fondness, noting that she and the other prisoners were “relatively happy” because they were no longer in transit, and “no physical labor was required”. She recalls using this time to chat and connect with other prisoners, all wives of intermediate and high level party functionaries. Interestingly, another prisoner at the camp at the same time as Larina, Nina Alekseevna Noskovich, recalls, “there was no possibility of speaking with [Larina], as [the bosses] had surrounded her with informants, and anything said to her would be known by the bosses”.<sup>99</sup> Larina states that the guards treated the prisoners horribly, placing them in the penalty isolator on the slightest provocation, and frequently verbally abusing them, blaming them for the “crimes” of their husbands. She describes the early spring in 1938 in nostalgic terms, worth quoting in full for the juxtaposition of the beautiful natural surroundings with the harsh reality of the camp:<sup>100</sup>

That year, 1938, spring came unusually early; in all my twenty years<sup>101</sup> to come in Siberia, there would never be another like it. The birch branches not only bristled with little buds but here and there produced a tender lace of barely opened pale green leaves. How good these birches were, with crowds of gloomy women in

---

<sup>97</sup> For more on Larina, see Paul Gregory, *Politics, Murder, and Love in Stalin's Kremlin: The Story of Nikolai Bukharin and Anna Larina* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2010).

<sup>98</sup> For Larina's time in the Tomsk camp, see Larina, *This I Cannot Forget*, esp. 42-51.

<sup>99</sup> Noskovich, N. A. (Lekarenko), “Vospominaniia “pridurka”,” *Neva*, 2001, no. 4, 165-183, quotation 169.

<sup>100</sup> Larina, *This I Cannot Forget*, 49. Previous quotation comes from 43.

<sup>101</sup> Larina was arrested in September 1937. She first arrived in Siberia in February 1938, but from the end of 1938 through 1941 was back in Moscow, first in the Lubyanka prison and then in the Butyrka prison. From 1942-1956 she then was back in Siberia, at the Iask subdivision, a harsh regimen camp station of the Iskitimsk subdivision, and then in administrative exile in Novosibirsk Province.

threadbare clothing milling around them, some tossing off their dirty gray quilted jackets! How good they looked against the background of dilapidated low barracks and trampled-down earth, the compound it seemed you would never leave!

Other prisoners at the Tomsk camp also recall greeting each other with excitement. Kseniia Medvedskaia, whose husband had been deputy-head of the Logging-Lumber Office of Leningrad Cooperative Supply, remembers her first night in the camp as one of “great joy,” in part because she was no longer in transit, and in part because she was able to chat and catch up with so many different people. Still, life was gruelling in the camp, and Medvedskaia even spent time in the penalty isolator. She was most appalled at the lack of basic human decency that the camp engendered. As she writes, “The regimen in prison corrupted people, and that was terrible. Denouncing each other was not only demanded but praised. If someone saw somebody else break the rules and did not report it, they would be punished along with the person who committed the infraction”.<sup>102</sup>

This camp is especially noteworthy not only because it housed Anna Larina. The existence of this camp and others for family members of so-called enemies of the people raises questions about the Gulag’s purpose. For one, there was no labour involved. Clearly, without any economic activity, the Tomsk camp’s sole purpose was isolation. Neither Larina nor Medvedskaia recall any attempts at the reeducation of inmates, either. In fact, Larina reports that the prisoners had nothing to read at all.<sup>103</sup> The order establishing these camps, NKVD Operational Order 00486 from 15 August 1937, states, “Wives of convicted traitors to the Motherland shall be incarcerated in the camps for

---

<sup>102</sup> Kseniia Dmitrievna Medvedskaia, “Life is Everywhere,” in Shapovalov, ed., *Remembering the Darkness*, 225-241, quotation 233.

<sup>103</sup> Larina, *This I Cannot Forget*, 47.

terms, depending on the degree of social danger, of no less than five to eight years”.<sup>104</sup> Thus these prisoners were also only guilty by association; their only treacherous acts, presumably, involved failing to report on their husbands’ supposed counter-revolutionary activity.<sup>105</sup>

This particular camp subdivision existed for only a couple of years, barely surviving the Great Terror itself. The experiment in camps without economic or cultural activities, in other words, was short lived. And at the same time that this camp was created, moreover, the Gulag opened many new camps with very specific economic tasks. The mass arrests of 1937-38 led to a huge influx of prisoners into the system. Western Siberia was home to two of these new camps.

### ***One Success, One Failure: Two camps from the late-1930s***

Western Siberia’s two new camp systems were Gornoshorlag in present-day Kemerovo Province, and Tomasinlag in present-day Tomsk Province. Both opened during the period now commonly known as the Great Terror, and both closed for different reasons in the months before the German invasion of the USSR. Gornoshorlag completed its assigned task in a timely fashion, while Tomasinlag abruptly ceased operations as a consequence of external factors: the influx of “refugees” (*bezhtensy*) to the area from the USSR’s western borderlands, where both territories and loyalties fluctuated due to the Nazi-Soviet Pact and the outbreak of World War II in Europe.<sup>106</sup> Although Gornoshorlag could in

---

<sup>104</sup> Shapovalov, ed., *Remembering the Darkness*, 239, n. 2.

<sup>105</sup> See also, Golfo Alexopoulos, “Stalin and the Politics of Kinship: Practices of Collective Punishment, 1920s-1940s,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 50.1 (2008): 91-117. Here she notes that repressive campaigns often targeted family “clans” and “lineages.”

<sup>106</sup> The Nazi-Soviet Pact, often referred to as the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, after the foreign ministers of the Soviet Union and Germany, respectively, was ostensibly a non-aggression pact signed on 23 August 1939.

some respects be labelled a success, due to the completion of its main assigned task, and Tomasinlag a failure, as it was removed altogether from the Administration of Forestry Camps (ULLP – *Upravlenie lagerei lesnoi promyshlennosti*) when there was still much work to be done, both experienced similar problems with inefficiency, corruption, and escapes. “Success” for a Gulag camp was clearly a measure of result, not process.

Had the Gulag opened these camps earlier in the decade, both would have fallen under Siblag’s administrative umbrella. Indeed, work on the railroad built by Gornoshorlag began at Siblag’s Akhpunsk subdivision, several years before Gornoshorlag commenced its operations. But, by the late 1930s, two factors were at work that contributed to an increase in the number of camp systems within the Soviet Union. First, while most camps were involved in a variety of economic activities, there was a clear trend towards greater economic specialization for specific camp systems, perhaps because this was easier to administer. This meant that subdivisions of certain camps (such as the Akhpunsk subdivision of Siblag) became their own, separate camp administrations. And, second, a huge wave of prisoners entered the Gulag as a result of the mass arrests and purges of 1937-38, and many new camp subdivisions—as well as entirely new camps—were founded at this time. In conjunction with this wave of prisoners, the Gulag took over large forestry tracts in many parts of the Soviet Union, including Western Siberia.

---

Secret protocols attached to the pact called for the division of Poland and the Baltic countries between the USSR and Nazi Germany should war break out between Poland and Germany. On 1 September, Germany invaded Poland. Soviet troops entered eastern Poland on 17 September in order to secure their territory as outlined in the Pact’s secret protocols. The text of the Pact and the attached protocols has been widely published. For an easily accessible source, see the documents at the “Seventeen Moments in Soviet History” website, section titled, “1939: Soviet Territorial Annexations”  
<http://www.soviethistory.org/index.php?page=subject&SubjectID=1939annex&Year=1939&Navi=byYear>  
(last accessed: 2 June 2010)

## *Gornoshorlag*

Gornoshorlag, founded in 1938, was originally part of Siblag as Siblag's Ninth Akhpunsk subdivision, located in what is today the southern part of Kemerovo Province. In 1940, Gornoshorlag came under the administration of the newly formed Main Administration of Camps for Railroad Construction (GULZhDS), but was one of the smaller camps in that system and, for reasons that are unclear, had a proportionately much smaller budget than most of the other railroad camps.<sup>107</sup> In the mid-1930s prisoners at the Akhpunsk division worked on the Gornaia-Shorskaia railway, a railway link for the mines of the crucially important Kuznetsk Basin, and this continued as the primary economic activity once Gornoshorlag became a separate camp.<sup>108</sup> In 1934 Matvei Berman, then director of the Gulag, N. N. Alekseev, director for the NKVD of the Western Siberian Territory, and M. M. Chuntonov, Siblag's director, paid a visit to the construction site at the Ninth Akhpunsk division, highlighting the importance of the project for Siblag, the Gulag and the NKVD. While there, Berman met with some of the "best shock-workers" on the project, and even ordered reduced sentences for several of them. *Sibirskaiia perekovka* devoted a full, front-page spread to the visit, clearly

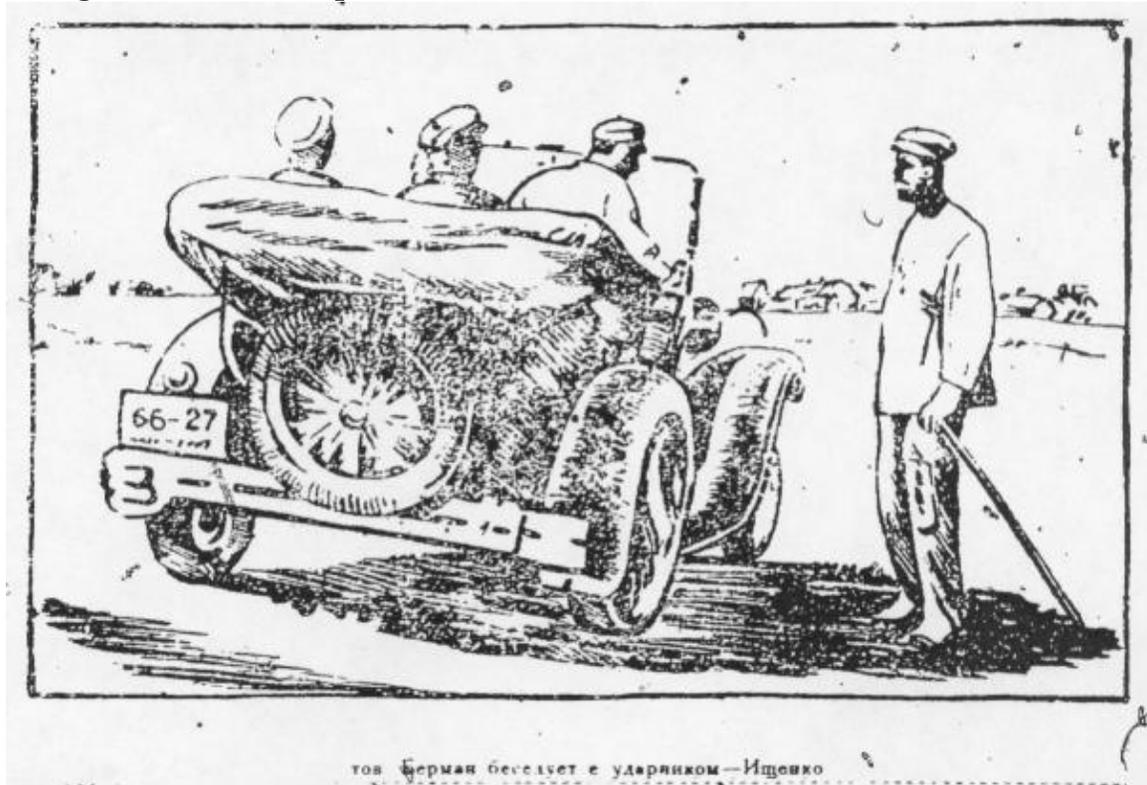
---

<sup>107</sup> As of January 1940, GULZhDS consisted of 11 camps, most in Siberia but some west of the Urals. Some of the GULZhDS conducted roadwork, too. Viazemlag, for example, was a large camp where prisoners worked on the Moscow-Minsk *avtomagistral'*. Gornoshorlag's budget for 1939 (approximately 22 million rubles), was on the low side for the railroad camps. Viazemlag had a budget of over 100 million. Viazemlag's population in late-1938 was almost 40,000, while on 1 Jan 1939 it had a prisoner population of 27,420, giving it approximately 3,650 rubles/prisoner (Jan 1 population). Gornoshorlag's population on 1 Jan 1939 was 11,670, or only approximately 1,885 rubles/prisoner. See *Sistema*, 204 and RGAE f. 7733, op. 36, d. 202 [Svodnyi godovoi otchet po kapitalovlozheniiam i proizvodstvu kaprabot Narodnogo Komissariata Vnutrennikh Del. Godovoi otchet po podriadnym stroitel'nym organizatsiiam Glavnogo upravleniia Lagerei i ob''iasnitel'naia zapiska k godovym otchetam Glavnogo upravleniia zheleznodorozhnogo stroitel'stva /GULZhDS/ po kapitalovlpzhenniam i podriadnoi deiatel'nostki za 1939 g], ll. 130, 119.

<sup>108</sup> For more on railway work at the Akhpunsk division, see Document no. 1 "Ob''iasnitel'naia zapiska k otchetu stroitel'stva Gorno-shorskoi zhel. dor. za 1936 god (9 Akhpunskoe otdelenie Siblaga NKVD)" in L. I. Gvozdikova, A. A. Mit', eds., *Prinuditel'nyi trud: Ispravitel'no-trudovye lageria v Kuzbasse (30-50-e gg.): Tom 2* (Kemerovo: Kuzbassvuzizdat, 1994) 11-21.

attempting to inspire the subdivision's prisoners.<sup>109</sup> Berman even met with several of the division's "shock-workers," personally granting them early release (see Figure 2.7).

**Figure 2.7: Berman speaks with a "shock-worker"**



Berman likely visited because the Kuznetsk Basin was at the heart of Siberian industrial development due to its massive coal deposits. The basin, for example, supplied the coking coal for such massive steelworks as those in Magnitogorsk in the Urals and locally, as part of the Ural-Kuznetsk Metallurgical Combine.<sup>110</sup> The railway was a key

---

<sup>109</sup> How the prisoners would have felt about Berman's visit is, of course, almost impossible to answer. It would not be surprising, however, if some of them took note of the reduced sentences awarded to the best shock-workers. For the entire article, see *Sibirskaiia perekovka*, 4 September 1934, *The GULAG Press*, fiche 462. For more on the intended audience of Gulag newspapers, see Bell, "Gulag Newspapers", esp. 292 n. 12.

<sup>110</sup> Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Soviet Experiment: Russia, the USSR, and the Successor States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) 238. For more on the Ural-Kuznetsk Metallurgical Combine, see Franklyn D. Holzman, "The Soviet Ural-Kuznetsk Combine: A Study in Investment Criteria and Industrialization

project for Sibltag and later Gornoshorlag on its own right, and in some ways Gornoshorlag could be considered the most successful of the camp projects in the area. Upon completion of the railway in 1940, Gornoshorlag's director (I. D. Makarov)<sup>111</sup> issued a statement awarding prizes to many camp personnel (eighty-seven in all) and discussing the project's importance:

The railroad, connecting the Stalin Kuznetsk Metallurgical Combine with the ore field in Tashtagol, is the key investment [*vkklad*] for the purpose of strengthening the defence power [*moshchi*] of our Motherland [*rodiny*], moving forward on the path set forth at the historical XVIII congress of the VKP(b) [Bolsheviks]: to reach and surpass the main capitalist countries economically.<sup>112</sup>

In this case, local authorities clearly linked their projects to broader Soviet goals. This, no doubt, was a way of justifying both the use of forced labour and its brutality, but it is also quite possible that camp personnel rarely had second thoughts about their activities and saw this project as a necessary part of the state-building process.<sup>113</sup>

Even at "successful" camps such as Gornoshorlag, however, operations hardly ran smoothly. Out of a planned workforce usage of eighty percent of the prisoner population for 1936, for example, the actual usage was only 60.5 percent, causing the Akhpunsk subdivision to spend large sums of money on the upkeep of non-working inmates.<sup>114</sup> In 1938, the Gornoshorlag administration complained that escapes at the camp had reached

---

Policies," *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 71.3 (1957): 368-405, esp. 368. Holzman writes that the "Ural-Kuznetsk Combine is probably the most ambitious single project, apart from the national economic plans themselves, ever attempted by the Soviets. In its most primitive formulation it was designed to unite the iron ore of Magnetic Mountain in the Urals with the huge coal reserves of the Kuznetsk Basin or Kuzbas in Western Siberia, more than 1400 miles by rail to the east. According to the so-called 'principle of the pendulum' metallurgical plants were to be located in both areas to avoid empty freight hauls in either direction."

<sup>111</sup> I. D. Makarov directed Gornoshorlag for its entire existence. He later directed Sevdvinlag in Arkhangel'sk Province from 1941-43, Altailag in the Altai Territory from 1943-45 and Angrenlag in Tashkent from 1945-46. It is unclear what happened to him after this. See *Sistema*, 204, 385, 141 and 147.

<sup>112</sup> See Document no. 15, "Prikaz nachal'nika Gornoshorskogo ITL NKVD SSSR o premirovanii lichnogo sostava," 6 November 1940, Gvozdkova, ed., *Prinuditel'nyi trud Tom 2*, 52.

<sup>113</sup> For more on personnel issues, see especially Chapter V of the present dissertation.

<sup>114</sup> Document 1, Gvozdkova, ed., *Prinuditel'nyi trud Tom 2*, 20.

“mass proportions” (*massovyi kharakter*) and “shamefully of all, these escapes occurred for the most part from the place of work under convoy”.<sup>115</sup> Authorities blamed the work-column (*kolonna*)<sup>116</sup> leaders, but also, despite the assertion that many prisoners had escaped while under convoy, pointed to a lax relationship to the de-convoying of prisoners (allowing certain prisoners to move from the camp zone to the worksite and back without guard), and improper watch over non-convoyed prisoners while at the place of work.<sup>117</sup> Makarov, Gornoshorlag’s director, cited an example of a prisoner who had escaped with 1,000 rubles while on a de-convoyed pass (where the prisoner found these rubles is left unstated). This prisoner had been sentenced under numerous articles of the criminal code suggesting that he had been a corrupt official, including articles 107, 109, 120, 154, and 58 (counter-revolutionary activity) for eight years.<sup>118</sup> He had nevertheless been granted the privilege of non-convoyed movement, contrary to the rules governing de-convoyed status.<sup>119</sup>

Even the closure of the camp reveals the poor planning within the system. On 11 January 1941 the NKVD ordered several thousand prisoners transferred from prisons in Ukraine to Gulag camps, mostly to the east of the Urals. The order called for the transfer of 1,500 prisoners to Gornoshorlag. On 30 January 1941, fewer than three weeks later,

---

<sup>115</sup> Document 2, Gvozdkova, ed., *Prinuditel’nyi trud Tom 2*, 21.

<sup>116</sup> The term “column” (*colonna*) replaced “phalanx” (*falanga*) in 1936 for the work units in order to avoid any analogy with fascism. See Jacques Rossi, *The GULAG Handbook*, trans William Burhans (New York: Paragon House, 1989) 475; Thomas Lahusen, *How Life Writes The Book: Real Socialism and Socialist Realism in Stalin’s Russia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 218 n. 18.

<sup>117</sup> Document 2, Gvozdkova, ed., *Prinuditel’nyi trud Tom 2*, 22.

<sup>118</sup> Article 107: Driving up prices by hoarding, buying up, or concealing goods; Article 109: Abuse of power or position; Article 120: Forgery or falsification of official documents; Article 154: Forcing a subordinate to perform sex or sexual acts. For the text of the RSFSR criminal code, see (<http://law.edu.ru/norm/norm.asp?normID=1241189&subID=100093745.100093777#text>); last accessed, 24 June 2010.

<sup>119</sup> Document 2, Gvozdkova, ed., *Prinuditel’nyi trud Tom 2*, 24. For more on de-convoyed prisoners, see Chapter III; See also Alan Barenberg, “Prisoners Without Borders: Zazonniki and the Transformation of Vorkuta after Stalin,” *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, 57. 4 (2009): 513-534.

the NKVD ordered the closure of Gornoshorlag, due to the completion of another important section of the railroad and in accordance with a directive from the Economic Council of the Council of People's Commissars (Sovnarkom), dating from mid-December, 1940. In other words, it should have been abundantly clear that sending more prisoners to Gornoshorlag in January 1941 was a waste of resources, as the initial transfer order came *after* the Sovnarkom's decision (although, it should be noted, it is not clear if these prisoners ever arrived). Following its dissolution, most of Gornoshorlag's prisoners were transferred to various subdivisions of Siblag.<sup>120</sup>

### ***Tomasinlag***

The Gulag founded Tomasinlag in 1937 as part of a group of new forestry camps that became the Administration of Forest Industry Camps (ULLP) in 1939 and, in 1947, the Main Administration of Forest Industry Camps (GULLP).<sup>121</sup> The seven initial forestry camps—peaking at seventeen—that made up the Administration of Forest Industry Camps were hardly a resounding success. Oleg Khlevniuk argues that the hasty formation of these camps led to unusually high death rates, so much so that they became “provisional” death camps. He writes:

Creating the new camps had horrifying consequences. In the first six months more than 12,500 died, 1,272 escaped, and more than 20,000 were unemployable, including 5,000 invalids. The original plan to place 103,000 worker prisoners in

---

<sup>120</sup> See NKVD Operational Order no. 07 from 11 January 1941 on the transfer of prisoners from Ukrainian prisons to ITLs of the NKVD: GARF f. 9401, op. 1a, d. 95, ll. 8-11. For the liquidation of Gornoshorlag, see the NKVD Operational Order from 31 January 1941, GARF f. 9401, op. 1a, d. 95, ll. 91-91ob.

<sup>121</sup> For the creation of the ULLP, see GARF f. 9401, op. 1a, d. 32, l. 141: NKVD Operational Order no. 00205: *Ob organizatsii v sisteme GULAGa NKVD Upravleniia lesnoi promyshlennosti*, 9 March 1939. One of the Gulag's deputy-directors, I.T. Sergeev, was named the director for the newly created ULLP. This was part of a trend towards economic specialization. By the early 1940s the NKVD established separate main administrations for camps of railroad construction (GULZhDS), hydro-technical construction (Glavgidrostroy), airfield (*aerodromnogo*) construction (GUAS), mining-metallurgical enterprise construction (GULGMP), highway construction (GUSHosDor), and several others. See N. V. Petrov, “Vvedenie,” *Istoriia Stalinskogo Gulaga: Tom 2: Karatel'naia sistema: struktura i kadry*, Petrov and N. I. Vladimirtsev, eds. (Moscow: Rosspen, 2004), 38-39, for a complete list.

the camps by 1 January 1938 proved to be unachievable. The new forest camps, organized in 1938, became in fact provisional death camps.<sup>122</sup>

Despite the vast forests of Western Siberia, originally only one camp in the region, Tomasinlag, was part of the Administration of Forest Industry Camps.<sup>123</sup> Given the geography of forced labour in Western Siberia, it is likely that authorities felt more forestry camps would be unnecessary, as special settlers continued to work heavily in the industry in the more remote areas. Centred in Asino, northeast of Tomsk, Tomasinlag initially took over operations from the Tomles Forestry Trust in the area of the Chulym River and its tributaries, interestingly one of the regions surveyed in the 1929 scientific expedition of the region.<sup>124</sup>

A Politburo decision from 31 July 1937 gave 75 million rubles to the NKVD for, among other things, “the construction of new camps, specially organized for forestry work using those sentenced under the mass operations against former criminals and kulaks,” a likely reference to the now infamous NKVD Operational Order 00447.<sup>125</sup> The chronology here is revealing: the initial motive for the Gulag’s expansion at this time was repressive (“mass operations against former criminals and kulaks”), but the regime almost simultaneously found an economic use for the expected increased numbers of inmates: the exploitation of under-utilized forest tracts. The Politburo requested the People’s Commissariat of Forestry (Narkomles) to give the Gulag several forest tracts

---

<sup>122</sup> Khleniuk, *The History of the Gulag*, 178.

<sup>123</sup> Two forestry camps—Sevkuzbasslag and Iuzhkuzbasslag—were founded in the region in 1947 as part of the Main Administration of Forest Industry Camps, GULLP.

<sup>124</sup> For a good overview of Tomasinlag, see Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Tomskoi oblasti (GATO) f. R-1152, op. 1, pages 1-3 of the description in the opis’.

<sup>125</sup> Politburo protocol document 51/442 contained within the files of the Tomsk Memorial Society. Politburo decision from 31 July 1937. Note that this decision comes only one day after the mass operations ordered under NKVD Operational Order no. 00447.

(*lesnye massivy*), including the Tomsk-Asino forest tract in Western Siberia.<sup>126</sup> On 16 August 1937, the NKVD followed the Politburo's direction with Operational Order 078, which called for the creation of seven forestry camps, including Tomasinlag. By October of that year, the NKVD expected each camp to house at least 5,000 prisoners, complete with temporary barracks, kitchen facilities and bathhouses. By 1 January 1938, the NKVD expected each camp's population to reach 15,000, although the difficulties in setting up these camps, combined with high death and escape rates, made this impossible in practice.<sup>127</sup> The NKVD recognized that there would be staffing issues, and ordered the training of more technical personnel as well as guards. Operational Order 078 underlined the need to prevent escapes from these camps, too.<sup>128</sup> Given the hastiness with which they were organized, however, it is hardly surprising that these camps initially encountered considerable difficulties.

Waste within the camp economy was a major issue. A report from 1939 complained that 59,000 rubles had been wasted at Tomasinlag because "79% of the work to determine the wood-cutting area for planning timber-shipping by railroad proved to be unnecessary".<sup>129</sup> Tomasinlag authorities also complained that they had to conduct their work with fewer specialists than Tomles, the local forestry trust, and thus inadvertently acknowledged a fundamental problem of forced labour: a lack of sufficient training, particularly in specialized positions.<sup>130</sup> Authorities were forced to use prisoners in many key positions: as chief statistician, road foreman (*dorozhnyi desiatnik*), foreman for

---

<sup>126</sup> Politburo protocol document 51/442, 31 July 1937.

<sup>127</sup> Khlevniuk, *The History of the Gulag*, 178.

<sup>128</sup> GARF f. 9401, op. 1a, d. 16, l. 98: *Prikaz no. 078 "Ob organizatsii lesozagotovitel'nykh lagerei" ot 16-go avgusta 1937 g.*

<sup>129</sup> GARF f. 9401, op. 1a, d. 39, l. 72: *Prikaz no. 0112 "O doiatel'nosti Leningradskogo proektno-izyskatel'skogo biuro upravleniia lesnoi promyshlennosti GULAGa NKVD SSSR," 7 May 1939.*

<sup>130</sup> GATO f. R-1152, op. 1, d. 4 [Doklad o rabote i proizvodstvennykh perspektivakh Tomsk-Asinovskogo lageria NKVD ot 20 maia 1939 goda], l. 15.

charcoal burning (*master po uglezhzheniiu*), assistant manager (*Zavkhoz*), planner (*Planovik*), and others.<sup>131</sup>

Tomasinlag, like Gornoshorlag, had issues involved with its dissolution that reveal poor planning. Tomasinlag officials seem to have had no idea that their camp was to be closed down. On 3 July 1940, the NKVD ordered the transfer of five thousand so-called “refugees” from western Ukraine and Belarus.<sup>132</sup> The NKVD designated Tomasinlag as a receiving area for this contingent, and in the quickest time possible. Tomasinlag’s prisoners were to be transferred elsewhere: the camp administration needed to send the first contingent (3,000 physically fit prisoners) to Unzhlag between 1 July (two days after the order) and 15 July. All prisoners were to be gone by 15 September, distributed to Unzhlag, Usol’lag, Temlag, and Belbaltlag (but, interestingly, not the local Siblag). This “refugee” transfer appears to have been part of a larger 1940 campaign directed against various groups of Poles, a campaign that also included the forced displacement of many Ukrainians, Jews and Belorussians. The campaign related directly to Soviet annexation of eastern Poland under the terms of the Nazi-Soviet Pact’s secret protocols. According to historian Viktor Zemskov, there were three main round-ups of Polish “refugees” in 1940, and by April 1941 there were 19,628 “refugees” in Novosibirsk Province, third behind Arkhangel’sk Province and Sverdlovsk Province.<sup>133</sup>

Not surprisingly, Tomasinlag officials were unable to meet the housing and supply needs of the “refugees.” Already by 18 July, just two weeks after the original order, there were 18,500 “special settlers [*spetspereselentsev*]” in Tomasinlag, when the camp itself

---

<sup>131</sup> GATO f. R-1152, op. 1, d. 1 [AKT ot 27/VII - 1939 goda o vypolneniia proizvodstvennoi programmy Kashtakovskogo OLP], ll. 9-10.

<sup>132</sup> GARF f. 9401, op. 1a, d. 64, ll. 39-41.

<sup>133</sup> The information about these deportations comes from V.N. Zemskov, *Spetsposelentsy v SSSR, 1930-1960* (Moscow: Nauka, 2005), 83-85.

was designed to hold not more than 10,000 prisoners (at this time, too, some prisoners remained the camp).<sup>134</sup> This meant that the per-person living space in the camp was less than one square metre. On 14 August, now with most of the prisoners gone, the “refugees” at several subdivisions went on strike, starting in Asino and Taiga, spreading the next day to Kitsa, and the following day to Beregaevo. Although details are lacking in the documentation, it appears that the strikes were not violent, but consisted mainly of anti-Soviet slogans, refusals to work, and demands for better living conditions.

A Novosibirsk Provincial Party Committee (*Obkom*) commission arrived on 17 August to investigate the “riot-strikes [*bunta – zabastovok*]”, which allegedly consisted of anti-Soviet agitation, including pro-Hitler slogans. The commission placed the blame squarely on the head of Tomasinlag’s Third Department, Saltymakov, and the head of the Political Department, Bekbulatov, who had both left the scene during the strike. Although both had done so ostensibly to obtain help, the Party Committee’s commission found them negligent in their duties, as their absences made it easier for the strikers to organize. Clearly, however, despite any anti-Soviet agitation, over-crowding was the main catalyst for the uprising. The commission noted, “a whole host of families with small children were living entirely under the open sky”.<sup>135</sup> The commission itself oversaw the arrest of 49 “organizers” within two to three days, and claimed that by 22 August all “refugees” were back at work.

The commission’s decisive action was evidently not decisive enough. On 6 September 1940, the Provincial Party Committee met again to discuss the situation at

---

<sup>134</sup> GANO f. P-4, op. 33, d. 238v, ll. 45-54: “Zamechaniia na biuro Obkoma VKP(b) po voprosu o Tomasinlage” from 14 Sept 1940. Information cited here on l. 45.

<sup>135</sup> The commission’s report can be found at GANO f. P-4, op. 33, d. 238v, ll. 32-36; quotation from l. 34.

Tomasinlag, noting that strikes were ongoing at several Tomasinlag subdivisions.<sup>136</sup> One participant at the meeting claimed that Tomasinlag’s personnel “did not realize that this contingent should be treated differently than prisoners” and again blamed the Third Department and the Political Department for failing to act. Tomasinlag’s leadership defended itself by noting that it had not received lists of the incoming contingent in advance, and that the refugee contingent was entirely different from what they were used to, as it included many young children and babies, and many adults who were not accustomed to forestry work. Work at the camp, according to one Comrade Aksenov (position not mentioned), had been going very well in the two years prior to the arrival of the refugees, making the disruption that much more noteworthy. Those present at the meeting recommended relieving Saltymakov, Bekbulatov and the director of the camp, Borisov, from their duties, with the possibility of party reprimands and criminal investigations.

What is most fascinating, however, is that the Provincial Party Committee blamed both the “clumsiness” of the Tomasinlag leadership *and* the poor planning of central Gulag administrators, who had sent the “special settler-refugees” without sufficient consideration of the amount and quality of living space at the camp.<sup>137</sup> Although local scapegoats had been found, in other words, local party officials placed blame on central authorities, too. Surely this was a risky strategy. On 6 September, the Party Committee resolved:

To inform the C[entral] C[ommittee] [of the Communist Party] about the violation of the decision of the C[entral] C[ommittee] and the SNK of the USSR concerning the sending of special-settlers to Tomasinlag and the

---

<sup>136</sup> The meeting protocol for this meeting can be found at GANO f. P-4, op. 33, d. 238v, ll. 37-44.

<sup>137</sup> GANO f. P-4, op. 33, d. 238a, ll. 15-18: “Protokol No 55 p. 19. 6 Sept 1940. ‘O besporiadkakh sredi bezhentshev-spetspereselentsev’.”

irresponsible relation of the GULAG leadership to the directing of refugee-special-settlers to Tomasinlag without accounting for the possibility of their settlement and the organization of labour[.] [D]espite the full awareness on the part of Gulag management about the available housing in the camps, and as a result of a superficial and irresponsible relation to the resolution of this problem, intolerable conditions were created in the camps, [including] an unbelievable overcrowding of people [...], resulting in diseases and a [high] death rate amongst the settlers.<sup>138</sup>

Thus Gornoshorlag and Tomasinlag, one a success and one a failure, actually operated in a similar manner. Both had numerous problems with escapes, inefficient production, and workforce issues. “Success” at a camp had little to do with day-to-day operations. It is true that widespread problems and inefficiencies were often blamed for failures, but success was, after all, related to results, not process. Camps with a specific assigned project to complete were much more likely to be “successful.” The White Sea-Baltic Canal is the most famous example of this, where prisoners completed the canal early to much fanfare.<sup>139</sup> It became a model for Gulag projects, even though the canal itself had been built with great inefficiencies, enormous loss of life, and the finished product was not even particularly economically useful. Similarly, personnel at Gornoshorlag received their awards not because of the camp’s exemplary operations, but only because Gornoshorlag’s assigned task had been completed.

Tomasinlag, on the other hand, was not involved in a specific infrastructure project and the camp fell victim to poor central planning. Tomasinlag’s fate was sealed when the camp was completely unprepared for the incoming settler-refugees, even though the camp administration had been given no time or resources to prepare. While it is not clear what happened to this specific contingent, ultimately almost all Polish deportees

---

<sup>138</sup> GANO f. P-4, op. 33, d. 238a, ll. 17-18. Note that the available documentation does not list the number of deaths amongst the “special-settler refugees”.

<sup>139</sup> See Cynthia Ruder, *Making History for Stalin: The Story of the Belomor Canal* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 1998).

(including some 43,000 Polish prisoners in Gulag camps) were freed by order of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet on 12 August 1941, in response to the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union in June.<sup>140</sup> The Asino subdivision of Tomasinlag was then incorporated into Siblag, becoming a prison camp once again.

### ***Conclusion***

The history of the Gulag in Western Siberia during the pre-war years reveals a system that was extensive geographically and economically. Camp subdivisions could be found within major population centres, as well as in agricultural and mining areas in the southern parts of the region. Prisoners worked in agriculture, but also in forestry, mining, manufacturing, and, in significant numbers, as contract-labourers. Although it showed economic promise at the beginning of the decade, Siblag itself never became a priority camp, and as a result often received a disproportionately high number of unfit prisoners.

At the decade progressed, there was a greater tendency towards economic specialization in the Gulag, resulting in the creation of new camps in Western Siberia as well as a gradual focus, for Siblag itself, on two areas: agriculture and contract labour. Two new—and short-lived—camps, Gornoshorlag and Tomasinlag, both experienced problems with inefficiency, yet Gornoshorlag was considered successful because it completed its assigned task. While most prisoners experiences unimaginable suffering, life in the Gulag depended largely on the whims of local officials, as conditions varied considerably between camp subdivisions and stations. Central regulations attempted to

---

<sup>140</sup> Zemskov, *Spetsposeleltsy v SSSR*, 89-90.

create a highly regulated camp system, but, in practice, regulations did not always have their intended effects.

In the period from 1939 to the war's outbreak in June 1941, the NKVD issued a flurry of regulations governing most aspects of camp life. These regulations were a clear attempt to resolve some of the inefficiencies of the camp system as it had developed over the course of the 1930s.

### CHAPTER III: Gulag Regulations on the Eve of World War II

“In working practice at the camps and colonies during release, transport [*etap*], and the labour use of prisoners, instances of the substitution by prisoners of surnames and the adjusting of data of one person for another, etc., take place.”  
- NKVD Operational Order 00148, “On the Photographing of Prisoners”<sup>1</sup>

“‘The photographs are a new thing,’ whispered Colonel Yágodkin to me; ‘and only a part of the exiles have them. They are intended to break up the practice of exchanging names and identities.’”  
- George Kennan, *Siberia and the Exile System* (1891)<sup>2</sup>

In an attempt to stabilize and regulate the camp system, the NKVD, particularly in the late 1930s, issued numerous operational orders related to various aspects of camp life. Before moving on to discuss Sibilag during the war, it is worth pausing to examine the plethora of regulations promulgated in the immediate pre-war years. As theorist Michel Foucault has shown, a study of government regulations—particularly pertaining to institutions such as penal systems—can offer significant insight into the operation of power within a given society.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rossiskoi Federatsii (GARF) f. 9401, op. 1a, d. 32, ll. 82-83

<sup>2</sup> George Kennan, *Siberia and the Exile System*, vol. 1 (New York: The Century Co., 1891) 291.

<sup>3</sup> As Jan Plamper argues, however, we must be careful when assessing the Soviet case, as “the function of public documents and other records differed sharply in the Soviet Union from documents in West European countries like France. Public legal documents [in the Soviet Union] often have no relationship to life practices.” Jan Plamper, “Foucault’s Gulag,” *Kritika* 3.2 (2002): 255-280, esp. 273. The assessment of regulations in the present chapter is derived from top secret directives and operational orders (i.e., they were not “public”), but the point is still well taken: even private directives in the Soviet case tell us more about what the Soviet authorities wished to see happen than what actually occurred, on the ground.

Many scholars argue that, by the end of the 1930s, the Gulag had reached some level of stability or maturity. For Robert Conquest, the “Great Terror” was the turning point that shifted the Gulag from a bumbling prison bureaucracy into a system that included death as one of its main purposes. Anne Applebaum claims that by the end of the 1930s, the camps had reached their “permanent form.” For Oleg Khlevniuk, “The Stalinist penal system was formed and entrenched during the 1930s—more precisely, between 1929 and 1941.”<sup>4</sup>

Although we should be wary of assigning any measure of stability to a system that would soon go through the major upheavals of World War II and increasingly severe criminal justice policies, it is clear that the late-1930s and early-1940s saw a concerted effort to codify and regulate camp life. These directives included “temporary” yet fairly comprehensive instructions on regimen in corrective labour camps in 1939 and corrective labour colonies in 1940, as well as detailed instructions on numerous aspects of camp life, from ration regimes to censorship procedures.<sup>5</sup>

In the Stalinist system as a whole, bureaucracy expanded rapidly over the course of the 1930s, so the desire for increased centralization, codification and unification of Soviet penal practices that these orders reveal is hardly surprising.<sup>6</sup> Central and local Gulag authorities had been unprepared for the rapid growth of the camp system in the early 1930s and, following the upheavals of collectivization, shock industrialization, and the

---

<sup>4</sup> Robert Conquest, *Kolyma: The Arctic Death Camps* (London: MacMillan, 1978) 47. See also Wilson T. Bell, “One Day in the Life of Educator Khrushchev: Labour and *Kul’turnost’* in the Gulag Newspapers,” *Canadian Slavonic Papers* vol. 46, nos. 3-4 (September-December, 2004) 296; Anne Applebaum, *Gulag: A History* (New York: Doubleday, 2003), 117; Oleg Khlevniuk, *The History of the Gulag: From Collectivization to the Great Terror*, trans. Vadim A. Staklo (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 1.

<sup>5</sup> Lavrentii Beriia, the new director of the NKVD, also proposed new, detailed regulations for the special settlements at this time, although this proposal was not implemented. See Lynne Viola, *The Unknown Gulag: The Lost World of Stalin’s Special Settlements* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) 169.

<sup>6</sup> Moshe Lewin, *The Making of the Soviet System: Essays in the Social History of Interwar Russia* (New York: The New Press, 1994) 245.

mass arrests of 1937-38, now had an enormous penal system in need of efficient oversight. The Gulag also worked in key economic sectors, making forced labour an important—if costly—contribution to Stalinist state-building.

As a whole, the regulations from these years show that there was a move away from a focus on the transformation of the individual prisoner that is evident in the 1920s and early-1930s, to an emphasis on isolation and economic output. Yet extensive record keeping indicates a continued concern with tracking the behavior of individual prisoners, despite decreased emphasis on transformation. In terms of centralizing Gulag operations, moreover, the NKVD had made great strides by the end of the 1930s. If in the early 1930s central authorities had “no idea” about Siblag’s finances and complained that local officials ignored central directives, by the eve of the war the camp’s very detailed budget was set in Moscow.<sup>7</sup>

### ***Modernity and the Gulag?***

In *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of The Prison*, Michel Foucault describes the shift away from public displays of punishment (such as flogging) that served to highlight the sovereign’s power, to modern punishment that was hidden (such as the prison), regulated, and concerned with the individual transformation of the prisoner. At first glance the Gulag fits Foucault’s description of a modern penal system. Yet as Jan Plamper argues, Foucault himself wavered on whether or not one could apply his theories to the Gulag.<sup>8</sup> Perhaps some of Foucault’s ambiguity on the subject relates to the nature of the Gulag

---

<sup>7</sup> For the information on Siblag in the early 1930s see Document 1, *Istoriia stalinskogo Gulaga Tom 3: Ekonomika Gulaga*, ed. Oleg Khlevniuk (Moscow: Rosspen, 2004) 62 [henceforth *ISG* 3]. For examples of camp budgets, see Rossiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv ekonomii (RGAE) f. 7733, op. 36.

<sup>8</sup> Plamper, “Foucault’s Gulag.”

itself. The Soviet penal system coincides with his theories on modern penality in certain respects, while contradicting these theories at the same time.<sup>9</sup>

Foucault argues that concern with the individual prisoner's behaviour—indeed concern, to a certain extent, with his soul—is indicative of the transformation of society into one of “surveillance,” where we all contribute to—and reinforce mechanisms of—power with the knowledge that we could be under surveillance at any moment.<sup>10</sup> Foucault uses the analogy of the panopticon, a design for a prison by utilitarian philosopher Jeremy Bentham. In Bentham's panopticon, prisoners would be isolated in individual cells surrounding a central watchtower in a manner such that a guard could be watching any prisoner at any time, but that prisoner would not necessarily know when he was being watched.<sup>11</sup> Thus, power is visible, but prisoners are also a part of this power mechanism, disciplining their own actions with the knowledge that they could be under surveillance.

Surveillance was indeed an important aspect of Gulag life, and to a certain extent, Gulag spatial geography. Point five of the 2 August 1939 “Temporary Instruction for Prisoners at C[orrective] L[abour] C[amps]” states, “When determining the border of the camp station [...] the surrounded zone must have the form of a rectangle or a square,

---

<sup>9</sup> For a sophisticated article on why scholars should be careful applying Foucault's theories to Russia, see Laura Engelstein, “Combined Underdevelopment: Discipline and the Law in Imperial and Soviet Russia,” *The American Historical Review* 98.2 (1993): 338-353.

<sup>10</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 217. In an interview, Foucault likened “Panoptism” explicitly to modern practices of record-keeping and classifying. See Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, edited Colin Gordon, trans. Gordon et al. (New York: Pantheon, 1980), 71.

<sup>11</sup> Interestingly enough, Bentham designed his prison-panopticon while in Russia during the reign of Catherine II. For an in-depth exploration of Bentham's design and what it meant to his own philosophy, see Janet Semple, *Bentham's Prison: A Study of the Panopticon Penitentiary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).

ensuring the best observation”.<sup>12</sup> The instruction also calls for warning zones and watchtowers, although in less strict subdivisions “the construction of towers is not required”. One could argue, too, that the presence of informants meant that, as in the panopticon, Gulag prisoners had no way of knowing precisely when they would be under observation, and would have thus self-regulated their behaviour. In 1940, the Gulag had one informant for every one hundred prisoners.<sup>13</sup>

The spatial geography of the camps overall, however, bore little resemblance to the panopticon. Gulag prisoners lived in barracks and not in individual cells.<sup>14</sup> Some camp subdivisions and sections, moreover, lacked borders altogether. Many camp subdivisions housed large numbers of unescorted prisoners, that is, prisoners who were permitted to move from the camp to the worksite and back (and sometimes even to live outside of the camp zones) without escort from guards.<sup>15</sup> It seems, in certain light regimen camps, that the authorities simply did not have enough resources (personnel, infrastructure, etc) for a complete surveillance society. Some prisoners, moreover, felt *freer to express themselves* while in the camps than on the outside, partially because they felt that nothing worse could be done to them.<sup>16</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> A. I. Kokurin and N. V. Petrov, eds., *GULAG (Glavnoe upravlenie lagerei) 1917-1960* (Moscow: “Materik,” 2002), 457.

<sup>13</sup> J. Otto Pohl, *The Stalinist Penal System: A Statistical History of Soviet Repression and Terror, 1930-1953* (London: McFarland & Company, 1997), 15. The informants were usually also prisoners, of course, but they received special privileges for relaying information back to the camp bosses and the Third Department.

<sup>14</sup> In this sense, the camps spatially were more like concentration camps than prisons. The use of barracks is very rare for modern penal institutions, world-wide, but interestingly is still the norm in Russia today, although there are some moves to reform the system. See Andrew E. Kramer, “Russia to Alter System of Penal Colonies,” *The New York Times*, 22 March 2010.

<sup>15</sup> See section on de-convoyed prisoners, below.

<sup>16</sup> See, for example, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *The GULAG Archipelago 1918-1956: An Experiment in Literary Investigation* vol. 3 (V-VII), trans Harry Willitts (New York: Harper & Row, 1978) 37, where he writes that the longer sentences in the post-war years meant that it was now “the prisoners’ turn to speak—to speak freely, uninhibitedly, undeterred by threats,” as they really had nothing to lose.

While authorities *attempted to create* a modern, disciplinary society, on-the-ground operations did not always cooperate. At times authorities simply lost track of individual prisoners, despite regulations and individual prisoner-files that would seem to make such practices difficult. The inefficiency of the system helped counter pretences of modernity, in this case.<sup>17</sup>

Forced labour in the Gulag also differed from Foucault's formulation. Foucault writes,<sup>18</sup>

Penal labour must be seen as the very machinery that transforms the violent, agitated, unreflective convict into a part that plays its role with perfect regularity. The prison is not a workshop; it is, it must be of itself, a machine whose convict-workers are both the cogs and the products; it occupies them continually, with the sole aim of filling their moments. When the body is agitated, when the mind applies itself to a particular object, importunate ideas depart, calm is born once again in the soul.

In the Gulag, circumstances on the ground—this time with the help of pressure from above—helped to undermine the supposed transformative aspects of penal labour. It is true that some prisoners received training and some may have even taken pride in their labour,<sup>19</sup> and that labour itself supposedly transformed criminals, but by-and-large Gulag economic activity was exactly that: *economic activity*, integrated within local and national production plans to achieve the greatest possible production results (often at great costs). It did not have the “sole aim” of reforming the convict's soul. Even cultural

---

<sup>17</sup> See below for a discussion of the difficulties in tracking individual prisoners.

<sup>18</sup> Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 242.

<sup>19</sup> Even Solzhenitsyn's fictional character of Ivan Denisovich Shukhov takes pride in his work in the camps. Many memoirists, too, report have looked forward to work in the camps after having been confined in the prisons, although most were subsequently shocked by the harshness of work conditions. See Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, trans Max Hayward and Ronald Hingley (New York: Bantam Books, 1990); and Bell, “Gulag Newspapers,” 299-300.

activities, which had educational components, were most often discussed as a means to encourage greater economic production, rather than individual transformation.<sup>20</sup>

The use of forced labour for economic ends, moreover, while certainly common in the modern era, is far from a modern phenomenon. While both the prison and the concentration camp are basically modern inventions, the use of prisoner labour has parallels dating back many centuries, and shares some similarities to slavery.<sup>21</sup> Even those scholars who argue that the Soviet Union represents one response to modernity's challenges are not sure what to make of the Gulag. For Stephen Kotkin, the corrective labour colony at Magnitogorsk is not part of the socialist city.<sup>22</sup> David Hoffmann, who speaks of a "Soviet modernity," nevertheless recognizes that the Gulag combined modern and pre-modern features: "But Soviet labor camps represented more than a coercive mechanism of labor mobilization. Even as the Soviet government adopted the new view that the laboring body was an instrument whose energies could be scientifically deployed to maximize production, socialist ideology also perpetuated the ancient craft ideal of labor as an ennobling accomplishment".<sup>23</sup>

---

<sup>20</sup> See also Chapter IV of the present dissertation.

<sup>21</sup> Most scholars date the birth of the modern penitentiary to the Auburn system in the USA of the late-eighteenth century, while the term "concentration camp" was first used in English by British parliamentarians during the Boer War. The use of prisoner labour is extremely common in modern penal systems: most countries use some type of prisoner labour, whether for public works, producing goods for state use, leasing or contracting prisoners to private enterprises, and so on. See the results of a 1955 UN study on prisoner labour in T. M. Corry, *Prison Labour in South Africa* (Cape Town: National Institute for Crime Prevention and the Rehabilitation of Offenders, 1977) 99-100. Penal labour is hardly confined to the modern era, however. Convict labour was used in Ancient Rome and in the Middle Ages, and in Ancient Greece state-owned slaves were leased to private enterprises, not unlike the convict-lease. Forced labour has long been a part of Western societies. See Mitchel P. Roth, *Prisons and Prison Systems: A Global Encyclopedia* (London: Greenwood Press, 2006) 68.

<sup>22</sup> Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995), 231: "In sum, the ITK was a colony for criminals and not a socialist city, however flawed."

<sup>23</sup> David L. Hoffman, *Stalinist Values: The Cultural Norms of Soviet Modernity, 1917-1941* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 31.

Yet, on the other hand, the Gulag clearly was a large bureaucracy, intent on collecting information about individuals and using them for the needs of a modernizing state. In *Modernity and the Holocaust*, Zygmunt Bauman argues that violence in the Nazi case progressed naturally from the bureaucratic structures, population politics, and interventionist policies of the Nazi regime, characteristics shared, to some degree, with all “modern” states.<sup>24</sup> Thus, Bauman cautions against viewing the Holocaust as a unique event, worth studying perhaps as an historical anomaly but sociologically irrelevant. Bauman’s arguments have heavily influenced a strand within the historiography of the Stalin era that views the Soviet system as emblematic of modernity, with elements such as large bureaucracies, major state-driven population shifts, a propensity to categorize and track individuals, and increased surveillance.<sup>25</sup>

It is clear that the Gulag could not have functioned without modern bureaucratic practices and, indeed, at least a degree of modern infrastructure. The movement of large numbers of people across the Eurasian continent on railroads took considerable organization, even if it occurred inefficiently at best. The same could be said for the delivery of supplies and centralized planning. The issue, then, is partly the degree to which a modern infrastructure existed. For example, many Gulag prisoners reached their final destinations following long marches on foot because of a lack of roads, and special settlers often had to build their settlements completely from scratch.<sup>26</sup> Earthen dugouts

---

<sup>24</sup> Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989).

<sup>25</sup> See Hoffman, *Stalinist Values*; Peter Holquist, “State Violence as Technique: The Logic of Violence in Soviet Totalitarianism,” in *Landscaping the Human Garden: 20<sup>th</sup> Century Population Management in a Comparative Framework*, ed. Amir Weiner (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003) 19-45; Weiner, “Introduction: Landscaping the Human Garden,” Weiner, ed., *Landscaping the Human Garden*, 1-18.

<sup>26</sup> For more on the special settlements, see Lynne Viola, *The Unknown Gulag*; and Viola, “The Aesthetic of Stalinist Planning and the World of the Special Villages,” *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 4.1 (2004) 101-128. Note, too, that prisoners in camps sometimes had to build their living-quarters

were common in the settlements, especially in the early years, and were not unheard of in the Gulag camps of Western Siberia, either.<sup>27</sup> Gulag labour often involved primitive tools as opposed to modern machinery and was slower to mechanize than “free” labour. By 1939, for example, the People’s Commissariat of Forestry had mechanized 90 percent of its timber removal, while the Gulag had reached 67 percent.<sup>28</sup> Even in Siblag’s mines, there were poor levels of mechanization.<sup>29</sup>

One illustration from *Sibirskaia perekovka* neatly reveals these contradictions (see Figure 3.1, below). The picture depicts one of Siblag’s Stakhanovites working on the construction of a railroad. The goal—a railroad—seems thoroughly modern. His Stakhanovite status also places him within the context of re-forging (*perekovka*), as he is clearly a model prisoner who has supposedly adopted Soviet values. Yet he is using only a pickaxe, and in the background a horse with a cart waits to haul away the loose boulders. Thus the process—manual forced labour—is primitive.

---

from scratch. See Fyodor Vasilevich Mochulsky, *Gulag Boss: A Soviet Memoir*, trans and ed by Deborah Kaple (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011) 33-42.

<sup>27</sup> One memoirist remembers the living quarters of Siblag’s Antibess subdivision as having been “earthen-dugout barracks [*zemlianki-barraki*]”, although conditions here were much better than other subdivisions where she lived. See S. S. Potresova, “O Kazachenko,” Memorial f. 2, op. 1, d. 97, l. 1

<sup>28</sup> Khlevniuk, *The History of the Gulag*, 339.

<sup>29</sup> Roza Grigor’eva Dmitrieva was shocked by the primitiveness of the mines. She was also incarcerated at Orlovo-Rozovo, and remembers having to walk “15-20 kilometres” to the fields. Memorial f. 2, op. 2, dd. 27&28, ll. 321, 359.

Figure 3.1: Siblrag Stakhanovite<sup>30</sup>



While the Siblrag newspaper also reported on achievements in mechanization, such as tractor supply (see Figure 3.2, below), the frequent articles on the poor state of the camp's horses suggest mechanization was far from complete.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>30</sup> *Sibirskaiia perekovka*, 16 October 1936, *The GULAG Press 1920-1937* (The Netherlands, IDC Publisheers, 1999), fiche 484.

<sup>31</sup> For an example of an issue that devotes considerable space to the health of the camp's horses, see *Sibirskaiia perekovka*, 10 April 1935, *Gulag Press* fiche 487. The paper reports that 1/3 of the 208 horses at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Novo-Ivanovo farm were unfit for work, and would not be able to participate in the spring-sowing campaign. There were similar issues elsewhere. The stable-hands received most of the blame.

**Figure 3.2: Tractors at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Orlovo-Rozovo Farm<sup>32</sup>**



Soviet authorities clearly *wanted* to create an efficient, modern system, and some Gulag practices resemble those associated with “modernity”. The early-1930s re-forging (*perekovka*) campaign within the camps, which sought—at least in the propaganda—to turn criminals into productive Soviet citizens through honest labour and cultural activities, reflects modern state interventionist practices and enlightenment-influenced ideas of the human as malleable.<sup>33</sup> The belief that prisoners could be reformed—even through labour—was also common in Western penal policy and practices of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.<sup>34</sup> The Soviet rhetoric of “re-forging” is a variation on this theme of rehabilitation.

One of Bauman’s key arguments concerning modernity and the Holocaust posits that the modern state is the “gardening state” in its desire to “purify” society.<sup>35</sup> The metaphor of gardening at first glance seems an apt one to describe the state’s role throughout much of interwar Europe: increasing state intervention into the lives of citizens (in the form of,

<sup>32</sup> *Sibirskaiia perekovka*, 19 May 1935, *Gulag Press* fiche 488.

<sup>33</sup> For more on these reeducation campaigns, see Bell, “Gulag Newspapers”.

<sup>34</sup> *The Encyclopedia of Prisons & Correctional Facilities*, vol. 1, ed. Mary Bosworth (London: Sage Publications, 2005) p. 529, mentions four main uses for prisoner labour: punishment, reward, profit, and rehabilitation. Rehabilitation was certainly a common goal of early-20<sup>th</sup> century penal policy in much of the world. For one example, see Nikolaus Wachsmann, “Between Reform and Repression: Imprisonment in Weimar Germany,” *The Historical Journal*, 45.2 (Jun., 2002), pp. 411-432.

<sup>35</sup> See Weiner, ed., *Landscaping the Human Garden*, especially the introduction. He borrows the concept of the “gardening state” directly from Zygmunt Bauman. See Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust*, 13.

say, information gathering or pronatalist policies) reveals a desire to “cultivate” society in a certain way. The state, too, must decide what to do with those who appear superfluous or even harmful (in the eyes of the state) to the design of the garden. As Bauman writes, the modern gardening state “view[s] the society it rules as an object of designing, cultivating and weed poisoning”.<sup>36</sup>

Given that state policy is so central to the “gardening” state, and that the Gulag itself could be construed as carrying out the role of “weed poisoning” (or, in one scholar’s view, deciding which prisoners were actually redeemable, and which were not),<sup>37</sup> the Gulag’s rules and regulations are worth studying in order to assess the type of system Soviet authorities *sought to create*. It would be a mistake, however, to view these regulations as emblematic of the system *as it existed*. As this present study suggests, the system was far from efficient and on the ground frequently operated on the basis of individual relationships and informal practices rather than bureaucratic rules. This was the case even once the system had supposedly matured. As Lynne Viola writes of the special settlements, they “on paper [...] exhibited all the elements of ‘scientific planning’ from on high” but, in practice, “the awful reality of the special settlements was anything but planned”.<sup>38</sup>

In other words, despite sharing some characteristics of the modern “gardening” state, the functioning of the Gulag could hardly be described as a “coolly rational bureaucratic process” (Bauman’s provocative description for much of the Holocaust).<sup>39</sup> In fact, there was something about the Gulag bureaucracy itself that actually *encouraged inefficiency*,

---

<sup>36</sup> Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust*, 13, 91.

<sup>37</sup> See Steven A. Barnes, “Soviet Society Confined: The Gulag in the Karaganda Region of Kazakhstan,” (PhD Dissertation in the Department of History, Stanford University, 2003)

<sup>38</sup> Viola, “The Aesthetic of Stalinist Planning,” 102.

<sup>39</sup> Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust*, 77.

*corruption, and a flaunting of the rules.* In his study of the Victorian prison, Richard Ireland notes that, due to under-staffing, rules could actually lead to arbitrariness, rather than create more predictability:<sup>40</sup>

Clearly the introduction of a rule of silence into a gaol in which it had not been used before was likely to increase the number of cases of rule-breach which called for punishment. Moreover, since it is a rule easy to breach and, in an understaffed institution at any rate, almost impossible to enforce absolutely, it may necessitate a degree of tolerance and/or the danger of arbitrary enforcement.

The Gulag faced similar issues, and this is the second reason the Gulag regulations are worth studying: given the detail and paperwork involved with some of the rules and regulations, and the general inefficiency of the system and chronic staff shortages, rules were arbitrarily enforced, whether intentionally or not.<sup>41</sup> Ultimately, while attempting to foster centralization and greater uniformity, the bureaucratization of the system helped to entrench informal practices prevalent in the camps. In this sense, the concept of “neo-traditionalism”—modernization with the persistence and entrenchment of some pre-modern practices—describes the Gulag better than “modernity.” Local authorities often found it easier to ignore the rules, creating their own systems or fiefdoms, than to follow the rules to the letter.<sup>42</sup> These informal practices, it should be stressed, did not necessarily mitigate the harsh camp living conditions and likely often made those conditions worse:

---

<sup>40</sup> Richard W. Ireland, *'A Want of Order and Good Discipline': Rules, Discretion and the Victorian Prison* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2007) 192.

<sup>41</sup> See Chapter V of the present dissertation for more on personnel shortages in the Gulag

<sup>42</sup> Informal practices were, in fact, prevalent throughout Soviet society, the most obvious being the limited black market that was eventually tolerated by authorities. In order to get around official regulations, Soviet citizens relied on networks (patronage was important) as well as *blat*, or, essentially an exchange of favours. Mochulsky's memoir, *Gulag Boss*, is full of examples where Mochulsky was forced, due to circumstances on the ground, to direct his camp station as he saw fit. He was stationed in northern European Russia, at Pechorlag.

if certain regulations (on rations, for example) had been followed, conditions may have been better in the camps than they actually were.<sup>43</sup>

The regime's emphasis on production norm-fulfillment, both at the individual prisoner level and at the camp level, often meant that documented results were more important than actual results. *Tufta*—the falsification of work-norm fulfillment through a variety of means—was widespread. Many former prisoners, for example, report the practice of sawing off the ends of already felled trees in order to make the trees appear freshly cut; these logs then were included in the prisoner's quota.<sup>44</sup> Brigade leaders, it seems, would sometimes turn a blind eye to this practice—they too would benefit from (over-)fulfilled production norms.

The practice of *tufta* was, of course, economically absurd. One former prisoner, Evgeniia Borisovna Pol'skaia, refers to *tufta* as “the scourge of all creative work, eating into the pores of the entire country”.<sup>45</sup> Indeed, according to Siblåg prisoner Evsei Moiseevich L'vov, *tufta* was one of the many Gulag-related words that entered the general lexicon of the Soviet population.<sup>46</sup> But *tufta* was necessary, both for the individual prisoner's survival (avoiding as much hard labour as possible) and for the brigade-leader's job (reporting positively on the fulfillment of work quotas). As Khlevniuk writes, “Falsifications and exaggerations were a foundation of the forced-labor economy. Both prisoners and their wardens depended on ‘trash [*tufta*]' for survival”.<sup>47</sup> The *appearance* of a functioning bureaucracy, in other words, was more important than

---

<sup>43</sup> See the discussion on rations in this chapter, below.

<sup>44</sup> For a discussion of *tufta*, see Applebaum, *Gulag*, 350-360. Applebaum draws extensively on memoirs for this discussion. For another example, see N.M. Busarev's autobiography in Rossiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv sotsial'no-politicheskoi istorii (RGASPI) f. 560, op. 1, d. 4, ll. 104-105.

<sup>45</sup> Evgeniia Borisovna Pol'skaia, *Eto my, Gospodi, pred Toboiu...* (Nevinnomyssk, 1998): 203.

<sup>46</sup> Memorial f. 2, op. 1, d. 84, l. 46.

<sup>47</sup> Khlevniuk, *The History of the Gulag*, 338.

an actually functioning bureaucracy. As Viola argues, Stalinist planning resembled Socialist Realism in the sense that planning reflected “reality” as it was supposed to become, rather than as it actually was on the ground.<sup>48</sup> Thus despite the modernizing impulse, rational order largely escaped the Gulag.

Thus the Gulag shares some similarities with both Bauman and Foucault’s theories as they relate to punishment and the modern state, but there were also important differences. How was the Gulag supposed to function? What type of system were authorities trying to create?

### *The Shift away from Rehabilitation in Soviet Penal Policy*

There had been numerous attempts to codify the operations of prison camps within the Soviet Union before the late-1930s. That these were regularly modified suggests that there was no master plan behind the camp system, or, at the very least, that the plan in place needed frequent modification. Central administrators desired that the camps operate in certain ways, but clearly also responded to and learned from the situation on the ground. As Soviet criminal justice became more and more conservative, moreover, there was less and less overt emphasis on the reeducation of prisoners.

Declarations on the use of prisoners’ labour date back as far as 1919 and 1921, but the first attempt at the codification of “corrective-labour” was the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic’s (RSFSR) Corrective-Labour Code of 1924.<sup>49</sup> This was an extensive document, with 231 total articles. What is perhaps most fascinating about this document, in comparison with later regulations, is that this early code shows much more

---

<sup>48</sup> Viola, “Aesthetic of Stalinist Planning,” esp. 127-128.

<sup>49</sup> For a copy of this code, see Document no. 9, “Ispravitel’no-Trudovoi Kodeks RSFSR [16 October 1924],” in Kokurin and Petrov, eds., *GULAG*, 30-56.

concern for the individual welfare and rehabilitation of prisoners. Article 3 makes this explicit.<sup>50</sup>

Art[icle] 3. The stated goals (art[icle] 2) of Corrective-Labour establishments are set up:

- a) for the acclimatization [*prisposobleniia*] of the criminal to the conditions of communal life [*obshchezhitiiia*] through the path and influence of corrective-labour, connected with deprivation of freedom, and
- b) for the prevention of the possibility of committing further crimes.

In this manner, the stated goals of punishment in the Soviet Union at this time differed little from the modernizing state elsewhere: to provide for the rehabilitation of the individual prisoner, while isolating him or her from society. The language related to individual rehabilitation, downplayed in the codes of the late-1930s, asserts itself throughout the text. Article 50, for example, states that “Regimen in places of confinement is formed as a progressive system [*stroitsia po progressivnoi sisteme*] in such a way that, independent of the character and virtues of the prisoners and the length of their stay in this or that corrective-labour establishment, they are able to take large or small steps to show [*proiavliat'*] their independence and initiative”.<sup>51</sup> The language surrounding work is even more explicit in this regard: “The work activities of prisoners have an educational-corrective purpose [*znachenie*], establishing the goal of teaching them labour and, having learned some sort of profession, giving them the very possibility to live a working life [*zhit' trudovoi zhizn'iu*] upon [their] release from the place of confinement”.<sup>52</sup> The language of both of these articles is entirely missing from later codes, where there is more emphasis on punishment, isolation, and economic output. The

---

<sup>50</sup> Kokurin and Petrov, eds., *GULAG*, 30.

<sup>51</sup> Kokurin and Petrov, eds., *GULAG*, 37-38.

<sup>52</sup> Kokurin and Petrov, eds., *GULAG*, 38.

transformative effect of labour on the individual, while certainly an important component of Soviet socialism, was in itself a key function of modern penal systems beginning in the late-eighteenth century.<sup>53</sup>

In the early 1930s, Soviet penal policy retained much of the emphasis on reform, although there was a clear shift towards giving more weight to the importance of isolating dangerous offenders from society. An April 1930 (coinciding with the formation of the Gulag) statute [*polozhenie*] “On Corrective-Labour Camps,” states, “Corrective-labour camps have the task of guarding society from especially-dangerous offenders by isolating them, acquainting them with socially-useful labour, and familiarizing these offenders with the conditions of working communal life.”<sup>54</sup> The Council of Ministers then altered the 1924 corrective-labour code in August 1933. The new code placed a greater emphasis on isolation, but did not abandon reeducation. The first two articles of the new code read as follows:<sup>55</sup>

1. The task of the proletariat's criminal policy in the period of transition from capitalism to communism is the defense of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the existing socialist construction from infringements [*ot posyagatel'stv*] on the part of class enemy elements and infractions on the part of *déclassé* elements and unstable [*neustoichivyykh*] elements from among the workers.
2. Accordingly this corrective-labour policy pursues the following ends:
  - a. To place those sentenced in conditions which prevent the possibility of actions that bring damage to socialist construction, and
  - b. To re-educate and to convert [*Perevospytyvat' i prisposibliat'*] them to the conditions of working communal life through the path

---

<sup>53</sup> See “Labor” in the *Encyclopedia of Prisons & Correctional Facilities*, ed. Mary Bosworth (London: Sage Publications, 2005) 529-535. Here (529) it states, “Prison labor as a form of penal servitude originated in 1790 as one of the defining features of the 'penitentiary house' in Philadelphia's Walnut Street Jail. Prior to the 18th century, prisons were used mainly for pretrial detention or for those awaiting execution of their corporal or capital sentences.”

<sup>54</sup> Document 17, “Postanovlenie SNK SSSR ‘Ob utverzhdenii polozheniia ob ispravitel’no-trudovykh lageriakh’,” Kokurin and Petrov, eds., *GULAG*, 65,

<sup>55</sup> Document 19, “Postanovlenie VTsIK i SNK RSFSR ob utverzhdenii Ispravitel’no-trudovogo kodeksa RSFSR,” Kokurin and Petrov, eds., *GULAG*, 73-92, esp. 73.

of correcting their labour to socially-useful purposes [*tseli*] and organizing this labour for the start of the gradual approach from forced to voluntary labour [*na nachalakh postepennogo priblizheniia truda prinuditel'nogo k trudu dobrovol'nomu*] on the basis of soc[ialist]-competitions and shock-work.

By the late-1930s, however, the shift away from reeducation, at least in the regulations, was complete. At this point the emphasis fell clearly on isolation and economic production. For example, the first three articles of the aforementioned “Temporary Instruction on Regimen” from August 1939, read:<sup>56</sup>

1. Confinement regimen for prisoners in corrective-labour camps is determined by the present instruction and must ensure:
  - a. The reliable isolation of criminals, sentenced for crimes stipulated by the criminal code;
  - b. The organization of orderly upkeep of prisoners in the camp, ensuring the most effective use of the prisoners' labour.
2. For the purposes of ensuring state security those sentenced for counter-revolutionary crimes are sent, as a rule, to camps located in remote areas [*v otdalennykh mestnostiakh*]. [/] With regards to prisoners sentenced for counter-revolutionary crimes apply a strengthened regimen.
3. Prisoners of corrective-labour camps are distributed to camp stations [...] that are organized close to the work sites.

There is no mention of reeducation in the 1939 instruction at all, even though the instruction discusses rules for numerous aspects of camp life.

Even a 1940 regulation (*polozhenie*) on the tasks of the Cultural-Educational Department, which logically should focus on reeducation, is ambiguous on exactly this point. According to this document, cultural-educational work in the corrective labour camps and colonies had a dual purpose: “a) re-educating prisoners, sentenced for daily-life [*bytovye*] and administrative [*dolzhestnyye*] crimes on the basis of highly-productive, socially-useful labour”; and “b) making the most effective and efficient use of the labour of all prisoners on production for the fulfilment and over-fulfilment of production plans”.

---

<sup>56</sup> The full text of this document can be found in GARF f. 9401, op. 1a, d. 35, ll. 16-29 *c ob.*; and as Document 112, “Prikaz no. 00889 [...]”Kokurin and Petrov, eds., *GULAG*, 456-476.

Thus reeducation was at this point available only to those with relatively light sentences, but even here the emphasis is on economic output.<sup>57</sup>

Rehabilitation, a key link with modern penology, was de-emphasized (though never abandoned) as the Stalin era progressed and the Gulag expanded. Despite this, however, other modern concerns—including increased bureaucratization and regimentation—are clearly visible in the Gulag regulations of the immediate pre-WWII years. The *intention* of these rules conforms to a modern ethos concerning the rational ordering of society. The *result* of many of them, however, was increased inefficiency and an entrenchment of informal practices.

### ***The Rules and Regulations of the Late-1930s, Early-1940s***

The details of the August 1939 “Temporary Instruction on Regimen” deserve attention. As a policy document, it is decidedly lacking in precision, leaving room, at times purposefully, for local interpretation. There are numerous instances, for example, when rules end with “and so on” or “etc” (*i t.p.* or *i t.d.*). Point 42, contained within the section on “Prisoner rights and responsibilities” lists permitted personal items, among them “mending items (needles, thread, *etc.*)”.<sup>58</sup> Certain camp officials could inflict punishments on prisoners who did not follow camp rules, which included “transfer to

---

<sup>57</sup> See Document 36, “Prikaz NKVD SSSR no. 0161 [...]” in Kokurin and Petrov, eds., *GULAG*, 117-128, esp. 119.

<sup>58</sup> Kokurin and Petrov, eds., *GULAG*, 461. Note that the “Temporary Instruction” is followed by a list of *forbidden* items, so there still could be some confusion about what is permitted (note that even in this list, there is often a lack of precision). That list: “1. Weapons. 2. All types of alcoholic beverages. 3. Narcotics. 4. Medicines. 5. Sharp items (knives, razors, sissors, saws, and so on [!]). 6. Playing cards. 7. Eau de cologne. 8. Various [*razlichnye*] documents. 9. Money, greater than the sum allowed for use. 10. Valuable items, bonds. 11. War-topographical maps, plans of the locale and maps of the regions and provinces where the camp and camp subdivisions are located.”

harsher living conditions (penalty ration, a less well-constructed barrack, *and so on*)”.<sup>59</sup> These are sufficiently vague as to invite interpretation, even for those officials who had studied the regulations carefully. At times, too, the instructions specifically call for local interpretation. For instance, individual camp subdivisions sounded reveille at varying times, dependent on production circumstances; camps also determined the time of the lunch-break based on “production and other [unspecified] conditions”.<sup>60</sup> While elsewhere the instructions insist on a minimum of seven-hours of sleep per prisoner per night, and that the lunch-break must last at least one-hour, it is easy to see that the imprecision of the regulations would allow for abuses in these areas, as “production circumstances” could out-weigh other factors.

The document itself consists of 152 regulations (some with sub-sets of rules) governing most aspects of camp life and death. There are the General regulations (1-34) with the first fifteen related mostly to the set-up of the individual camp, followed by sub-sections on reveille (16-18), departure for work (19-22), the tidying of living quarters (23-25), food distribution (26-31), and the evening check and break-off signal (32-34). Then there is a section on the rights and responsibilities of prisoners (35-56), followed by rules governing prisoner movement at the camp. These rules divide into two sections, convoyed movement (57-64) and de-convoyed movement (65-72). The instruction then outlines rules for meetings with relatives or other outsiders (73-80); the receiving of packages and parcels (81-85); and rules governing correspondence (86-96). It details regulations for admitting prisoners into administrative-technical positions (97-103), disciplinary measures for infractions (104-112), and incentive measures to promote good

---

<sup>59</sup> Kokurin and Petrov, eds., *GULAG*, 467, emphasis added.

<sup>60</sup> Kokurin and Petrov, eds., *GULAG*, 458, 459.

behaviour (113-117). A large section, on “Penalty Regimen,” is divided into several sub-sections: the central penalty camp station (*punkt*) (118-124); the penalty isolator at camp stations (125-133); and solitary confinement cells at the central penalty camp station (134-137). Rule number 138 deals with holding prisoners under investigation. Rules 139-148 address the issue of prisoner complaints and declarations. And, finally, rules 149-152 deal with notification and actions to be taken following the death of a prisoner.

The “Temporary Instruction on Regimen for Prisoners in Corrective-Labour Colonies of the NKVD USSR,” issued in 1940, is more detailed, with 184 rules instead of 152. The overall categories remain basically the same, although the Labour Colony Instruction also includes small sections on cultural-educational activities, the release of prisoners, and colony inspections. As labour colonies technically held prisoners with short sentences involving relatively minor crimes, it is not surprising that these regulations include specific points relating to cultural activities and release. The regulations for the camps and the colonies are otherwise quite similar to one another, although there is more indication that prisoners in labour colonies would have a greater chance at interacting with the outside world. The very first page states that “Colonies, *situated in cities and other population centres*, must be surrounded entirely by a wooden fence of sufficient thickness”. Barbed wire should also be used to separate prisoners from non-prisoner premises (*pomeshchenie*).<sup>61</sup> In contrast, the instruction for labour camps had called for the camps to be located as far from population centres as possible.<sup>62</sup>

---

<sup>61</sup> GARF f. 9401, op. 1a, d. 57, l. 143.

<sup>62</sup> Kokurin and Petrov, eds., *GULAG*, 457. ITLs were supposed to be located as close as possible to the place of work; as far as possible from “general population settlements [*obshchegrazhdanskikh naselennykh punktov*]”; and in a dry area, supplied with fresh water.

Aside from these two relatively comprehensive instructions on camp regimen, the two to three years before the outbreak of the war saw many other operational orders on aspects of camp life and governance. For example, a February 1939 order (00148) gave a detailed set of instructions regarding the photographing of prisoners.<sup>63</sup> In June of that year, the NKVD clarified its rules for registering Gulag deaths (00874).<sup>64</sup> The NKVD created separate regimen departments for each corrective labour camp in June 1939; these were to be run by the vice-commander of the camp in charge of the Militarized Guard (VOKhR), and had the responsibility for enforcing regulations regarding camp regimen.<sup>65</sup> Other detailed central circulars and operational orders dealt with such issues as prisoner complaints and declarations (11 May 1939, Order 00514), censorship, and rations.<sup>66</sup>

Many of the regulations from these years reveal a concern with the categorization of prisoners, highlighting differences in confinement practices for different types of prisoners. The 1939 Corrective Labour Camp “Temporary Instruction,” for example, restricts Article 58ers from privileges including non-convoyed movement and frequent correspondence. It also states that Article 58ers should be placed under strengthened regimen. The camp-ration system from 1939 actually divided prisoners into twelve categories based on such factors as individual economic output and prisoner health.

Concerns with categorization had, of course, pre-dated the late-1930s and were in fact a feature of Soviet society right from the beginning: special advantages for those of proletarian origins and the deprivation of rights for certain other social groups and

---

<sup>63</sup> GARF f. 9401, op. 1a, d. 32, l. 83.

<sup>64</sup> GARF f. 9401, op. 1a, d. 34, l. 35.

<sup>65</sup> GARF f. 9401, op. 1a, d. 50, ll. 130-130ob.

<sup>66</sup> GARF f. 9401, op. 1a, d. 33, l. 134; GARF f. 9401, op. 1a, d. 37, ll. 92-95ob; Kokurin and Petrov, eds., *GULAG*, 476-489.

individuals characterized early Soviet class relations.<sup>67</sup> The dekulakization campaigns were a logical if not inevitable outcome of Lenin's categorization of the peasantry in the countryside.

Gulag methods of categorizing prisoners reveal great concern with gathering considerable information on individual prisoners and tracking these prisoners' development within the camps. Each prisoner had a file that would follow him or her to his or her final place of incarceration; the file stopped its own journey only with the prisoner's release or death. Almost every prisoner file contains either a "Questionnaire of the Arrested Person [*Anketa arrestovannogo*]" or a "Registration-Statistical Form [*Uchetno-statisticheskaiia kartochka*]" with considerable information on the prisoner, from physical characteristics and a place for a photograph to demographic information.<sup>68</sup>

In the late 1930s, the "Registration-Statistical Form" was double-sided. The prisoner completed and signed the front side, while a camp official filled out the blanks on the back. A blank form appeared approximately as follows:<sup>69</sup>

[Front side:]  
Registration-Statistical Form for [Name of Camp]                      Personal file # \_\_\_\_\_  
Arrived in the camp "\_\_\_" \_\_\_\_\_ 193\_\_                      transfer from \_\_\_\_\_  
Labour category: \_\_\_\_\_                      {Place for photo-card}  
Physical description [a list of physical characteristics (not included, here), to be underlined]  
1. Surname and nickname [*klichka*]: \_\_\_\_\_  
2. Name and patronymic: \_\_\_\_\_

---

<sup>67</sup> For more on early Soviet class relations and categorizations, see Golfo Alexopolous, *Stalin's Outcasts: Aliens, Citizens, and the Soviet State, 1926-1936* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003).

<sup>68</sup> Prisoner files examined for this study were found in the Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Tomskoi oblasti (GATO), collections (*fondy*) R-1151 (ITKs for Tomsk Oblast') and R-1152 (Tomasinlag). The *Anketa arrestovanogo* appears more often in the prisoner files in f. 1151, while the *Uchetno-statisticheskaiia kartochka* is exclusive to f. 1152. It is unclear whether this reflects a difference in forms for prisoners of ITKs as opposed to ITLs, or simply a difference related to the time period in which the prisoners were incarcerated (most of the R-1151 files cover the war years and beyond, while the Tomasinlag files are confined to the late-1930s). For more on prisoner files see Barnes, "Soviet Society Confined," 94-96.

<sup>69</sup> These are the exact questions (translated) but only the approximate format, as I was not allowed to take photographs or photocopies of any of the forms.

3. Year of birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Place of birth and registration: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Education – general: \_\_\_\_\_ Specialization: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Citizenship: \_\_\_\_\_ Nationality<sup>70</sup>: \_\_\_\_\_
6. Specialization – general: \_\_\_\_\_ narrow: \_\_\_\_\_ length of service: \_\_\_\_\_
7. Decision of the qualification commission [*Postanovl. kvalifikats. komissii*]:  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. Languages spoken aside from native language: \_\_\_\_\_
9. Social origin: \_\_\_\_\_
10. Social position [*polozhenie*]: \_\_\_\_\_
11. Party status (former): \_\_\_\_\_
12. Service in the army: old: \_\_\_\_\_ white: \_\_\_\_\_ red: \_\_\_\_\_
13. Service in the judicial organs of the NKVD: \_\_\_\_\_
14. Date of arrest: \_\_\_\_\_
15. Prior convictions: \_\_\_\_\_ Number of times in the camps: \_\_\_\_\_
16. Marital status: \_\_\_\_\_ List the family names and addresses of closest relatives:  
\_\_\_\_\_
17. Last address: \_\_\_\_\_

#### WORK BEFORE ARREST

[a chart (not included, here) with space for employment history]

I have been warned about the consequences of giving false information.

\_\_\_\_\_ [for prisoner's signature, date]

[Back side:]

To be completed by the administration of the place of confinement:

1. Sentenced by: \_\_\_\_\_
2. When: \_\_\_\_\_
3. For what and [which] article: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Term of “\_\_\_\_\_” from “\_\_\_\_\_” \_\_\_\_\_ 193\_ to “\_\_\_\_\_” \_\_\_\_\_ 193\_.<sup>71</sup>
5. Workday credits earned: \_\_\_\_\_
6. Notes from the MSZ<sup>72</sup>: \_\_\_\_\_
7. Changes to term: \_\_\_\_\_  
Commander URCh<sup>73</sup>: \_\_\_\_\_ [signature] Executor [*Ispolnitel'*]: \_\_\_\_\_  
[signature]
  - a. Workday credits by camp: \_\_\_\_\_<sup>74</sup>
  - b. Other changes to the term: \_\_\_\_\_
7. [*sic*] Died “\_\_\_\_\_” \_\_\_\_\_ 19\_\_ Document [*Akt*] # \_\_\_\_\_
8. [*sic*] Freed “\_\_\_\_\_” \_\_\_\_\_ 19\_\_ Certificate [*Spravka*] # \_\_\_\_\_

<sup>70</sup> By “nationality” the Soviets essentially meant ethnic/linguistic group.

<sup>71</sup> Note: it is fascinating that the first digit of the decade was already typed in, suggesting that when this form was first created, authorities were not expecting prisoners with sentences of more than a few years.

<sup>72</sup> Note: I have been unable to determine which department this is within the Gulag and/or NKVD.

<sup>73</sup> *Uchetno-raspredelitel'nyi chast'*: Registration-distribution section, sometimes referred to as the Second Section.

<sup>74</sup> Note: in many cases, this section is stamped with “Do not note credits [*Zachetu ne podlezhit*]”. This is probably because the practice of counting workday credits towards early release officially ended in 1939.

In most cases, question seven from the first side and five-eight on the second side were not filled out, either by the prisoner or the administration. The forms were often missing photo-cards.

Other common documents within the prisoner files include a copy of the sentence itself (*prigovor*), medical reports (usually very brief) that pronounce on the prisoner's health and labour capabilities; forms for counting workday credits, which also include spaces for information about the prisoner's behaviour in the camps; responses to complaints and petitions by the prisoner or his relatives (usually copies of the original petitions are not included); and documents related to the prisoner's release or death. Occasionally, other information such as notes on disciplinary infractions and documents from the prisoner's prior places of confinement (including, sometimes, interrogation reports) are included.

Thus authorities had considerable data at their disposal including, importantly, information about the prisoner's possible political reliability (background, party-status, army service, NKVD service, and so on), and also whether or not the prisoner might have useful work or educational experience. On the surface, these record-keeping practices support the contention that the Gulag was part of the "gardening state," cultivating and weeding as necessary.

At the ground level, however, despite extensive record keeping, authorities actually often had considerable difficulties tracking individual prisoners. NKVD Operational Order 00148, "On the photographing of prisoners," illustrates this point well.<sup>75</sup> The order begins with the striking statement, "In working practice at the camps and colonies during

---

<sup>75</sup> GARF f. 9401, op. 1a, d. 32, ll. 82-83

release, transport [*etap*], and the labour use of prisoners, instances of the substitution by prisoners of surnames and the adjusting of data of one person for another, etc., take place.” This is one area where subversive prisoner practices carried over from the tsarist era penal system.<sup>76</sup> George Kennan noted the same practice in his famous indictment of the Siberian penal and exile system in the late nineteenth century, *Siberia and the Exile System*.<sup>77</sup> To prevent this identity fraud, Order 00148 called for four copies of photographs of each prisoner (the previous, tsarist, administration also called for photographs as the answer to this problem), one for the prisoner’s personal file and the others for various forms stored with the camp or colony’s Second Department, in charge of record keeping.<sup>78</sup> The order also directed the Second Department to create dark rooms for the processing of photographs, and included rules listing the photograph’s size, noting that there should be one full facial shot, and one profile of the prisoner’s right side, and indicating what should be done with the negatives.

Authorities were correct to worry about prisoner photographs. Many of the prisoner files, even those dating after this 1939 order, lack a photograph, even where space for one existed. Many de-convoyed prisoners—those with special permission to move outside of the zone without guard—passed in and out of the camps without a photo card, even though the Gulag specifically required that these prisoners show photo cards to the guards when exiting or entering the camp.<sup>79</sup>

---

<sup>76</sup> Another more obvious area is in the prisoner alphabet, hammered out on walls between cells in prisons.

<sup>77</sup> George Kennan discovered that this practice occurred frequently amongst Siberian exiles in the late-tsarist period. See Kennan, *Siberia and the Exile System*, esp. 291.

<sup>78</sup> The Second Department was the URO: Uchetno-raspredelitel’nyi otdel, or “Accounting-distribution department.”

<sup>79</sup> For a Sibltag example of authorities complaining about de-convoyed movement without photocards, see the meeting protocol of the closed party meeting of the Zavarzino subdivision Party Committee from 22 February 1940, Tsentr dokumentatsii noveishei istorii Tomskoi oblasti (TsDNI TO) f. 356, op. 1, d. 5, l. 112.

**Figure 3.3: Escapes from Corrective Labour Camps, 1934-1953<sup>80</sup>**

Year	Number of escapes	Escapees as % of camp population	Number of escapees re-captured
1934	83,940	16.36	46,752
1935	67,493	9.30	45,988
1936	58,313	6.90	35,891
1937	58,264	7.09	35,460
1938	32,033	3.21	22,679
1939	12,333	0.93	9,838
1940	11,813	0.87	8,839
1941	10,592	0.70	6,528
1942	11,822	0.83	--
1943	6,242	0.63	--
1944	3,586	0.54	--
1945	2,196	0.30	--
1946	2,642	0.43	--
1947	3,779	0.46	--
1948	4,261	0.38	--
1949	2,583	0.21	--
1950	2,577	0.18	--
1951	2,318	0.15	--
1952	1,253	0.07	--
1953	785	0.05	--

The most significant evidence of the authorities' difficulty in tracking prisoners, however, is the incredibly high escape-rate, particularly in the pre-war years (Figure 3.3, above). While Figure 3.3 includes data only for corrective-labour camps, the problem was acute also in special settlements and corrective-labour colonies. Lynne Viola writes of the special settlements that escape "was in fact such a common response to the

---

<sup>80</sup> Note that this chart only includes escapes from ITLs and not from ITKs. It also does not include special-settlement escapes. So, in all, it vastly underestimates the number of escapes from the Gulag as a whole, particularly for the 1930s. Chart adapted from Pohl, *The Stalinist Penal System*, 16 and Document 97: "Report on the Movement of prisoners in NKVD Camps," in Khlevniuk, ed., *The History of the Gulag*, 308. Note that documents 52-54, on the movement of prisoners in the Gulag from 1945-1954 in A. B. Bezborodov, I. V. Bezborodova and V. M. Khrustalev, eds. *Istoriia Staliniskogo Gulaga: Tom 4: Naselenie Gulaga: chislennost' i usloviia sodержaniia* (Moscow: Rosspen, 2004) [ISG 4], 134-136, include different (higher) numbers for the total escapes for these years, because they include ITKs. These documents also include data on re-captured escapees, but that data have not been included in the chart, above, due to the inconsistencies in the numbers.

desperation of [the settlers'] situation, especially in the early years, that some feared in time only the elderly and women with children would remain in the special settlements.” According to the OGPU, almost 72,000 special settlers were at large due to escapes as of February 1931.<sup>81</sup> As the data indicate, authorities also had difficulty re-capturing escapees. In 1935, for example, in the camps there were 67,493 escapes and 45,988 escapees recaptured (some, presumably, had escaped in previous years).

On a micro-level, prisoner files illustrate some of the issues surrounding escapes and tracking prisoners. A fascinating personal file of one Chechen Sibltag prisoner reveals that authorities were not sure whether or not this prisoner was an escapee from the 1930s, a World War II veteran, or simply a prisoner who failed to show up to roll-call. A 1939 letter from a Sibltag official to central Gulag authorities, copied to the NKVD Administration for Novosibirsk Province and the NKVD for the Chechen-Ingush ASSR, concerns the prisoner, who had been interned at the Tomsk Camp Station of Sibltag in 1933-34:<sup>82</sup>

I request [that you] take measures to search and check on a non-appearance on the verification day [*denproverki*] of 13.08.34 in the f[ormer] Tomsk OLP of pr[isoner] {*named*} p[ersonal] f[ile] no. 79104, born 1912, raised in the [...] Chechen-Ingush ASSR, Chechen, illiterate, from the peasantry, n[on]-Party, bachelor.

Sentenced on 24.1.33 by the people's court [*narsud*] of the Chechen-Ingush ASSR under art[icle] 166 pt 2 of the C[riminal] C[ode] to four years.<sup>83</sup>

[...this part of the document is a physical description of the prisoner]

Upon detection of the individual [but] before [re-]confinement, we ask that you check whether the prisoner really escaped from Sibltag NKVD, or whether there are documents pertaining to his release.

[...]

Deputy-Commander of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Department of the Sibltag Admin of the NKVD USSR /MOISEEV/ [signed]

---

<sup>81</sup> See Viola, *Unknown Gulag*, 116-120, quotation 117.

<sup>82</sup> GATO f. R-1151, op. 1, d. 132, l. 6.

<sup>83</sup> Article 166 of the RSFSR criminal code concerns the theft of horses or livestock.

Commander of the URO [2<sup>nd</sup> Department] of the Siblag Admin of the NKVD USSR /MARTYNOV/ [signed]

A reply dated 21 October 1939 states that the prisoner had escaped from the Tomsk Camp Station on 18 August 1934. The next document in the file jumps all the way to December 1949, from the director of the First Subdivision of the Corrective Labour Colony Department for Tomsk Province, asking if there is a record of the prisoner having served in the Great Patriotic War. The file was finally closed (and the search for the prisoner officially ended) by a Declaration (*Postanovlenie*) from July 1950, which also noted that there was no evidence that the prisoner had escaped, only that he did not appear at a 13 August 1934 general check. The whole file contains only nine pages.<sup>84</sup>

Yet the file and the above letter are worth highlighting. Most striking is the relative lack of concern for the prisoner's whereabouts, with evidence of only two brief inquiries in the fifteen years following his disappearance. It is possible that there were extensive searches that produced little documentation (unlikely) or extensive searches that produced documentation that did not make it into the prisoner's file (more likely). It is also conceivable that the prisoner was sent to another camp or subdivision without proper documentation, or that he died in the camps and authorities failed to note his death in his file. Any of these possibilities attest to the haphazard operations of the Gulag bureaucracy.

In general, part of the confusion in tracking prisoners may have resulted from deliberate actions of local camp authorities. An NKVD Operational Order from 1936 complained that local camp subdivision directors would send their worst prisoners (in

---

<sup>84</sup> GATO f. R-1151, op. 1, d. 132, ll. 1-9. Note that camp authorities knew his demographic information because of the information contained in the file. The discrepancy between the 18 August 1934 date and the 13 August 1934 date in the documentation is unexplained. The "18" may simply be a typographical error.

terms of behaviour, health, or production) to other subdivisions or regions without the knowledge or permission of the camp commander.<sup>85</sup> In other instances, incompetence played a role. On 9 June 1939 the NKVD ordered Sibltag to send the prisoner G. I. Mansurov back to Astrakhan for a re-trial. On 22 June, Sibltag authorities replied that no such prisoner was in the camp, but then on 29 June they sent a second reply stating that they would transfer Mansurov, as requested, later in July. Clearly, it was not always easy to track down individual prisoners within a particular camp system.<sup>86</sup>

While at times prisoners could use the Gulag's inefficiency to escape the scrutiny of officials—exchanging identities, escaping (particularly in the early-mid 1930s)—at other times the inefficiency of the system clearly worked to the prisoner's disadvantage. Central authorities also admonished officials also for holding prisoners in the camps after the end of their sentences. A September 1938 order noted that Sibltag freed one prisoner, I. T. Basov, one year, eleven months and nineteen days after the end of his sentence and another prisoner two months and nineteen days after the end of hers.<sup>87</sup> It is difficult to know the extent of such tracking problems, of course. Clearly, despite a cumbersome railway system, many remote subdivisions, and an understaffed bureaucracy, authorities still managed to move vast numbers of prisoners to points all over the Soviet Union.

### *Camp rations and hyper-bureaucratization*

One of the more interesting regulations of the late 1930s was the attempt to standardize rations within the camps. Appended to NKVD Operational Order 00943, on rations, one finds several tables containing various food norms, as well as lists of

---

<sup>85</sup> GARF f. 9401, op. 1a, d. 9, l. 54. Order no. 0030.

<sup>86</sup> GARF f. 9401, op. 1a, d. 40, l. 130. This information is contained as part of NKVD Operational Order no. 0299 from 15 September 1939.

<sup>87</sup> GARF f. 9401, op. 1a, d. 21, ll. 70-71. Order no. 00608

allowable goods for prisoners.<sup>88</sup> Order 00943 and other orders from this time reveal what we might term, “hyper-bureaucratization,” whereby official regulations were so detailed and cumbersome as to encourage non-compliance, thereby entrenching informal practices.<sup>89</sup>

The food-norm charts of the late-1930s show no concern for variety. Instead, authorities break down food allotments into grams/day of various types of foodstuffs, from rye bread to fish to potatoes to tea. The charts also contain no mention of quality. The base ration consisted of 1,100g of rye bread per prisoner per day; 650g of potatoes and vegetables; and 155g of fish, as well as small amounts of other items. The official diet was very low in fruits and vegetables.<sup>90</sup> Of course, according to most Gulag memoirists, fish and even potatoes were extremely rare, with bread and a barely edible broth soup forming the staple diet.<sup>91</sup> Thus, to say that actual rations did not conform to Order 00943 would be an understatement. Some prisoners found ways of supplementing rations via packages from relatives, through personal connections with well-placed prisoners or staff, or as reward for performing small tasks. One Sibltag prisoner even recalls with a certain amount of satisfaction the ability to “earn” extra food: “In the camp I felt like I was on the outside, as here I was able to “earn” an extra bowl of gruel [*balandy*] or a piece of bread, not like in the prison”.<sup>92</sup>

---

<sup>88</sup> See Kokurin and Petrov, eds., *GULAG*, 476-489.

<sup>89</sup> I use “hyper” here in the same sense as Mikhail Epstein in “The Dialectics of *Hyper*: From Modernism to Postmodernism,” in Epstein et al., eds, *Russian Postmodernism: New Perspectives on Post-Soviet Culture* (Providence: Berghan Books, 1999) 3-30. Here Epstein discusses “hyper” in various contexts (hypertextuality, hypersexuality, hypersociality) as both an exaggeration of reality and a pseudo-reality.

<sup>90</sup> For comparative purposes, convicts in Victorian England received less food than Gulag prisoners were supposed to have received. The convict diet in the 1870s consisted of between 616-810g of bread per day, 389g/day of potatoes, and 132g/day of meat. There was, however, more day-to-day variety in food servings in the English prisons. See Ireland, ‘*A Want of Order and Good Discipline*’, 204-205.

<sup>91</sup> For a description of the soup see Applebaum, *Gulag*, 288.

<sup>92</sup> Aleksandr Klein, *Kleimenye, ili, Odin’ sredi odinokikh: Zapiski katorzhnika* (Syktyvkar, 1995) 144.

Had local camp authorities followed these ration regimes, prisoners likely would have had enough food. On the other hand, we must consider the possibility that the norms themselves were merely a cynical attempt by the NKVD to pass the blame should problems arise. Due to inefficiencies in supply, the black market, and the skimming of foodstuffs for personal use, central authorities must have known that the regulations would have been impossible to follow. Yet, the regulations allowed the centre to blame the periphery for any problems. And, indeed, on the rare occasions when an official received punishment for high levels of starvation and disease in the camps, the punished official was invariably a local camp commander, rather than someone from the central Gulag or NKVD.<sup>93</sup> On paper, however, Order 00943 exposes a key difference between the Gulag and the Nazi camps. Here we find the *opposite* of Bauman's formulation for the Holocaust. Bauman attributes Nazi atrocities partly to an efficient, bureaucratic system carrying out orders from above; some of the repression in the Gulag, however, might have been prevented had there been an efficient, bureaucratic system that successfully carried out orders.

Margarete Buber-Neumann's fascinating account of her time in both the Soviet and the Nazi camps nicely illustrates this point about the differences in efficiency in the two systems. She recalls finding an official document for food norms while incarcerated in Karlag in Kazakhstan. She discovered that the prisoners received less food than they were supposed to receive, and assumed that kitchen workers regularly stole the remainder. Camp inefficiencies litter her account of Karlag, where she managed to be unwatched much of the time and where socializing in the barracks—which were hardly well

---

<sup>93</sup> See discussion, pages 239-240, in the present dissertation.

ordered—was a common occurrence. The contrast to Ravensbrück could hardly be more striking. Initially, Buber-Neumann was happy to receive better rations in Ravensbrück than in Karlag (she was not Jewish, and was not on starvation rations), and she was also initially struck by the orderliness of the camp: “I was astonished at what I saw: neat plots of grass with beds in which flowers were blooming [...] large timber barracks painted white [...] a big, well-kept lawn with silver furs”. Even the barracks had a functioning lavatory and washbasins. At Ravensbrück, however, everything was so regimented, and social ties so tenuous, that Buber-Neumann “almost began to think that the lousy mud huts of Birma [in Karlag] were preferable to this pedantic nightmare”.<sup>94</sup>

While Buber-Neumann blamed the kitchen-staff at Karlag for the poor state of camp rations, the very regulations themselves were so onerous as to ensure that they were ignored. The NKVD called for twelve different food norms, some also containing various modifiers, each very specific in the amount per prisoner per day. The logistical hurdles for distributing food in such a manner surely would have been overwhelming even for the most competent of personnel and managers.<sup>95</sup>

**Figure 3.4: The Standard Ration (grams/prisoner/day)<sup>96</sup>**

<i>Type of food</i>	<i>Amount</i>	<i>Type of food</i>	<i>Amount</i>	<i>Type of food</i>	<i>Amount</i>
Rye bread	1100	Animal fat*	4	Potato flour*	0.3
Wheat flour	61	Macaroni	10	Cayenne	0.13
Cereals	127	Tea surrogate	2	Bay leaves	0.2
Meat	39	Natural tea*	0.3	Salt	20
Fish	155	Potatoes & Vegetables	650	Sugar	17
Herring*	5	Pureed tomato	10		
Vegetable oil	14	Dried fruits*	0.5		

\*Herring was available only for sale in the commissary; animal fat was available only for those who were ill and Stakhanovites; natural tea, dried fruits, and potato flour were available only for those who were ill.

<sup>94</sup> See Margarete Buber, *Under Two Dictators* (London: Victor Gollanz LTD, 1949). Her description of the rations document can be found on page 108; quotations 187, 224.

<sup>95</sup> As Viola argues, Stalinist planning often resembled what authorities wished to see in practice, and did not always relate in any meaningful way to reality on the ground. Viola, “Aesthetic of Stalinist Planning.”

<sup>96</sup> Kokurin and Petrov, eds., *GULAG*, 479.

The twelve food norms were as follows: 1) a lower-than-standard ration for those not fulfilling their norms, under investigation, invalids, and prisoners confined to work within the camp zone (this norm could be modified, too: those fulfilling work norms by less than sixty percent had different rations than those who fulfilled their work norms by between 60-99 percent); 2) a higher-than-standard ration for those fulfilling their work norms in key production areas (*osnovnykh proizvodstvennykh*); 3) supplementary food rations for Stakhanovite workers; 4) supplementary food rations for engineering-technical workers (note that these rations are greater than Stakhanovite rations); 5) the standard ration for prisoners in corrective labour colonies and camps (see Figure 3.4, above);<sup>97</sup> 6) rations for under-aged prisoners, divided into two parts: general and work-norm fulfillers; 7) rations for the sickly and those suffering from pellagra; 8) rations for pregnant and breast-feeding women (mostly higher than Stakhanovite rations); 9) rations for non-working unfit prisoners; 10) rations for working unfit prisoners; 11) rations for those on transfer; and 12) penalty rations. In all cases, rations for those prisoners above the Arctic Circle or in underground work were 25 percent higher, while rations for several camps—Noril’lag, Vorkutlag, and a subdivision of Sevzheldorlag—were set separately, probably because these were priority camps. Thus in the case of rations, the regime categorized prisoners not by type of sentence, as one might expect, but usually by work-norm fulfilment and health status. Article 58ers were more likely to be placed under penalty rations, but there is no explicit targeting of the so-called counter-revolutionaries with these food norms.

While ration differentiation clearly existed in the camps, it is almost impossible to conceive of it working according to the script of NKVD Operational Order 00943.

---

<sup>97</sup> It is worth noting that there was not a difference in the main food norm for prisoners in ITKs compared with prisoners in ITLs.

Corrupt camp officials sold foodstuffs on the side;<sup>98</sup> supply issues plagued most camps; and prisoners who worked in the kitchen were often able to pocket extra food for themselves and their friends. Even once the food reached the mess-hall, however, it is unlikely that those who dished out food portions did so by the criteria set out under the twelve ration regimes. Most likely, prisoners receiving the best rations were the friends of the mess-hall workers or those in the camps—usually from the professional criminal class—with the most influence amongst other prisoners. No doubt those who curried favour with camp personnel also received better rations. Women memoirists commonly report that Gulag guards would offer better food in exchange for sex.<sup>99</sup> For all of these reasons, then, personal connections, ingenuity, and the general inefficiency of the system played a greater role in a prisoner’s food supply than did central regulations.

Ration categories highlight the regime’s new emphasis on economic over political concerns. This economic focus is apparent in general prisoner categories, too. A 1931 Gulag circular established three categories for prisoners: First, Second, and Third. First category prisoners were those able to conduct any form of physical labour; second category were those with a lower capacity for unskilled physical labour; and the third category were invalids, either those capable only of light work or those unable to work at

---

<sup>98</sup> See Chapter V.

<sup>99</sup> For more discussion of this and for specific example see Applebaum, *Gulag*, 311; Barnes, “Soviet Society Confined,” 119-120; Buber, *Under Two Dictators*, 69; Roy Robson, *Solovki: The Story of Russia Told through Its Most Remarkable Islands* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004) 219; Olga Adamova-Sloizberg, “My Journey,” in Simeon Vilensky, ed., *Till My Tale Is Told: Women’s Memoirs of the Gulag* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999) 51. Sexual abuse was quite common in the 1930s in the Soviet Union more generally, particularly at the workplace, as thousands upon thousands of women entered the workforce. For more, see Wendy Goldman, *Women at the Gates: Gender and Industry in Stalin’s Russia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) 227-230.

all.<sup>100</sup> Authorities also often used a four-category system, A, B, C and D (A, B, V, G), where “A” were those prisoners able to work, “B” were prisoners who conducted light work only in the zone, “C” were invalids, and “D” were those prisoners not engaged in work for reasons other than illness.<sup>101</sup> To cite one example, only 28 percent of prisoners at Siblag’s Akhpunsk subdivision in January 1937 were First Category prisoners, and this in a camp with the task of building a railroad, which clearly would have involved mostly hard, physical labour.<sup>102</sup>

Rations are not the only area where official regulations were virtually impossible for individual officials to follow. The documents regarding censorship in the camps are similarly problematic. In late-1939, the NKVD issued detailed instructions for camp censors.<sup>103</sup> The instruction required censors to use different forms depending on the circumstances. An initial form was filled out for each letter read. Censors were supposed to look out for hidden items and evidence of anti-Soviet statements (*vyskazyvaniia*), as well as for information about the camp, such as its location, the number of prisoners, statements pertaining to regimen, conditions, the guard, escapes, type of production, problems with living conditions, illnesses and epidemics in the camps, camp rules, and complaints to judicial organs. The censor would send letters containing this type of information to the Third Department, requiring a second form; the Third Department completed a third form when sending the letter back, while the censor kept track of

---

<sup>100</sup> Note that usually the camp doctor would perform a medical inspection to determine the category for a particular prisoner. Document 7, “Tsirkuliar GULAG no. 177177 ‘Ob ustanovlenii trekh kategorii trudosposobnosti zakliuchennykh v ispravitel’no-trudovykh lageriakh OGPU,” in *ISG* 3, 72.

<sup>101</sup> See, for example, Document 63, “Iz spravki otdela ucheta i raspredeleniia zakliuchennykh GULAG o chislennosti i trudovom ispol’zovanii zakliuchennykh,” in *ISG* 3, 218.

<sup>102</sup> Document 1, “Ob’’ianitel’naia zapiska k otchetu stroitel’stva Gorno-Shorskoi zhel. dor. za 1936 god,” in L. I. Gvozdkova, A. A. Mit’, eds., *Prinuditel’nyi trud: Ispravitel’no-trudovye lageria v Kuzbasse (30-50-e gg.)*: Tom 2 (Kemerovo: Kuzbassvuzizdat, 1994), 15.

<sup>103</sup> “Instruction on the Work of the Censor in Corrective-Labour Camps and Colonies of the USSR.” GARF f. 9401, op. 1a, d. 37, ll. 93-101 *s ob.*

suspicious passages from all correspondence on a fourth form. Outright confiscation required the decision of the Third Department itself (yet another form), while a final decision to destroy the correspondence required a sixth form. The censor used a seventh form to note if any money had been confiscated from correspondence. Letters in a foreign language required extra work (the NKVD also permitted the censor to use non-Article 58 prisoners as translators, if necessary).

According to the regulations, there was only one censor for every 1300-1500 prisoners in labour camp subdivisions, and one censor per labour colony, regardless of the number of prisoners. In labour colonies with fewer than 800 prisoners, moreover, the censor was also in charge of the sending/receiving of packages and organizing prisoner meetings with relatives.<sup>104</sup> Given the low educational levels of camp personnel generally, as well as chronic staff shortages, it is difficult to imagine that censors would fill out each necessary form in each case.

The hyper-bureaucratization of systems of ration distribution and censorship in the camps show how regulations actually worked to encourage unofficial networks and informal practices. Fudging data and ignoring rules was often an easier path than trying to follow regulations to the letter. These practices no doubt contributed to the harsh living conditions in most camps. One of the only sanctioned means the prisoners had to fight corruption and to try to ameliorate their living conditions was the petition, complaint, or declaration, sent to key officials, including Stalin himself.

---

<sup>104</sup> NKVD Operational Order no. 00555 from 5 May 1940, “O vvedenii v podrazdeleniakh lagerei NKVD i koloniiakh UITK, OITK NKVD, UNKVD dolzhnosti tsenzora,” GARF f. 9401 op. 1a d. 56 l. 187.

### *Petitions and Complaints*

Given the poor conditions of the camps and the widespread abuses of power by camp authorities, it is not surprising that prisoners sent huge numbers of petitions and complaints to various authorities, from the local procurator to Stalin. Like many aspects of the Gulag system, petition writing reveals a combination of the modern and the traditional. Scholars have noted that appealing directly to the tsar with grievances had been a Russian pastime that continued as a “neo-traditional” feature of the Stalin era, when countless people continued this practice by writing to local and national political figures for help with personal grievances.<sup>105</sup> Petition-writing and direct complaints to politicians are also a feature of modern democracies, however, so we should be careful about construing these practices solely as vestiges of Russia’s paternalistic past. According to historian Miriam Dobson, prisoner petitions stylistically borrowed elements from socialist realism, which in turn borrowed from older Russian hagiographies.<sup>106</sup>

Unfortunately, we now know that most petitions in Soviet archives were eventually destroyed due to a bureaucratic decision concerning which records to keep, and which to purge.<sup>107</sup> Fortunately, we can learn significant information about petitions and complaints from the prisoner files. Often, these petitions speak of unjust arrest, and request a re-examination of the individual case. At times, too, petitioners tried to show, essentially, that they had indeed been “re-forged” and would now be contributing members of Soviet society. Prisoners also complained to local procurators who inspected the camps.

---

<sup>105</sup> See Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 15.

<sup>106</sup> Miriam Dobson, *Khrushchev’s Cold Summer: Gulag Returnees, Crime, and the Fate of Reform after Stalin* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), 69-78.

<sup>107</sup> Khlevniuk, *The History of the Gulag*, 4-5.

While some prisoners no doubt petitioned essentially out of desperation, the very act of complaining or petitioning suggests a belief that at least somewhere in the system, justice worked properly. In other words, many seem to have felt that if only their petition reached the right person, their situation would change for the better. At the very least, the act of petitioning suggests a belief that the system could possibly be manipulated to one's own advantage, even from the position of *zek*.<sup>108</sup>

Authorities could also be punished for ignoring prisoner complaints and petitions. While punishment certainly did not happen frequently, it counters the common perception that a prisoner complaint was completely meaningless. A June 1932 Gulag operational order, for example, punished a camp official for ignoring a prisoner's petition; the order was sent to all Corrective-Labour Camps, and clearly meant as an example.<sup>109</sup> In 1939, authorities continued to seek improvements in dealing with prisoner complaints, which had increased by this period.<sup>110</sup>

Perhaps most surprisingly, prisoner petitions sometimes worked. This was especially the case in the late-1930s, following the excesses of the mass arrests of 1937-38, when a number of cases were reviewed. Examples of petitions working to shorten prisoners' sentences litter the Tomasinlag prisoner files for this period. In one, a Ukrainian prisoner sentenced for five years in February 1936, described as a "good worker" in the camps, was released by order of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR already in March of 1938 following a petition to review the case against him.<sup>111</sup> Another prisoner

---

<sup>108</sup> For a fascinating account of a prisoner who was able to manipulate his own situation through the use of petitions, see Golfo Alexopoulos, "Portrait of a Con Artist as a Soviet Man," *Slavic Review* 57.4 (1998): 774-790.

<sup>109</sup> GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 2, ll. 77-77ob.

<sup>110</sup> GARF f. 9401, op. 1a, d. 39, l. 39.

<sup>111</sup> GATO f. R-1152, op. 1, d. 9, ll. 6, 14.

sent a declaration (*zaiavlenie*) directly to the Procurator of the USSR in September 1939. He had been sentenced in September 1937 to eight years for leading a “socially dangerous” life, having been involved in numerous thefts with various criminal groups. Reports about his work in the camps showed that he worked well, although he did not participate in camp cultural-educational activities. Although there is no information about the contents of his declaration, a response in the file from the Procurator of the USSR notes that the declaration was sent on to the Procurator of Stalinsk Province (today called Donetsk Province in South-Eastern Ukraine), where the prisoner had originally received his sentence. The Stalinsk Province Procurator responded in March 1940, having found that the case against the prisoner was sound, but the sentence too severe, and ordered the prisoner’s immediate release. Tomasinlag released the prisoner on 22 April 1940; he had served about 2.5 years of his original eight-year term.<sup>112</sup>

Petitions from family members could also make a difference. A brief prisoner file for a prisoner with a two-year sentence, 2 April 1938 – 2 April 1940, reveals that a petition from the prisoner’s parents (the prisoner himself was only seventeen at the time of his arrest) caused an NKVD troika in Western Siberia to reverse its decision, and order the prisoner’s release in September 1938.<sup>113</sup> Sometimes, too, persistence could pay off, even in the case of so-called counter-revolutionary prisoners. One prisoner, sentenced to ten years in October 1937 for counter-revolutionary offences for supposedly having “an anti-Soviet mood, gathering around himself c[ounter]-r[evolutionary] elements and conducting c[ounter]-r[evolutionary] agitation, [and] supporting fascist Germany,” was fortunate to have a very persistent wife. Authorities rejected her first request for a

---

<sup>112</sup> GATO f. R-1152, op. 1, d. 18, ll. 1ob, 17, 18-18ob, 22, 23, 27.

<sup>113</sup> GATO f. R-1152, op. 1, d. 37, ll. 1-1ob, 13, 14.

meeting with her husband at the camp. Later, she wrote directly to the Tomasinlag Administration, asking whether or not her husband was still alive. At that point (July 1938) she had not heard from him in four months. She must have continued to write petitions, however, because in November 1939 authorities, after re-examining the case against the prisoner, ordered his release. The investigation into his case had occurred “in response to a declaration from the prisoner’s wife,” and found that there was no evidence to support that he had had an anti-Soviet mood, anti-Soviet friends, had conducted anti-Soviet agitation, or that he had supported fascist Germany.<sup>114</sup> Timing, in this case, likely helped considerably, as the prisoner’s wife prevailed only after the Soviet Union had signed its infamous non-aggression pact with Nazi Germany.

The above examples are just several among many showing that petitions could, at times, work to reduce a prisoner’s sentence and/or free him or her from the camps. While timing was key, some prisoners and their relatives likely would not have written petitions at all if there had not been at least a partial belief that, somewhere and somehow, justice could prevail. They treated the Gulag like a prison system that was part of a functioning criminal justice system, and would send complaints and petitions if they felt they had been wrongfully convicted. Petitions, too, had a long history in the Russian tradition, where appeals to higher authorities were often made in order to counter perceived injustices at the local level.

---

<sup>114</sup> GATO f. R-1152, op. 1, d. 17, ll. 1ob, 2, 9, 10, 12, 18, 19-20.

### *De-convoyed Prisoners*

Even in the Gulag's rules and regulations, the Gulag does not fit the traditional image of the concentration camp as something completely separated from society. This was nowhere more the case than in that of de-convoyed (*raskonvoirovannye*) prisoners. These were prisoners who had the right to move outside of the camp zone *without guard*. Some prisoners even received the right to *live* outside of the zone.<sup>115</sup>

This was not an isolated phenomenon. For the Gulag as a whole, *ten percent* of all prisoners is likely a conservative estimate of the number of de-convoyed prisoners in the post-war years, and the number during the pre-war years is impossible to estimate due to sporadic data, but was almost certainly higher.<sup>116</sup> Available documents indicate the widespread presence of unescorted prisoners throughout the Stalin era.<sup>117</sup> For example, several documents in Khlevniuk's *The History of the Gulag* mention problems in the mid-1930s with unescorted prisoners at Dmitlag (charged with building the Moscow-Volga Canal).<sup>118</sup> A fascinating January 1938 document from Ukhtpechlag (a mining camp in Komi ASSR) complains that 95-96 percent of the camp's population is unescorted, and

---

<sup>115</sup> I first presented some of this material at the 2006 Conference on the History and Legacy of the Gulag, held at Harvard University, as Wilson T. Bell, "Was the Gulag an Archipelago: An Examination of De-Convoyed Prisoners in Western Siberia"; see also, Alan Barenberg, "Prisoners Without Borders: Zazonniki and the Transformation of Vorkuta after Stalin," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, 57. 4 (2009): 513-534.

<sup>116</sup> Andrei Sokolov, "Forced Labor in Soviet Industry: The End of the 1930s to the Mid-1950s: An Overview," in *The Economics of Forced Labor: The Soviet Gulag* edited by Paul Gregory and Valery Lazarev (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2003), 41. Sokolov writes that the overall percentage of unescorted prisoners in the Gulag was 11 per cent in 1947, and this figure continued to increase in the following years.

<sup>117</sup> Many published accounts—including well-known memoirs—also make mention of this phenomenon. Lev Razgon describes passing uncensored letters, in 1939, to non-convoyed prisoner/drivers, most of whom were in the Gulag under very light sentences, but the group included at least one Article 58er. Varlam Shalamov writes of unescorted movement in the Far-Eastern taiga, although this is somewhat different, as there was no real risk of interaction in the cases that he describes. See L. E. Razgon, *Plen v svoem otechestve* (Moscow: Kn. sad, 1994), 169; and in particular, the story "Dry Rations," in Varlam Shalamov, *Kolyma Tales*, trans. John Glad (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1980): 55-69.

<sup>118</sup> See Documents 29, 31 and 32 of Khlevniuk, *The History of the Gulag*, 111-113.

calls this “unheard of in the camp system”.<sup>119</sup> While numbers clearly were rarely this high, they were nevertheless significant. In 1939, de-convoyed prisoners numbered thirty to forty percent of the camp population in several large camp complexes, a situation that caused many problems for camp and local authorities.<sup>120</sup> In Western Siberia in the post-war years, two inspection reports from the procurator of the Novosibirsk Province Camp and Colony Administration place the percentage of de-convoyed prisoners at 11.7 and eight percent, respectively, for 1947 and 1948.<sup>121</sup> According to one scholar, the average for the Gulag as a whole was eleven percent in 1947, and the figure only increased in subsequent years.<sup>122</sup>

Our most detailed sources on de-convoyed prisoners come from three NKVD/MVD<sup>123</sup> orders from 1939, 1940 and 1947 concerning camp and colony regimen and a detailed 1949 MVD order specifically devoted to de-convoyed status. Each of these orders includes a lengthy list of rules governing unescorted movement. The 1939 order discusses regimen in Corrective-Labour Camps, while the 1940 order applies to Corrective-Labour Colonies (see discussion, above). Both the 1947 order and the 1949

---

<sup>119</sup> Khlevniuk, *The History of the Gulag*, 120.

<sup>120</sup> See document no. 66, “Iz doklada zamestitelia nachal’nika GULAG L.P.Dobrynina o rabote Upravleniia okhrany GULAG za 1939 g. Ne ranee 1 ianvaria 1940,” in *ISG 4*, 170-177, esp. 174. The camps listed are Sevzheldorlag, Luzhlag, Birlag, Novo-Tamboskii, Sredne-Bel’skii lageria “and others”.

<sup>121</sup> See “DOKLAD o rabote Prokuratury UITLiK UMVD po Novosibirskoi oblasti za 1-i polugodie 1947 goda”, GANO f. R-20, op. 1, d. 378, l. 4; and GANO f. R-20, op. 1, d. 404 [*Doklady o rabote prokuratury UITLiK UMVD po Novosibirskoi oblasti za 1948 god*], l. 11. The 1947 figures state that there are 1403 de-convoyed prisoners, many of whom live in 10 agricultural zones that *do not have borders*. In 1948, there are only 5 of these zones, and a total of 1113 de-convoyed prisoners.

<sup>122</sup> Sokolov, “Forced Labor in Soviet Industry,” 41. The Main Administration of Forestry Camps (GULLP), established in 1947, also made widespread use of de-convoyed prisoners, likely because with forestry work it was almost impossible to keep a close watch over every prisoner. There were two camps in Western Siberia under the auspices of the Main Administration of Forestry Camps: Iuzhkuzbasslag and Sevskuzbasslag. On the eve of Stalin’s death, at Iuzhkuzbasslag 18.5 percent of prisoners were de-convoyed, and 15.5 per cent of prisoners at Sevskuzbasslag had this status. By 1952, the Main Administration of Forestry Camps as a whole held 284,563 prisoners. Almost 36,000 of these prisoners were de-convoyed (12.6 per cent) and 2,477 of the de-convoyed prisoners lived outside of the camp zones. See GARF f. 8360, op. 1, d. 63, l. 2; GARF f. 8360, op. 1, d. 44, l. 88.

<sup>123</sup> In 1946 the NKVD was divided into two organizations, the MVD (Ministry of Internal Affairs) and the MGB (Ministry of State Security). The MVD remained in charge of the Gulag.

order are a unified set of rules for both the penal camps *and* colonies, underscoring the similarity between these institutions.

The 2 August 1939 NKVD Order 00889 on camp regimen discusses de-convoyed movement in detail. Most (but not all) article 58ers, as well as foreigners and those with sentences for banditry and armed robbery, were not permitted de-convoyed status.<sup>124</sup> Those not included above could be de-convoyed, if work necessitated it, with the permission of the head of the camp administration and the head of the Third Department.<sup>125</sup> The 1940 order increases the restrictions to include all article 58ers. Interestingly, the 1947 directive relaxes the restrictions somewhat. It allows *all prisoners* not interned in the newly created “special camps” the possibility of de-convoyed movement.<sup>126</sup> The 1949 order, however, now refused de-convoyed status to prisoners in special camps, as before, but also forbade unescorted movement for prisoners in regular regimen camps serving sentences under article 58 (except 58-10),<sup>127</sup> for banditry, armed

---

<sup>124</sup> GARF f. 9401, op. 1a, d. 35, l. 21ob, point 65a, the first of a series of rules governing non-convoyed status. This order is published in part in *ISG 4* as document no. 65, pp. 159-170, but does not include the section on unescorted movement. The document is, however, published in full in Kokurin and Petrov, eds, *GULAG*, 456-475. According to the order, those sentenced for “terror, spying, treason, sabotage (*diversiui*), participation in counter-revolutionary Trotskyist, Zinovievite, right organizations, and also in other anti-Soviet organizations, participants in fascist and nationalist organizations, deserters (*perebezhchikov*), members of anti-Soviet parties (Mensheviks, SRs, etc) and foreign citizens (*inopoddannykh*), no matter what type of crime, and also those sentenced for banditry and armed robbery” are “categorically forbidden” from receiving de-convoyed status. It is somewhat difficult to determine precisely which of the 14 points of article 58 would have allowed the possibility of de-convoyed status, and which would have restricted that possibility. Clearly a sentence under 58-11 (counter-revolutionary organizations), 58-8 (terrorism), 58-6 (spying), and 58-1a (treason) would disqualify one from de-convoyed status.

<sup>125</sup> GARF f. 9401, op. 1a, d. 35, l. 21ob, point 65b.

<sup>126</sup> For the 1940 order, see GARF f. 9401, op. 1a, d. 57, l. 148. On the ground, however, the colonies allowed counter-revolutionaries to become de-convoyed. The 1947 order, perhaps reflecting what actually occurred in practice, states the following: “Do not allow de-convoyed [status] to prisoners held in camp subdivisions/colonies of strengthened regimen, in penalty camp subdivisions and to those serving terms in penalty isolators. The remaining prisoners, held in general regimen camp subdivisions/colonies, can be de-convoyed after serving at least half of their term”. GARF f. 9401, op. 1a, d. 234, l. 42ob.

<sup>127</sup> It is not clear why those prisoners under 58-10 would still be eligible for de-convoyed status. According to the RSFSR criminal code, 58-10 was spying. Khlevniuk’s *The History of the Gulag* states that it is “Propaganda or agitation containing a call for the overthrow, subversion, or weakening of Soviet authority

robbery, escape, and those sentenced under the notorious law of 4 June 1947 (on criminal responsibility for the theft of state property), as well as several other categories.<sup>128</sup>

The rules governing the movement of de-convoyed prisoners reveal considerable concern about interaction between prisoners and society. Technically, guards allowed de-convoyed prisoners out of the camp zone only with a proper pass and photo-card, although in practice they did not always follow this basic rule.<sup>129</sup> Also, guards were required to search prisoners for forbidden items and prisoners had to follow a set route and return to the camp zone by a specified time. Prisoners would sign a statement agreeing, 1. not to diverge from the given route; 2. to return to the zone at the time given on the pass; 3. not to engage in any illegal connections (*Ne usushchestvliat' nikakoi nelegal'noi sviazi*) with locals either personally, or at the behest of other prisoners; and 4. not to bring into the zone forbidden items. The prisoner's statement would declare that he or she had been warned about "disciplinary and criminal responsibility" for disregarding these rules.<sup>130</sup>

De-convoyed prisoners technically had other privileges, too. They were supposed to live in separate barracks from regular regimen prisoners, for example. The Third Department could also grant permission for them to live *outside of the camp zone*, if this

---

or for the carrying out of other counter-revolutionary crimes". See Khlevniuk, *The History of the Gulag*, 366.

<sup>128</sup> See document no. 138, *ISG 4*, 275-278, for the text of the 1949 order.

<sup>129</sup> GARF f. 9401, op. 1a, d. 35, l. 21ob, points 65d and 69. It was difficult for some camp authorities to follow even this basic rule. At a closed Party meeting of a Tomsk ITK administration, comrade Turbin (position not identified) complains that "Here in the colony [...] non-convoyed prisoners go at their own will through the sentry-box, without a pass and without a photo-card. At Zavarzino there are also not passes or photo-cards for the non-convoyed. And several places lack zone fences and warning areas, so that prisoners *do not have visible borders* [...]" See TsDNI TO f. 356, op. 1, d. 5, l. 112. Emphasis added.

<sup>130</sup> GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 2513, l. 29.

was “necessary for production”.<sup>131</sup> This suggests an awkward semi-free position somewhere between that of prisoner and Soviet citizen. One prisoner, de-convoyed in 1947, described it as “to some extent freedom [*v kakoi-to stepeni svoboda*],” because he could spend his days at the stores or at the theatre.<sup>132</sup> These prisoners would have had similar rights to many of the camp civilian staff, who were often former prisoners who had completed their sentences, but had restrictions on their mobility. In effect, de-convoyed status may have evolved into a type of parole. Parole had been eliminated in 1938 as part of what Peter Solomon calls a “conservative shift” in the criminal justice system.<sup>133</sup> In contrast to the 1939 and 1940 instructions, the 1947 order indicates that de-convoyed status is a step towards freedom. It states that only those who had served at least half of their sentences should be eligible for unescorted movement. The 1949 order underscores this quasi-parole status, as those sentenced for fewer than three years could be eligible after one third of their sentence; for three to ten years after at least two years of their sentences; and for over ten years after having served at least five years.

Why would significant numbers of unescorted prisoners be required in the first place? The orders clearly tie de-convoyed status with camp production: the 1939 instruction states, “Non-convoyed movement outside of the camp zone’s borders is allowed in exceptional circumstances, when production conditions necessitate it”.<sup>134</sup> Likely due to

---

<sup>131</sup> See GARF f. 9401, op. 1a, d. 35, l. 18, particular points 8 and 12, which deal with living arrangements for de-convoyed prisoners.

<sup>132</sup> See T. N. Baryshnikova, “Dorogaia moia kul’tbrigada,” in *Ozerlag: kak eto bylo*, compiled and edited by L. S. Mukhin (Irkutski: Vost.-Sib. kn Izd-vo, 1992): 171-186, esp. 174. Baryshnikova also recalls that prisoners could not be de-convoyed until they had finished half of their sentences.

<sup>133</sup> See Peter H. Solomon, Jr., *Soviet Criminal Justice under Stalin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996): 153-334, esp. 227.

<sup>134</sup> GARF f. 9401, op. 1a, d. 35, l. 21ob, point 65. The 1940 and 1947 orders contain virtually the same language. See GARF f. 9401, op. 1a, d. 57, l. 148 and GARF f. 9401, op. 1a, d. 234, l. 42ob. The 1947 order, in contrast to the 1939 and 1940 orders, also explicitly mentions that specialists could be de-convoyed if necessary.

insufficient numbers of guards, it was simply impossible to keep close watch on all prisoners involved in certain industries, particularly forestry and agriculture.<sup>135</sup> General camp needs could also require de-convoyed prisoners. For example, at a May 1945 general party meeting of the Mezhhinenovsk Corrective Labour Colony (Tomsk Province), a report on firefighting called for prisoners to be de-convoyed in order to help fight forest fires.<sup>136</sup> Prisoners were obviously needed outside of the zone for this purpose, and they required a significant degree of mobility. In one unpublished memoir, a former prisoner recalls digging graves in the forest as one of his main unescorted jobs.<sup>137</sup> Camp officials often used prisoners as drivers, and this brought these inmates into cities on camp business. Some camp officials also commandeered de-convoyed prisoners as domestic servants, a practice that was in most cases expressly forbidden.<sup>138</sup>

Camp authorities also granted de-convoyed status to specialists.<sup>139</sup> In published memoirs of former de-convoyed prisoners, many were engineers or had other specialized training.<sup>140</sup> Prisoner files highlight the use de-convoyed prisoners in specialist positions.

---

<sup>135</sup> See, for example, GANO f. R-20, op. 1, d. 378, l. 4. This is a report on the work of the procurator of the UITLIK UMVD of Novosibirsk *Oblast'*. On this page, it states that within the 10 camp subdivisions, there are 10 agricultural sub-command posts [*podkomandirovok*] that do not have borders, and house non-convoyed [*bezkonvoinnye*] prisoners. The documents contained within the collection of the Main Administration of Forestry Camps (GULLP), GARF f. R-8360, are full of references to de-convoyed prisoners.

<sup>136</sup> TsDNI TO f. 1492, op. 1, d. 5, l. 42.

<sup>137</sup> GANO f. R-600, op. 1, d. 45 [Mazurii B. V. "Odin god iz desiati podobnik" (vospominaniia)], l. 13.

<sup>138</sup> See, for example, document no. 121, "Ukazanie nachal'nika GULAG no. 42/587 nachal'nikam ispravitel'no-trudovykh lagerei i kolonii o prekrashchenii nezakonnogo ispol'zovaniia zakliuchennykh v kachestve domashnikh rabotnikov (rabotnits) u vol'nonaemnykh sotrudnikov lagerei i kolonii. 29 avg 1944," in *ISG 4*, 250. The ukazanie notes that only the camp director and deputy-directors are allowed to use prisoners in this capacity, although not article 58ers or "other dangerous offenders."

<sup>139</sup> A top secret NKVD order from 1940 concerning prisoners-of-war states that they could be granted de-convoyed status (!) if they were specialists in areas where personnel was lacking. The order lists: "engineers, mechanics [*tekhniki*], construction superintendents, adjusters, [drivers], welders, etc." as the desired specialists. See GARF f. 9401, op. 1a, d. 60, l. 154.

<sup>140</sup> In the published accounts of 38 former prisoners, de-convoyed at some point during their terms, located in camps all over the Soviet Union, and incarcerated mostly for counter-revolutionary crimes, 10 were engineers, several had studied at mechanics institutes, and there was one physicist, one topographer, one power engineering specialist (*energetik*), one biochemist and one metalworker (*slesar'*). Many of the

For example, a prisoner/engineer at the Tomsk Artillery Factory, a Corrective Labour Colony located in the city of Tomsk, had been sentenced in 1937 as a Trotskyite, but was granted de-convoyed status during the war and even allowed to live outside of the camp zone.<sup>141</sup> He was one of the main engineers at the factory. This example alone is enough to illustrate the complexities of the Gulag system within Soviet society: authorities entrusted a convicted counter-revolutionary, someone who supposedly wished to undermine or overthrow the Soviet government, to live outside of the camp zone and play a crucial role in Soviet wartime production. Note that according to the rules for de-convoyed movement, described above, this prisoner should not have been given that privilege, as he was incarcerated in a Corrective-Labour Colony under Article 58.

Insufficient personnel clearly played a role in the decision to de-convoy prisoners: during the 1930s Gulag authorities struggled to deal with the rapid expansion of the system; during the war years many guards left the camps to fight with the Red Army; and in the post-war years the Gulag expanded rapidly once again, leading to more personnel shortages. The law set the number of guards at nine percent of the prisoner population,

---

remaining were artists, writers, or journalists. I found these accounts by searching for “*raskon [раскон]*” in the very helpful Gulag memoir database, compiled by the Sakharov Center: <<http://www.sakharov-center.ru/asfcd/auth/>>.

<sup>141</sup> GATO f. R-1151, op. 1, d. 319, l. 113. The prisoner’s name has been withheld due to privacy laws. His is perhaps not a typical case, as his sentence was supposed to have ended in 1941. He was held first under NKVD order no. 221 from 22 June 1941 and then under Directive 185 from 29 April 1942. See GATO f. R-1151, op. 1, d. 319, ll. 119, 122. He was highly regarded by the authorities: “Prisoner [X] has worked at ITK no. 5 from the 28 August 1942 in the capacity of vice-chief of the foundry shop. [Prisoner X] has brought valuable suggestions to the technological process in the manufacture of M-82. [He] has shown initiative as an extremely efficient manager well-versed in manufacturing conditions as an engineer and competently passes this experience and knowledge on to his subordinates.” GATO f. R-1151, op. 1, d. 319, l. 114. He was granted de-convoyed status in May 1943 by Kolesnik, the head of the UITLiK for Novosibirsk Province. See GATO f. R-1151, op. 1, d. 319, l. 115. Following the end of the war, the prisoner wrote a *zaiavleniia* both to Nasedkin, the head of the Gulag, and to Stalin himself, requesting immediate release (GATO f. R-1151, op. 1, d. 319, ll. 128-129, 133-134). The authorities freed him on 9 August 1945 (GATO f. R-1151, op. 1, d. 319, l. 130).

but recruitment difficulties meant it was “perpetually below” this level.<sup>142</sup> Especially in the 1930s, it was not uncommon for prisoners to be used as guards or in other administrative positions.<sup>143</sup> It should not be surprising, therefore, that numerous camps did not have enough personnel to supervise all prisoners, especially at the work sites.

Ideologically, de-convoyed status for large numbers of prisoners may not be so far-fetched, as it could be seen as evidence of the rehabilitation (or reeducation) of the prisoner. Indeed, authorities often granted de-convoyed status to individual prisoners as a reward for productive labour, suggesting that if one behaved well and worked hard, one could gain greater privileges and move towards reintegration. Following the end, in 1939, of workday credits (*zachety rabochikh dnei*), whereby prisoners could earn reduced sentences by over-fulfilling their work norms, there were fewer direct incentives for prisoners to work hard. The authorities constantly struggled with ways to improve production. In the 1930s, running parallel to Soviet society, they introduced labour competitions, shock-work, and the Stakhanovite movement into the camps.<sup>144</sup> Those who over-fulfilled their norms received special privileges, including, through workday credits, early release. With the end of workday credits, camp authorities resorted to other types of rewards.<sup>145</sup> The right to unescorted movement was one such reward.

---

<sup>142</sup> Donald Filtzer, *Soviet Workers and Late Stalinism: Labour and the Restoration of the Stalinist System after World War II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 26-27.

<sup>143</sup> See Michael Jakobson, *Origins of the GULAG: The Soviet Prison-Camp System, 1917-1934* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1993) 99.

<sup>144</sup> Interestingly, official documents refer to competitions between civilians and/or guards in the camps as ‘socialist competitions,’ while they call competitions between prisoners or prisoner-groups, ‘labour competitions’. This indicates a reluctance to view prisoners as fully integrated into the building of socialism.

<sup>145</sup> It should be noted, however, that camps continued to grant early release as a reward for good behaviour. See Chapter IV.

## *Conclusion*

Regulations governing “corrective-labour” in the immediate pre-war years suggest that the regime moved away from a focus on the rehabilitation of the individual convict to an emphasis on isolation and economic output. This supports the contention that there was a “conservative shift” in criminal justice over the course of the Stalin era, away from the more “progressive” notion of rehabilitation.<sup>146</sup> Many of the detailed regulations, particularly those on rations and censorship, would have been extremely difficult to follow precisely, especially given the supply and personnel difficulties that camps faced. Despite all of this, however, it is clear that the regime was motivated by very modern concerns: tracking and categorizing individuals, isolating undesirable elements from the rest of society, and rapid industrialization.

The regime’s inability to implement many of its regulations, however, increased the prevalence of informal practices and arbitrary enforcement of regulations within individual camps. As historian Terry Martin writes of the Stalin era, “[m]odernization is the theory of Soviet intentions,” but the reality on the ground was one of informal networks, “patron-client relations and deferential petitioning to paternalistic ‘big men’”.<sup>147</sup> Indeed, taken together, Gulag regulations on the eve of the war serve to illustrate the “neo-traditional” development of the Soviet Union up to this point in time. The very attempts at rationalization likely contributed to the entrenchment of informal practices.

---

<sup>146</sup> See Solomon, *Soviet Criminal Justice under Stalin*, for more on the “conservative shift.”

<sup>147</sup> Terry Martin, “Modernization or Neo-Traditionalism? Ascribed nationality and Soviet primordialism,” in Sheila Fitzpatrick, ed., *Stalinism: New Directions* (London: Routledge, 2000) 348-367, quotations 361.

Thus, even as the Gulag developed over the course of the 1930s, it remained a cruelly inefficient bureaucracy, unable to enforce completely its myriad rules and regulations. This bureaucracy, along with its rules, regulations, special settlers, prisoners and personnel, would be severely tested during the Great Patriotic War, with the very survival of the Soviet Union at stake. By the beginning of the war in June 1941, moreover, Sibltag was once again Western Siberia's only camp, managing a large number of subdivisions that would soon be fully mobilized towards helping the war effort.

## CHAPTER IV: Mobilization for War

“By the Stalin Constitution Day we had fulfilled our obligations, having executed the repair schedule at the tractor park by 113%. We send our greetings and assure you—glorious defender of the Motherland—that we, just like you, are working selflessly on the home front for the rout of the enemy”  
- Prisoners at the Iurginsk subdivision, in response to an ex-prisoner now fighting on the front, 1943<sup>1</sup>

By the eve of the war, the Gulag had become a major factor in the Soviet economy, accounting for thirteen to fourteen percent of capital construction projects in 1940-41, and twelve to thirteen percent of the nation’s timber.<sup>2</sup> In certain industries, such as forestry and mining, Soviet authorities relied heavily on prisoner labour. Forced labour in Western Siberia was no exception. Siblag was involved in a wide range of economic activities. One large camp subdivision on the left bank of the mighty Ob’ river housed prisoners who were helping to construct Novosibirsk’s largest factory complex, the People’s Commissariat of Munitions’ Combine 179.<sup>3</sup> Prisoners in Iaia, mostly women, had recently converted from sewing prisoner clothing to producing Red Army uniforms in support of the Winter War against Finland.<sup>4</sup> Many subdivisions all over the region, but especially in the burgeoning industrial zones of the Kuznetsk Basin and the city of Novosibirsk, contracted out prisoner labour to various other (non-Gulag) enterprises,

---

<sup>1</sup> Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rossiskoi Federatsii (GARF) fond 9414, opis’ 1, delo 1461, list 196.

<sup>2</sup> Oleg Khlevniuk, *The History of the Gulag: From Collectivization to the Great Terror* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004) 331-334.

<sup>3</sup> For more on Combine 179, see I. M. Savitskii, “Sozdanie v Novosibirskoe krupneishego v Sibiri tsentra oboronnoi promyshlennosti v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny,” in S. A. Papkov and K. Teraiama, eds., *Ural i Sibir’ v Stalinskoi politike* (Novosibirsk: Sibirskii khronograf, 2002) 192-204.

<sup>4</sup> Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Novosibirskoi oblasti (GANO) f. P-260, op. 1, d. 1, l. 58.

mostly for mining and construction. And, crucially important from the point of view of central planners, Siblag prisoners worked in agriculture. Indeed Siblag, along with Karlag in Kazakhstan, was charged with supplying foodstuffs all over the “archipelago”.

Most historians agree that the war had a profound affect on life in the Gulag.<sup>5</sup> In 1942-43, for example, the overall Gulag yearly mortality reached its highest recorded rate, at roughly twenty-five percent even by official statistics.<sup>6</sup> The camps of Novosibirsk Province did not escape this grim reality. From January 1942 through August 1943 the Novosibirsk Province Camp and Colony Administration (UITLK NSO)<sup>7</sup> lost no less than 1.87 percent of its prisoners per month, with a high of 3.52 percent in May 1942.<sup>8</sup> While the corresponding yearly mortality rate is almost impossible to calculate given the fluctuation in prisoner population due to arrests and releases, these figures yield a mortality rate greater than the Gulag average mortality for those years. Infectious diseases were of particular concern to the authorities.

In any case, it is worth remembering that harsh wartime conditions within the camps in many respects reflected harsh conditions in the Soviet Union as a whole, only with greater severity. In 1942, for example, death rates surpassed birth rates in Siberia. Historian V. A. Isupov even refers to this period in Western Siberia as a “demographic

---

<sup>5</sup> Edwin Bacon rightly points out that there was no stable period during the Gulag’s entire history, but the war was certainly characterized by extreme instability. Edwin Bacon, *The Gulag at War: Stalin's Forced Labor System in the Light of the Archives* (New York: New York University Press, 1994) 3-4.

<sup>6</sup> Leonid Borodkin and Simon Ertz, “Coercion versus Motivation: Forced Labor in Norilsk,” in Paul R. Gregory and Valery Lazarev, eds., *The Economics of Forced Labor: The Soviet Gulag* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2003) 79. Official mortality statistics likely represent minimum figures at best. See the discussion in Khlevniuk, *The History of the Gulag*, 321-325.

<sup>7</sup> UITLK NSO: The Administration for Corrective-Labour Camps and Colonies of Novosibirsk Province. In April 1942 Sibltag split into two, separate, administrations: Sibltag, located in Mariinsk, and UITLK NSO, located in Novosibirsk.

<sup>8</sup> Danila S. Krasil’nikov, “Lageria i kolonii na territorii Novosibirskoi Oblasti v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny (1941-1945),” *Diplomnaia rabota* (Humanities Faculty, Novosibirsk State University, 1999) 89-90.

crisis,” noting that the regime risked a halt to military production by not taking measures to halt the epidemics and deaths on the home front.<sup>9</sup>

Ultimately, the war focused attention on priorities. After all, everything had to be done in order to defeat the Nazis. The most noteworthy aspect of this in terms of the Gulag’s history, at least at the local level, is the clear emphasis on economic factors over ideological ones. This does not mean that ideology was unimportant, only that we see the same sort of pragmatism in the camps as we do outside of the camps during this period, when the regime, for example, relaxed its relationship with the Russian Orthodox Church and actively promoted Russian nationalism.<sup>10</sup>

Mobilization for war brought many changes to the camps. The wartime Gulag saw a shift in its population in terms of overall numbers and other indicators, such as gender and type of sentence. Many prisoners with lighter “daily-life” (*bytovye*) and criminal sentences were released to fight on the front.<sup>11</sup> This left a higher percentage of Article 58ers in the camps than at the war’s beginning.<sup>12</sup> The release of many men also caused

---

<sup>9</sup> V. A. Isupov, “Sotsial’no-demograficheskaia politika Stalinskogo pravitel’sstva v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny (na materialakh Sibiri),” in V. A. Isupov, S. A. Papkov and I. M. Savitskii, eds., *Zapadnaia Sibir’ v Velikoi Otechestvennoi voine (1941-1945 gg.)* (Novosibirsk: Nauka-Tsentr, 2004) 115-143, quotation 119. Isupov includes a lot of information in this article about deaths due to various diseases such as TB. It is also worth noting that even before the war child mortality in region had been around 20 percent. See GANO f. P-4, op. 33, d. 238a, ll. 11-13: information from the report of the *Obizdravotdel* on “Child mortality in Novosibirsk *Oblast’* and measures for lowering it,” from 10 August 1940. Statistics for 1939 put the child mortality rate in the province at 19.2 percent, but in some areas it was as high as 24.9 percent.

<sup>10</sup> Ideological propaganda (for example, emphasis on the Stalin’s *Short Course*) did not cease, although there is some indication that it was not well received, especially during the hardships of war. See Richard J. Brody, *Ideology and Political Mobilization: The Soviet Home Front during World War II* (Pittsburgh: Carl Beck Papers in Russian and East European Studies, no. 1104, 1994). See also Amir Weiner, *Making Sense of War: The Second World War and the Fate of the Bolshevik Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001) 309-310.

<sup>11</sup> For more, see Anne Applebaum, *Gulag: A History* (New York: Doubleday, 2003) 452-455.

<sup>12</sup> In an August 1944 report by the head of the Gulag, V.G. Nasedkin, to the head of the NKVD, L.P. Beriia, “On the work of the GULAG during the war years (1941-1944),” Nasedkin notes: “If in 1941 those sentenced for counter-revolutionary and other especially dangerous crimes comprised only 27% of the general number of prisoners, held in camps and colonies, then by July 1944 the number sentenced in this

the percentage of women in the camps to increase.<sup>13</sup> Harsh labour laws from the early 1940s resulted in a steady stream of prisoners into the camp system, even as many were released.<sup>14</sup> The deportations of national minority groups meant that the issue of national minorities, particularly those from the Soviet Union's western borderlands, would alter the ethnic make-up of the Gulag.<sup>15</sup> Western Siberia's special settlements shifted from places of exile for the so-called kulaks, to places of exile for entire ethnic groups, particularly Volga Germans and Kalmyks.

Not surprisingly, orders to strengthen the regimen within the camps appeared almost as quickly as the Nazi invasion itself. In the weeks following the war's outbreak, Sibltag's Political Department (Politotdel) called for all subdivision leaders and directors of camp Communist Party organizations to intensify work at strengthening regimen; the Political Department was particularly concerned with criminal activity *within* the camp system, calling for an end to murder, assault and theft, as well as illegal communication by staff and guards with prisoners.<sup>16</sup> A later letter sent to all Political Department heads within the Gulag called for "strict control against persons entering the camp territory [who] have no relation to [the camp]."<sup>17</sup> Isolation was an important goal, clearly, but was not always successful, as these directives suggest.

---

category rose to 43%." See Document no. 71 in A.I. Kokurin and N.V. Petrov, eds., *GULAG (Glavnoe upravlenie lagerei): 1918-1960*, (Moscow: "Materik," 2002) 274.

<sup>13</sup> Kokurin and Petrov, eds., *GULAG*, 274.

<sup>14</sup> For a good discussion of the affects of these laws, see Donald Filtzer, *Soviet Workers and Late Stalinism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) esp. 27 and 162.

<sup>15</sup> Steven A. Barnes, "All for the Front, All for Victory!: The Mobilization of Forced Labor in the Soviet Union during World War Two," *International Labor and Working Class History* 58 (Fall 2000): 239-260, quotation 243.

<sup>16</sup> GANO f. P-260, op. 1a, d. 6, l. 58

<sup>17</sup> GANO f. P-260, op. 1a, d. 6, l. 88

The historiography of the Gulag at war is underdeveloped.<sup>18</sup> One can, nevertheless, discern a general question in the scholarship that mirrors debates about Gulag history: namely, was the primary motivation behind the Gulag's operation during the war economic or political/ideological? In their study of Norilsk during the war, Leonid Borodkin and Simon Ertz found that unfit prisoners were often turned away from this camp, which had a relatively low mortality rate and remained relatively productive.<sup>19</sup> For Norilsk, at least, it seems that economic concerns trumped penal ones.<sup>20</sup> The Gulag administration, moreover, had divided in 1941 into various *Glavki*, or main administrations, based on *economic* function (e.g. GULDZhS: Main Administration for Camps of Railway Construction) rather than political considerations. Yet, economics—i.e., a ready supply of slave labour for crucial production activities—does not tell the whole story.<sup>21</sup> Gulag labour was very inefficient and, despite a stated goal of self-sufficiency, generally cost the state more than it gave back.<sup>22</sup>

The politics of release during the war also clearly indicate that penal and political concerns were crucially important. Many thousands of prisoners—often healthy, young

---

<sup>18</sup> Even Edwin Bacon's important *Gulag at War* uses this period not to discuss specifically wartime issues faced by the camps, but as a window into general operations of the Gulag system. The war period is, for Bacon, a "case-study" through which various aspects of the camps can be examined. As he writes, his goal "is to make a further contribution to our knowledge of forced labour in the Soviet Union as it existed under Stalin". Bacon, *Gulag at War*, 1; "case-study" is mentioned on page 3.

<sup>19</sup> See Borodkin and Ertz, 79-80.

<sup>20</sup> Ertz also argues that, by the mid-to-late 1930s, "[t]he Gulag administration had evolved in the minds of top Soviet leaders from an organization that supplied prisoner labour to an administration that could, on its own, carry out complex construction projects of the highest priority"; see Simon Ertz, "Building Norilsk," in Gregory and Lazarev, eds., *Economics of Forced Labor*, 133. David Nordlander has come to a similar conclusion for the camps of Kolyma, where "economic rather than political needs were paramount". David Nordlander, "Magadan and the Economic History of Dalstroï in the 1930s," in Gregory and Lazarev, eds., *Economics of Forced Labor*, 107.

<sup>21</sup> After all, scholars such as Ivanova and Khlevniuk have shown that resources spent on the camps drained resources from the front and, potentially, from other projects. See, for example, Oleg Khlevniuk, "The Economy of the OGPU, NKVD, and MVD of the USSR, 1930-1953: The Scale, Structure, and Trends of Development," in Gregory and Lazarev, eds., *The Economics of Forced Labor*, 63-65; and Galina Ivanova, *Labour Camp Socialism: The Gulag in the Soviet Totalitarian System*, trans. C. Flath (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2000), 69-125, esp. 86, 104.

<sup>22</sup> Ivanova, *Labour Camp Socialism*, 76, 86, 96.

men—were released to fight on the front; this without question hindered the Gulag’s economic production. And, while the Gulag remained a “revolving door”<sup>23</sup> for those with lighter sentences, the regime barred release to counter-revolutionaries who had completed their sentences.<sup>24</sup> Article 58ers tended to receive harsher treatment than other prisoner populations and were thus more likely to be unfit for work. They were, moreover, by definition politically unreliable, and thus hardly the most likely candidates to help the camp system in the Soviet Union’s war effort. If the Gulag had been primarily an economic institution, why release many healthy prisoners and maintain those unfit to work, who were politically suspect? As Steven Barnes describes, “[a]t a time when it was mobilized for a total war, the Gulag consisted of a smaller, less healthy, less politically reliable, older, and more feminine detained population with a smaller... staff”.<sup>25</sup> For Golfo Alexopoulos, this sort of evidence, along with the frequent release and arrests, shows that, “penal practices fundamentally undermined economic production”.<sup>26</sup> For her, then, the Gulag was primarily a *prison* system, rather than an economic institution. Barnes even takes this a step further, pointing to the continued efforts at reeducation as evidence of the Gulag’s role as a “transformer of man,” part of the modern gardening state.<sup>27</sup>

---

<sup>23</sup> Golfo Alexopoulos, “Amnesty 1945: The Revolving Door of Stalin’s Gulag,” *Slavic Review* 64.2 (2005): 274-306.

<sup>24</sup> The NKVD and the USSR Procurator Directive 185 from April 1942 ordered Article 58ers to remain in the camps, even after their terms had ended, for the duration of the war. For an example, see the following prisoner file: Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Tomskoi oblasti (GATO) f. R-1151 op. 1 d. 319, esp. l. 119.

<sup>25</sup> Barnes, “All for the Front,” 242.

<sup>26</sup> Alexopoulos, “Amnesty 1945,” 303.

<sup>27</sup> Barnes views political/ideological concerns as paramount. The Soviet Union as a whole, he argues, was deeply concerned with “real and potential enemies”. Drawing on the work of Amir Weiner, Barnes shows that the Gulag was the ultimate Soviet “landscaping” site, where undesirables were weeded out and those who could be re-integrated were, in fact, redeemed. He notes that the camps’ Cultural-Educational Departments (KVOs) were very active during the war, and often used stories of the heroic frontline exploits of ex-prisoners—reintegrated into society—as a way to spur production in the camps. The lack of political education was also frequently cited by authorities as an explanation for poor production. In this way, then, the Gulag remained important as a “transformer of man”. See Barnes, “All for the Front,” 252; Amir Weiner, “Introduction: Landscaping the Human Garden,” in Weiner, ed., *Landscaping the Human Garden*:

These emphases (economic, penal, ideological) are, of course, not mutually exclusive. If camp authorities at Norilsk received only the able-bodied prisoners, Siblag's administrators frequently complained about the poor physical condition of the arriving inmates. In a 1943 report on conditions at Camp Station 3 (in Novosibirsk), authorities blamed poor production results on worsening food supply and the "huge" number of arriving prisoners who were physically able to perform only light tasks.<sup>28</sup> Taken as a whole, then, motivation may have varied from camp to camp. The wide variety of types of incarceration and punishment, from the strict isolation in the strict regimen *katorga* camps introduced in 1943, to what essentially amounted to fines deducted from one's regular work pay, also indicate the presence of economic, penal, and ideological factors.

The war provides a useful vantage point through which to view these various motivating factors. This period was obviously a time of acute concern about real and potential enemies. It was also a period of intense economic activity directed towards the war effort. As Bacon writes, "[t]he crisis and demands of war also provide a heightened demonstration of the effects of the vast labour camp network on the Soviet state's economy, society and morale".<sup>29</sup> The history of the Western Siberian camps during the war emphasizes the economic rationale for the camps, at least at the local level.

---

*20<sup>th</sup> Century Population Management in a Comparative Framework* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003) 1-17; and Barnes, "All for the Front," 246, 244.

<sup>28</sup> See GANO f. P-260 op. 1 d. 24 ll. 40-41ob. Indeed, by the 1 April 1943 an astounding 51 percent of the camp contingent was unable to work due to poor physical condition.

<sup>29</sup> Bacon, *Gulag at War*, 3.

### *Wartime Administrative Changes*

The camp system in Western Siberia went through many administrative and production changes during World War II. At the beginning of the war, Siblag was the region's only camp system.

Tracing Siblag's administrative changes is not an easy task for the historian and, furthermore, provided numerous difficulties for local camp officials themselves. In 1942, the Gulag moved Siblag's central administration from Novosibirsk to Mariinsk, in present-day Kemerovo Province, and divided the camp system into two, separate camps. "Siblag" now included the former agricultural subdivisions of the Novosibirsk Province Camp and Colony Administration, while the Novosibirsk Province Camp and Colony Administration itself remained headquartered in Novosibirsk as a separate camp system, and was comprised mainly of subdivisions which contracted out prisoner labour, focusing on defence and construction industries. Later, the formation of Kemerovo Province (1943) and Tomsk Province (1944) out of the larger Novosibirsk Province created a Department of Corrective-Labour Colonies (OITK) for each of these provinces, divided from the old Novosibirsk Province Camp and Colony Administration.

These changes created administrative complexities that at times amounted to a jurisdictional nightmare. At the beginning of the 1940s, the Iask subdivision, located in Iaia (present-day Kemerovo Province), was a major sewing factory, already supplying uniforms to the Red Army during the Winter War. According to the Russian historian S. A. Papkov, Iask was one of the largest factories in the entire Gulag.<sup>30</sup> When Siblag and

---

<sup>30</sup> S.A. Papkov, *Stalinskii terror v Sibiri, 1928-1941* (Novosibirsk: Izdatel'stvo Sibirskogo Otdeleniia RAN, 1997) 134.

the Novosibirsk Province Camp and Colony Administration split, Iask continued under the Novosibirsk Province Camp and Colony Administration even though, geographically, it was closer to Mariinsk than to Novosibirsk. A year later, however, it came under the jurisdiction of the newly created Department of Corrective Labour Colonies for Kemerovo Province. After the war, in April 1947, the NKVD ordered Iask's sewing equipment sold or transferred, and Iask became the primary subdivision and administrative headquarters of the newly created forestry camp, Sevkuzbasslag (under the auspices of the Main Administration for Forestry Camps), although apparently some sewing activity continued.<sup>31</sup> Thus, over the course the 1940s, the Iask subdivision found itself under the jurisdiction of four separate camp administrations.

The administrative changes could have profound effects on individual prisoners. In 1937, for example, authorities transferred a counter-revolutionary prisoner, sentenced in 1929 for ten years, to the Tomsk psychiatric hospital from the very same Iask subdivision discussed above.<sup>32</sup> His family members made repeated inquiries as to his whereabouts, and, once they determined his location, petitioned to have him released to their care. At first, examining doctors stated that release would not be possible, as he had not yet been cured. During the war (long after his term should have ended), they, along with several camp officials, called for his transfer to the Tomsk Corrective Labour Colony for release, since he was unfit for work. The Procurator for the Novosibirsk Province Camps and Colonies refused to authorize this transfer, however, simply stating: "the procurator for

---

<sup>31</sup> For the order moving Iask into Sevkuzbasslag and selling the sewing equipment, see: NKVD operational order no. 0231 from 23 April 1947 "On the transfer from the GULAG MVD SSSR Iaskii OLP OITK UMVD of Kemerovo Province to the GULLP MVD SSSR": GARF f. 9401 op. 1a d. 234 l. 178. For evidence of continued sewing activities, see a 1951 report on skills training for civilians, prisoners, and "other contingents" for Sevkuzbasslag. The report states that there were 605 prisoner and 85 civilian Stakhanovites working as "sewers [shveiniki] and other workers". See GARF f. 8360 op. 1 d. 37 l. 162.

<sup>32</sup> GATO f. R-1151 op. 1 d. 195 l. 2. This is from the prisoner's personal file. The prisoner's name has been withheld in accordance with privacy laws.

UITLK NSO cannot resolve the question of freeing [Prisoner A] due to the fact that [Tomsk's] colonies are not in our area of service and the refusal of the local procurator to address this question is wrong".<sup>33</sup> Evidently the jurisdictional debate was eventually settled, as authorities finally authorized his release in the summer of 1945, six years after his sentence had technically ended.<sup>34</sup>

Perhaps most importantly from the historian's point of view, this changing administrative landscape also complicates compiled statistics for the area's camps. According to published figures, Siblag's January 1 population from 1940-45 is as follows:<sup>35</sup>

**Figure 4.1: Siblag and Gulag prisoner populations, 1940-1945**

Year	Siblag (1 January population)	Gulag (1 January population)	Siblag population as a % of the total
1940	40,275	1,659,992	2.43%
1941	43,857	1,929,729	2.20%
1942	77,919	1,777,043	4.38%
1943	30,463	1,484,182	2.05%
1944	29,627	1,179,819	2.51%
1945	39,455	1,460,677	2.70%

Siblag figures show a different trend than those for the Gulag as a whole (ITLs and ITKs) over the same period. Clearly, there are major discrepancies between Siblag and the Gulag in prisoner population changes from 1941-42 and 1942-43. The disproportionate increase in Siblag prisoners during 1941 (Siblag's 1 January 1942 population is approximately 178 percent of its 1 January 1941 population, while the

<sup>33</sup> GATO f. R-1151 op. 1 d. 195, l. 107. The letter is dated December, 1944.

<sup>34</sup> GATO f. R-1151 op. 1 d. 195, l. 120.

<sup>35</sup> *Sistema ispravitel'no-trudovykh lagerei v SSSR, 1923-1960: Spravochnik*, compiled by M. B. Smirnov, edited by N. G. Okhotin and A. B. Roginskii, (Moscow: Zven'ia, 1998) 392 (henceforth cited as *Sistema*). For Gulag statistics, see A.B. Bezborodov, I.V. Bezborodova and V.M. Khrustalev, eds. *Istoriia stalinskogo Gulaga Tom 4: Naselenie Gulaga: chislennost' i usloviia sodержaniia* (Moscow: Rosspen, 2004), document no. 49, pp. 129-130 [henceforth, *ISG 4*].

overall Gulag figures show a decline) was mostly due to the outbreak of the war. The NKVD evacuated close to 750,000 prisoners from corrective labour camps and colonies under threat from the Nazi invasion, and some of these prisoners would have ended up in Siblag or in one of Siblag's two transit stations, Novosibirsk and Mariinsk.<sup>36</sup> Following the liquidation of Gornoshorlag in early 1941, moreover, the NKVD transferred many of the camp's 8,000 prisoners back into Siblag.

The most striking change in Siblag's wartime population occurs over the course of 1942. The 1 January 1943 prisoner population is only 39.1 percent of the 1 January 1942 population, at first glance an astounding drop. For the Gulag as a whole, the 1 January 1943 population is 83.5 percent of the previous year's population, making the Siblag statistics stand out even more. We know, for example, that the death rate in the camp system were at its highest during this period, and that many of Siblag's subdivisions had particularly harsh conditions.

Yet, there may have not been a decrease at all. In the Memorial Society's *Spravochnik*, the compilers acknowledge Siblag's administrative changes, noting that Siblag was under the Novosibirsk Province Camp and Colony Administration's jurisdiction until April 1942.<sup>37</sup> What this reference-work does not make explicit, however, is that the Novosibirsk Province Camp and Colony Administration continued to function as a large camp system even after this point.<sup>38</sup> Indeed, at least at first, this camp system was larger than Siblag itself. In the spring of 1942, following the creation of

---

<sup>36</sup> The 750,000 prisoners came from 27 ITLs and 210 ITKs. See J. Otto Pohl, *The Stalinist Penal System: A Statistical History of Soviet Repression and Terror, 1930-1953* (London: McFarland & Company, 1997), 16.

<sup>37</sup> *Sistema*, 391.

<sup>38</sup> Indeed, although *Sistema* is otherwise an excellent source of information on the camps, it lacks detailed information about locally administered camps and colonies, which, for the last ten years of the Stalin era, held huge numbers of prisoners.

Siblag out of the Novosibirsk Province Camp and Colony Administration, Siblag had a population of 33,737 prisoners, while the Novosibirsk Province Camp and Colony Administration housed 50,453 prisoners, the majority working in so-called “contract camps”.<sup>39</sup> Data for 1 January for 1943-45 are sporadic, but the Novosibirsk Province Administration remained a large system. In April 1943, local authorities reported a prisoner population of 46,895.<sup>40</sup> Memorial’s *Spravochnik* simply does not include this information. Adding together the figures for these two camp systems, then, the actual population for the camps in the area increased from 1942 to 1943, in contrast to the decrease seen across the Gulag. These figures thus indicate that the relative importance of Gulag subdivisions in the region *increased* over the first years of the war, which is hardly surprising given that much of the European part of the Soviet Union was under occupation or threat of occupation from German forces.

### ***Economic Mobilization***

According to Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, in most camps Gulag inmates only found out about the outbreak of the war via information from de-convoyed prisoners and civilian employees.<sup>41</sup> The flow of information through the Gulag’s porous borders was often by rumour or hearsay, spread by those with greater access to the world outside the camps. But information frequently flowed via a more direct route. One Siblag prisoner, Nina

---

<sup>39</sup> D. S. Krasil’nikov, “Lageria i kolonii,” 44.

<sup>40</sup> See I. S. Kuznetsov et al., eds., *Novonikolaevskaia guberniia – Novosibirskaia oblast’: 1921-2000: Khronika. Dokumenty* (Novosibirsk: Sibirskoe otdelenie RAN), 146. Henceforth cited as Kuznetsov, ed., *Khronika. Dokumenty*.

<sup>41</sup> Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago, 1918-1956: An Experiment in Literary Investigation*, vol. 2 (III-IV), trans. T. P. Whitney (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), 131. The published translation uses the term “unescorted by convoy”, while the Russian is *raskonvoirovannykh*: “V bol’shinstve lagerei zakliuchennym dazhe ne ob’iavili o nachale voiny - nashe neborimoe pristrastie k skrytnosti i lzhi! - lish’ v ponedel’nik zeki uznavali ot raskonvoirovannykh i ot vol’nykh”. See Solzhenitsyn, *ARKHIPELAG GULAG: 1918-1956: opyt khudozhestvennogo issledovaniia, III-IV* (Paris: YMCA-PRESS, 1974), 130.

Alekseevna Noskovich, who was in the Mariinsk transit station when war broke out on 22 June 1941, recalls that there was a radio attached to a pole inside the camp zone, and the prisoners listened directly to Molotov's speech following the surprise attack.<sup>42</sup> Noskovich even had the foresight to write to her mother and sister in Leningrad, asking them to evacuate the city. In their reply, however, they told her that she "had no reason to fear".<sup>43</sup>

Following the German invasion of the Soviet Union, the shift to wartime production was almost immediate. Mikhail Gregor'evich Gorbachev, a prisoner who had been incarcerated at the former Corrective Labour Colony for young offenders in the city of Tomsk, remembers the production shift vividly. While the juvenile offenders had built musical instruments in the pre-war period, all that changed after the war's outbreak:<sup>44</sup>

Until this time there was a children's labour colony here. They sent them someplace, and surrounded the territory with a high fence with barbed wire on top with towers on the corners for guards, fully in order. The zone itself was divided into two parts: one part with barracks for living, and the second part [for] production with workshops. When the colonists lived here, they had a mus[ical instrument] factory, making guitars, balalaikas and mandolins.

But for us *zeks* came something entirely different [...]. In these very workshops only in the place of the joiners' benches [*stoliarnykh verstikov*] [they] added lathes, and, well, we prepared all for the front, all for the war!<sup>45</sup> What we produced were called ready-made mortar shells [*gatovye (sic) miny*].<sup>46</sup> But really what appeared were mortar shells prepared with our hands [...].

---

<sup>42</sup> Viachislav Molotov, the Soviet Union's Commissar of Foreign Affairs and the Deputy-Chair of the Council of People's Ministers (Sovnarkom), announced the invasion in a radio broadcast on 22 June 1941. Iosif Stalin's first public address came on 3 July. See John Barber and Mark Harrison, *The Soviet Home Front, 1941-1945* (New York: Longman, 1991) 46.

<sup>43</sup> Noskovich, N. A. (Lekarenko), "Vospominaniia "pridurka"/ publ i vstup st. N.R. Liberman," *Neva*, no. 4 (2001): 165-183, quotation 170.

<sup>44</sup> Mikhail Gregor'evich Gorbachev, unpublished memoir, Tomsk Memorial Society archives, pages not numbered. This excerpt is from the third notebook in the file, and is riddled with spelling errors, which have not been included in the translation.

<sup>45</sup> Note that the wartime slogan, "All for the Front, All for Victory!" was common in the Gulag.

<sup>46</sup> Note: *Miny* can mean mines or mortar shells, and the misspelling in the first word is somewhat confusing.

The Tomsk Corrective Labour Colony became an important part of the NKVD's munitions production. A plan for November 1941, for example, called for the production of 10,000 50mm shells at the Tomsk plant, out of a total of 65,000 for the Gulag as a whole.<sup>47</sup> Pre-June 1941 munitions plans for the NKVD had not even included the Tomsk Corrective Labour Colony, revealing the rapid shift to wartime production in the region.<sup>48</sup>

The Tomsk Corrective Labour Colony, though, was not the only Sibltag subdivision to mobilize for the war effort. As already noted, the Iask subdivision had been sewing Red Army uniforms since the second half of 1940.<sup>49</sup> Another Corrective Labour Colony near Tomsk ceased manufacturing furniture and began to produce skis for the Red Army. According to one Novosibirsk Party Committee (Obkom) document, Sibltag engineers even devised a way to attach a machine-gun system to skis, an invention that was tested and approved by the administration of the Siberian Military District (SibVO: *Sibirskii voennyi okrug*).<sup>50</sup> In Novosibirsk, prisoners at the large Krivoshchekovsk subdivision (the largest of Sibltag's pre-war subdivisions) worked on the construction of the enormous munitions factory, Combine 179, and also worked under contract in the combine's various workshops, producing artillery and other munitions. Prisoners stepped up construction on the Chkalov Aviation Factory 153—another key defence enterprise—and on a local airport.<sup>51</sup> Even the agricultural subdivisions played an important role for the front by sending food and horses to the Red Army. In early 1943, as camp mortality rates

---

<sup>47</sup> GARF f. 9414 op. 1 d. 1978 l. 35.

<sup>48</sup> See, for example, the 13 June 1941 ammunition plan for the NKVD. GARF f. 9414 op. 1 d. 1978 ll. 1-2.

<sup>49</sup> GANO f. P-260 op. 1 d. l. 58.

<sup>50</sup> Kuznetsov, ed., *Khronika. Dokumenty*, 138. The Siberian Military District was administered from Novosibirsk, and in 1941 included Novosibirsk Province (including present-day Tomsk and Kemerovo Provinces), Omsk Province, Altai Territory and Krasnoiarsk Territory.

<sup>51</sup> Papkov, *Stalinskii terror*, 133-134.

reached their highest recorded levels, one of Siblag's wartime slogans was, "Give the country and the front more vegetables, more foodstuffs".<sup>52</sup>

Central authorities clearly recognized the usefulness of prisoner labour for the war effort. On 30 July 1941 the NKVD in Moscow noted that a significant proportion of Gulag prisoners working on airfields and airports were nearing the end of their terms. The NKVD ordered freed prisoners to remain until the completion of the work, even if their sentences had technically ended.<sup>53</sup> Clearly, these types of directives reveal the importance of economic concerns for NKVD and Gulag officials. Skilled labourers and specialists were in particularly high demand during the war, too, and forced labour provided one possible solution.<sup>54</sup>

Novosibirsk Province's strategic importance increased during the war. Not only did it house the large Kuznetsk coal basin, but it also received a significant number of evacuated factories, workers, cultural institutions, and civilians.<sup>55</sup> By 1943, half a million evacuees were living in Novosibirsk Province, a significant addition to the Province's approximately 4.5 million inhabitants at the beginning of the war. The city of Novosibirsk received 150,000 evacuees in the first year-and-a-half of the war, to add to a pre-war population of 463,000.<sup>56</sup> One evacuee from Leningrad described the city as a

---

<sup>52</sup> This comes from a report on the work of Siblag's Cultural-Educational Department for the first half of 1943. See GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1452, l. 155.

<sup>53</sup> GARF f. 9401, op. 1a, d. 107, l. 192.

<sup>54</sup> The example of the prisoner-engineer de-convoyed in Tomsk is a case in point, as he was an Article 58er, but was granted significant privileges because of his specialized skills. GATO f. R-1151, op. 1, d. 319, l. 113.

<sup>55</sup> For more on the evacuations, see Rebecca Manley, *To the Tashkent Station: Evacuation and Survival in the Soviet Union at War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009). Note that Tashkent was one of the most famous evacuation destinations, as many prominent intellectuals spent the war there (including Anna Akhmatova), but Tashkent received fewer evacuees overall (100,000) than Novosibirsk (150,000). See Manley, *To the Tashkent Station*, 2, 6.

<sup>56</sup> For these population figures and more information about wartime evacuations, see Kristen Edwards, "Fleeing to Siberia: The wartime relocation of evacuees to Novosibirsk, 1941-1943," PhD dissertation (Stanford University, 1996), esp. 3-8. Note that I. M. Savitskii lists the 1939 population of Novosibirsk

provincial backwater, noting, “only the very centre of Novosibirsk resembled an actual city”.<sup>57</sup> This is the period when Novosibirsk grew into its own as an important Soviet city. In August 1943, by a decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR, Novosibirsk joined a select group of cities as a “republican” city. Soviet authorities granted this status to numerous cities deemed particularly important for the war effort. “Republican” status meant that Novosibirsk officials now answered directly to the Russian Soviet Republic, bypassing provincial authorities.<sup>58</sup> The war years also witnessed the opening of Siberia’s largest opera house, located in downtown Novosibirsk, as well as several other cultural firsts.<sup>59</sup> Indeed it was during this time, according to David Shearer, that the region finally shed its frontier relationship with Moscow.<sup>60</sup>

At the beginning of the war, Combine 179 was one of two main defence enterprises in Novosibirsk, along with Chkalov Aviation Factory 153.<sup>61</sup> Both of these factory complexes lacked sufficient workers, especially those with required skills. Before the war there had been no industrial institute of higher education in all of Novosibirsk Province.<sup>62</sup>

---

Province at just over 4 million. See I. M. Savitskii, “Formirovanie kadrov oboronnoi promyshlennosti Novosibirskoi oblasti v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny,” in Isupov, Papkov, Savitskii, eds., *Zapadnaia Sibir’ v Velikoi Otechestvennoi voine*, 5. For more on wartime evacuations to the region, see V. A. Isupov, “Na izlome: Smertnost’ naseleniia Sibiri v nachale Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny,” in R. S. Vasil’evskii and N. I. Gushchin, eds., *Istoricheskaia demografiia Sibiri: sbornik nauchnykh trudov* (Novosibirsk: Nauka, 1992) 186-198.

<sup>57</sup> Ninel’ Severiukhina, *Proshchanie s detstvom: Fragmenty semeinoi khroniki 1941-1944* (St. Petersburg: Izdatel’stvo imeni N.I. Novikova, 2004) 39.

<sup>58</sup> Kuznetsov, ed., *Khronika. Dokumenty*, 148. The Russian reads: “*Ukazom Prezidiuma Verkhovnogo Soveta RSFSR Novosibirsk vydelen v samostoiatel’nyi administrativnyi tsentr i otnesen k kategorii gorodov respublikanskogo podchineniia.*” See also Edwards, “Fleeing to Siberia,” 5-6. I thank J. Arch Getty, Alan Barenberg, Oleksandr Melnyk, Karl Qualls and Auri Berg for a fascinating discussion about the meaning of “respublikanskogo podchineniia” during the war.

<sup>59</sup> Many cultural events in the city during the war were performed by evacuated theatre troupes, orchestras, and so on from Leningrad and other cities. On 20 January 1945, the Novosibirsk Symphonic Orchestra played its first concert. See Kuznetsov, ed. *Khronika. Dokumenty*, 154.

<sup>60</sup> David Shearer, “Mastering the Soviet Frontier: Western Siberia in the 1930s,” Eva-Maria Stolberg, ed., *The Siberian Saga: A History of Russia’s Wild East* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2005): 159-172, esp. 171-172.

<sup>61</sup> Savitskii, “Formirovanie kadrov,” 4.

<sup>62</sup> Savitskii, “Formirovanie kadrov,” 4.

Although the People's Commissariat of Munitions (*Narkom boepripasov*) was supposed to send qualified workers along with the evacuees, this did not happen, and at a November 1941 meeting, the Provincial Party Committee decided to use prisoners sentenced for daily-life (*bytovye*) and counter-revolutionary crimes in defence industries.<sup>63</sup> Even before this decision, many prisoners already had been put to work in defence industries. The timing of this decision deserves emphasis, for it shows both the pragmatic nature of local authorities in dealing with problems of labour shortages and high turnover, and that local authorities did not always wait for direction from the centre.

The Novosibirsk Province Party Committee sought to supply a steady stream of workers to Combine 179 and other defence enterprises, but in this regard it does not seem to have viewed prisoners that much differently than other, free, workers. All were simply a resource. Already before the war, in constructing the Combine, the Party Committee in December 1940 called for the transfer of 5,000 Sibltag prisoners as well as 6,000 workers from the Soviet Union's central provinces in order to complete the project.<sup>64</sup> The Winter War against Finland necessitated the increased production of war materials, and local authorities sought to step up the production of this key industrial complex. The resolution's listing of these numbers one after another emphasizes the authorities' wide-ranging ability to draw on human resources for specific projects, and blurs the distinction between free and forced labour.

In late-December 1940 the Politburo itself discussed the amount of funding to supply for capital investment in Combine 179, and central plans called for production of 800,000 shell casings (*korpusov snariadov*) of various types, as well as numerous other munitions,

---

<sup>63</sup> Savitskii, "Formirovanie kadrov," 13.

<sup>64</sup> GANO f. P-4 op. 33 d. 238a l. 43.

to be produced in 1941. Extra workers to help with the Combine's construction were to come from numerous sources. The Politburo charged L. P. Beria, head of the NKVD, with increasing the number of Gulag prisoners working at the Combine to 10,000. The Politburo also ordered squared beams and saw timber (*brusa i pilomaterialov*) to be sawed out of the recently de-commissioned Tomasinlag and shipped to the Combine to aid in construction. Authorities in Novosibirsk and Kirov Provinces, the Altai Territory, and Bashkir ASSR had to send free workers, totalling 11,000 between them, for the first half of 1941.<sup>65</sup> The Politburo ended this particular discussion by calling for the inclusion of Combine 179 as one of the "country's especially important construction projects [*Otnesti stroitel'stvo kombinata no. 179 k osobovazhnym stroitel'stvam strany*]"<sup>66</sup> Wartime orders continued to redirect human resources in a similar manner.<sup>67</sup> For the local party officials, as well as central authorities in Moscow, there does not seem to have been a major difference between prisoner and non-prisoner labourers. The key issue was having enough hands to complete the task.

The Provincial Party Committee also placed a considerable burden on Siblag to supply labourers as quickly as possible. At a 10 September 1941 meeting, the committee directed Kopaev, Siblag's director, to send an additional 3,000 persons to Combine 179: 1,000 by 13 September, 1,000 by 20 September, and the final 1,000 by 1 October. Not surprisingly, but again attesting to poor planning, a month later the Party Committee criticized Kopaev for not having done enough to build proper barracks for the incoming

---

<sup>65</sup> 2000 were to come from Novosibirsk Province, 3000 from Altai territory, 4000 from Bashkir ASSR, and 2000 from Kirov Province.

<sup>66</sup> RGASPI f. 17 op. 162 d. 31 ll. 73-74.

<sup>67</sup> See, for example, Protocol no. 216 point 4 of the Novosibirsk Obkom resolutions (25 September 1941): GANO f. P-4 op. 33 d. 503v ll. 70-78.

contingents.<sup>68</sup> Given the extremely short time he had in which to transfer the prisoners, the party's demands must have seemed completely unrealistic.

Conditions were indeed horrendous, for both the free workers and the Combine's prisoner contingent. In Siberia's urban areas the mortality rate increased by over 25 percent in the first year of the war, and Novosibirsk Province saw huge increases in diseases such as typhoid fever, dysentery, typhus and whooping cough.<sup>69</sup> Due to these conditions, Combine 179 suffered from shockingly high turnover of its free workers, despite extremely harsh wartime labour laws, especially in defence industries.<sup>70</sup> Many free workers risked lengthy imprisonment by leaving the Combine without permission. In 1942, 11,497 persons arrived to work at the factory, while 9,324 left. In 1943, 7,703 arrived while 7,600 left, approximately 5,000 of whom deserted.<sup>71</sup> This behaviour could have easily resulted in a Gulag sentence, possibly sending the same free workers back to Combine 179, this time as prisoners.

Many free workers in the region also left key industries to join the ranks of the Red Army. Indeed, some 500,000 persons left Novosibirsk Province for the front during the war. Kuzbass Coal lost 11,000 miners to the Red Army in the second half of 1941

---

<sup>68</sup> For the 10 September resolution, see GANO f. P-4 op. 33 d. 503v ll. 1-31, esp. l. 3. For the 14 October resolution, see *ibid.*, ll. 83-96, esp. ll. 83-85.

<sup>69</sup> Isupov, "Na izlome: Smertnost' naseleniia Sibiri," 186, 193.

<sup>70</sup> For a good discussion of the affects of these laws, see Filtzer, *Soviet Workers*, esp. 27 and 162. The harsh labour laws of June 1940, whereby one could be punished for showing up late to work or for illegally changing jobs, were made even harsher under wartime conditions. With a December 1941 decree, workers in war industries (broadly defined as the war progressed) could be sentenced to the camps for 5-8 years for leaving their jobs without authorization. Transport workers also could receive severe sentences for labour infractions. By 1942-43, "war industries" included the coal, textile, chemical and gasoline industries. This decree, moreover, stayed in effect until 1948. From 1942-45, over 900,000 persons were sentenced under this decree, and another 200,000 between the end of the war and 1948. See Nicholas Werth, "Vvedenie," in *Istoriia stalinskogo Gulaga Tom 1: Massovye represii v SSSR*, S. V. Mironenko and N. Werth, eds. (Moscow: Rosspen, 2004), 79 [henceforth *ISG I*].

<sup>71</sup> According to the specialist I. M. Savitskii, this turnover was directly related to poor living conditions. See Savitskii, "Formirovanie kadrov," 17-19.

alone.<sup>72</sup> By January 1943 in Novosibirsk Province there were only thirty-five men for every one hundred women.<sup>73</sup>

Due to the high turnover, the Party Committee's turn to forced labour as a partial solution is not surprising. Indeed, not only prisoners worked in Combine 179, but also exiles. Volga Germans—now called upon to help the very war effort against which they had supposedly collaborated—as well as exiled Kalmyks, special settlers from Narym and, later, even POWs worked at Combine 179. By the second half of 1942, over twenty percent of the workforce in munitions (*boepripsy*) in Novosibirsk Province was made up of prisoners.<sup>74</sup> By the end of the war this percentage had fallen somewhat, but was still significant. On 1 May 1945, of Combine 179's 25,117 workers, 3,120 were prisoners (12.4 percent), 1,100 were exiled Volga Germans (4.4 percent), 822 were POWs, 106 were former “kulaks” from Narym, and 98 were exiled Kalmyks.<sup>75</sup>

If many free workers risked imprisonment by leaving the workplace without authorization due to poor conditions, certainly the prisoners themselves fared worse. Not surprisingly, prisoners found themselves at the bottom the supply chain. In December 1941, the Provincial Party Committee ordered Kopaev to clear the living space of the first and second camp stations under Combine 179 in order to make room for demobilized Red Army soldiers. New living quarters would have to be built for the prisoners, while

---

<sup>72</sup> V. V. Alekseev et al., *Rabochii klass Sibiri v period uprocheniia i razvitiia sotsializma* (Novosibirsk: Nauka, 1984) 81.

<sup>73</sup> Isupov, “Sotsial’no-demograficheskaia politika stalinskogo pravitel’sтва,” esp. 120.

<sup>74</sup> Savitskii, “Formirovanie kadrov,” 20-21.

<sup>75</sup> Kuznetsov, ed., *Khronika. Dokumenty*, 157. For an interesting work on German POWs in the Soviet Union, see Andreas Hilger, *Deutsche Kriegsgefangene in der Sowjetunion, 1941-1956. Kriegsgefangenenpolitik, Lageralltag und Erinnerung* (Essen: Klartext-Verlag, 2000). Hilger argues that from central directives, the *intention* was to treat the German POWs humanely, but often inefficiencies on the ground undermined this effort.

Kopaev and the Combine's director, Novikov, had orders to send under-utilized prisoners to other camp subdivisions.<sup>76</sup>

A memoir from a prisoner who worked at Chkalov Aviation Factory 153, Novosibirsk's other major defence enterprise, reveals what life must have been like for prisoners at the time. The prisoner, D. E. Alin, a peasant who had grown up not far from Novosibirsk, was impressed by the long walk, under convoy, from the zone to the factory complex. Guards escorted the prisoners from 2.5 to five kilometres, depending on the worksite, often along the Trans-Siberian Railway, where the prisoners would wave to the soldiers heading off to the front. The convoy of over 2,000 prisoners stretched for over a kilometre. The prisoners worked mostly with shovels and wheelbarrows digging space for building foundations; clearing, lengthening, expanding, and levelling the airfield; and even digging ditches in the city itself. At the end of his first day of work, all of Alin's personal belongings, left in the barracks, had been stolen. Often the prisoners would not arrive back in the zone until after eight in the evening, and searches and prisoner counts could last an additional couple of hours, meaning it was quite late before the prisoners could have supper and go to sleep. Although rations were drastically reduced after the beginning of the war, Alin states that at first it was possible to live on the miniscule 260 to 460 grams of bread per day, plus a small amount of cereal, and that many prisoners supplemented this ration with food sent in packages from relatives.<sup>77</sup>

As the war dragged on, however, the situation became dire. Even outside of the camps, evacuees to Novosibirsk Province received less bread than what the Gulag

---

<sup>76</sup> GANO f. P-4, op. 33, d. 503d, ll. 112-114.

<sup>77</sup> For Alin's account of work and life at Chkalov Aviation Factory 153, see D. E. Alin, *Malo slov, a gorja rechen'ka...: Nevydumannye rasskazy* (Tomsk: Volodei, 1997) esp. 127-135.

prisoner should have received.<sup>78</sup> In the camps the situation was worse. By the beginning of 1942, the prisoners in Alin's camp split a regular ration five ways. The prisoners began to smuggle and hide crowbars and other items (even axes) that could be used as weapons, not to try to escape, but to defend their own rations and intimidate other prisoners into giving their rations away. Alin recalls an incident when he found a new arrival at the camp, who happened to be a distant cousin, with his head bashed in, murdered for his small bowl of kasha. Alin himself became so ill and malnourished by the fall of 1942 that he lost consciousness one day at work, and considered himself lucky to survive the camp hospital, where patients were "dying like flies".<sup>79</sup>

Not only were rations drastically reduced in 1942 and 1943, when Gulag mortality rates reached their highest levels, over-crowding was a major issue. The evacuation of prisoners from areas near the front meant that there was, during 1942, an average of only one square metre of living space per prisoner.<sup>80</sup>

Despite the horrific conditions, the widespread use of forced labourers in defence industries seems to have helped production, at least from the regime's point of view. For the Gulag as a whole, from mid-1941 to the end of 1944 prisoners produced over 25 million shells, 35 million hand grenades and fuses, nine million mines, and a hundred thousand bombs, not to mention other military material such as telephone cable, skis, rafts, gas masks, and uniforms. As one scholar writes, "It was prison labor that filled many of the gaps created by the vast expansion of the Red Army during World War II".<sup>81</sup>

---

<sup>78</sup> Severiukhina, *Proshchanie s detstvom*, 42. Here she notes that wartime rations for *izhdiventsev* were 400 grams of bread per day, for *sluzhashchikh* - 500 grams, and for *rabochikh* - 800 grams. The 1939 Order on Gulag rations had called for 1,100 grams of bread/day.

<sup>79</sup> Alin, *Nevydumannye rasskazy*, 135-138, quotation 137.

<sup>80</sup> Pohl, *The Stalinist Penal System*, 16.

<sup>81</sup> Pohl, *The Stalinist Penal System*, 40.

Novosibirsk Province Camp and Colony Administration documents proudly report the awarding of the Order of Lenin to Combine 179 in November 1943, and give credit to prisoners for helping to make this happen.<sup>82</sup>

Not surprisingly, however, the use of forced labour created its own problems, as authorities worried about possible counter-revolutionary activity amongst prisoners and exile groups. A November 1941 instruction sent to NKVD officials in the Kazakh ASSR, Novosibirsk and Omsk Provinces, and the Krasnoiarsk and Altai territories from Comrade Ivanov, the head of the special settlement department of the NKVD, called upon exiled Volga Germans to be used in their specialities. At the same time, however, Ivanov reported instances of roaming groups of Volga Germans who, without permission, went to various organizations and establishments looking for work. No doubt these Volga Germans were merely trying to survive, to make the best of a bad situation, but from the authorities' point of view this posed problems: "At times this vagrancy [*brodiazhnichestvo*] by fascist elements is used to establish connections with counter-revolutionary goals".<sup>83</sup> Novosibirsk Province saw an increase in death sentences for counter-revolutionary activity in the first six months of the war, but starting in 1942 there was a sharp decline in the number of sentences for counter-revolutionary activity (especially death sentences) in the region.<sup>84</sup>

---

<sup>82</sup> See the report of the KVO UITLK NSO for the second half of 1943: GARF f. 9414 op. 1 d. 1463 l. 137.

<sup>83</sup> See the November 1941 instruction in GARF f. 9479 op. 1 d. 71 ll. 202-203. Note that not all Volga-Germans were treated poorly. Indeed, recent research from Michael Westren indicates that while in exile in Kazakhstan, the Volga Germans' labour was in high demand, because they were considered to be particularly good workers. See Michael Westren, "(Re)educating Special Settlers in Soviet Kazakhstan: Negotiating Language, Culture, and Nationality Policy, 1941-1958," paper presented at the 2008 National Convention of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies in Philadelphia, PA.

<sup>84</sup> S. A. Papkov, "'Kontrevoliutsionnaia prestupnost'" i osobennosti ee podavleniia v Sibiri v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny (1941-1945)," in Papkov and Teraiama, eds., *Ural i Sibir' v Stalinskoi politike*, 205-223, esp. 208-211.

The regime also saw the Volga Germans as potentially useful. The State Defence Committee (*Gosudarstvennyi Komitet Oborony*, or GKO) in January 1942 called for the mobilization of 120,000 exiled Volga-German males, fit for physical labour, into “work columns” for the duration of the war. Later in 1942 the State Defence Committee expanded this mobilization order to include a greater age-range of Volga-German males (now from age fifteen to fifty-five), as well as females age sixteen to forty-five, excluding pregnant women and mothers with children under three years of age. These Volga-Germans were placed in so-called “special zones” in Gulag camps, not as prisoners, but as “labour soldiers” (*trudarmeitsy*). In Western Siberia the labour soldiers worked mainly in forestry and in railroad construction.<sup>85</sup>

This issue of roaming Volga Germans underscores two major problems facing authorities when using forced labour (prisoner and exile) in a time of war: first, the perceived political reliability of the workforce and, second and perhaps surprisingly, the very stability of that workforce. The Gulag labour force in Western Siberia and elsewhere in reality hardly provided the stability lacking in the workforce in general. Most importantly, as mentioned earlier, the war years saw extremely high mortality rates. Many prisoners and special settlers were also sent to the Red Army. Central Gulag authorities and economic planners, local communist and provincial officials, and managers of defence enterprises, all saw prisoners as a resource. Yet despite this, officials virtually across the board failed to provide adequate living conditions to make production more efficient. High mortality, combined with high release and arrest rates, meant that turnover in the prisoner labour force, much like the free workforce, was a major problem.

---

<sup>85</sup> V.N. Zemskov, *Spetsposelentsyy v SSSR, 1930-1960* (Moscow: Nauka, 2005), 84-85.

### *Wartime Release*

The politics of release during wartime USSR are not simple.<sup>86</sup> Many documents indicate that not all of those released were healthy. Large numbers of prisoners received their release papers only once they had been declared invalids or otherwise unfit to work. The practice of releasing inmates already near death means that the number of those who died as a result of their incarceration is considerably higher than the already high mortality statistics indicate. In 1943, the Novosibirsk Province Party Committee formed an inspection brigade to examine the conditions of prisoners working in defence industries.<sup>87</sup> The brigade's report notes huge increases in mortality rates, particularly at the third Krivoshchekovsk division, in charge of construction at Combine 179, as well as large numbers of invalids. In January 1943 2.2 percent of prisoners in the region's defence industries died; in February the figure was 2.9 percent; and in March, 2.6 percent. At the third Krivoshchekovsk division in March alone 5.4 percent of prisoners died. These percentages are monthly, rather than yearly, mortality rates, and would translate into huge yearly mortality figures, well in excess of the average for the Gulag as a whole. On invalids in the Novosibirsk Province Camp and Colony Administration, the inspection brigade reported the following:<sup>88</sup>

---

<sup>86</sup> Indeed, the politics of release have been the subject of considerable recent historical debate. See, for example, Stephen G. Wheatcroft, "Victims of Stalinism and the Soviet Secret Police: The Comparability and Reliability of the Archival Data. Not the Last Word," *Europe-Asia Studies* 51.2 (1999): 315-345; Robert Conquest, "Comment on Wheatcroft," *Europe-Asia Studies* 51.8 (1999): 1479-1483; and Alexopoulos, "Amnesty 1945".

<sup>87</sup> For this report, see S. A. Krasil'nikov, V. A. Il'inykh, G. A. Spitsyna, and O. K. Kavtsevich, eds. *Nasha malaia rodina: Khrestomatiia po istorii Novosibirskoi oblasti, 1921-1991* (Novosibirsk: Ekor, 1997), 282-285. The inspection brigade was comprised of comrades Ter-Oganian and Mansurov from the Obkom, and comrades Kolesnik (head of the UITLK NSO) and Sluchanko (position not given) from the UITLK NSO.

<sup>88</sup> Krasil'nikov et al., eds. *Nasha malaia rodina*, 282-283.

This contingent, on the basis of the instruction of the NKVD of the USSR, the NKIu [People's Commissariat of Justice] of the USSR and the Procurator of the Union from 23 October 1942, no. 467/18-71/117s, is released from camp ahead of schedule, as it is a large burden for the camp.

By 1 April of t[his] y[ear] the medical commissions under the ITL, as a result of physical examination, had recognized as invalids 7,491 persons. Of these 2,917 were released ahead of schedule and 875 have died.

In a 1944 report based on 1943 inspections of the areas camps and colonies, the procurator overseeing camp operations, A. Kondrashev, actually *encouraged early release for invalids as a way to help improve the camp's mortality statistics*. His statement underscores the utter disregard for the human misery of the camps, which, while not surprising, is especially galling considering his role as an inspector.<sup>89</sup> As Kondrashev wrote,<sup>90</sup>

It is worth noting that the Camp Administration and also the procurator in the first half of 1943 paid insufficient attention to fulfilling the directives of the NKVD and Procurator of the USSR, [and] as a consequence in August there was a high mortality rate in the camp, whereas people could have been released in a timely way [*svoevremennno*], thereby considerably reducing the death rate.

Kondrashev went on, however, to suggest that the political reliability of those released must be considered:<sup>91</sup>

Alongside the correct application of the above-mentioned directives concerning the release of prisoners with illnesses unable to be cured under camp conditions, it is necessary to stop such occurrences where I consider state security has not been observed[.] I ask for an explanation, in particular [of the following cases]:  
a) 7 August 1942 Gregorii Ivanovich IVANOV, born 1909, sentenced to 10 y[ears] d[eprivation] of freedom by a war Tribunal in the city of Tomsk under art[icle] 58-10 of the R[ussian] C[riminal] C[ode]; at this time a medical commission has recognized IVANOV as a patient unable to be cured under camp

---

<sup>89</sup> Kondrashev's statement is reminiscent of Zygmunt Bauman's contention that the drive towards bureaucratic efficiency has no inherent moral boundaries. Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989)

<sup>90</sup> GANO f. R-20, op. 4, d. 12 [Doklad o rabote prokuratury UTL UTK UNKVD [NSO] za 1943 god i 1-i kvartal 1944 god] l. 14.

<sup>91</sup> GANO f. R-20, op. 4, d. 12, l. 15.

conditions and has released [him].

b) 14 August 1943 Stepan Fedorovich IAKOVLEV, born 1912, was sentenced by the people's court [*narsudom*] of Karatskii region under art[icle] 162 pt. "d"<sup>92</sup> of the C[riminal] C[ode] to 5 years d[eprivation] of freedom; at present IAKOVLEV has been declared ill and is also subject to release.

### ***Mobilizing the Prisoners: Cultural-Educational Work during World War II***

Mobilizing prisoners was not an easy task, given the horrendous living and work conditions for most inmates and the forced nature of their labour. Perhaps surprisingly, however, many ex-prisoners recall a surge of patriotism following the German invasion, and thousands requested release in order to fight on the front.<sup>93</sup> Interestingly, one of the ways in which Sibltag attempted to mobilize prisoners was with renewed emphasis on cultural-educational activities.<sup>94</sup> Although there are many parallels between this period and the early 1930s, when "re-forging" individuals was rhetorically the Gulag's purpose, the focus during the war is different. In both periods, authorities measured the success of cultural activities by increases in work norm-fulfilment—in other words, by economic indicators. But the early 1930s rhetoric of "re-forging" was replaced during the war by a patriotic impulse: the more prisoners knew about Soviet successes (including the front-line exploits of ex-prisoners) and the horrors of the Nazis, the more they would do their part on the "home-front".<sup>95</sup>

As in the 1930s, the camps' Cultural-Educational Sections (KVCh), part of the larger Cultural-Educational Department (KVO), had the task of mobilizing prisoners. In

---

<sup>92</sup> Article 162 pt d of the criminal code relates to property theft from a state factory or warehouse by a person with special access to the facility.

<sup>93</sup> See Applebaum, *Gulag: A History*, 452-56.

<sup>94</sup> Steve Barnes has discussed the Gulag's considerable emphasis on cultural activities during the war years, but few other scholars have studied this phenomenon. See Barnes, "All for the Front".

<sup>95</sup> It is important to note that the term "home-front" is used frequently in the Cultural-Educational Department documents. For an example, see GARF f. 9414 op. 1 d. 1461 l. 196. In this way, then, prisoners were included as part of Soviet society.

December 1941, the Cultural-Educational Departments for individual camps became their own administrative units, separated from the camp Political departments (*Politotdely*).<sup>96</sup> Now separate, the Cultural-Educational Department would be required to send regular reports to central authorities, and regular reports required, at the very least, the appearance of regular results.<sup>97</sup>

The Cultural-Educational Department itself certainly saw its role as important. A directive from 15 August 1941 discusses the “German Fascist” attack and the significance of the Gulag for the war effort, noting that “especially serious attention” should be paid to cultural-educational work, including art circles showing the heroic struggles of the Red Army and newspapers that emphasize positive brigade work.<sup>98</sup>

If authorities sought to use the camps’ cultural departments to spur wartime production, however, they had a formidable task in front of them, at least as far as Sibltag was concerned. Wartime documents reveal an extensive cultural infrastructure with stationary and mobile libraries, multiple film-screenings per day, widespread occurrences of political discussions, and so on. On the other hand, operations occurred haphazardly at best, especially at the beginning of the war. Part of the problem was certainly due to the large turnover of Gulag personnel during the war.<sup>99</sup> Prisoners themselves remember Sibltag’s cultural activities mostly for their absence. Ananii Semenovich Gebel’, a prisoner of Orlovo-Rozovo subdivision, recalls that in 1940-41, “[w]e didn’t receive newspapers from anywhere and did not have a clue what was going on in the world; there

---

<sup>96</sup> GARF f. 9401 op. 1a d. 99 l. 157 [NKVD sekretnyi prikaz no. 0522/k “O reorganizatsii Kul’turno-Vospitatel’nykh otdelov (otdelenii) pri Politotdelakh v samostoiatel’nykh otdely (otdeleniia) ITL”]

<sup>97</sup> Kate Brown beautifully describes the intricacies of Soviet reports from the periphery to the centre in: Kate Brown, *A Biography of No Place: From Ethnic Borderland to Soviet Heartland* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).

<sup>98</sup> See GARF f. 9414 op. 1 d. 1432 ll. 36-38.

<sup>99</sup> See Chapter V of the present study for more information

were also no books. We only knew the barrack, the field, and work”.<sup>100</sup> Aleksandr Klein, a prisoner who later became heavily involved in cultural activities in Vorkutlag, while in Siblag was technically forbidden from participating due to his counter-revolutionary status. He nevertheless managed, clandestinely, to participate in a camp-wide chess tournament amongst prisoners and even to attend a few theatrical performances, all with the help of bribes.<sup>101</sup> His experience of Vorkuta, however, made Siblag look like a cultural backwater.

Nevertheless, if one was privileged enough to work in one of the camp’s clubs, survival was certainly much easier during the harsh years of the war. One prisoner, Nina Alekseevich Noskovich, who had been a fine-arts student before her arrest in the mid-1930s, was placed in charge of the cultural club at the Iask subdivision after the outbreak of the war. She even lived at the club with two other prisoners, where they slept on comfortable cots. The camp director would occasionally show up to chat with her, too, and a civilian employee often brought her extra rations. Noskovich recalls her experience with some guilt, noting that she felt sorry for her friends in the barracks who had to work long hours sewing jackets and uniforms. She even refers to herself by the derogatory term *pridurka*, often translated as “trustee.” The “trustees” were those who curried favour with the camp administration, and received special privileges. In the club Noskovich and her fellow prisoner workers directed plays, dances, made costumes, painted, and played music.<sup>102</sup>

---

<sup>100</sup> Memorial f. 2 op. 2 d. 14 [Gebel’ Ananii Semenovich, *Kratkie epizody ternistigo puta s 1937 (iun’)* do 1956 g.] l. 111.

<sup>101</sup> Aleksandr Klein, *Kleimenye, ili, Odin sredi odinokikh: Zapiski katorzhnika* (Syktyvkar, 1995), esp. 147, 168, 174. I thank Alan Barenberg for pointing me to this memoir.

<sup>102</sup> See Noskovich, “Vospominaniia ‘pridurka’,” esp. 173-176. Noskovich was freed at the end of her term in 1942, but was not allowed to leave Siberia, and continued to have various camp jobs until the end of the

From September 1940 to December 1941, Siblag's Cultural-Educational Department lacked a director. Siblag had been admonished several times during 1941 for the poor state of its cultural work. A directive from the head of the Gulag's Political Department, Gavrilin, from February 1941 mentioned that many Cultural-Educational Department administrators ignored central directives, not considering them essential. Siblag was among several camps accused of this, and Gavrilin also accused Siblag of not sending its reports on time.<sup>103</sup> In August 1941 another central directive includes Siblag among several camp systems which "in reality had achieved nothing over the last quarter".<sup>104</sup>

The appointment of a new director, Comrade Karataev, in December indicates a renewed emphasis on cultural activities. Karataev's first report, on cultural activities for the second half of 1941 (i.e., for the first several months of the war), underscores a litany of failures in the cultural sphere. In one subdivision, for example, the "red corner" was used as a grain-storage facility.<sup>105</sup> In another subdivision, the educator was apparently illiterate, and shockingly ignorant of world affairs, as this amusing 1941 example reveals: "[...] the KVCh inspector of the Novosibirsk division, Comrade Baranov, is apparently so illiterate that he could not read the newspaper out loud to the prisoners; and when they asked him at a political discussion, 'What is the USA? [*Chto takoe SShA?*],' he was unable to answer and declared, 'This is not our concern.'"<sup>106</sup>

Karataev did his best to turn the situation around. At the very least, he and subsequent directors succeeded in reporting data to indicate some improvements. Reports and

---

war, when she moved closer to her Leningrad home (she was still not allowed to live within 101 kilometres of major cities). She was rehabilitated in the 1960s and died in 1995.

<sup>103</sup> GARF f. 9414 op. 1 d. 1432 ll. 6-7.

<sup>104</sup> GARF f. 9414 op. 1 d. 1432 ll. 44-48. The four camp systems singled out are Siblag, OITK Kabardino-Balkarskoi ASSR, OITK Buriato-Mongol'skoi ASSR, and OITK Omskoi oblasti.

<sup>105</sup> For the information about the Siblag KVO director, see GARF f. 9414 op. 1 d. 1437 l. 39ob; on the use of cultural space for storing grain, see the same report, l. 45ob.

<sup>106</sup> For this report, see GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1437, l. 39ob.

statistics on the Cultural-Educational Department's activities were sent twice yearly to central Gulag authorities. The reports generally direct more attention to economic production and work-related issues than to strictly "cultural-educational" activities. For example, a typical fifteen-page report "On cultural-educational work amongst the prisoners of ITLK NKVD of Novosibirsk Province"<sup>107</sup> for the second half of 1942 includes the following sections: cadres (half a page); mass-political work (three pages); mass-production work (four-and-a-half pages); mass club work (one page); struggle against work-refusal (about three quarters of a page); the press (one page); preparation for winter (one page); visual agitation (*nagliadnaia agitatsiia*) (one-and-a-half pages); early release (half a page); and "our tasks" (half a page). Half of the section on mass-political work is devoted to stories of workers over-fulfilling their norms following the department's political agitation. Statistical indices also include work-related data such as information about the numbers of prisoners in group "A" (healthy, able-bodied); the number of those involved in "labour competitions"; the number not fulfilling their norms; the number of work refusals, and so on.<sup>108</sup>

The statistics on cultural activities during the war reveal a mixed picture, yet were usually interpreted to show an ever-improving situation (despite admissions of failures in certain areas). In general, then, these reports—marked "secret" or "top secret"—cannot be taken at face value. They read as "socialist realist" documents of their own: prisoners become inspired by knowledge of Stalin's orders concerning the war or the exploits of ex-prisoners at the front, and thus over-fulfil their work-norms by huge numbers; thousands of prisoners attend public newspaper readings and political discussions and

---

<sup>107</sup> GARF f. 9414 op. 1 d. 1463 ll. 132-146.

<sup>108</sup> For an example, see GARF f. 9414 op. 1 d. 1463 ll. 147-147ob.

information sessions; and incidences of work-refusal go down as prisoners become more politically aware.<sup>109</sup>

There is no doubt that both the Novosibirsk Province Camp and Colony Administration and Siblag maintained considerable cultural infrastructure. In the second half of 1941 Siblag's Cultural-Educational Department reported a total of 1,268 film screenings.<sup>110</sup> This works out to approximately seven screenings per day, although it is important to note that Siblag at the time had around thirty subdivisions, most with numerous camp stations, so certainly not every prisoner would have been able to access the film-screenings physically, even if all prisoners were allowed to attend.<sup>111</sup> The films likely would have been more or less the same films as those screened throughout the Soviet Union.<sup>112</sup> The overall trend during the war shows an initial drop in film screenings in 1942, followed by some improvements and some setbacks.<sup>113</sup> Some of the initial decline can be attributed to the division of the Novosibirsk Province Camp and Colony Administration and Siblag in April 1942, but the accompanying report for this period blames problems with the distribution of films and a lack of electricity in some camp

---

<sup>109</sup> For an example of prisoners supposedly gaining inspiration from Stalin's orders, see GARF f. 9414 op. 1 d. 1445 l. 15ob. The exploits of ex-prisoners at the front are a frequent theme in the cultural reports. For an example, see page 199, below. For an example of a so-called "work-refuser" (*otkazchik*) mending his ways following work by the KVCh, see GARF f. 9414 op. 1 d. 1463 l. 141.

<sup>110</sup> GARF f. 9414 op. 1 d. 1437 l. 45.

<sup>111</sup> Which is certainly not the case, as most film-screenings likely would have been off-limits to Article 58ers and especially dangerous offenders. The number of subdivisions was constantly in flux, but S. A. Papkov reports that there were 31 at Siblag on the eve of the war, although his chart listing the subdivisions includes only 27. See Papkov, *Stalinskii terror*, 132-133.

<sup>112</sup> GARF f. 9414 op. 1 d. 1437 l. 45ob. This particular document does not mention the names of the films, but a report on the cultural activities for the Camps and Colonies of Tomsk Province for the first half of 1951 lists the following movies as having been screened: Tsirk, Trinadtsat', Vesna v Sakene, Kubanskiye kazaki, Skazanie o zemle sibirskoi, Shchedroe leto, Za tekh kto v more, Tretii udar, Donetskii shakhtery, Ian Rogach, Bronenosets Potemkin, Tainoe poruchenie, Admiral Nakhimov, Zagovor obrechennykh, Sekretnaia missiia, Kak zakalialas' stal', Konstantin Zaslouov, Velikii Grazhdanin, Oborona Tsaritsyna, Za mir vo vsem mire, Dalekaia nevesta, Madam Bovari, Shtrafnaia ploshchadka, Sovetskaia Chuvashiia, Sovetskaia Kirgiziia. See GARF f. 9414 op. 1 d. 1655 l. 56.

<sup>113</sup> The statistical indices show 527 films screened in the second half of 1941 (interestingly, significantly less than the number in the report itself) and only 384 in the first half of 1942. See GARF f. 9414 op. 1 d. 1445 l. 18ob.

areas.<sup>114</sup> The Novosibirsk Province Camp and Colony Administration also reported problems with showing films in some subdivisions due to a lack of projection lamps and safety parts for the projectors.<sup>115</sup> The picture becomes murky in the latter half of the war, as screenings at the Novosibirsk Province camps and colonies increased, while those at Siblag decreased, and more camp administrations were created with the formation of Kemerovo Province (1943) and Tomsk Province (1944) out of Novosibirsk Province.<sup>116</sup>

Even if the films were propagandistic, the availability of the cinema for some prisoners provided an important diversion from the extreme hardships of camp life. Various theatre groups, choirs, musical ensembles, and even the camp libraries (both stationary and mobile) also gave certain prisoners a respite. Importantly, moreover, the films, plays, and so on constituted a link with Soviet society. Barbed wire did not prevent the same sort of propaganda and entertainment from reaching the prisoners as was consumed by the general Soviet public. Ironically this included political lessons and discussions about the “fascist *katorga*” of the Nazi regime the same year (1943) that the name “*katorga*” was resurrected for special strict regimen camps within the Gulag system.<sup>117</sup> The irony appears to have been lost on Siblag’s educators. Nevertheless, the cultural links to Soviet society as a whole were more than simply propaganda, as films

---

<sup>114</sup> GARF f. 9414 op. 1 d. 1445 l. 17.

<sup>115</sup> GARF f. 9414 op. 1 d. 1445 l. 32.

<sup>116</sup> For the second half of 1942, UITLK NSO had 534 film screenings with an average of 370 persons attending, while Siblag had 186 screenings with an average attendance of “300-325.” For the UITLK NSO figures, see GARF f. 9414 op. 1 d. 1445 l. 33ob; and for the Siblag statistics, see GARF f. 9414 op. 1 d. 1442 l. 213. In the first half of 1943, Siblag managed only 93 film screenings, but the figure for UITLK NSO jumps to 772. For the UITLK NSO statistics, see GARF f. 9414 op. 1 d. 1454 l. 106ob; the Siblag statistics can be found at GARF f. 9414 op. 1 d. 1452 l. 157ob.

<sup>117</sup> See, for example, the “Spetsdonesenie” on the work of the KVO of Siblag for the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of 1943. GARF f. 9414 op. 1 d. 1463 l. 192. This report mentions that the successes of the Red Army as well as the “freeing of tens of thousands of Soviet people from fascist *katorga*” had improved production levels at the camp. This is a fascinating use of language because the Soviet authorities had created their own *katorga* camps in 1943, reviving the dreaded term of tsarist-era incarcerations.

and equipment often came directly from the local cinefication (*kinofikatsiia*) office, the same office that would have been in charge of bringing the cinema to the Soviet countryside.<sup>118</sup>

As Bacon argues, however, “The occasional political meeting could not hope successfully to re-educate inmates, nor could poorly and selectively stocked camp libraries, although both of these phenomena existed”.<sup>119</sup> One of the best indicators of this half-hearted effort at cultural-educational activities is the persistent personnel problem at Siblag’s Cultural-Educational Department. In the second half of 1941, the department was staffed at only 63 percent (127 persons out of 190). Turnover was extremely high, too, as eighty-nine workers had arrived during this period, while eighty-eight left, forty of whom joined the Red Army.<sup>120</sup> And even though Siblag’s Cultural-Educational Department finally had a director by the end of 1941 (Karataev), this evidently did not solve leadership issues. The director who signed the report for the first half of 1942 is named Dubinin. Siblag then divides into the Novosibirsk Province Camp and Colony Administration and Siblag, and the second half reports for 1942 were prepared by comrades Sushchev and Bekbulatov, respectively. Bekbulatov remained Siblag’s Cultural-Educational Department director for the remainder of the war, but at the Novosibirsk Administration the high turnover continued. For the first half of 1943, the director remained Comrade Sushchev, but in the second half Comrade Lebedev took on

---

<sup>118</sup> One cultural report complains that the local cinefication office had not been sending proper equipment. See GARF f. 9414 op. 1 d. 1445 l. 32. For more on cinefication see the work-in-progress by Thomas Lahusen, titled, “Cinefication: A History of Film Distribution and Exhibition in the Soviet Union” as well as Lahusen’s documentary film, with Alexander Gershtein, Tracy McDonald, and Alexander Nikitin, “The Province of Lost Film,” which has been screened at numerous film festivals.

<sup>119</sup> Bacon, *Gulag at War*, 77.

<sup>120</sup> GARF f. 9414 op. 1 d. 1437 l. 39.

that role.<sup>121</sup> Staffing was an issue at all levels of the Cultural-Educational Department. For the second half of 1942, Siblag's department was staffed at sixty-eight percent while Novosibirsk's was only at forty-eight percent (53 of 111). The Novosibirsk Province Camp and Colony Administration improved this to 59 percent by the first half of 1943 and seventy-two percent by the second half, and Siblag managed to increase its staffing levels to eighty percent by the second half of 1944.<sup>122</sup>

Reports such as the one cited above about illiterate educators show that the camps did not always devote their best cadres to cultural work.<sup>123</sup> In the second half of 1942 at the Novosibirsk Province Camp and Colony Administration, only three out of the fifty-one department cadres had any sort of higher education, although just over ninety percent had completed at least some middle schooling. Of this same group of fifty-one, only forty-one percent had received training at Cultural-Education Department seminars and fewer than one in four had been at the job for more than one year.<sup>124</sup> Most department cadres had some sort of party affiliation, whether as full, candidate, or komsomol members. For most of the war, too, women made up slightly more than half of the department's employees, likely due in part to the many men leaving for the front.<sup>125</sup>

As in the 1930s, prisoners conducted a significant proportion of the "educational" work directed towards prisoners. By far the most common department activity was the newspaper reading. For instance, in the second half of 1943 a total of 15,265 newspaper

---

<sup>121</sup> This information comes from the signatures on the reports that have been cited throughout this section.

<sup>122</sup> See N.V. Petrov and N.I. Vladimirtsev, eds., *Istoriia stalinskogo Gulaga Tom 2: Karatel'naia sistema: struktura i kadry* (Moscow: Rosspen, 2004), [henceforth *ISG 2*] Document no. 131, "Iz spravki Otdela kadrov GULAG o sostave kadrov po vsem periferiinyim organam GULAG po sostoiianiu na 1 ianvaria 1945 g." 267.

<sup>123</sup> Although we know, of course, from Galina Ivanova's research that, in general, the educational levels of guards and other officials was quite low. See Ivanova, *Labor Camp Socialism*, esp. 127-175.

<sup>124</sup> See GARF f. 9414 op. 1 d. 1445 l. 13.

<sup>125</sup> For examples of party membership and gender composition, see the "Tsifrovye pokazateli" for UITLK NSO for the second half of 1943: GARF f. 9414 op. 1 d. 1463 l. 147.

readings (*gromkikh chitok gazet*) were reported at the camps and colonies of the Novosibirsk Administration and 28,936 readings occurred at Siblag.<sup>126</sup> Within the Novosibirsk Administration twenty-eight party and komsomol members (presumably department cadres), along with 231 different prisoners, conducted the 15,000-plus newspaper reading sessions.<sup>127</sup> The newspaper readings were likely from the camps' own wall-newspapers and production bulletins, although some reports mention including information from *Pravda* in political discussions.<sup>128</sup>

The emphasis of the Cultural-Educational Department had, by this point, shifted from the “re-forging” theme of the 1930s. None of the Cultural-Educational documents from Western Siberian camps during the war mention reeducation. Indeed, as one report states, “[t]he purpose of political discussions, reports and lectures is for the mobilization of prisoners to over-fulfil production tasks in the output of defence materials [and] collecting the harvest, mainly by labour competitions”.<sup>129</sup> On the other hand, however, clearly some of the reeducation “blueprint” remains in the work of the Cultural-Educational Department, even during the war. Shaming rituals, which had been prominent in the Gulag press of the mid-1930s, continued, and at least according to the department reports, helped turn some of those who refused to work into prisoners who over-fulfilled their norms.<sup>130</sup> Just as in the early-to-mid 1930s, moreover, Gulag

---

<sup>126</sup> See GARF f. 9414, op 1, d. 1463, l. 147; and GARF f. 9414 op. 1 d. 1461 l. 210. Political discussions and information sessions are the second most frequent activity. At UITLK NSO there were 1125 of these in the second half of 1943; 72 reports and lectures; 280 theatrical performances, concerts and amateur performances (*vecheroi samodeiatel'nosti*); and 177 film screenings.

<sup>127</sup> GARF f. 9414 op. 1 d. 1463 l. 147.

<sup>128</sup> In the second half of 1943, UITLK NSO published 31 different wall-newspapers and production bulletins with a total of 431 issues. Note that I have been unable to find any examples of Western Siberian Gulag newspapers from the 1940s in the archives. For more on Gulag newspapers during the war, see A. Iu. Gorcheva, *Pressa Gulaga, 1918-1955* (Moscow: Izd-vo Moskovskogo Universiteta, 1996) 53-56.

<sup>129</sup> GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1463, l. 133.

<sup>130</sup> GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1463, l. 142.

propaganda emphasised examples to emulate. During the war, these examples came mostly from ex-prisoners who had been released to fight on the front. For camp authorities, these ex-prisoners were the perfect propaganda tools, providing evidence that a camp sentence could turn a prisoner into a productive, Soviet citizen. The wartime reports usually include descriptions and excerpts of letters supposedly sent from ex-prisoners to the camps, letters that would inspire prisoners in the camp to do their part “on the home front”. One example from Siblag in 1943 reads as follows:<sup>131</sup>

The former prisoner of Iurginsk division, K. A. Novak, now a soldier with the Red Army, twice awarded governmental awards [*pravitel'stvennoi nagradoi*], writes to his former camp comrades: “On the approach to Belgorod I destroyed [*unichtozhil*] 10 Fritzes and seized a trophy, for which they awarded me the medal “For Bravery [*Za otvagu*]”. On the right bank of the Dnepr they awarded me the Order of the Red Banner and at present they have removed [my] previous conviction and accepted [me] as a candidate of the party [*VKP/b/*]. [...] But it is necessary to be fearless, for the Fritzes love cowards [...] but Russians do not cower before them, overcoming all difficulties and moving fearlessly forward”, and so on. He asked [his comrades] to tell all prisoners not to feel sorry for themselves in work, [or to feel sorry for] the idler or saboteur – direct helpers of the enemy. He sends his regards to the advanced brigades and the best workers and asks them to write him a letter.

In response to the letter the prisoners of Iurginsk division sent him an answer. They wrote, “By the Stalin Constitution Day we had fulfilled our obligations, having executed the repair schedule at the tractor park by 113%. We send our greetings and assure you—glorious defender of the Motherland [*rodiny*]—that we, just like you, are working selflessly on the home front for the rout of the enemy [...].

While we should no doubt be sceptical about the truth of these reports—after all, conditions were terrible in most subdivisions, especially in 1942 and 1943—there are, indeed, numerous examples of ex-prisoners who were awarded for their exploits at the front. Several even received status as heroes of the Soviet Union.<sup>132</sup> This particular

---

<sup>131</sup> GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1461, l. 196.

<sup>132</sup> Bacon, *Gulag at War*, 106.

example is important, too, for the inclusion of prisoners as “comrades” and as a key part of the overall war effort.

Thus reeducation, while no longer emphasised in the rhetoric, continued to play a role in the Gulag in Western Siberia. And, even though the practice of formally reducing a prisoner’s sentence by giving credit for days worked had ended in 1939, prisoners continued to receive early release for good work. In 1939 the Politburo had explicitly stated that prisoners must serve their full terms, with incentives in the form of rewards (higher rations, better barracks, etc), rather than early release.<sup>133</sup> Local authorities, however, recognized the need for strong positive incentives. The continued use of early release also, of course, underscores the penal—and perhaps ideological—aspects of the Gulag system. Prisoners could be rehabilitated, so to speak, if they proved their usefulness through their work on the home front. Many of the cultural reports include a section on “early release and reduced sentences”.<sup>134</sup> In the second half of 1943, the Novosibirsk Province Camp and Colony Administration allowed the early release of 161 prisoners and reduced the sentences of another 262. Part of the work of the Cultural-Educational Department was to inform prisoners that only through “selfless labour and excellent behaviour in daily life [*v bytu*] can they receive conditional early release”.<sup>135</sup> According to the report, prisoners throughout the camp studied the orders pertaining to early release and reduced sentences as an incentive to work harder. The Cultural-Educational Department recognized improved norm-fulfilment *and* improved behaviour as the main reasons for granting early release, calling it “one of the best measures” to

---

<sup>133</sup> *ISG* 2, Document no. 76: Reshenie Politburo VKP(b): “O lageriakh NKVD,” 10 September 1939, p. 158.

<sup>134</sup> See, for example, GARF f. 9414 op. 1 d. 1463 l. 145. The following discussion and quotations come from the same report.

<sup>135</sup> GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1463, l. 145.

increase production and teach prisoners good behaviour. This practice clearly echoes the 1930s re-forging campaigns without, importantly, using the same language.

The practice of early release for productive labour, moreover, highlights the problematic nature—from the historian’s point of view—of release from the Gulag. On the one hand, we have seen that the authorities released many prisoners precisely because these prisoners were unfit to work, and were a burden on the system. At the same time, camp officials held out the promise of early release as a reward for productive labour. And, although Article 58ers were barred from release for the duration of the war, many prisoners left the Gulag simply because their terms had ended.

### *Conclusion*

Mobilization of the Gulag for the war effort occurred at both a practical and a propaganda level. Almost every camp subdivision in the region shifted its production to help the war effort. The region’s prisoners produced munitions, skis, uniforms, and helped to construct defence-industry factories, including Novosibirsk’s largest factory complex, Combine 179. Even the agricultural divisions sent foodstuffs to the front at the expense of sufficient nourishment for the prisoners themselves.

The camps’ Cultural-Educational Sections ran political discussions and cultural events designed to show the need for prisoners to work as hard as possible for the war effort. Propaganda concerning the exploits of former prisoners played an important role in this endeavour.

The use of counter-revolutionary prisoners and exiled national groups in defence industries suggests that, on the ground at least, the importance of ideology was subsumed

under the greater effort of winning the war. Provincial authorities saw prisoners as one set of workers whose labour could be exploited, and thus ordered the transfer of prisoners and free workers alike to various defence enterprises, as necessary. Economic output was clearly the top priority. Nevertheless, the contradictory release practices for Gulag prisoners, including directives *not* to release counter-revolutionary prisoners who had reached the end of their sentences, suggest that political and ideological concerns remained important.

In order to address the question of motivations, it is necessary to focus more directly on the camp personnel at the local level. The actions of the personnel during wartime are especially instructive, as this was a period when external factors forced the Gulag to focus only on its priorities.

## CHAPTER V: Camp Personnel during Wartime, 1940-1945

“Podrugin, ex-employee of the transit station, is expelled from the [Communist Party]. Podrugin directed a prisoner-support echelon. In May and June Podrugin, along with komsomol-member Volynkin (dir[ector] of supply), stole food and other tangible assets from the prisoners’ fund in the market-value sum of 270 thousand rubles. Podrugin was sentenced by the order of 7 August 1932 to 10 years deprivation of freedom.”

- January 1945 Party Conference for the Novosibirsk Province Camp and Colony Administration<sup>1</sup>

““A person?” roared [the Commander], “There aren’t any here! Here are enemies of the people, traitors of the Motherland, bandits, crooks. The dregs of humanity, scum, riff-raff, that’s who is here!””

- From the memoir of Sergei Vladimirov, Sibltag prisoner<sup>2</sup>

The growing body of literature on the Gulag has said little, systematically, about Gulag personnel. The war provides an especially useful vantage point for an in-depth examination of camp officials and guards, as this was a period of extreme stress on the system. Because of the various hardships—epidemics, major supply issues, personnel shortages, mobilization for the war, increased vigilance—the motivations behind the system appear in greater clarity, as the Gulag was forced to focus on its priorities. Ultimately, an in-depth analysis of the personnel in Western Siberia highlights the important of personal, informal relationships (as opposed to central directives) in the

---

<sup>1</sup> Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Novosibirskoi oblasti (GANO) fond P-260, opis’ 1, delo 54, listy 33-34.

<sup>2</sup> V. Belousov [Sergei Vladimirov], *Zapiski dokhodiagi* (Ashkhabad, Turkmenistan, 1992) 127.

Gulag's day-to-day operations, and underscores an economic rationale for the system from the point of view of local officials. Camp personnel, for the most part, do not appear to have been highly ideologically motivated.

The lack of studies on camp personnel is striking given the huge amount of scholarly work devoted to the role of the “perpetrator” in the Nazi camps. To describe the Gulag without an attempt to decipher the experiences and roles of camp officials and guards would tell only a part of the story. Despite the very real tendency of some camp personnel to de-humanize the prisoners, one gets the strong impression that, for the most part, the men and women employed in the camps viewed their work as simply a job, and cared little for the fate of the prisoners, but also did not, for the most part, go out of their way to cause harm.

Galina Ivanova's *Labor Camp Socialism* includes a large section on camp personnel (one of only a few works to examine the issue in detail), and she demonstrates forcefully that despite the Soviet stereotype of the “morally pure, self-sacrificing Chekist”,<sup>3</sup> Gulag guards and staff were generally poorly educated—even in comparison with non-Gulag officials from the NKVD. Indeed, the NKVD often sent its own cadres to work in the camps as a punishment for poor behaviour. Standards of living for staff were quite poor, and there was little concerted effort at training.<sup>4</sup> Importantly, in terms of attitudes towards prisoners, Ivanova notes that authorities placed considerable energy in “cultivating a

---

<sup>3</sup> Galina Ivanova, *Labor Camp Socialism: The Gulag and the Soviet Totalitarian System*, intro Donald J. Raleigh, trans Carol A. Flath, (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2000) 127.

<sup>4</sup> Ivanova, *Labor Camp Socialism*, 139, 163, 165. Ivanova is somewhat contradictory on this point: on page 163 she states, “The Party organs did not seem to make any special efforts to improve the level of political awareness of the guards”; while on page 165 she says, “The Gulag leadership made repeated attempts to raise the professional and educational level of their employees.” These two statements are not necessarily contradictory, in part because “guards” and “employees” are not synonymous; but given that “political awareness” was a big part of education, further explanation is required.

sense of hatred in the guards towards the prisoners.”<sup>5</sup> But while officials and guards certainly abused their positions, often directly or indirectly causing great harm to prisoners, the issue is much more complex than one of hatred. Indeed, there are some instances where ignoring or flouting camp rules actually benefited (some) prisoners.<sup>6</sup>

In general, what is most striking about the Gulag cadres is that the camps faced a constant personnel shortage. While the NKVD had always faced recruitment difficulties for the Gulag system, the problem was especially acute during the war, when many Gulag personnel left the camps to fight in the Red Army.<sup>7</sup> Recruitment difficulties meant that the practice of using prisoners in administrative positions (and even as guards) never completely ceased, despite repeated efforts from central authorities to limit its extent.<sup>8</sup> As one former prisoner recalled, writing about the late 1930s,<sup>9</sup>

The group leaders [*zven'skye*], brigade leaders [*brigadiry*], foremen [*desiatniki*], and work assigners were all prisoners. Prisoners were working in accounting, the dispensary, the kitchen, the cafeteria, the bakery [...]. At the fire watch [*pozharnei*], the bathhouse, the sanitation room [*v sankomissii*], the workshops and the warehouses were all prisoners.

---

<sup>5</sup> Ivanova, *Labour Camp Socialism*, 149.

<sup>6</sup> Anne Applebaum essentially follows Ivanova's analysis, arguing that “it seems that the Gulag administration openly functioned within the NKVD as a place of exile, a last resort for disgraced secret police”. With some exceptions, officials took advantage of prisoners and de-humanized them. Applebaum, however, has a more nuanced discussion of the grey area that the guards occupied (many were former prisoners) and the poor conditions in which they worked. Anne Applebaum, *Gulag: A History* (New York: Doubleday, 2003) 261, 256-279.

<sup>7</sup> Donald Filtzer, *Soviet Workers and Late Stalinism: Labour and the Restoration of the Stalinist System after World War II*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) 26-27.

<sup>8</sup> See N.V. Petrov, “Vvedenie,” *Istoriia Stalinskogo Gulaga: Tom 2: Karatel'naia sistema: struktura i kadry*, edited Petrov and N.I. Vladimirtsev, (Moscow: Rosspen, 2004) [henceforth cited as *ISG 2*] 44-45. In 1938 at Belbaltlag, for example, “more than half of the administrators and nearly half of the armed guards [...] were former or actual prisoners” (Applebaum, *Gulag*, 257). Neftali Frenkel' is only the most famous prisoner who ended up as a Gulag administrator. He was a prisoner at Solovki in the 1920s, and then ended up working in the Solovki administration, then as Works Chief on the White Sea-Baltic Canal, then head of construction at BAMLag in the Far East. Later he became the head of the Main Administration of Railway Construction Camps (GULZhDS). Petrov's introduction, as well as many of the documents contained within the volume itself, is particularly useful for questions of personnel shortages and general statistical information pertaining to Gulag cadres.

<sup>9</sup> Rossiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv sotsial'no-politicheskoi istorii (RGASPI) f. 560, op. 1, d. 21 [*Vospominaniia Kuznetsova N.S. o repressiakh v gody kul'ta lichnosti Stalina...*], ll. 70-71.

Authorities also frequently arrested guards and other camp personnel for various infractions. Prisoners stayed on at the camps as civilians following their release. These occurrences complicate the picture of a strict dichotomy between perpetrator and victim in the Gulag.<sup>10</sup>

The growing body of local studies of the Gulag have thus far proven to be the most promising in terms of revealing information about Gulag cadres and their relationship to the camp system. In Alan Barenberg's detailed study of Vorkutlag, we see a shift during the war from a relatively lax relationship to the regulations to a much more regimented approach, in part due to the needs of the war effort. One of the main reasons for the change, however, was the appointment of M. M. Mal'tsev as camp commander. Mal'tsev ruled Vorkutlag much like a fiefdom and saw prisoners as a resource for extracting coal, and thus punished and rewarded on the basis of output.<sup>11</sup>

Lynne Viola's recent study of the special settlements, which makes excellent use of local sources from the North and from Western Siberia, includes a wealth of material on centre-periphery relations. The picture that emerges is far more complex than that presented in Ivanova's work. Viola finds tension between officials with on-the-ground experience, and those in Moscow, who often took a harder line, particularly in the early years of forced peasant exile (the dekulakization campaigns).<sup>12</sup> At the local level, too, the

---

<sup>10</sup> The "grey zone" in the Gulag was enormous. Holocaust survivor Primo Levi's various writings on his experience, notably *The Drowned and the Saved*, trans Raymond Rosenthal (New York: Vintage, 1989), deal extensively with the idea that the perpetrator/victim dichotomy is an oversimplification of the Nazi camp structure. For Levi, in order to survive the camps, a degree of moral ambiguity was necessary. In Chapter 2 of *The Drowned and the Saved* Levi termed this ambiguous area the "grey zone," an area that included the kapos and other inmates who helped the Nazis in one way or another in order to help themselves survive.

<sup>11</sup> Alan Barenberg, "From Prison Camp to Mining Town: The Gulag and Its Legacy in Vorkuta, 1938-1965: Volume One," PhD dissertation (Department of History, University of Chicago, 2007) esp. 95-99.

<sup>12</sup> See Lynne Viola, *The Unknown Gulag: The Lost World of Stalin's Special Settlements* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) esp. 61-72.

Gulag officials who ran the special settlements were essentially “Soviet company men” who, for all practical purposes, “were Soviet power” in a given settlement. Viola notes that they were often unqualified for the enormous tasks of running the settlements, tasks made more difficult by high turnover and personnel shortages. They were, however, all-powerful over their jurisdictions, and this led to abuses. As the Western Siberian party leader Robert Eikhe commented in 1931, special settlers “go to the commandant for permission to get married and [he can] say, for whatever reason, I won’t permit you to marry. This smells of abuse. And there are many such instances”.<sup>13</sup>

What these local studies of Gulag officials highlight is the significant impact individual camp commanders and administrators could have on the lives of prisoners, regardless of camp regulations. Ivanova herself even likens the relationship to that of a serf-owner and his serfs, arguing that the arbitrariness and self-serving actions of local Gulag directors vis-à-vis the prisoners (and even, at times, acts of kindness) represented in some way a return to *pomestii* and *votchina*.<sup>14</sup>

At first glance, excavating the motives and attitudes of camp officials seems a daunting, possibly impossible, task. There are very few personal memoirs available from former camp employees, for example,<sup>15</sup> and the information in central archives related to

---

<sup>13</sup> Viola, *Unknown Gulag*, 104-113, quotations taken from 104 and 105. The quotation from Eikhe is as quoted by Viola on page 107.

<sup>14</sup> G. M. Ivanova, “Kadry GULAGa,” in I. V. Dobrovol’skii and Ivanova, eds., *GULAG: ego stroiteli, obitateli i geroi: Rossiia po dorogam fanatizma i muchenichestva* (Moscow: Mezhdobshchestvo prav cheloveka, 1998), 40-59, esp. 53.

<sup>15</sup> We do not have the equivalent, for the Gulag, of Rudolf Höss’ memoir of his experience as commandant of Auschwitz. There have been memoirs from former NKVD officials, such as Anotoli Granovsky’s *I Was An NKVD Agent* (New York: The Devin-Adair Company, 1962), but even he cannot be considered representative, as he had been arrested before he became an agent and later defected to the west. The most promising is Fyodor Vasilevich Mochulsky, *Gulag Boss: A Soviet Memoir*, trans. and edited Deborah Kaple (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

cadres heavily favours statistical data.<sup>16</sup> However, archival collections in both Tomsk and Novosibirsk include thousands of documents from the Communist Party organizations of Siblag and the Novosibirsk Province Camp and Colony Administration (UITLK NSO) and their various subdivisions. Most of these documents are party-meeting protocols for one camp party organization or another, which are either verbatim stenographic reports or close summaries of the meetings' proceedings.<sup>17</sup> These are a particularly rich source for the historian, as camp cadres discussed a wide variety of topics, from disciplinary measures directed at camp personnel, to the study of the *Short Course*, to issues of camp living conditions and economic production. The Communist Party, too, as the “vanguard of the proletariat,” provides a crucial lens for assessing the actions and motivations of Gulag cadres and the rationale for the Gulag at the local level. After all, one would expect party members to attach ideological significance to their work; set examples of how officials and guards are supposed to behave vis-à-vis prisoners; and lead the camps in economic and cultural matters.

The various Siblag and Novosibirsk Province Camp and Colony Administration party organizations did not see themselves significantly differently from, say, factory party organizations. Emphasis in these meetings fell on the party's role in boosting economic production through raising political awareness and organizing competitions, as well as on various party tasks – membership, discipline, education, selecting members for various

---

<sup>16</sup> Note that Oxana Ermolaeva, in a recent unpublished conference paper, makes excellent use of job application files for the positions of camp guard and camp Third Department worker, in order to answer pertinent questions about camp personnel. See Ermolaeva, “Making a Career in the GULAG Archipelago: The BBK-BBLag Personnel,” paper for presentation at the 10<sup>th</sup> annual Young Researchers Conference, Miami University, Oxford, OH (2010). Ermolaeva was unfortunately unable to attend the conference, but made her paper available.

<sup>17</sup> It is ultimately impossible to know what has been omitted from these stenographic reports and meeting minutes. In some cases, they read as verbatim accounts, complete with notations for applause and questions from the floor. In other cases, particularly with the meeting minutes, some of the discussion has clearly been left out.

committees or conferences, and so on. The party members discuss prisoners relatively infrequently, and the overall picture reveals the prisoners as a resource in plan-fulfilment, rather than as “enemies” or as potentially “re-forgeable” individuals. When discussing party propaganda work amongst non-party members, the stenographic reports and protocols usually refer to the camp *civilian* (*vol’nonaemnye*) population, rather than the prisoners.<sup>18</sup> There are many instances, too, of a very pragmatic approach to using “counter-revolutionary” prisoners in important positions, despite central orders forbidding the practice, suggesting that at the local level production matters frequently trumped ideological considerations. This changes for a brief period after the outbreak of the war, when the view shifts and there is considerable discussion of the isolation of enemies as the system’s main task.

Certainly, too, we find in these documents considerable evidence of abuses of power, bending or ignoring the rules and utter indifference to the fate of individual prisoners. But the majority of the time the party organizations concerned themselves more with internal party business and production matters.

### ***Siblag’s Personnel***

Siblag’s personnel fell into three main groups: administrators, civilian employees, and guards.<sup>19</sup> Siblag’s many subdivisions, camp stations, and administrative departments

---

<sup>18</sup> As Edwin Bacon notes, the camps’ political departments (*politotdely*, singular = *politotdel*) focused their efforts on the staff Edwin Bacon, *The Gulag at War: Stalin’s Forced Labor System in the Light of the Archives*, (New York: New York University Press, 1994) 79.

<sup>19</sup> Exactly who the “civilians” were is not always clear. Some were certainly ex-prisoners, hired on after the completion of their sentences (and frequently without a say in the matter). According to Jacques Rossi, the main guarding units, the VOKhR, were made up mostly of civilians on 3-year contracts who were usually de-mobilized soldiers not wanting to go back to the *kolkhoz*. See Zhak Rossi [Jacques Rossi], *Spravochnik po GULAGu* (Moscow: Prosvet, 1991), 62-63.

required a large staff. On the eve of the war, Siblag employed over 11,000 civilians.<sup>20</sup> The entire prisoner population at Siblag at the time was around 50,000, meaning that non-prisoner Siblag employees were a significant proportion of the camp's workforce.<sup>21</sup> The civilian staff (*nomenklatura*) of the Novosibirsk Province Camp and Colony Administration in spring 1942, after the division of Siblag, comprised 6,428 people, a number that was still only eight-seven percent of the system's allotted 7,371. Turnover was extremely high at this time, too, with 2,212 new personnel arriving in the first half of 1942, and 2,533 leaving the camp.<sup>22</sup> Just the upkeep of camp cadres cost tremendous sums, a point worth considering when assessing the productive value of forced labour. Siblag's budget for 1941, for example, allotted twenty-five million rubles for the upkeep of the guards alone, which, as the camp commander Kopaev pointed out, was enough "to build a decent-sized factory [*nemalen'kii zavod*]"<sup>23</sup> Many civilian employees were themselves ex-prisoners, and they often worked in the same positions they had occupied as prisoners, only now for pay and with more freedom of movement. They also worked in the Militarized Guard (*voenizirovannaya okhrana*, or VOKhR), as the NKVD hired many demobilized Red Army soldiers for guard duty.

The Militarized Guard—so-called because the guards themselves lived together in barracks and were treated and paid much like soldiers—was the official term for the

---

<sup>20</sup> See the "STENOGRAMMA partiino-khoziaistvennogo aktiva Upravleniia ispravitel'no-trudovykh lagerei i kolonii po Novosibirskoi oblasti, 20-22 fev. 1941," GANO f. P-260, op. 1, d. 1, l. 2, for data on the civilian employees.

<sup>21</sup> The 1 January 1941 population was 43,857 and the 1 January 1942 population 77,919; most of the influx probably came after the outbreak of the war, but given the high turnover and rates of transfer of prisoners, the exact population throughout 1941 is difficult to know. For the population figures see *Sistema ispravitel'no-trudovykh lagerei v SSSR: Spravochnik* (Moscow: Zven'ia, 1998), 392 [henceforth cited as *Sistema*].

<sup>22</sup> For these figures, see Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rossiskoi Federatsii (GARF) f. 9414, op. 1 *dop*, d. 9, l. 5. The document is from October 1942 and has to do with the change in leadership of UITLK NSO from Kopaev to Kolesnik.

<sup>23</sup> GANO f. P-260, op. 1, d. 1, l. 33.

camp guards. These guards sought to prevent escapes, performed sentry duties and convoyed prisoners to the worksites, but were theoretically not allowed to interact with the prisoners. Other guards of a sort, called “supervisors” (*nadzirateli*), enforced camp regimen and ensured that the prisoners were actually working at the work sites, and thus had considerable daily interaction with the prisoner population. The “supervisor” position was considered to be a more privileged position than that of the Militarized Guard. Prisoners who were also guards—sometimes referred to as *samookhraniki*, or “self-guarders”—had the same duties as the Militarized Guard and were counted in their ranks.<sup>24</sup>

During the war, prisoners and ex-prisoners continued to hold important positions, even within the camp administration. A Novosibirsk Province Camp and Colony Administration “Report on the condition of party-political work at UITLK NSO” from October 1942 noted that there had been little attention paid to the selection of staff, which was “littered with all sorts of rascals”.<sup>25</sup> In the camp administration alone, the report continued, there were ninety-five workers who had received sentences, including three for murder, ten for absenteeism and lateness, and twenty-one for “abuse of a position of service for mercenary ends.” There were considerable problems with nepotism in hiring practices and with the use of un-verified workers. Many high-ranking officials had family members working in other departments. Thus the wife of Shuster, who was leader of the medical department (*sanotdel*), directed a health clinic; the Political Department director Ivanov’s son-in-law worked as the deputy-director for Corrective-Labour Colony 4,

---

<sup>24</sup> This description is based mostly on private correspondence between Simon Ertz and myself (emails dated 8 and 9 February 2010: held on file). I am very grateful to Simon Ertz for his help clarifying the various terminology associated with guarding the camps.

<sup>25</sup> GANO f. P-260, op. 1, d. 24, l. 28.

while Ivanov's wife was in the Administrative-Economic Department (AKhO). Twenty relatives of Vol'pov, the head of the Second Department, had arrived in Novosibirsk—likely as wartime evacuees—along with twenty-two relatives of Shvartz, the director of the Novosibirsk subdivision. Vol'pov and Shvartz managed to secure food and living space in Novosibirsk for all of their relatives at a time when many camp specialists—not to mention others in the city—went without lodging.<sup>26</sup>

Along with unsurprising corruption, what this nepotism highlights is that running the camps was, curiously, a family affair.<sup>27</sup> That many guards and administrators had their families with them or nearby is worth underlining, for it is yet another indicator of the extent of interaction between the Gulag and Soviet society. The presence of family members also suggests that, as in Soviet society more general, “clans” often played an important role in local politics.<sup>28</sup> To cite another Gulag example, when the Tomsk colony for juveniles converted from a furniture- to a munitions factory (now with adult prisoners), 134 new personnel, including engineers, were transferred there to help with production. They brought 145 family members with them.<sup>29</sup> Anna Larina also describes this type of phenomenon. During a transfer from Novosibirsk to Mariinsk, authorities placed Larina in a train car with “convoy guards and their families” because they did not want her talking to other women prisoners. This car was extremely overcrowded (though no doubt better than the prisoners' cars), and Larina listened to many of the guards'

---

<sup>26</sup> These, and many other examples, come from GANO f. P-260, op. 1, d. 24, l. 29.

<sup>27</sup> The implications of this are considerable, and worth examining in further detail, as we must multiply the number of those who would have known a lot about Gulag conditions and operations.

<sup>28</sup> For more on this, see recent (unpublished) work by J. Arch Getty, “The Fall of the Clans: The Rise and Fall of Vainov of Iaroslavl’,” presented at the conference, “Stalinist Terror: Contexts, Origins and Dynamics,” Aug 1-5 2010, Leeds University, Leeds, UK. I thank Professor Getty for sending me a copy of this paper, and for allowing me to cite it in this dissertation.

<sup>29</sup> V. P. Zinov'ev, “Poselok Chekist,” in Zinov'ev, I. M. Rudaia, V. O. El'blaus, eds., *Neizvestnyi Seversk: Sbornik statei* (Tomsk: Izd-vo TGU, 1996), 60-71, esp. 64.

wives — who had brought dishes, pots and pans, pets, and even houseplants — complaining about leaving Novosibirsk to go to Mariinsk, a “hole in the ground”.<sup>30</sup> They certainly had reason to worry. In many Gulag camps, guards’ family members slept with them in the barracks due to a lack of housing; these barracks often were in not much better shape than those of the prisoners.<sup>31</sup>

### *The Guards*

Guarding had long occurred on a relatively ad hoc basis, especially in the 1930s. Many prisoners were used as guards, and many thousands of prisoners actually travelled to the worksite and back without escort (the latter practice remained prevalent throughout the Gulag’s existence). In March 1939 NKVD Order 00268 technically removed prisoners from the Militarized Guard, replacing them with civilians. As the Russian scholar Petrov points out, this move, combined with a pay increase, was largely successful, at least at first. By 1 September 1940 prisoners comprised only 0.2 percent of the Militarized Guard for the Gulag as a whole.<sup>32</sup> This situation did not last for every camp, however, as the disruptions caused by the war and continued recruitment difficulties meant that prisoners, in many camps, made up a large proportion of the Militarized Guard from the late-1940s at least until the mid-1950s.<sup>33</sup>

---

<sup>30</sup> Anna Larina, *This I Cannot Forget: The Memoirs of Nikolai Bukharin’s Widow*, trans. Gary Kern (New York: W.W. Norton, 1993), 149-151. The term she uses for “convoy guards” is *konvoiry*. See A. M. Larina, *Nezabyvaemoe* (Moscow: Izd-vo APN, 1989) 131.

<sup>31</sup> Applebaum, *Gulag*, 261-262.

<sup>32</sup> Petrov, “Vvedenie,” *ISG* 2, 34. This number was likely higher amongst the non-VOKhR guards. The VOKhR was the main guard unit, but there were also unarmed *nadzirатели* within the camp compounds. Many prisoners, especially during the 1930s but throughout the Gulag’s history, were *samookhraniki*, or self-guards, but these guards would have been counted amongst the VOKhR. See Barenberg, “From Prison Camp to Mining Town,” 204.

<sup>33</sup> Barenberg points out that at Vorkutlag, in 1948, 28 percent (1,352) of the total guards were prisoners, a number that increased to 37 percent (1,891) by 1950. See Barenberg, “From Prison Camp to Mining Town,” 204-205.

Gulag jobs—particularly guarding prisoners—were hardly prestigious. The general consensus amongst historians is that the Gulag was a place to transfer troublesome Chekists;<sup>34</sup> NKVD officials who worked outside of the camps tended to receive higher pay than their Gulag counterparts.<sup>35</sup> Yet during the war and post-war years, a position in the Militarized Guard, according to Petrov, gained a small measure of prestige, as former Red Army soldiers began to populate its ranks.<sup>36</sup>

Efforts to improve conditions by increasing pay failed to solve personnel shortages. The number of guards, according to Donald Filtzer, remained “perpetually below” the goal set for security of nine percent of the prisoner population.<sup>37</sup> For the Novosibirsk Province Camp and Colony Administration, the data are a little less clear, although it seems likely that the number was below the nine percent threshold. Data for the spring of 1942 show a prisoner population at the Novosibirsk camps and colonies of 50,453.<sup>38</sup> The number of Militarized Guard as of July 1 of that year was 3,025, or roughly six percent of the spring population figure. Data also support the assertion that the Militarized Guard was not comprised of the elite, especially at the camps and colonies of Novosibirsk Province. Only three percent, for example, had party status, while 2.2 percent were candidate members and 8.8 percent were komsomol members.<sup>39</sup>

Naturally, one of the main tasks of the guards was to prevent escapes, and worry about escapes and regimen infractions increased substantially around the outbreak of the

---

<sup>34</sup> See Petrov, “Vvedenie,” *ISG* 2, 48; Ivanova, *Labor Camp Socialism*, 141; and Applebaum, *Gulag*, 261.

<sup>35</sup> Ivanova, *Labor Camp Socialism*, 146.

<sup>36</sup> Petrov, “Vvedenie,” *ISG Tom 2*, 48.

<sup>37</sup> Filtzer, *Soviet Workers*, 26-27. It is unclear from Filtzer’s account whether this 9 percent figure refers only to the VOKhR, or also to the *nadzirateli*. Likely, however, it is the VOKhR figure, as this was the formalized guard unit.

<sup>38</sup> D.S. Krasil’nikov, “Lageria i kolonii na territorii Novosibirskoi oblasti v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny (1941-1945,” *diplomnaia* dissertation (Novosibirsk: Humanities Faculty, Novosibirsk State University, 1999), 44.

<sup>39</sup> GANO f. P-260, op. 1, d. 24, ll. 1-4.

war, as prisoners were seen as likely subversive elements. An April 1942 NKVD operational order (number 0149) directly from Beria noted the unsatisfactory isolation of “state criminals” and the high level of escapes in many camps. In May and June 1942, escapes from the Gulag increased even more (although hardly to levels seen in the Gulag’s early years), prompting the censure of several Militarized Guard commanders from various camps.<sup>40</sup>

Beria had expressed special concern about escapes even before the war’s outbreak, stating in April 1941 that “the escape of prisoners from the camps is considered to be one of the most heinous [*zlostnykh*] forms of sabotage and the disorganization of camp life and production”.<sup>41</sup> In an attempt to discourage escapes, he ordered all escapees sentenced under article 58-14 of the RSFSR’s criminal code, a counter-revolutionary offence, and that the death penalty be administered to escapees who were “especially dangerous criminals,” those who had made repeated escape attempts, counter-revolutionaries, and other serious offenders. Another circular, issued right after the outbreak of the war, actually relaxed these rules somewhat, but still made escapes punishable by death under certain circumstances.<sup>42</sup>

One Sibltag memoirist, D. E. Alin, who spent time in a subdivision near the Chulym River during the war, successfully escaped, although he was recaptured. Working by

---

<sup>40</sup> For information on order 0149 of April 1942, as well as on the censure of VOKhR commanders, see NKVD Operational Order 001478 from 13 July 1942 “O nalozhenii vzykaniia na rabotnikov Voenizirovannoi okhrany ispravitel’no-trudovykh lagerei i kolonii NKVD za dopusk pobegov gosudarstvennykh prestupnikov,” GARF f. 9401, op. 1a, d. 113, l. 153 s ob.

<sup>41</sup> See GARF f. 9401, op. 1a, d. 107, l. 80 [Tsirkuliar NKVD no. 87s/06/PR/29 ot 28 apreliia 1941 g. “Ob usilenii bor’by s pobegami z/k”].

<sup>42</sup> The follow-up NKVD circular, from Chernyshev, dated 2 July 1941 clarifies that under-age escapees should only be sentenced under article 82 of the RSFSR’s criminal code, rather than 58-14, and that the death penalty should only be carried out against escapees who were especially dangerous (bandits, counter-revolutionaries, etc.) who had repeated an escape attempt. This follow-up circular also gave room to decide on the punishment based on individual circumstances. See GARF f. 9401, op. 1a, d. 113, l. 194.

night for two weeks, he and two other prisoners dug a tunnel under a building to an area at the edge of the zone, which was not completely surrounded by fence. They then waited for a thunderstorm to make their escape, and were on the run for three days. They became lost, however, and a young boy (“a local Pavlik Morozov,” as Alin called him) turned them in to the authorities in a village where an elderly woman had given them food and tobacco. NKVD officers then took them back to the camp, where members of the Militarized Guard beat them so severely that one of his co-escapees died. Alin and his other friend, Ivanov, got off lightly, however, with six-months in a strengthened regimen barrack before going back to the regular regime. As Alin explains it, he and Ivanov both claimed that they had left spontaneously during the thunderstorm when they saw that the Militarized Guard had left the camp gate open. Thus, the camp officials did not want to risk reprisals against themselves for their own negligence, and covered up the issue.<sup>43</sup>

The Militarized Guard especially, as the main barrier between dangerous criminals, counter-revolutionaries, and Soviet society, had to be politically reliable. Yet they, along with other camp employees, could also be part of the problem. Sidorenko, the deputy-director of the Novosibirsk Camp and Colony Administration’s Militarized Guard in charge of supply, had earlier directed supply at Dal’stroi and had lost his job there for selling bread and other foodstuffs on the black market.<sup>44</sup> A February 1942 directive from Siblag’s Political Department noted that civilian employees and the Militarized Guard often traded goods with both prisoners and the surrounding population, thus facilitating a

---

<sup>43</sup> D. E. Alin, *Malo slov, a gorja rechen’ka...: Nevydumannye rasskazy* (Tomsk: Volodei, 1997) 147-154; quotation 152. According to Alin, camp officials simply noted that the third prisoner had died resisting arrest during an escape attempt.

<sup>44</sup> GANO f. P-260, op. 1, d. 24, l. 29.

black market in camp supplies.<sup>45</sup> The Political Department complained that camp clothing was being sold on the black market at great expense to the system, placing the cost in the hundreds of thousands of rubles in the region. One Sibltag prisoner at the time, Evsei L’vov, remembers similar instances, although he places the blame on unescorted prisoners rather than on the Militarized Guard. As he writes, “Non-convoyed prisoners sell in the villages clothing, footwear, and other [items]. The nearby population is literally to a person dressed in the footwear, pants, padded jackets, pea-jackets, hats, blouses, [and] quilted jackets of the camp type”.<sup>46</sup> Although L’vov was describing a rural subdivision, Sibltag’s Political Department complained that the problem was particularly acute in the urban areas of Novosibirsk and Kemerovo.<sup>47</sup> In its February 1942 directive, the Political Department did not offer specific measures to prevent black market activity, merely calling for systematic explanatory work amongst the Militarized Guard, “concrete measures” (unidentified in the document) to secure the camp’s borders, and an end to the squandering of camp resources.<sup>48</sup>

A March 1942 NKVD circular (number 107) worried about “doubtful foreign” (*somnitel’nyimi chuzhdym*) elements within the Militarized Guard. There were many within the ranks who were either former prisoners, or were of suspect background, including those who had previously served in the White armies or were former kulaks, counter-revolutionaries, bandits or recidivists. The circular called for a purge of these

---

<sup>45</sup> Tsentr dokumentatsii noveishei istorii Tomskoi oblasti (TsDNI TO) f. 356 op. 1 d. 15 ll. 152-153.

<sup>46</sup> Memorial f. 2, op. 1, d. 84 [*L’vov Evsei Moiseevich (Vospominaniia)*], l. 46.

<sup>47</sup> The Krivoshechekovsk subdivision was hugely important during the war. Located in Novosibirsk’s rapidly-developing west bank, it was in charge of constructing Combine no. 179, Novosibirsk’s largest factory complex and a major ammunitions producer during World War II. The Krivoshechekovsk subdivision also provided prisoner labour under contract to the various workshops and factories of Combine no. 179.

<sup>48</sup> TsDNI TO f. 356 op. 1 d. 15 l. 153.

types from the Militarized Guard, even though there were problems attracting cadres at that time.<sup>49</sup>

### *Training*

Part of the problem lay in the generally poor state of training for the guards and other Gulag cadres. In May 1942 V. G. Nasedkin,<sup>50</sup> Gulag director in Moscow, complained that many riflemen (*strelki*)<sup>51</sup> did not know how to use their rifles, particularly foreign-made models; had poor knowledge of their duties; and ultimately were unable to guard prisoners properly.<sup>52</sup> Nasedkin criticized many camp subdivisions for not planning training exercises for the guards. He singled out the Novosibirsk Province Camp and Colony Administration as particularly problematic, interestingly, not because some of the subdivision commanders were unacquainted with the rules and regulations, but because they failed to adapt these rules to specific conditions: “In several subdivisions at UITLK UNKVD for Novosibirsk Province the task of the ongoing training of the Militarized Guard is concerned only with the reading of charters and manuals, without relating [the information] to the concrete reality of the given camp, [and] without practical actions related to the given camp’s specific climactic conditions”.<sup>53</sup> Thus, their Moscow superiors could admonish Gulag officials both for ignoring regulations and for not adapting those regulations to local circumstances.

A key problem, as the above circular makes clear, was that many Gulag cadres simply were not qualified for the job. The lack of experienced technical personnel certainly

---

<sup>49</sup> GARF f. 9401, op. 1a, d. 127, ll. 75-76.

<sup>50</sup> V. G. Nasedkin became the head of the Gulag on 26 February 1941; he received several awards both during and after the war, but left the MVD in 1948 due to illness. He died in 1950. See A. I. Kokurin and N. V. Petrov, eds., *GULAG (Glavnoe upravlenie lagerei) 1917-1960* (Moscow: “Materik,” 2002), 836.

<sup>51</sup> *Strelki*, or riflemen, was another common term for members of the VOKhR.

<sup>52</sup> GARF f. 9401, op. 1a, d. 128, ll. 9-10 *s ob* [Tsirkuliar no. 184s ot 4 maia 1942 g.].

<sup>53</sup> GARF f. 9401, op. 1a, d. 128, l. 9*ob*.

contributed to economic difficulties. In a February 1943 letter to Nasedkin, one high-ranking Gulag official explains that one of the reasons for low munitions production at the Tomsk factory and elsewhere was the “lack of cadres who have any experience” in related work.<sup>54</sup>

Through most of the 1930s, Gulag cadres received no special training outside of their training as NKVD officers;<sup>55</sup> by the late 1930s, there was only one school, located in Kharkov, specifically for the training of Gulag personnel for various positions of responsibility within the camps.<sup>56</sup> It was actually during the war, in 1942 and 1943—possibly due to the recognition of the need to make the system more professional—that several schools opened up around the Soviet Union to train cadres for specific tasks, including one at Sibltag.<sup>57</sup> By late 1944 there were ten Gulag schools for training cadres of various types.<sup>58</sup> One of these was located at Sibltag’s headquarters in Mariinsk. It trained gunsmiths (*oruzheinykh masterov*), and was one of the Gulag’s smallest training facilities in terms of the number of pupils, but also one of its most intensive, with a six-month course. The Sibltag school opened in November 1942 with a three-month course designed to enable participants to repair all types of arms.<sup>59</sup> Elsewhere, schools trained cadres for various leadership positions, including subdivision commanders, cultural-educational section directors, general supply section directors, lieutenants for the Militarized Guard, and various positions related to the breeding and training of guard dogs.<sup>60</sup>

---

<sup>54</sup> GARF f. 9414 op. 1 d. 1994 l. 55. The letter is from Zavgorodnii, at the time the director of the Gulag’s Corrective-Labour Colonies (ITKs).

<sup>55</sup> Mochulsky, for example, was recruited right out of engineering school to work at Pechorlag in the far north of European Russia. Mochulsky, *Gulag Boss*, esp. 5-9.

<sup>56</sup> Petrov, “Vvedenie,” *ISG* 2, 46.

<sup>57</sup> Petrov, “Vvedenie,” *ISG* 2, 46.

<sup>58</sup> Document no. 122, “Spisok shkol GULAG, deistvovavshikh v 1944 g,” *ISG* 2, 244.

<sup>59</sup> GARF f. 9401 op. 1a d. 118 l. 122

<sup>60</sup> The “general supply section” is the ChOS = *Chast’ obshchego snabzheniia*.

Authorities also re-organized the central Kuibyshev school during the war.<sup>61</sup> In September 1944, the Kuibyshev school became the Central Gulag School, designed to prepare leadership cadres (initially 500) in five-month courses.<sup>62</sup> While enrolled in the program, the participants were to receive wages equivalent to their prior position; extra stipends were available for inspectors (*inspektorskogo sostava*)<sup>63</sup> and for accountants. Grading occurred using the traditional five-point system.<sup>64</sup> The wartime emphasis on training, which continued into the post-war years, suggests a growing impetus towards the professionalization of camp cadres. The chaos of the war may have forced the hand of the Gulag and NKVD administrations, as experienced, qualified cadres were now more difficult than ever to find, and something had to be done to ameliorate the situation. Beria himself recognized that, despite obvious contributions to key economic sectors, the Gulag's overall operations were extremely costly and inefficient, and thus needed improvements.<sup>65</sup>

A detailed 1940 NKVD circular and booklet concerning the training of camp Second Department (Accounting and Distribution) workers gives an idea of the type of

---

<sup>61</sup> The Kuibyshev school is likely the same as the 1930s Kharkov school. The Nazis occupied Kharkov until late-summer, 1943, and many administrative offices from occupied or threatened areas (including Moscow) were re-located to Kuibyshev.

<sup>62</sup> GARF f. 9401 op. 1a d. 165 ll. 88-90 *s ob.*

<sup>63</sup> It is not clear what is meant by *inspektorskii sostav* in this 1944 document. Beria issued an order on 7 February 1940 (NKVD operational order number 00149) reorganizing several Gulag administrative departments. Order 00149 also created a fifteen-person *Kontrol'no-inspektorskaia grupa* (Control-Inspection Group) within the central Gulag command to help monitor the work of the prison camps and colonies. It is likely that the *inspektorskii sostav* mentioned in the 1944 document refers to inspectors working under this group. However, it may also refer to inspectors of machinery. It is also worth noting that provincial and territorial procurators also had "camp procurators" on their staff, who inspected the camps on a semi-regular basis. For more on the Order 00149 see N. V. Petrov, "Istoriia imperii 'GULAG': Glava 8," accessed on-line at <http://www.pseudology.org/GULAG/Glava08> on 31 January 2010.

<sup>64</sup> In the Russian/Soviet education system, grades were assigned on a 5-point scale, where 5 was the highest.

<sup>65</sup> See, for example, Yoram Gorzki and Oleg Khlevniuk, *Cold Peace: Stalin and the Soviet Ruling Circle, 1945-1953* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 128-129; Aleksei Tikhonov, "The End of the Gulag," in Paul R. Gregory and Valery Lazarev, eds., *The Economics of Forced Labor: The Soviet Gulag* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2003), 68, 72; Amy Knight, *Beria: Stalin's First Lieutenant* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 105-106.

instruction they were supposed to have received.<sup>66</sup> Notably, the booklet states that the camps' purpose is twofold: first, isolating criminals and securing the interests of state security; and second, to contribute to the economic development of the country. The training is divided into eighteen themes involving numerous courses. The first three themes relate to general information about the camps: the first is on camp organization, the second on types of places of confinement, and the third on the structure of the Second Department. Most of the remaining themes have to do with the specific record-keeping tasks of the department.<sup>67</sup> Thus, these themes point to the increased bureaucratization of the system. On paper, at the very least, the Gulag resembled a modern bureaucratic organization.

### ***Turnover***

Harsh wartime conditions and the mobilization of cadres for the Red Army exacerbated the problem of a lack of sufficient personnel, and worked to prevent the bureaucracy from functioning efficiently. A report on the movement of the peripheral and administrative staff (*nomenklatura upravl. i periferii*) at the Novosibirsk Province Camp

---

<sup>66</sup> The 2<sup>nd</sup> department was also called the URO (*Uchetno-raspredelitel'nyi otdel*), or Accounting and Distribution Department. See Rossi, *Spravochnik po GULAGu*, 428. For the circular and booklet, see GARF f. 9401, op. 1a, d. 81, ll. 12-37. The first two pages of this document are the text of the circular, no. 157 from 21 June 1940, while the remaining pages consist of a copy of a training booklet.

<sup>67</sup> The remaining 15 themes, roughly translated: 4. Arrival of prisoners in camps and colonies and filling in the basic [*osnovnykh*] registration documents; 5. The personal file: the basic document of the prisoner: using, processing and storing; 6. Proper notice to judicial bodies and NKVD organs of the arrival, movement, and departure and death of prisoners; 7. Finger-printing [*daktiloskopicheskaia*] and photograph registry of prisoners; 8. Administrative-*stroevoi* account; 9. General checks [*genproverka*]; 10. Selecting and directing [*Otbor i napravlenie*] prisoners to camps and transit points; 11. Legal questions of work of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Departments of camps and OITK NKVD; 12. Freeing of prisoners; 13. Questions of the passport regime; 14. Account for *inopoddanykh*, deserters, their accommodation in the camps, the order for establishing a *inopoddanstva* and the order for release; 15. Labour uses of prisoners; 16. Accounting and reporting on the use of specialists and the qualified work force; 17. The organization and activities of contract work in OITK and camps; and, 18. The statistical reporting of camps and OITK to the GULAG on the movement and composition of prisoners.

and Colony Administration for the first half of 1942 is particularly revealing.<sup>68</sup> A total of 2,533 of these cadres left the camp during this time, while 2,212 were hired on, out of a staff listed at around 6,500 for spring of that year.<sup>69</sup> As one Sibltag prisoner recalled, in 1941 and 1942, “with each passing day there were fewer and fewer young riflemen [*molodykh strelkov*]. They were replaced by old [guards], too old or unhealthy to fight at the Front”.<sup>70</sup>

Over one-third of those who left in the first half of 1942 joined the ranks of the Red Army; slightly over twenty percent left because of “family circumstances and personal reasons [*lichnomu zhelaniuu*],” suggesting that work conditions could not have been ideal. The next two most prevalent reasons, at 9.9 percent and 9.5 percent, respectively, were staff reductions (*po sokrashcheniiu shtata*)<sup>71</sup> and transfer to another camp. Seven point eight percent could not stay on due to health reasons. Of the thirteen reasons given, negligent or criminal behaviour do not factor heavily, but are prevalent enough to suggest a significant lack of discipline amongst camp employees. Five point one percent were relieved of their duties for service discrepancies (*sluzhebn. nesootvetstviu*); 2.5 percent for discipline infractions or not carrying out orders; 1.5 percent for moral corruption (*moral'no bytov.razlozh*); 1.4 percent for counter-revolutionary activity; one percent for other crimes.; and 4.4 percent due to failed special background checks. Authorities sentenced another 1.5 percent under the harsh labour laws of 26 June 1940. In all, then, around 17 percent of those cadres who left the Novosibirsk Province Camp and Colony

---

<sup>68</sup> GANO f. P-260 op. 1 d. 24 ll. 1-4.

<sup>69</sup> See also GARF f. 9414, op. 1 *dop*, d. 9, l. 5

<sup>70</sup> Alin, *Nevydumannye rasskazy*, 132.

<sup>71</sup> This is curious given that UITLK NSO was already under-staffed.

Administration in the first half of 1942 did so because they did not fulfil their duties in one way or another.

Notably, of the 2,533 who left, 62.7 percent had been at their positions for less than a full year and almost 93 percent for fewer than three years. Clearly, few of these cadres had much experience in their specific positions, which no doubt impacted efficiency negatively. For the first half of 1942, the incoming contingent had a higher percentage of party members and was better educated than the outgoing contingent, perhaps because many within the incoming contingent were older than those sent to the front.<sup>72</sup>

For the entire Gulag, the movement of cadres must have caused huge headaches. In 1944, fourteen percent of all NKVD cadres (91,523 persons) left the NKVD, almost half from the Gulag. The largest proportion (approximately 32 percent) left for family reasons. Authorities expressed optimism at this, however, because “only” 14.2 percent had left due to some sort of negligent or criminal activity, while more than 85 percent left for other reasons, including family, illnesses or age, and Red Army mobilization. In that same year, however, 181,134 persons joined the NKVD. Both the NKVD and the camp system were beginning to replace lost personnel by the last years of the war. Over 80,000 of these new recruits, many of them de-mobilized Red Army soldiers, went to work in the Gulag.<sup>73</sup> By January 1945 the Gulag as a whole was still showing a staffing shortfall in many areas.<sup>74</sup>

---

<sup>72</sup> Around 5 percent of the incoming contingent were party or candidate party members (112 of 2212), while only 3.3 percent of the outgoing contingent had this status (83 of 2533). 2.2 percent (48 of 2212) of the incoming contingent had completed some sort of higher education, while only 1.5 percent (37 of 2533) of the outgoing group had done so. In terms of completed middle education, too the figures for the incoming contingent are 7.3 percent compared to 6.7 percent in the outgoing group.

<sup>73</sup> Document no. 130, “Spravka Otdela kadrov NKVD SSSR o dvizhenii i sostave kadrov NKVD za 1944g.,” *ISG* 2, 254-256.

<sup>74</sup> The information on camp personall shows a shortage of 15.3 percent for the camp sector, 25.3 percent for the production sector, 11.6 percent for the Militarized Guard commanders; and 11.8 percent for the

At the Tomsk Provincial Department of Prison Colonies (OITK TO)<sup>75</sup> in the first half of 1945, already after the situation had improved, only 83 percent of positions were filled (2,162 out of 2,605 workers).<sup>76</sup> Of these 2,162 workers, moreover, almost 78 percent had worked in the system for fewer than three years. Problems were especially acute where specialists were concerned. The Tomsk Prison Colonies could not find sufficient medical and veterinary staff, and lacked enough skilled engineers. In other words, poorly educated, unskilled, and inexperienced workers were the norm amongst Gulag staff in Western Siberia.

The poor living and working conditions for most Gulag cadres are particularly striking. A central directive sent to all leaders of prison camps, administrations for prison camps and colonies, and departments of prison colonies in early 1943 noted that there had recently been cases of serious illness for many within the Militarized Guard, including pellagra, scurvy, dystrophy and anaemia, many of the same diseases prevalent amongst prisoners.<sup>77</sup> The directive blamed improper food, rest and medical services, but also refused to lay the blame on central authorities, claiming that “[t]he state supplies everything that is necessary so that the riflemen will be in good health, but certain local leaders and commanders have a criminally negligent relationship to the organization of food and rest for the riflemen.” There had been three cases of death from pellagra

---

leadership of the educational-political department (VPO – *Vospitatel’no-politicheskii otdel*). In absolute numbers, according the document (Document no. 131, “Iz spravki Otdela kadrov GULAG o sostave kadrov po vsem periferiinyim organam GULAG po sostoianiiu na 1 ianvaria 1945 g.,” *ISG* 2, 266-271, esp. 266-7), the camp sector employed 23,703 persons (with a shortfall of 4931); the production sector 23,479 persons (with a shortfall of 8229); the VOKhR commanders 5185 (with a shortfall of 683); and the VPO leadership 848 (with a shortfall of 249).

<sup>75</sup> OITK TO = The new administration for ITKs in Tomsk Province following the creation of Tomsk Province in 1944 out of Novosibirsk Province.

<sup>76</sup> TsDNI TO f. 607, op. 1, d. 29, ll. 54-57.

<sup>77</sup> Information in this paragraph comes from GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 2513 [Instruktsii i direktivy Gulaga NKVD SSSR po okhrane i rezhimu {Jan-Nov 1943}], ll. 83-84.

amongst the Militarized Guard at the Novosibirsk Province Prison Camps and Colonies in January 1943 alone. Guards often worked long hours, too, frequently as many as thirteen to fifteen hours per day.<sup>78</sup> Conditions for prisoners, of course, were even worse.

While many of the guards and camp personnel seem to have been more or less regular Soviet citizens, there were members of the Soviet elite—the Communist Party—who worked in and ran the Gulag camps. On the whole, however, even the camp party members do not appear to have been motivated overtly by ideological concerns, at least not as far as day-to-day camp operations were concerned.

### *The Camp Party Organizations*

The party structure in the camp system had been formalized in 1937 with the creation of a Political Department (politotdel) within the Gulag and each of its camps.<sup>79</sup> The party organizations within the Gulag were not large. Almost all directors of individual camps and of the militarized guard were party members, but, according to statistics from the mid-1940s, only about eighteen percent of Gulag personnel as a whole were members of either the party or the komsomol.<sup>80</sup> In a 1943 letter, Ivanov (unidentified in the documentation) complained that the Primary Party Organizations for the Novosibirsk Province Camp and Colony Administration were too small. The letter, written to Maslov, the head of the camp's Political Department, listed eleven Primary Party Organizations, with an average of only nine members each (the largest—the Krivoshchekovsk

---

<sup>78</sup> Ivanova, "Kadry GULAGa," 49.

<sup>79</sup> See Document no. 49, "Prikaz NKVD SSSR no. 00690 «Ob organizatsii politotdela v sostave GULAGa NKVD i politotdelov v sostave Upravlenii lagerei». 22 oktiabria 1937," *ISG* 2, 134.

<sup>80</sup> As of 10 March 1945 99 percent of the 756 "nomenklaturnykh rabotnikov" in the camp sector and the militarized guard (VOKhR) were Party or candidate members. See Document no. 126, "Spravka GULAG o sostave rukovodiashchikh kadrov ispravitel'no-trudovykh lagerei i kolonii NKVD nomenklatury TsK VKP(b) [...]," *ISG* 2, 250-251. For the 18 percent figure as of 1 January 1945 see Petrov, "Vvedenie," in *ISG* 2, 47.

Subdivision—had twenty-one party members and the smallest—the Novosibirsk Transit Station—had only two).<sup>81</sup> While organizationally small, the party was, for the most part, very active within the camp system.

Party activities in the Gulag mirrored party activities within Soviet society at large. Meeting protocols for many of the party organizations of various camp subdivisions reveal a focus on issues of membership and planning for political lectures and discussions. As elsewhere, study of the *Short Course of the History of the VKP(b)* was mandatory for party members, although in practice, just as outside of the camps, not all members were conscientious in their studies.<sup>82</sup> Disciplinary measures, too, frequently came about due to abusing one's position, alcohol related incidents or because of misplaced party cards, all of which common outside of the Gulag.<sup>83</sup> In 1944, for example, the Party Control Commission<sup>84</sup> for the Novosibirsk Province Camp and Colony Administration investigated forty-five party and candidate members. Of the top four reasons for investigation (loss of party documents, abuse of a position of service,

---

<sup>81</sup> TsDNI TO f. 356, op. 1, d. 25 [Rukovodiashchikh direktiv politotdela UITLiK NKVD po NSO 1943 god], l. 148.

<sup>82</sup> See, for example. Protocol no. 11 of the operational-chekist primary Party organization of Tomasinlag from 7 October 1940. Complaints at this meeting indicate that there was not enough study of the *Short Course*, and few communists had studied more than four chapters. TsDNI TO f. 242, op. 1, d. 1 [Protokoly oper-chekistskoi pervichnoi partorganizatsii Tomasinlaga NKVD], ll. 43-45.

<sup>83</sup> According to the excellent work of Edward Cohn (whose dissertation covers the post-war period), from 1945-53 the top five reasons for expulsion from the Communist Party were: 1. Abuse of job, moral and everyday degeneration, drinking and hooliganism; 2. Remaining on occupied territory, POW; 3. Party and labour discipline, anti-party behaviour; 4. Alienated from the party organization; 5. Lost or destroyed party documents (note that more members were expelled during a special campaign from 1952-53 than for lost party documents, but I have not included that, here). See Edward D. Cohn, "Disciplining the Party: The Expulsion and Censure of Communists in the Post-War Soviet Union, 1945-1961," (PhD dissertation, Department of History, University of Chicago, 2007) 131.

<sup>84</sup> The Control Commission was in charge of monitoring members for proper behaviour, and thus played a large role in issues of discipline and membership.

connections with prisoners, and drunkenness, respectively) only one, connections with prisoners, related directly to the Gulag.<sup>85</sup>

On the other hand, these disciplinary infractions, particularly the loss of party documents, had important connotations when associated with the camps. While discussing two cases of lost party documents at a February 1941 meeting, several party members at Corrective Labour Colony 6 expressed worry that such documents could end up in the wrong hands. As one participant stated, “[b]ecause of a lack of vigilance amongst certain communist comrades party documents may fall into the hands of enemies of the people”.<sup>86</sup> The loss of party documents was, however, considered a grave infraction even outside of the camps.<sup>87</sup>

Just as in a factory party committee, many of Siblag’s party meetings focused on economic issues. This was especially true of centralized meetings. In January 1942, Siblag held its first all-camp party conference, with party representatives from every subdivision and camp department. These conferences continued on an annual basis throughout the war, and in most years following. While not exclusively devoted to production issues (indeed disciplinary and training issues figure prominently), the camp’s economic output appears to have been the biggest concern. It is through the party’s disciplinary activity, however, that we can gain great insight into the history of the “elite” of the camp personnel.

---

<sup>85</sup> This information comes from the Party Commission report at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Party Conference of the Administration of Corrective Labour Camps and Colonies [Novosibirsk Province], held 22-23 January 1945. See GANO f. P-260, op. 1, d. 54, l. 33.

<sup>86</sup> TsDNI TO f. 356, op. 1, d. 20, ll. 19-19*ob*.

<sup>87</sup> See, for example, Cohn, “Disciplining the Party,” 134.

### *Party discipline*

On 22-23 January 1945 the Novosibirsk Province Camp and Colony Administration held its Third Party Conference. At the conference, the Party Control Commission reported on several disciplinary cases it had dealt with in the previous year. In one instance, the party expelled a former transit station worker in Novosibirsk. He had been head of a prisoner-support echelon. He, along with a komsomol member, stole merchandise and other material goods from the prisoners' fund "in the market-value sum of 270 thousand rubles." Both received ten-year sentences for this abuse of power. In a second case, a party member of over ten years received a strict reprimand for connections (*sviaz'*) with a prisoner. She did not have an intimate relationship with the prisoner, but smuggled money and other goods to the prisoner from that prisoner's relatives, who lived in Novosibirsk. According to the report, the prisoner's mother allowed the official to make use of her apartment to meet with "pals and friends [*druzhkami-priiateliami*]"<sup>88</sup>

Taken together, these two cases reveal a lot about informal networks that functioned within the Gulag system. In the first, theft from resources allocated to prisoners resulted in camp administrators lining their own pockets. This no doubt led to increased hardships for prisoners at the Novosibirsk transit station. In the second, an informal relationship approaching *blat*<sup>89</sup> was formed, whereby a prisoner benefited by receiving goods, a camp official benefited by receiving a place to meet with friends, and the prisoner's mother benefited through the ability to contact and help her son more easily. In both cases, camp administrators violated regulations regarding the relationship of officials to the prisoner

---

<sup>88</sup> See GANO f. P-260, op. 1, d. 54, ll. 33-34 for these, and other, examples.

<sup>89</sup> Alena Ledeneva defines *blat* as "the use of personal networks and informal contacts to obtain goods and services in short supply and to find a way around formal procedures." See Ledeneva, *Russia's Economy of Favours: Blat, Networking and Informal Exchange* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) 1.

population. Some prisoners themselves note the prevalence of *blat*. As D. E. Alin—a Siblrag prisoner during World War II—notes in his memoir, if a prisoner worked honestly and fulfilled his norms he risked dying of exhaustion, while if he did not fulfil his norms he risked dying of starvation. To solve this problem,<sup>90</sup>

One way was to carry out *blat* with the civilian master who covered duty details [*nariady*]. Our brigade leader solved this problem, reaching an agreement with a civilian engineer-master so that he would cover our duty details at inflated rates, and the brigade received more funds in hand, and then those funds were returned to the master. This kind of “action” was widely practiced throughout the camps of the country at this time.

At a February 1941 Siblrag Party conference, Skvirskii (initials and position not given) condemned the lack of “Bolshevik order” in the camps. He accused Zamoishchik, recently transferred to Siblrag’s Novosibirsk subdivision in order to supervise supply, of embezzling 30,000 rubles. Zamoishchik allegedly used “his own network [*cherez opredelennuiu set’ svoikh liudei*],” including de-convoyed (*raskonvoirovannye*) prisoners, in order to sell liver from the division’s meat-processing plant on the black market (*na chastnom rynke*). According to Skvirskii, Zamoishchik then pocketed the profits. Even if the events did not take place as described (the next speaker argues that Zamoishchik could not have committed such a crime), the inclusion of prisoners in the story highlights one way in which prisoners could have had considerable contact with Soviet society. Networks between prisoners and camp officials were not uncommon.<sup>91</sup>

This was not an isolated incident, either. At the Zavarzino subdivision (Tomsk Corrective Labour Colony 6), one camp official (a party member) allegedly pocketed profits by selling pork, milk and even soap produced at the subdivision on the black market. He had the help of prisoners. While these specific prisoners may have benefited

---

<sup>90</sup> Alin, *Nevydumannye rasskazy*, 147.

<sup>91</sup> For this discussion, see GANO f. P-260, op. 1, d. 1, ll. 159-161.

directly from this arrangement, others clearly did not: the children of prisoners in the prison colony went without milk while the official sold milk on the side.<sup>92</sup>

Prisoners at times benefitted directly or indirectly from the illicit actions of party members. There are, for example, numerous instances of the disciplining of party members for smuggling alcohol to prisoners and, even, for drinking with the prisoners themselves. In June 1940, at the Zavarzino subdivision, one Zakharov received a strict reprimand for un-party-like behaviour, which included instances of drinking with prisoners. According to the discussion of his case, he frequently drank with his driver, a prisoner, and also appeared drunk in front of other prisoners.<sup>93</sup> Interestingly, Zakharov, at a January 1940 meeting, had accused another official of similar behaviour, noting that this official often took his driver to the neighbouring village, and they would come back together, drunk.<sup>94</sup> Zakharov may have had some inkling at this meeting of future problems, however, as he was forced to defend the colony's production record against accusations that a group of wreckers was operating within the colony.<sup>95</sup>

Indeed, it is fascinating to follow certain party members through the disciplinary process. At a December 1939 party meeting at the same subdivision, six of the nine attendees voted to give Solov'ev a reprimand (*vygovor*) without a notation in his personal file. The party committee had apparently warned Solov'ev in July of that year about drinking on the job, but this behaviour did not stop. He also, without permission, had driven a prisoner who worked in the colony's kitchen to the Tomsk train station so that

---

<sup>92</sup> See AKT from 31 December 1939, an investigation of the Zavarzino subdivision: TsDNI TO f. 356, op. 1, d. 5, ll. 149-150. The "children" referred to in this document are probably under two or three years of age, as this the age when children born in the camps were generally taken away and placed in orphanages or with the mother's relatives. For more, see the section on women in the camps in Chapter VI of the present dissertation.

<sup>93</sup> See Protocol no. 12, closed Party meeting of ITK 6, 4 June 1940. TsDNI TO f. 356, op. 1, d. 5, ll. 84-86.

<sup>94</sup> See Protocol no. 1, closed Party meeting of ITK 6, 9 January 1940. TsDNI TO f. 356, op. 1, d. 5, l. 142.

<sup>95</sup> TsDNI TO f. 356, op 1, d. 5, l. 142.

the prisoner could meet with relatives. Thus, once again, we see a case of a prisoner using informal connections for his own benefit. On top of this, another speaker accused Solov'ev of selling wine and beer on the side, thus "losing his vigilance." The black market for alcohol was enormous in the camps, and officials such as Solov'ev helped facilitate this illicit trade. Solov'ev blamed his actions on overwork, pointing out that he had not had a day off for the whole year ("*tselyi god ni odnogo vykhodnogo dnia*"). Despite some calls for a notation in his file, with only a reprimand Solov'ev got off relatively easily.<sup>96</sup> His poor behaviour continued, however. On 5 August 1940 the committee again reprimanded him for drinking on the job, and warned that he would not be treated so generously in the future. Just ten days later the tide turned completely against him. Several Party members accused him of smuggling cigarettes to prisoners, drinking with prisoners and, importantly, not behaving "in a Bolshevik manner" even at the meeting itself, where he had tried to excuse his actions rather than repent his sins.

His actions may have been reprehensible in part because of the power inversion that they implied. As one person commented concerning the smuggling of cigarettes, "Comrade Solov'ev served the prisoner like a servant to a landowner. He tried to deny it, but later confessed that he had been bringing cigarettes to the prisoner in the barrack". This time, he was expelled from the party, nine votes to zero. That same day he had been given a six-month sentence for "absenteeism while binge drinking" (*za progul s*

---

<sup>96</sup> See Protocol 14 of the closed Party meeting of ITK no. 6, 2 December 1939. TsDNI TO f. 356, op. 1, d. 4, ll. 53ob-54ob.

*p'iankoi*).<sup>97</sup> The fact that the party only expelled him once had been sentenced for a crime, however, suggests that many abuses likely escaped party disciplinary measures.

It is not surprising that Zavarzino, an agricultural colony not far from Tomsk, had so many disciplinary difficulties with its prisoners and staff. The nature of agricultural work made constant surveillance almost impossible. Spatially, too, the labour colony may have resembled a state farm more than a concentration camp. Authorities complained that at the Zavarzino subdivision, “several places lack zone fences and warning areas, so that prisoners *do not have visible borders*”.<sup>98</sup> The relative fluidity of the situation presented an opportunity for considerable corruption amongst camp officials, but also, as we have seen, at times allowed prisoners to circumvent the strict rules regarding camp regimen in order to meet with relatives or receive alcohol, cigarettes, and other items.

Zavarzino was a corrective labour colony, and thus perhaps did not pay as much attention to regimen as the corrective labour camps. However, such occurrences were common even at Tomasinlag, one of the group of forestry camps that Oleg Khlevniuk identifies as having been “provisional” death camps due to their horrendous (even for the Gulag) living conditions and extremely hard, manual, labour.<sup>99</sup> At a February 1940 meeting of the Primary Party Organization of Tomasinlag one member, Plekhanov, was fired from his job and given a strict reprimand with a warning in part for binge drinking

---

<sup>97</sup> Protocol no. 16 of the closed Party meeting of ITK no. 6, 5 August 1940: TsDNI TO f. 356, op. 1, d. 5, ll. 62-64; and Protocol no. 18 of the closed Party meeting of ITK no. 6, 15 August 1940: TsDNI TO f. 356, op. 1, d. 5, ll. 56-58ob. Special thanks to Olga Berg for help with the translation.

<sup>98</sup> TsDNI TO f. 356, op. 1, d. 5, l. 112. Emphasis added. The presence of borderless *punkty* and subdivisions was not that uncommon. Margarete Buber's first subdivision at Karaganda had no borders: “We were surprised to find that the camp was not surrounded by barbed wire or a wall. Prisoners, we were told, were allowed to move freely up to within half a mile of the camp; after that the guards shot without ceremony,” in Buber, *Under Two Dictators*, trans. E. Fitzgerald (London: Victor Gollanz LTZ, 1949) 75.

<sup>99</sup> According to Oleg Khlevniuk, the forestry camps were created in part as an *ad hoc* response to the mass arrests of 1937-38 and were so poorly organized that they “became in fact provisional death camps.” Khlevniuk, *The History of the Gulag: From Collectivization to the Great Terror*, trans. V.A. Staklo (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004) 177. For more on Tomasinlag, see Chapter II.

earlier that year. One incident in particular stands out. His fellow party members accused him of taking, without permission, two prisoners to the local food shop (*produkty*) and then leaving them in the regional centre (*v Raitsentre*) without any surveillance. Plekhanov then apparently got drunk and brought the prisoners back to the camp, throwing them in the penalty isolator without reason. To top it all off, he took 590 rubles from a prisoner commissary worker (*zakliuchennogo larechnika*) even though he lacked the authority to do so. He had not given the funds back to the camp's financial department after five days. Here we see clear examples of how the authorities' abuses of power could at times help prisoners, while at other times harm them. Two prisoners had the opportunity to move about town unsupervised, which surely must have been a welcomed reprieve from camp conditions; later, however, both were punished through no fault of their own, and the same official then allegedly stole prisoner funds. The official, moreover, got off rather lightly (he was not, at this point in any case, expelled from the party or criminally charged, although he did lose his position).<sup>100</sup>

While it is clear that such occurrences were not uncommon, their frequency is difficult to calculate. In a March 1941 letter sent to the party secretaries of all Siblag subdivisions, the head of Siblag's Political Department described the need to liquidate all instances of illicit connections between civilian workers, guards, and prisoners. In 1940, for Siblag as whole, authorities had uncovered thirty-seven cases of illicit connections between guards and prisoners and thirteen cases of guards living with women prisoners.<sup>101</sup> While clearly an affront to the rules and regulations governing the camps,

---

<sup>100</sup> This example comes from TsDNI TO f. 4151 [*Pervichnaia partorganizatsiia Tomsko-Asinskogo ispravitel'no-trudovogo lageria NKVD*], op. 1, d. 5, ll. 24-25 [1<sup>st</sup> party organization meeting protocol from 9 February 1940].

<sup>101</sup> For the text of the letter, see TsDNI TO f. 356, op. 1, d. 15, l. 3.

these numbers are not high given the size of the camp: Sibltag's prisoner population was 40,275 as of 1 January 1940 and 43,857 on 1 January 1941.<sup>102</sup> Nevertheless, the numbers were high enough to catch Moscow's attention. The Gulag's central Political Department listed Sibltag as one of four camps "where connections between civilian workers and prisoners have become common occurrences".<sup>103</sup> It is also likely that reported cases were only the tip of the iceberg. After all, the memoir literature is filled with descriptions of corrupt officials, some of whom used other prisoners for their personal gain. A prisoner of Sibltag in the early 1940s, for example, remembers that the head of the camp's Third Department—certainly a party member due the Third Department's important role in internal surveillance—conducted strict surveillance work with the help of some prisoners, who would steal from others without fear of disciplinary measures.<sup>104</sup> It would hardly be surprising to discover that the party frequently looked the other way when these types of infractions occurred, except where there was a clear economic impact.

The authorities consistently blamed a lack of vigilance and a lack of party activities for allowing connections with prisoners, drunkenness, and other disciplinary infractions. In a report on the political condition of the guards at the Zavarzino subdivision in February 1940, the head of the guards (a party member) complained of numerous instances of illicit connections between guards and prisoners. Several party members linked this immoral behaviour directly to a lack of political-educational work and the

---

<sup>102</sup> *Sistema*, 392.

<sup>103</sup> Closed letter from Gavrilin, a deputy-director (*zam-nach*) of the Gulag's Politotdel, sent to all Party and Komsomol organizations within GULAG and GLAVGIDROSTROI NKVD. The other camps listed are Karlag, Astrakhanlag, and Vladivostoklag. TsDNI TO f. 356, op. 1, d. 15, ll. 4-5.

<sup>104</sup> See the unpublished memoir of Ananii Semenovich Gebel', "Kratkie epizody ternistigo puta s 1937 (iiun') do 1956 g. (ianvar')," held at the Memorial, f. 2, op. 2, d. 14, l. 138.

Party's failure to raise the guards' cultural level.<sup>105</sup> Poor party work, both in relation to other personnel and to the prisoners themselves, not only lead to numerous regimen infractions but also had a direct impact on economic output, as party work was seen as a key part of labour mobilization (and, conversely, as a scapegoat for problems). For example, at a February 1941 Sibltag party meeting, the first five reasons given for the unfilled production plan all related to poor party work: The camp management and party organizations failed to work hard enough in mobilizing for plan fulfilment; some administrative positions were filled without attention to the "political quality" of the candidate; the camp administration rarely made use of socialist and labour competitions and only occasionally conducted cultural-educational work amongst the prisoners; the party activists themselves met irregularly; and party organizations did not always fulfil orders from the central camp administration and did not necessarily know about all of the resources available to them. Only the final few reasons did not relate directly to party work. These focused on poorly organized labour, lack of sufficient fuel, insufficient numbers of specialists, and the poor state of the accounting books.<sup>106</sup>

At first glance, these last four reasons make more sense as explanations for inefficient production than issues such as insufficient cultural-educational work. Yet it is hardly surprising that party matters were stressed over seemingly more practical ones. Indeed, the improper behaviour and lack of sufficient vigilance of its members undermined the party's role as the vanguard of the proletariat and its educative function within the camps.

---

<sup>105</sup> Protocol no. 4 closed Party meeting of ITK no. 6, 1 February 1940. TsDNI TO f. 356, op. 1, d. 5, ll. 127-130.

<sup>106</sup> See the Stenogramma partiino-khoziastvennogo aktiva Upravleniia ispravitel'no trudovykh lagerei i kolonii po Novosibirskoi oblasti, 20-22 February 1941: GANO f. P-260, op. 1, d. 1, ll. 235ob-236.

If party members did not behave morally, or with sufficient attention to mobilization and other matters, then how could one expect guards, much less prisoners, to do the same?

Most of the disciplinary examples above deal with the immediate pre-war years (although, with the Winter War with Finland, even in this period there was partial mobilization). Did the German invasion of 22 June 1941 change party discipline within the camps? There is certainly reason to think that it should have changed. On 25 June, just three days after the invasion, the Primary Party Organization of the Asino subdivision (formerly part of Tomasinlag) of Siblag held a closed meeting to discuss Molotov's radio address from 22 June. The meeting's discussion centred around the need to prevent illicit interaction between the prisoners and the surrounding population, and the party's important role in this endeavour. The head of the party organization, Petrov, began by saying that "[n]ow, like never before, it is necessary to mobilize the Party-Komsomol and union organizations for the guarding of prisoners in the zones and at the work sites," and that party members need to be examples of excellent workers. In the ensuing discussion, one participant, Pantileeva, pointed out that just like the Red Army, they, too, were dealing with a "barbaric enemy". Pantileeva gave an example of a woman in the town (*gorodok*) whose husband was serving his sentence in the camp. She worried that the prisoner, who worked at the Forestry combine (*Lesokombinat*), would be able to see his wife: "In this regard we comrades must be tactful [*chutkim*] and vigilant, or else the prisoners working outside of the division will talk with free citizens [*s vol'nyimi grazhdanami*]" . As one solution, they decided to make sure that the number of prisoners sent to work would be in proportion to the number of guards available. As party members, they were clearly conscious of their vanguard role. Later in the discussion,

Pantileeva stated that a communist must “stand a head taller” than non-party members, and pointed out that it had been wrong to replace a komsomol member with a non-party member in a leadership position. One participant, Gorskii, put it simply: he argued that enemies were now conducting enemy work (*vrazheskuiu rabotu*) and that a strong home front would always defeat the enemy. He noted, rather ominously, that special settlers, intent on defeating the Soviet Union, surrounded them.<sup>107</sup>

References to prisoners and special settlers as enemies of the Soviet Union are surprisingly infrequent in these meeting protocols, and seem to be confined mostly to the period around the outbreak of the war, as the example above illustrates. Indeed, one of the first post-invasion orders concerning the Gulag, issued on 22 June itself, forbade those sentenced under especially dangerous provisions of the criminal code—including terror, spying, Trotskyism and banditry but not murder—from leaving the camps, even after their terms expired. This decree affected many thousands of prisoners across the Gulag. Many individual camps also unilaterally ended certain privileges (Ustvymlag in the Komi Republic, for example, on 22 June banned all correspondence and newspapers).<sup>108</sup>

Yet even at the Asino division meeting, discussed above, not all participants viewed the prisoners with suspicion. While discussing the need for increased vigilance, comrade Egorov emphasized the contributions that prisoners could make to the war effort, especially through forestry work and defence production. The party should focus, he argued, on using the workforce more efficiently. Egorov gave an example where a

---

<sup>107</sup> See TsDNI TO f. 4151, op. 1, d. 10 [Protokoly sobranii partorganizatsii Siblaga], ll. 8-11 [Protokol no. 4 Obshchego zakrytogo sobranii pervichnoi partorganizatsii Asinovskogo otdeleniia Siblaga NKVD Novosibirskoi oblasti ot 25 iunია 1941 goda].

<sup>108</sup> Applebaum, *Gulag*, 418-419.

specific worksite was sent twenty-five prisoners when it only needed ten.<sup>109</sup> Egorov may simply have been pragmatic: authorities had little choice but to mobilize prisoners for the war effort.

Even though there was general agreement amongst the Siblag administration that party discipline had to improve in order to meet the economic and political needs of the home front, if anything the situation became worse. Escapes increased following the war's outbreak. Disciplinary infractions spiked, too. At a closed party meeting of the Asino Primary Party Organization on 23 March 1942, in a response to a directive from the Gulag's Political Department complaining about poor party work, the Asino party organization found that it, too, had many problems. In the first half of 1941, there had been fifty-two cases of infractions, while in the second half 103 cases, an almost 100 percent increase following the outbreak of the war. There were four times as many disciplinary measures for drunkenness (admittedly from a low starting point – three in the first half of 1941 to twelve in the second).<sup>110</sup> This could be partially due to increased vigilance in punishing improper behaviour, but given the chaos of the first years of the war, when many camp personnel left to fight on the front and supplies were severely disrupted, it is likely that party discipline actually worsened, at least until the war's latter half.

The illegal flow of goods in and out of the camp also continued. At the same meeting, the party organization discussed the file of party member V. N. Pantiukhov, a Militarized Guard division leader, who was caught stealing food products and giving them to his daughter. A search found 1.7 kilograms of stolen millet, 800 grams of butter and one

---

<sup>109</sup> TsDNI TO f. 4151, op. 1, d. 10, l. 9.

<sup>110</sup> These statistics come from TsDNI TO f. 4151, op. 1, d. 12, l. 14*ob*.

kilogram of macaroni, at a time when camp supplies were beginning to dwindle. The organization then voted to exclude Pantiukhov from the party and transfer his file to judicial organs (*v sud*).<sup>111</sup>

Importantly, too, party members could also be blamed and punished for the worsening conditions in the camps. In January 1942, the Party Control Commission of Siblag's Political Department decided to give N. F. Korostel', the secretary of the Akhpunsk subdivision's party organization, a strict reprimand with a notation in his file. The commission also recommended that he be removed from his position as party secretary.<sup>112</sup> The recommendation related not to the abuse of power, but was due to "negligent relation to duties". The control commission noted that the Akhpunsk subdivision had incredibly poor living conditions: the bathhouse and disinfection chamber (*dezokamera*) were not working properly, resulting in a massive lice problem; food distribution was poorly organized and foodstuffs often stolen; prisoner complaints and petitions ignored; prisoners beaten; and ill prisoners forced to work, dying as a result. All of these problems had caused a massive increase in mortality. Two hundred fifteen prisoners died in November 1941, out of a prisoner population of 4,723 (a staggering 4.5 percent of the prisoner population in just one month, well before camp mortality rates reached their peak). On an annual basis, this would mean a November mortality rate of around fifty-five percent, many times above the Gulag average. Criminal proceedings

---

<sup>111</sup> TsDNI TO f. 4151, op. 1, d. 12, l. 16.

<sup>112</sup> TsDNI TO f. 1492, op. 1, d. 1 [Dokumenta politotdela Siblaga NKVD SSSR ob usilenii partiino-propagandistskoi i kul'turno-vospitatel'noi raboty sredi sotrudnikov Siblaga i zakliuchennykh ...], ll. 3-3ob. Unfortunately the vast majority of party control commission files are still classified at TsDNI TO; these could potentially yield a lot more information about party discipline. This particular document, a meeting protocol of the Party Commission of Siblag's Politotdel from 7 January 1942, probably has been declassified only because it was included within other Politotdel documents.

were already being opened against the subdivision's director, Bekshaev, at the time of the control commission's report.

### *Attitudes towards Prisoners*

The above information on the disciplining of party members reveals, if indirectly, the attitudes of many camp cadres towards the prisoners. In the vast majority of cases, the stenographic reports and meeting minutes refer to camp inmates simply as prisoners. The documents generally use the abbreviated form of the Russian word for prisoner (*zakliuchennyi*), which is z/k (or "z/k, z/k" for the plural). Likely, then, the word used at the various meetings most often was the abbreviated, *zek*. One could argue that this represents a move towards the de-humanization of inmates (this would hardly make the Gulag unique amongst prison systems or, for that matter, other instances of forced labour). The zeks became, in a sense, a sub-species within the Soviet world and were often, as we know, treated that way after release, with difficulties in finding employment, housing, and so on.<sup>113</sup> In part, though, the use of this language may simply show that many camp authorities saw the Gulag as a normal prison system, regardless of the fact that it was located within a highly abnormal Soviet context. The term "enemies of the people", or even simply "enemies," comes up only rarely when applied to prisoners (and, interestingly, figures more prominently when discussions arise concerning special

---

<sup>113</sup> For more on issues facing Gulag prisoners after release, see Miriam Dobson, *Khrushchev's Cold Summer: Gulag Returnees, Crime, and the Fate of Reform after Stalin* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009) and Nanci Adler, *The Gulag Survivor: Beyond the Soviet System* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2002). For some on the issue in Novosibirsk Province, see Marc Elie, "Les politiques à l'égard des libérés du Goulag: amnistiés et réhabilités dans la région de Novossibirsk, 1953-1960," *Cahiers du monde russe* 47.1-2 (2006): 327-348.

settlers). Although camp cadres rarely referred to prisoners as enemies, at least in official documents, their statements often reveal an extreme indifference to prisoner welfare.

The worst of this rhetoric supports the contention that camp authorities viewed “zeks” as less than human. At a 1941 meeting of Sibltag’s party economic activists, Kopaev, the camp commander, emphasized the need,<sup>114</sup>

to break some of our workers of the rotten theory [*gniluiu teoriiu*] of the impossibility of using invalids in light work in the manufacture of consumer goods. [...] We have 9 thousand invalids and around 15,000 persons suitable to light labour [and] the maintenance of invalids costs us 11 million [rubles] per year; therefore, the task of using invalids in the manufacture of consumer goods should save us 6-7 million rubles of public funds.

Were it not for the invective, “rotten theory,” the above statement might be mistaken for an impulse towards bureaucratic efficiency. Clearly some camp personnel (if not the commander himself) recognized the need to improve the health of invalids by keeping them away from manual labour.<sup>115</sup>

Local orders to divert prisoners to various construction sites and other projects suggest that authorities thought of prisoners as a resource in fulfilling economic tasks. Obkom orders obliging Kopaev to send 5,000 prisoners to Combine 179,<sup>116</sup> for example, would seem to leave little room or concern for the individual prisoner, who becomes just a number. This is an example of the bureaucratic mechanism at its worst: the need for a timely completion of an important factory complex results in a complete lack of concern

---

<sup>114</sup> GANO f. P-260, op. 1, d. 1, l. 21. See also D.S. Krasil’nikov, “Lageria i kolonii,” 37. There is also an important subtext to this information. Kopaev states that the camp uses 11 million rubles/year in the upkeep of 9000 invalid-prisoners. As noted earlier in this chapter, Sibltag allotted 25 million rubles for the upkeep of its approximately 4000 guards. The difference is revealing, especially considering the fact that invalids would have needed medicines and medical equipment, although it is not clear exactly what Kopaev means by “upkeep.”

<sup>115</sup> Indeed, it was a curious phenomenon in the Gulag that most prisoners would be over-worked, underfed, under-clothed, and forced to live in extremely harsh conditions, but that, once declared invalids by camp medical staff, considerable effort was usually made to nurse them back to health. Many extremely ill prisoners, of course, were never declared invalids and simply died.

<sup>116</sup> For more on Combine 179 and Kopaev see Chapter IV of the present dissertation.

for the welfare of those involved. As usual when discussing a system as complex as the Gulag, however, the issue is more complicated. We have already noted that individual relationships between prisoners and camp personnel could make a large difference in the lives of some prisoners.

Of course, the final word on prisoner-personnel relations should be given to the prisoners themselves. How did inmates at Sibltag and the Novosibirsk Province Camps and Colonies feel about those who ran the camps? To some degree, the picture is not black and white even from the prisoners' point of view. Certainly cases of reported abuses are the norm, rather than something exceptional. Sergei Vladimirov, who spent ten years in Sibltag from 1942-1952 and wrote his memoir under the pseudonym V. Blousov, vividly describes an incident when a guard killed a young prisoner who had been fishing, and the prisoners gathered around, threatening to beat the guards. The subdivision's commander, Major Zvantsev, whom the prisoners had nicknamed "The Boar," objected to the prisoners' complaints:<sup>117</sup>

"You are thinking of rebelling?" he shouted. "To the cooler [*kartsere*] with you! I'll send you to the tower! Bastards [*Svolochi*]! [...] Disperse!"  
From the crowd could be heard in response:  
"Murderers! They've killed [*zagubili*] the boy!"  
"For a little fish... a person died [*pogib*]!"  
"A person?" roared The Boar, "There aren't any here! Here are enemies of the people, traitors of the Motherland, bandits, crooks [*zhuliki*]. The dregs of humanity, scum (*mraz'*), riff-raff (*podonki*), that's who is here!"

There are positive memories of some camp officials, too, although these certainly stand out as exceptional. Evsei Moiseevich L'vov, a prisoner at the Sibltag agricultural subdivision, Orlovo-Rozovo, in the early 1940s, had great respect for the subdivision's

---

<sup>117</sup> Belousov, *Zapiski dokhodiagi*, 126-127.

director, F. I. Kazachenko,<sup>118</sup> who apparently had tremendous knowledge of animal husbandry. L'vov writes, “And to this day former Orlovo-Rozovians [*orlovo-rozovtsy*] recall F. I. Kazachenko with kind words. He was strict and fair, a true Party-man, faultlessly honest, and cultured [*kul'turn*] in all essences.”<sup>119</sup> L'vov was not, as he himself suggests, the only former prisoner to remember Kazachenko this way. Sof'ia Sergeevna Potresova recalls Kazachenko telling her and her fellow inmates, “We don't consider you to be prisoners, but only temporary detainees [*My ne schitaem vas zakliuchennymi, a vremenno zaderzhannymi*].”<sup>120</sup>

### ***Conclusion***

There was nothing particularly extraordinary about the Gulag personnel. While there were no doubt camp officials who were ideologically motivated, most camp personnel were not party members, and even the camp party members often behaved as if ideology did not matter.<sup>121</sup> In some ways there was a certain banality, then, to the actions of these guards and camp party members.

Indeed, one is tempted to argue that Gulag cadres were not that different from other Soviet bureaucrats. In her classic study, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*,<sup>122</sup> Hannah Arendt posited that Eichmann, a high-level Nazi bureaucrat, was complicit in the Holocaust not

---

<sup>118</sup> Before moving to Orlovo-Rozovo, Kazachenko had been the director of the Antibess subdivision, an agricultural camp within Siblag that was in some ways a “model” camp, that even attended the All-Union Agricultural Exhibition in 1940. See Chapter II for more detail. See also “Netipichnyi geroi zhestokogo vremeni,” *Vestnik UIS Kuzbassa* no. 4, 34-36; article can also be found at the Memorial f. 2, op. 1, d. 7

<sup>119</sup> See Memorial f. 2, op. 1, d. 84, ll. 34-35.

<sup>120</sup> Memorial f. 2, op. 1, d. 7, l. 35.

<sup>121</sup> I do not wish to give the impression that no personnel were motivated by ideology. J. Arch Getty and Oleg Naumov argue that Nikolai Ezhov, head of the NKVD during the “Great Terror,” was “not an amoral careerist, and he took ideology seriously”. No doubt there were many within the NKVD like him. See Getty and Naumov, *Yezhov: The Rise of Stalin's “Iron Fist”* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008) xxi.

<sup>122</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, revised and enlarged edition (New York: Penguin Books, 1994; original publication, 1963).

because of anti-Semitism or because he was a sociopath—she presents him as a relatively normal person—but because he abdicated moral responsibility to Hitler/the Nazi state; i.e., he was just following orders. For Arendt, although there was nothing peculiar about Eichmann, Eichmann’s choice was an individual one, and thus his abdication of moral responsibility did not actually absolve him of that responsibility. Arendt referred to this as the “banality of evil,” and thus suggests that any of us might have acted similarly under a similar system.<sup>123</sup>

Yet although there was a certain “banality” to many Gulag cadres, the tendency of Gulag officials to flout the rules and, occasionally, to form informal networks with prisoners, shows that they were not simply cogs in a bureaucratic machine, following orders without considering the consequences. They were looking out for their own self-interest, too.

The evidence from the party documents from the Western Siberian Gulag, as well as other materials pertaining to the camp personnel, suggests that, for the most part, those who worked in the camps were “ordinary” Soviet men and women.<sup>124</sup> They were, generally, poorly educated, and even from within the NKVD they were not from the elite. Many, likely, thought of their work in the Gulag administration as not that different from work in a factory administration. What is crucial to understand, of course, is that the Soviet Union during the Stalin era—and especially during the war—was itself quite

---

<sup>123</sup> For an interesting discussion relating Arendt’s theories to the Gulag, see Svetlana Boym, ““Banality of Evil,” Mimicry, and the Soviet Subject: Varlam Shalamov and Hannah Arendt,” *Slavic Review* 67, no. 2 (2008): 342-363, esp. 349-352.

<sup>124</sup> In his work on the Holocaust, Christopher Browning shows that “ordinary men”—as opposed to elite SS officers—carried out a great deal of the initial violence against the Jews. See Christopher Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York: Harper Collins, 1992); and Browning, *Nazi Policy, Jewish Workers, German Killers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

extraordinary: extraordinarily violent, and in an extraordinary state of mobilization.<sup>125</sup>

Little value was placed on the lives of individuals.

When the war ended in victory, and shortly thereafter a mass amnesty released tens of thousands of non-political prisoners, some Gulag personnel probably expected a decreased emphasis on the prison camps. After all, many within Soviet society optimistically hoped for a relaxation of repressive measures as a reward for their sacrifices during the war.<sup>126</sup> Western Siberia, moreover, had developed considerably during the war, suggesting that there may have been less need for forced labour. This would not be the case, however, as the camps reached their peak populations in the post-war years, a period that has been called the “zenith of the camp-industrial complex”.<sup>127</sup>

---

<sup>125</sup> Christian Gerlach and Nicholas Werth, “State Violence—Violent Societies,” in Michael Geyer and Sheila Fitzpatrick, eds., *Beyond Totalitarianism: Stalinism and Nazism Compared* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 133-179.

<sup>126</sup> Elena Zubkova discusses the disappointment felt by many Russians as hopes for liberalization failed to materialize. See Zubkova, *Russia after the War: Hopes, Illusions, and Disappointments, 1945-1957*, trans. Hugh Ragsdale (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1998).

<sup>127</sup> Applebaum, *Gulag*, 466.

## CHAPTER VI: *The Gulag in Western Siberia, 1945-53*

“The especially dangerous contingents [...] are organized into separate brigades, but at the production site they work together with those sentenced for minor infractions. There are 1403 unescorted prisoners in the camp subdivisions, comprising 11.7% of the general contingent. The women’s barracks and sections are divided into separate zones, but [the women] work together with the men at the production zones.”  
- From a 1947 procurator’s report on the Novosibirsk Province Camp and Colony Administration<sup>1</sup>

Unlike much of the European part of the Soviet Union, Siberia emerged from World War II relatively unscathed. Western Siberia’s importance to the Soviet economy had grown over the course the war, in part due to the evacuation of factories and Soviet citizens to the region, and in part due to indigenous economic growth to support the war effort, particularly in fuel, metallurgical and machine-building industries. While the USSR’s industrial output for 1945 was only 91 percent what it was in 1940, Western Siberia’s industrial output was 279 percent of that of 1940.<sup>2</sup> In short, the image of a country devastated by war does not fit the area east of the Urals. In 1946, industrial production fell in Western Siberia as the regime concentrated its efforts on rebuilding European regions and the country transitioned from a wartime to a peacetime economy. By 1948, however, the region had again reached its 1945 production levels.<sup>3</sup> The increased

---

<sup>1</sup> Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Novosibirskoi oblasti (GANO) fond R-20, opis’ 1, delo 378, list 4.

<sup>2</sup> V. V. Alekseev and Z. G. Karpenko, “Razvitie narodnogo khoziastvo,” in V. V. Alekseev, et al., eds., *Rabochii klass Sibiri v period uprocheniia i razvitiia sotsializma*, (Novosibirsk: Nauka, 1984) 148.

<sup>3</sup> Alekseev and Karpenko, “Razvitie narodnogo khoziastvo,” 149

mechanization in forestry industries and coal mining also helped to improve industrial output. And although the area, like the rest of the USSR, was hard-hit by the famine of 1946-47, the general story for Western Siberia in the post-war Stalin years is one of success.

The Gulag in the post-war years was “successful,” too. Despite a spike in 1946, the authorities continued to make relative improvements in preventing escapes.<sup>4</sup> There was a mass-amnesty of non-political prisoners in 1945, when over one million prisoners were immediately freed or received reductions to their sentences. In Novosibirsk Province, 86.3 percent of those freed were from the region, and many local inhabitants blamed the prisoners for an increase in crime.<sup>5</sup> Following the amnesty, the Gulag’s population grew steadily, reaching the peak figure for its entire existence in the early 1950s (see Figure 6.1) and then levelling off until after Stalin’s death.<sup>6</sup> NKVD (from March of 1946 the MVD, *Ministerstvo vnutrennykh del* – Ministry of Internal Affairs)<sup>7</sup> and Gulag officials made a concerted effort to improve production, too, by offering incentives such as wages for labour and the re-instatement of workday credits (*zachety rabochikh dnei*) by 1950/1951.

---

<sup>4</sup> For a discussion of the spike in escapes in early 1946 (Siblag was one of the camps singled out), see Order no. 10/ss of the Administration for Guarding and Regimen of the Gulag, “*O nakazanii vinovnikov neobespecheniia izoliatsii i okhrany zakliuchennykh v ispravitel’no-trudovykh lageriakh i koloniiakh NKVD i priniatii mer k prekrashcheniiu pobegov*,” from 15 February 1946. Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rossiskoi Federatsii (GARF) f. 9414, op. 1, d. 2527, ll. 36-37. In *Cold Peace*, Gorlizki and Khlevniuk argue that escapes remained common in the post-war years, but certainly relative to the 1930s there was a major improvement. See Yoram Gorlizki and Oleg Khlevniuk, *Cold Peace: Stalin and the Soviet Ruling Circle, 1945-1953* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) 126.

<sup>5</sup> Golfo Alexopolous, “Amnesty 1945: The Revolving Door of Stalin’s Gulag,” *Slavic Review* 64, no. 2 (2005) 274. 290.

<sup>6</sup> Anne Applebaum, *Gulag: A History* (New York: Doubleday, 2003), 590-593.

<sup>7</sup> In March of 1946 the NKVD split into two ministries, the MGB (Ministry of State Security) and the MVD (Ministry of Internal Affairs), with the MGB in charge of counter-intelligence (the precursor to the KGB) and the MVD in charge internal security, including the regular police and fire-fighting services but also, of course, the Gulag. See Applebaum, *Gulag*, 468.

In part, however, the post-war work incentives may have resulted from the Gulag's failures, rather than any perceived success. Beria himself recognized that the Gulag was hardly cost-effective, and thus took steps to reform the system before Stalin's death.<sup>8</sup> The speed with which authorities partially dismantled the Gulag following Stalin's death attests to the disillusionment amongst Soviet leadership with using forced labour as a means to help the economy. Indeed, ultimately, by focusing on three issues—the persistence of the black market, illicit relations between men and women in the camps, and the issue of resistance—we see that, despite greater emphasis on professionalization and clear success in some areas, informal practices in the camps undermined the regime's vision of a truly efficient, modern penal system.

### ***The Expansion of the Camp System***

The post-war Gulag was a paradox. Central authorities increasingly understood its ineffectiveness, but at the same time undertook measures that caused an expansion of the MVD's forced-labour empire. During this time Soviet criminal justice shifted towards longer sentences for both political and non-political crimes, resulting in an increase in the average prisoner population.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, although the Gulag prisoner population reached its peak during this time, the total numbers arrested and sentenced per year from around 1948 to 1953 were amongst the lowest in the Stalin era.<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> These arguments come from Gorlizki and Khlevniuk, who note that Beria (head of the MVD) in particular sought incentives to improve the efficiency of Gulag labour. By 1950, 27 percent of prisoners were in camps that were again using *zachety rabochikh dnei*, while from 1949 to Stalin's death various measures were passed to give certain prisoners wages for their labour. See Gorlizki and Khlevniuk, *Cold Peace*, 128-129.

<sup>9</sup> Alexopolous, "Amnesty 1945," 299.

<sup>10</sup> See Document no. 100, "Spravki 1 spetsotdela MVD SSSR o kolichestve arestovannykh i osuzhdennykh v period 1921-1953 gg.," in A. I. Kokurin and N. B. Petrov, eds., *GULAG (Glavnoe upravlenie lagerei) 1917-1960* (Moscow: Materik, 2002) 431.

Peter Solomon describes the post-war criminal justice system as one that relied even less on law and more on administrative regulations; became more arbitrary by relying increasingly on “secret regulations and laws”; and used “unusual severity” to punish non-political crimes.<sup>11</sup> Donald Filtzer has noted the Soviet regime’s propensity to criminalize “ordinary activity,” particularly in the post-war years, thus turning a “large minority of its population into criminals,” who, he continues, “had to be put to work”.<sup>12</sup> These actions of course led to an increase in the number of prisoners in the camps.

**Figure 6.1: Gulag and Regional Prisoner Populations, Jan. 1, 1946-53<sup>13</sup>**

Year	Gulag	Siblag	Western Siberia (est.)
1946	1,703,095	(est.) 35,000	70,000
1947	1,721,543	41,075	75,000
1948	2,199,535	37,554	110,000
1949	2,356,685	(Jan. 31) 39,437	130,916
1950	2,561,351	(est.) 38,000	126,000
1951	2,525,146	36,565	141,000
1952	2,504,514	32,605	163,000
1953	2,468,524	30,114	158,659

These actions—arbitrary punishment and the criminalization of ordinary activity—violate several of Foucault’s criteria for modern punishment, which Foucault states must include ideas such as innocence until proven guilty, and complete clarity with regards to the “laws that define the crime and lay down the penalties”.<sup>14</sup> Justice cannot *appear*

<sup>11</sup> Peter H. Solomon, Jr., *Soviet Criminal Justice under Stalin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) 404.

<sup>12</sup> Donald Filtzer, *Soviet Workers and Late Stalinism: Labour and the Restoration of the Stalinist System after World War II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) 27.

<sup>13</sup> Siblag figures come from *Sistema ispravitel'no-trudovykh lagerei v SSSR, 1923-1960: Spravochnik*, compiled by M. B. Smirnov, edited by N. G. Okhotin and A. B. Roginskii, (Moscow: Zven'ia, 1998), 392 (henceforth cited as *Sistema*), while the Gulag figures are from Applebaum, *Gulag*, 579. The Western Siberia estimates are taken from Figure 6.3 of the present dissertation. *Sistema* does not list a 1946 figure for Siblag, but both the 1945 figure and the 1947 figure are around 40,000. The 35,000 is thus a conservative estimate, taking into account that the 1946 figure may be slightly lower due to the post-war amnesty. For an explanation of the Western Siberia estimates see Figure 6.3.

<sup>14</sup> See Michel Foucault, *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 94-99; quotation 95.

arbitrary. Although the Soviet Union had a criminal code, a characteristic of modern justice systems, the use of secret regulations and overly severe punishment would, from a Foucauldian point of view, be reminiscent of pre-modern forms of punishment. And in some ways, these post-war measures were indeed reminiscent of earlier forms of punishment in Russia. Solomon notes that all three post-war trends (increasing use of administrative measures, arbitrariness, and unusually harsh punishments) “had less extreme precedents in the criminal law of the tsars before 1864”.<sup>15</sup>

There were other changes in the Gulag during the post-war period. A rise in tensions between national minority groups occurred. Indeed, some accounts have pointed to “clans,” formed along national lines in the post-war years, with the most powerful and cohesive from the former Baltic countries and Ukraine.<sup>16</sup> Also, animosity between criminal gangs within the camps and the so-called politicals became more prevalent in the post-war years. There seems to have been more “rebelliousness” and better organization amongst those sentenced under Article 58. Solzhenitsyn notes that many politicals in the post-war period really had nothing to lose, as the extremely long sentences, often in strict-regimen “Special Camps” (organized in 1948), meant that authorities’ threats of additional punishments were almost meaningless.<sup>17</sup> The MVD’s network of special settlements continued to be quite extensive in the post-war period, but

---

<sup>15</sup> Solomon, *Soviet Criminal Justice*, 404.

<sup>16</sup> Applebaum, *Gulag: A History*, 298.

<sup>17</sup> Oleg Khlevniuk, “Vvedenie,” in Khlevniuk, ed., *Istoriia Stalinskogo Gulaga: Tom 3: Ekonomika Gulaga* (Moscow: Rosspen, 2004), 47 (henceforth *ISG 3*). For a good discussion of the “Special Camps” and their effects on political prisoners, see Steven A. Barnes, “Soviet Society Confined: The Gulag in the Karaganda Region of Kazakhstan,” (PhD dissertation, Stanford University, 2003), esp. 207-233. Solzhenitsyn writes, “These twenty-five-year sentences were enough to transform the prisoners' world. The holders of power had bombarded us with all they had. Now it was the prisoners' turn to speak—to speak freely, uninhibitedly, undeterred by threats, the words we had never heard in our lives and which alone could enlighten and unite us”. See Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *The GULAG Archipelago 1918-1956: An Experiment in Literary Investigation V-VII*. Trans Harry Willitts (New York: Harper & Row, 1978) 37. See also Applebaum, *Gulag*, 477.

settlements now mostly housed exiled national minority groups, as opposed to peasants.<sup>18</sup> For many of the original waves of peasant special settlers, their rights had been restored, and even if they continued to live in their place of exile, they were no longer labelled special settlers.

As before the war, prisoners in the Gulag under non-political sentences comprised the large majority of the camp prisoner populations, although for a brief period following the 1945 amnesty, the number of “counter-revolutionaries” in the Corrective Labour *Camps* (not including Corrective Labour *Colonies*) exceeded half of all prisoners for the first and only time in the Gulag’s history.<sup>19</sup> If one takes into account all Gulag prisoners, even in this brief period there was not a majority of Article 58ers. In any case, the proportion of counter-revolutionaries quickly dropped. In 1948, for example, fewer than a quarter of prisoners had sentences under Article 58.<sup>20</sup> The majority of the Gulag’s prisoners were criminals and violators of harsh labour laws and laws concerning socialist property.

Late in the war, the number of prisoners in Corrective-Labour Colonies actually surpassed the number of prisoners in Corrective-Labour Camps, and following the war the prisoner totals for colonies remained close to those of the camps.<sup>21</sup> This is a crucial

---

<sup>18</sup> In October 1945, for example, according to NKVD data there were a total of 2,187,500 special settlers. The three largest groups were Volga Germans (687,300), former kulaks (606,800) and Chechens and Ingush (405,900). See V.N. Zemskov, *Spetsposelentsy v SSSR, 1930-1960* (Moscow: Nauka, 2005) 122.

<sup>19</sup> Alexopolous, “Amnesty 1945,” 301. See also “Appendix (b): USSR Custodial Populations, 1943-1953,” in J. Arch Getty, Gabor T. Rittersporn and Viktor N. Zemskov, “Victims of the Soviet Penal System in the Pre-War Years: A First Approach on the Basis of Archival Evidence,” *The American Historical Review* 98, no. 4 (Oct., 1993) 1049.

<sup>20</sup> Applebaum, *Gulag*, 295.

<sup>21</sup> See Doc 63, “Iz spravi ot dela ucheta i raspredeleniia zakliuchennykh GULAG o chislennosti i trudovom ispol’zovanii zakliuchennykh,” *ISG* 3, 217. As of 1 January 1945 there were 745,171 prisoners in ITKs and 715,506 in ITLs. As of 15 June 1948 there were roughly the same number in each: 1,083,000 in ITKs and 1,109,000 in ITLs. See Doc 72, “Spravka MVD SSSR o raspredelenii i trudovom ispol’zovanii zakliuchennykh lagerei i kolonii na 15 iunia 1948 goda,” *ISG* 3, 245.

aspect of the Gulag's history that has been almost completely dismissed or ignored by scholars.<sup>22</sup>

The 1947 "Instruction on Regimen for Prisoners at Corrective-Labour Camps and Colonies of the MVD" points to important post-war changes in the system, as well as many continuities from the pre-war period. Of note, both the 1939 instruction for Corrective-Labour Camps and the 1940 instruction for Corrective-Labour Colonies had been "temporary" instructions on regimen. In 1947, these "temporary" instructions were combined into one, single, regimen manual, with the word "temporary" removed from its title. Under "general provisions [*Obshchie polozheniia*]," the instruction notes that camps should hold prisoners with sentences greater than three years, while prisoners with shorter sentences should be sent to colonies. This, however, is one of the few differences listed between the two types of incarceration. Indeed while the 1939 and 1940 instructions had differed somewhat in their language on the locations of subdivisions (see Chapter III), the 1947 Instruction uses the same language for both, merely stating that

---

<sup>22</sup> Applebaum, for example, writes that "[s]urviving a labor *colony* in Western Russia in the mid-1930s or even late 1940s, when most of the work was factory work and the food was regular [...] probably did not require any special mental adjustments. Surviving one of the far northern *camps*—Kolyma, Vorkuta, Norilsk—during the hungry war years, on the other hand, often required huge reserves of talent and willpower, or else an enormous capacity for evil [...]." <sup>22</sup> This statement is misleading for a number of reasons. For one, conditions in most corrective-labour colonies, at least in the urban areas of Western Siberia, were also horrendous during the war, and food was by no means regular. Secondly, any form of incarceration likely requires considerable mental adjustment, regardless of the conditions. And third, with one brief sentence Applebaum dismisses the experiences of prisoners who, for a large portion of the Gulag's existence, made up around half the Gulag's population. While the distinction between the colonies and camps is often difficult to discern (indeed, in 1947 the MVD issued an operational order on regimen that covered both the camps and colonies with the same set of rules), generally Corrective-Labour Colonies were more likely to be located in close proximity to (or within) urban centres, and housed a lower proportion of counter-revolutionary prisoners. Applebaum, *Gulag*, 349. For the MVD Operational Order no. 0190, 27 March 1947, "S ob''iavleniem "Instruksii po rezhimu sodержaniia zakliuchennykh v ispravitel'no-trudovykh lageriakh i koloniakh MVD"" and the accompanying instruction, see GARF f. 9401, op. 1a, d. 234, ll. 28-66ob.

they should be located “as close as possible to the place of work and separated from population centres [*punktov*].”<sup>23</sup>

The differences between Corrective Labour Camps and Colonies should thus not be exaggerated, particularly in the post-war years. As of 1 January 1951, for example, prisoners serving five-to-ten-year sentences made up the largest number of prisoners in *both* the camps and the colonies (58.8 and 46.3 percent, respectively), and in *both* the camps and colonies the next largest group was made up of prisoners serving three to five year terms (14.2 and 19.5 percent).<sup>24</sup>

In strengthened regimen camps—not to be confused with the Special Camps, founded in 1948—prisoners could not be de-convoyed, received stricter punishments for infractions, and were held under stricter guard.<sup>25</sup> The 1947 instruction lists six tasks for camp regimen, emphasising penal aspects of the Gulag system, but also, unlike the 1939 instruction, mentions reeducation:

- 1) To ensure the isolation of prisoners
- 2) To ensure the prevention of escape attempts
- 3) To ensure strict discipline amongst prisoners
- 4) To ensure the reeducation of prisoners on the basis of socially useful labour
- 5) To ensure the correct organization of prisoners’ labour
- 6) To ensure the creation of appropriate living and sanitary conditions for prisoners.<sup>26</sup>

---

<sup>23</sup> GARF f. 9401, op. 1a, d. 234, l. 29ob.

<sup>24</sup> J. Otto Pohl, *The Stalinist Penal System: A Statistical History of Soviet Repression and Terror, 1930-1953* (London: McFarland & Company, 1997), 28. The main differences in terms of prisoners sentences were not surprisingly at the extremes. In ITLs, only 0.2% of prisoners were serving sentences of less than one year, while that figure was 7% in ITKs, while 6.8% of ITL prisoners had sentences of over 20 years, compared with only 1.8% of ITK prisoners. Still, overall, there are surprisingly few differences.

<sup>25</sup> Point 47 of the Instruction lists those who should be sent to strengthened regimen camps and colonies and, “as a rule to far-removed northern camps”: “Prisoners, sentenced for especially dangerous crimes: high treason, terrorism, spying, subversive activity [*diversiiu*], counter-revolutionary sabotage (art. 58-14), participation in Trotskyist, right fascist, nationalist and other anti-Soviet organizations, members of anti-Soviet polit[ical] parties, deserters over the state border [*perebezhchiki cherez gosgranitsu*], foreigners, those sentenced for banditry, armed robbery, escape, and also prisoner-recidivists”. See GARF f. 9401, op. 1a, d. 234, l. 32ob.

<sup>26</sup> GARF f. 9401, op. 1a, d. 234, l. 29

In all, the document is much more detailed than either the 1939 or 1940 instruction. It includes a total of 338 rules, many also with sub-sections, suggesting a continued drive towards greater regulation and an increase in the bureaucratization of the camp system.

### ***The Post-War Gulag in Western Siberia***

The Gulag in Western Siberia underwent a variety of changes from 1945-53, many of them related to the administrative changes that had occurred in the region during the war. The pre-war Sibltag was now four separate camp administrations: Sibltag, administered from Mariinsk; the Novosibirsk Province Camp and Colony Administration, administered from Novosibirsk; the Department of Corrective-Labour Colonies of Tomsk Province (OITK TO), administered from Tomsk; and the Department of Corrective-Labour Colonies of Kemerovo Province (OITK KO), which became the Kemerovo Province Camp and Colony Administration (UITLK KO) in 1949. What is more, two relatively large camp complexes—Sevkuzbasslag and Iuzhkuzbasslag—were founded in Kemerovo Province in 1947, both focusing on forestry and both part of the newly established Main Administration of Forestry Camps (GULLP: *Glavnoe upravleniia lagerei lesnoi promyshlennosti*). One of the larger post-war complexes in the region was Voroninlag, formed in 1949 (originally called Construction site 601 and ITL) out of two subdivisions of the Tomsk Province Labour Colony Department. And, rounding out the picture are the Tomsk Corrective-Labour Colony, a small camp that existed from 1946-49; Kamyshlag, located in Kemerovo, founded in 1951 as the region's only strict regimen "special camp"; Kamenlag, in Novosibirsk, (originally named Construction site 600 and ITL); Arlichevleg, which existed in the early 1950s in Kemerovo Province; and Tom'-Usinksii

ITL and ITL Kemerovozhilstroia, both small camps in Kemerovo Province in the late 1940s (for more information, see Figures 6.2 and 6.3).

The Gulag carried out diversified economic activities in the region, although each separate camp system tended to be fairly specialized. In his memoir, one former prisoner describes post-war Siblrag as “like an enormous state farm, with all kinds of agricultural production and support services”.<sup>27</sup> Overall, the Western Siberian Gulag mirrored production activities for the Gulag as a whole. Of the 2.2 million Gulag prisoners at the end of 1947, over 700,000 worked in agriculture and the manufacture of consumer goods; over 500,000 were contracted out to non-MVD enterprises; and around 273,000 worked in forestry.<sup>28</sup> These were the three most common categories for Gulag labour in the post-war years, and the three most common in Western Siberia as well (Figure 6.2). Aside from agriculture, contract work, and forestry, prisoners in Western Siberia worked in construction, smelting, wood- and metalworking, textiles, road and railroad repair, and even the manufacturing of furniture.

**Figure 6.2: Economic activity in the post-war camps of Western Siberia<sup>29</sup>**

<i>Camp system (years in existence, 1945-1960)</i>	<i>Main production activity</i>	<i>Selected secondary production activities</i>
Siblrag (whole period)	Agriculture	Forestry, construction
Novosibirsk Prov. Camp and Colony Admin. UITLK NSO (whole period)	Contract work (construction)	Agriculture, forestry
Kamenlag (April '49 to May '55)	Construction	Metal-working, sewing, forestry
Tomskii ITL (Feb '46 to Jan '49)	Smelting, Woodworking	Contract work

<sup>27</sup> G. N. Gorchakov, *Vospominaniia* (Jerusalem: Ierusalim.izdat.tsentr, 1995), 116.

<sup>28</sup> These figures come from Filtzer, *Soviet Workers and Late Stalinism*, 23.

<sup>29</sup> The information from this table comes primarily from *Sistema*, 392, 439, 281, 482, 194, 290, 305, 386, 520, 483. See also L. I. Gvozdkova, A. A. Mit', eds., *Prinuditel'nyi trud: Ispravitel'no-trudovye lageria v Kuzbasse (30-50-e gg.)*, 2 vols (Kemerovo: Kuzbassvuzizdat, 1994), for information on UITLK KO, and GANO f. R-20, op. 1, dd. 378, 404, for information on UITLK NSO.

Voroninlag (April '49 to June '59)	Construction (including many factories, apartments and university buildings);	
Tomsk Prov. Dept of Labour Colonies. OITK TO (whole period)	Construction, manufacturing of consumer goods	
Kemerovo Prov. Camp and Colony Admin. UITLK KO (whole period)	Contract work, construction	Sewing, agriculture
ITL Kemerovozhilstroia (Sept '46 to Sept '48)	Construction	Contract work for MUP and MKhP <sup>30</sup>
Kuzbasslag (Dec '46 to Sept '48)	Construction	Forestry, woodworking
Sevkuzbasslag (March '47 on)	Forestry	Auto repair, sewing, brick production
Iuzhkuzbasslag (March '47 on)	Forestry	Ship repair ( <i>sudorem.</i> ), woodworking, furniture manufacture, brick production
Tom'-Usinskii ITL (Aug '48 to July '49)	?	
Arlichevlag (March '51 to April '53)	Construction	Road and Railroad work, brick production
Kamyshlag (April '51 to Oct '54)	Mine construction, general construction	

In terms of prisoner population, the overall picture for Western Siberia follows general Gulag trends, at least according to available data (see Table 6.3, below). Indeed, the number of separate camps proliferated in the post-war years, so that while both the Novosibirsk Province Camp and Colony Administration and Siblag show a decline in prisoner population, regionally the prisoner population as a whole increased considerably from 1946-53.

---

<sup>30</sup> These are the Coal Ministry (*Ministerstvo ugol'noi promyshlennosti*) and the Chemical Industries Ministry (*Ministerstvo Khimicheskoi promyshlennosti*)

**Figure 6.3: Prisoners in West Siberian Camps, 1 Jan 1946-53<sup>31</sup>**

Name of Camp	Province	1946	1947	1948	1949	1950	1951	1952	1953
Siblag	K.O.	?	41075	37554	39437 (Jan 31)	?	36565	32605*	30114
UITLK NSO <sup>32</sup>	NSO	10208	15981 (16856)	14901	15188	?	?	10031 (March 1)	9692
Kamenskii ITL (Construction 600)	NSO	--	--	--	--	11566	12824	15753	9999
Tomskii ITL	T.O.	--	?	?	--	--	--	--	--
Voroninlag (Construction 601)	T.O.	--	--	--	--	10912	16669	22238	33983
OITK TO	T.O.	?	?	?	4732	?	?	?	3712
OITK-UITLK KO	K.O.	?	?	?	31697	?	?	25663*	13022
ITL Kemerovo-vozhilstroia	K.O.	--	331	5109	--	--	--	--	--
Kuzbasslag	K.O.	--	2874	10184	--	--	--	--	--
Sevkuzbasslag	K.O.	--	--	15107	19790	18168	18930	17520 (17521*)	18174
Iuzhkuzbasslag	K.O.	--	--	13877	20072	18364	21211	23539 (23561*)	24629
Tom'-Usinskii ITL	K.O.	--	--	--	5000 (Aug '48)	--	--	--	--
Arlichevlag	K.O.	--	--	--	--	--	1718	3902 (3912*)	7152
Kamyshskii ITL	K.O.	--	--	--	--	--	--	10750 (10813*)	8182
<b>EST. TOTAL (1,000s):<sup>33</sup></b>		<b>70.0</b>	<b>75.0</b>	<b>110.0</b>	<b>130.9</b>	<b>126.0</b>	<b>141.0</b>	<b>163.0</b>	<b>158.7</b>

<sup>31</sup> Population figures come from *Sistema*, 392, 439, 281, 482, 194, 290, 305, 386, 520, 483 and the chart on locally administered camps in *Sistema*, 533-537. The \* indicates that these figures have been taken from Gvozdkova et al., eds, *Prinuditel'nyi trud*. A “?” indicates that the figure is unknown, while a “--” indicates that the camp did not exist on 1 January of that year.

<sup>32</sup> Jan 1<sup>st</sup> population figures for UITLK NSO for 1947 and 1948 come from the “Report on the work of the procurator for general observance of the UITLiK UMVD of N[ovosibirsk] P[rovince] for the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 1948,” GANO f. R-20, op. 1, d. 404 [*Doklady o rabote prokuratury UITLiK UMVD po Novosibirskoi oblasti za 1948 god*], l. 8. The 1 Jan 1946 figure and the alternate 1 Jan 1947 figure come from “PROTOKOL rassmotreniia godovogo otcheta po UITLiK UMVD Novosibirskoi oblasti za 1946 god,” 6 May 1947 in GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 3194, l. 9. And the March 1, 1952 figures come from GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 539 [*Liternoe delo po ob'ektu UITLK UMVD po Novosibirskoi oblasti za 1952 g*]

<sup>33</sup> The estimated total presented in Figure 6.3 really is a rough estimate. So, for example, for 1946 the only definite figure in the table is the approximately 10,000 prisoners in UITLK NSO on 1 January. Yet, the table presents an estimated total of 70,000. To arrive at this figure, I've conservatively estimated Siblag's total at 35,000 (lower than both 1945 and 1947), the UITLK KO (then OITK KO) at 15,000 (slightly lower than the 16,523 figure for 1945 given in *Sistema*, 534) and the OITK TO at 10,000 (slightly lower than the 10,943 figure given for 1945 in *Sistema*, 536). Adding these together, we arrive at a total of 70,000

As before, the administrative changes can be difficult for the historian to follow. The Tomsk Corrective-Labour Camp (Tomskii ITL), for example, was formed out of Corrective-Labour Colony 5 and the Prikulsk Independent Camp Station (OLP) of the Department of Corrective Labour Colonies for Tomsk Province, both of which had previously been under the Novosibirsk Province Camp and Colony Administration. The Tomsk Corrective-Labour Colony was then re-absorbed into the Tomsk Department in January 1949, before again becoming a separate camp in April 1949, first under the name, “Construction Site 601 and Corrective Labour Camp.” Then, in 1953, it became the Voroninskii Corrective Labour Camp (Voroninlag).<sup>34</sup>

As before the war, local camp authorities had to deal with unusually unhealthy prisoner contingents in comparison with many other areas. A lengthy procurator’s report about the Novosibirsk Province Camp and Colony Administration for the first half of 1947 notes that plans had been unfulfilled for contract work, and that the problem was growing more acute as the year progressed. One contributing factor was the “updating” of the contingent through out-transfers and the Decree (*Ukaz*) from 10 January 1947.<sup>35</sup> The following year saw even greater difficulties with un-fit prisoners at the camps and colonies of the Novosibirsk Administration, which is not surprising given famine conditions within the Soviet Union, which probably resulted in around one million deaths

---

prisoners. I have taken a similar approach to other years when exact totals are unavailable: 1953 is the only year for which the 1 Jan figure is available for each camp in operation at that time. There are also fairly specific figures for 1949, although I have not included the Tom’-Usinskii total in the estimated total because there are no data close to the 1 January date.

<sup>34</sup> See *Sistema*, 193-195.

<sup>35</sup> GANO f. R-20, op. 1, d. 378, l. 9. I have also come across this *Ukaz* in a prisoner file: one prisoner at the OITK TO was “released” early (after serving about one year of a two-year term) because of this *Ukaz*, but was to serve out the remainder of his term as a civilian (“v/n”) worker. The *Ukaz* of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR is listed as no. 108/59 for 1947. See GATO f. R-1151, op. 1, d. 51, l. 20. This *Ukaz* does not appear in the *Sbornik zakonov SSSR i Ukazov Prezidiuma Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR (1938-iul’ 1956)* M. I. Iumashev and B. A. Zhaleiko, eds (Moscow: Gos. Izd. Iuridicheskoi literatury, 1956).

in the country as a whole.<sup>36</sup> In January 1947, 55.4 percent of the contingent was either unable to work or could only conduct light work; invalids, included here, made up 7.9 of the total contingent. By March 1948, 71 percent of the contingent was suitable either for light work or no work at all, with invalids comprising eighteen percent of the total. The procurator delineated three reasons for this: first, an interruption in food supply “so that the given nourishment is biologically not enough and the caloric content of the daily ration is lowered” (bureaucratic speak for starvation); second, massive problems with overcrowding, which led to poor living conditions; and, third, the transfer, by order of the Gulag, of around 17,000 mostly able-bodied prisoners out of the camp to higher priority camps.<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, the Novosibirsk Province Camp and Colony Administration had received many “seriously ill [*tiazhelo bol’nikh*]” prisoners from Iuzhkuzbasslag and from contingents in transit through the area.<sup>38</sup>

Another prime example of the region’s struggle to retain its able-bodied prisoners comes from 1951. As part of the effort to place strict-regimen *katorga* prisoners into separate camps, the Gulag ordered Sibltag to send 493 physically-fit strict-regimen prisoners to Vorkutlag, a high-priority camp located in the far north of European Russia. The Gulag also ordered the transfer of 837 invalids under strict regimen from the Tomsk area camp of Voroninlag to Sibltag. In other words, the prisoners in poor physical condition remained in the region, while a healthy contingent departed.<sup>39</sup>

---

<sup>36</sup> See Donald Filtzer, “The Standard of Living of Soviet Industrial Workers in the Immediate Postwar Period, 1945-1948,” *Europe-Asia Studies* 51.6 (1999): 1013-1038, esp. 1018-1024.

<sup>37</sup> GANO f. R-20, op. 1, d. 404 [*Doklady o rabote prokuatury UITLiK UMVD po Novosibirskoi oblasti za 1948 god*] l. 8.

<sup>38</sup> GANO f. R-20, op. 1, d. 404, l. 8ob.

<sup>39</sup> See Document 43, “Spravka 2-go Upravleniia GULAG o napravlenii osuzhdennykh k katorzhnym rabotam v spetsial’nye lagernye podrazdelenie,” A. B. Bezborodov, I. V. Bezborodova and V. M. Khrustalev, eds. *Istoriia Staliniskogo Gulaga: Tom 4: Naselenie Gulaga: chislennost’ i usloviia soderzhaniia* (Moscow: Rosspen, 2004), 122 (henceforth, *ISG 4*).

Aside from dealing with the poor health of the prisoner contingent, camps in the area continued to face issues of inefficiency and porous borders. Despite efforts at increased bureaucratization and specialization, informal practices remained prevalent. Camp borders simply could not restrict the flow of goods and people in the ways that the authorities hoped. Black market activity within the camps of the region, the remarkable frequency of illicit contact between men and women in the camps, and resistance each serve to highlight the persistence of informal practices.

### ***Black Market Activity***

The end of the war did not result in an end to the smuggling of goods in and out of the camps. In 1947, the procurator for the Novosibirsk Province Camp and Colony Administration reported on one interesting case that illustrates how prisoners, with connections to the outside, could set up a smuggling network to line their own pockets.<sup>40</sup> A group of prisoners at the fifth camp station of the Novosibirsk Subdivision, under the leadership of the senior accountant (a prisoner) by the name of Mikhailov, made contact with the “local speculators,” Zabolotnikov and Ivanov. From August 1946 to January 1947 the prisoners (including two haulers [*vozchiki*]) smuggled, out of the camp, bread and other food products at a reported approximate value of 8,145 rubles in state prices, and 80,946 rubles in market-value prices. Apparently Mikhailov was able to make contact with the speculators through the prisoner Bogatyrov, who was the camp station’s shipping agent (*ekspeditor*), and had worked hard to find local contacts. As the person in charge of the sending and receiving of goods, Bogatyrov would have been in a unique

---

<sup>40</sup> The description of this can be found at GANO f. R-20, op. 1, d. 378 [*Doklad o rabote prokuratury UITLiK UMVD po Novosibirskoi oblasti za 1-2 polugodie 1947 god*], ll. 30-32.

position to access information and contacts unavailable to most prisoners.<sup>41</sup> According to investigators, Mikhailov convinced Bogatyrov to join the group with an offer Bogatyrov could not refuse: if Bogatyrov did not participate, Mikhailov promised to do his best to make Bogatyrov criminally responsible for bread that Mikhailov had noticed had previously gone missing. In September of 1946, the group managed to smuggle out and sell to the speculators 300 kilograms of bread; in January 1947 the figure was more than double, at 616 kilograms. Mikhailov, as the main accountant, simply did not document the missing bread. This theft occurred, of course, within the context of a growing nationwide famine, and no doubt had a negative impact on camp supply. However, the famine likely also made black market activity all the more lucrative, and these prisoners were therefore willing to take the risk.

Mikhailov was a twenty-four-year-old who had originally been sentenced in 1945 under Article 73.2<sup>42</sup> of the criminal code for 2.5 years, and again in 1946 under Article 109 (abuse of authority or a position of service) for five years; Bogatyrov was twenty-six, and had been sentenced for eight years under article 153 (rape); Zabolotnikov was thirty-three, and had been sent to the camps in 1945 for three years; and Ivanov was twenty-one and had been sentenced in 1945 for two years (under Articles 166 and 162(g), respectively: theft of horses or livestock and theft of private property). In other words, none were counter-revolutionaries, and all had positions within the camps that helped facilitate their black-market activity.

---

<sup>41</sup> That the camp authorities entrusted a prisoner in this role once again attests to lack of trained personnel amongst the camp cadres.

<sup>42</sup> Article 73 of the criminal code is about resisting requests from the authorities, either violently or non-violently.

They received harsh punishments for their actions. Under the law of 7 August 1932 (protection of socialist property), Mikhailov received the death sentence, while Bogatyrov received an additional ten-year sentence. Both Zabolotnikov and Ivanov were sentenced again under Article 162(d) for three years in addition to the sentences they were already serving. The local speculators, Bykov and Arkhipov, both peasants in their early forties with no prior convictions, received sentences under Articles 164 (purchase of stolen goods) and 107 (speculation) for eight years and five years, respectively.<sup>43</sup>

Camp personnel were also involved in black market activities. Authorities arrested and convicted one supervisor (*nadziratel'*) at the Tomsk Corrective-Labour Colony 3, for example, for stealing items at a market value sum of 9,470 rubles from the colony in September 1945 and selling the items over the next couple of days in the city of Tomsk.<sup>44</sup> The courts sentenced her to seven years deprivation of freedom, but later changed her sentence to two years in part, it seems, due to inconsistencies in the case.<sup>45</sup> Later, as a prisoner under the Tomsk Province Labour Colony Department, authorities granted her de-convoyed status. She became pregnant in late-1946. She was released in September of 1947, at the end of the revised sentence.<sup>46</sup>

It is certainly not difficult to imagine widespread black-market activity in the region. In May 1951 central Gulag authorities presented Siblag with a plan to improve regimen and the guarding of the prisoners at the camp. Of the thirty-five measures listed to improve the situation, one in particular stands out, because it so directly challenges

---

<sup>43</sup> The text of the 1926 RSFSR Criminal Code (still the code used at the time, although many sentence-lengths had been increased and other crimes added to the code) can be found at < <http://law.edu.ru/norm/norm.asp?normID=1241189&subID=100093745,100093777,100093746> >

<sup>44</sup> Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Tomskoi oblasti (GATO) f. R-1151, op. 1, d. 15, ll. 1-2 [copy of the *prigovor*].

<sup>45</sup> GATO f. R-1151, op. 1, d. 15, ll. 6; 9-10.

<sup>46</sup> GATO f. R-1151, op. 1, d. 15, l. 21.

perceived wisdom about the Gulag: “25. Immediately [*nemedlenno*] and categorically cease allowing extraneous persons [*postoronnikh lits*] in the [camp] zone without relation to the camp (visiting the med[ical] stations, bath houses and so on).<sup>47</sup> Siblag, at this point, was a primarily agricultural camp, with many of its subdivisions located in rural Kemerovo Province, and it seems as if some camp stations with bathhouses and medical facilities were better equipped than some of the nearby collective farms.

### ***Women in the Camps***

The Gulag population remained predominantly male after the war.<sup>48</sup> In this it resembled most penal systems, where the prisoner population is usually overwhelmingly young and male, but the Gulag nevertheless held a higher percentage of women prisoners than most modern penal systems.<sup>49</sup> The percentage of women rose during the war due to the high numbers of released male prisoner sent to the front, and although the percentage of women declined in the post-war period, it remained higher than it had been during the 1930s (around 6 percent). Thus, women made up 13 percent of prisoners in 1942; thirty percent in 1945; twenty-two percent in 1948; and, in 1951, 17 percent.<sup>50</sup>

Siblag was an exceptional camp system, in this regard. In the spring of 1952 of the approximately 32,000 prisoners in Siblag’s eleven camp subdivisions, roughly 13,000

---

<sup>47</sup> GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 469, ll. 5-10: “PLAN. Meropriiatii po usileniiu rezhima sodержaniia i okhrany zakliuchennykh v Upravlenii Siblaga MVD SSSR,” May 1951.

<sup>48</sup> Despite many memoirs available (even in English translation) by women, there have been remarkably few in-depth studies of women in the camps. The most comprehensive, Meinhard Stark, *Frauen im Gulag: Alltag und Überleben, 1936 bis 1956* (München: Hanser, 2003), is an oral history, supplemented with archival research, that focuses on the experiences of so-called counter-revolutionary prisoners.

<sup>49</sup> To cite one example, in 1988 women made up only about five percent of those incarcerated in federal prisons in the United States. See [<http://www.prisonactivist.org/archive/women/women-and-imprisonment.html>] (last accessed 24 July 2010). See also the reference to the Parchman Farm, below.

<sup>50</sup> For this information, see Applebaum, *Gulag: A History*, 315-316.

were women, or 40.6 percent.<sup>51</sup> This discrepancy relates to the type of work conducted at Siblág. While not always the case, work in the Gulag was often “gendered,” in the sense that the authorities frequently assigned women prisoners lighter work or that would have traditionally been in the woman’s sphere, such as sewing or agricultural fieldwork, exactly the type of work prevalent in Siblág.<sup>52</sup> In comparison, the notorious Parchman Farm in Mississippi, which operated over the same period and, like Siblág, used prisoner labour in agriculture, never held more than five percent women prisoners; usually the figure was much lower.<sup>53</sup>

Key difficulties, of course, related to women’s sexuality. While love in the camps was not uncommon,<sup>54</sup> many women were coerced into sexual relationships or even prostitution within the camps in exchange for extra rations.<sup>55</sup>

Particularly in the lighter regimen camps and in the corrective-labour colonies, men and women prisoners slept in separate barracks (and were usually housed in separate

---

<sup>51</sup> These stats come from compiling information within reports on individual camp subdivisions for the spring of 1952, and are contained in GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 581 [*Liternoe delo po ob’ektu Siblaga za 1952 g.*].

<sup>52</sup> Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago 1918-1956: An Experiment in Literary Investigation III-IV*, trans. Thomas Witney (New York: Harper & Row, 1975) 234. Here Solzhenitsyn states that if men and women were assigned to similar work, the men would do the heavier work.

<sup>53</sup> David M. Oshinsky, *“Worse Than Slavery”: Parchman Farm and the Ordeal of Jim Crow Justice* (New York: The Free Press, 1996) 169-189

<sup>54</sup> The best-known case is Evgeniia Ginzburg, who falls in love and has a relationship with another prisoner in Kolyma, a camp doctor. See Evgeniia [Eugenia] Ginzburg’s two-volume *Journey Into the Whirlwind* trans. Paul Stevenson and Max Hayward (New York: HBJ, 1967) and *Within the Whirlwind*, trans. Ian Boland (New York: Harvest/HBJ, 1982). Ginzburg actually has a lot to say about love in the camps, noting that “true love” existed in the camps (Ginzburg, *Within the Whirlwind*, 15) and indicating some of the logistical difficulties in having intimate relations: “In the Kolyma camps love meant hasty, perilous meetings in some sketchy shelter at your place of work in the taiga or behind a soiled curtain in some ‘free’ hut. There was always the fear of being caught, exposed to public shame, and assigned to a penal labor brigade, i.e., posted to some lethal spot; you might end up paying for your date with nothing less than your life” (*Within the Whirlwind*, 11-12). She also mentions several instances of genuine relationships, including, of course, her own with a doctor in the camp, also a prisoner, who later became her second husband (see *Within the Whirlwind*, esp. 113-116, describing the beginning of their relationship).

<sup>55</sup> Solzhenitsyn, *Gulag Archipelago III-IV*, 230. While it could possibly be argued, in some cases at least, that women were able to use their sexuality for their own benefit, these were nevertheless exploitative situations, to say the least. For an example of a Siblág memoir where the memoirist discusses being offered food for sex, see Memorial f. 2, op. 2, d. 27, l. 333.

zones of a camp subdivision or even in separate camp stations altogether), but often worked at the same activities at the same worksites. Thus, the opportunity existed for interaction between men and women prisoners, as well as between male personnel and women prisoners. In the first quarter of 1947 the procurator for the Novosibirsk Province Camp and Colony Administration uncovered 103 “cohabitation” infractions, and in the second quarter 139.<sup>56</sup> Cohabitation, or *sozhitel'stvo*, was a codeword for sexual relations.

Interestingly, while many camp documents discuss the prevalence of heterosexual cohabitation, these same documents are silent on the topic of homosexual intimate relations. We know from the memoir literature, as well as some of the post-Stalin documentation on the Gulag, that homosexual behaviour—both coerced and consensual—was common in the camps. As Adi Kuntsman notes, “In many memoirs the political prisoners are repeatedly and consistently heterosexualized, while descriptions of the criminal inmates contain many references to same-sex relations”.<sup>57</sup> This absence of information about homosexuality in the documentation speaks, perhaps, to the regime’s discomfort with same-sex relations. On the other hand, perhaps it indicates a willingness to tolerate same-sex intimacy, which, after all, did not have the same economic implications as heterosexual intimacy, since widespread pregnancy and childbirth could hinder a camp’s economic bottom line.

Camp authorities punished cohabitation, although the extent to which this happened is unclear. In May 1947, the head of the MVD for Tomsk Province wrote to the Province’s Party Committee (Obkom) concerning the vice-director of Corrective-Labour Colony 8,

---

<sup>56</sup> GANO f. R-20, op. 1, d. 378, l. 4

<sup>57</sup> Adi Kuntsman, “‘With a Shade of Disgust’: Affective Politics of Sexuality and Class in Memoirs of the Stalinist Gulag,” *Slavic Review* 68.2 (2009): 308-328. Kuntsman is currently working on a project on sexuality in the camps with Dan Healey.

Leonid Arkad'evich Kotliarevskii. According to the letter, Kotliarevskii had abused his position by forcing (*ponuzhdal*) women prisoners into cohabitation. He forced (*ponudil*) a woman prisoner, N. E. Murav'eva to live with him from 1941 until her release under the amnesty of 1945.<sup>58</sup> Then from what must have been immediately after Murav'eva's release, he had an affair with another prisoner, G. I. Zhurba, from July 1945 to January 1946. Zhurba gave birth to their child in July 1946. At the time the letter was written, Zhurba was living with her child at Corrective Labour Colony 6 of the Tomsk Province Labour Colony Department.<sup>59</sup> Brovchenko, head of the Tomsk Province MVD, asked the Party Committee to sanction the arrest of Kotliarevskii.

Action against Kotliarevskii at this point is curious. If forced cohabitation was such a problem, why did the NKVD/MVD wait until the middle of 1947 to take action, considering that Kotliarevskii had been living with women prisoners continually since December 1941? While perhaps the birth of the child made the issue more visible, Brovchenko sent his letter to the party committee a full year after the baby's birth. Early 1947 meetings of the Primary Party Organization for Corrective Labour Colony 8, moreover, do not indicate that Kotliarevskii's position was in jeopardy. At a general meeting from February 1947, for example, Kotliarevskii discusses difficulties the labour colony was having due to insufficient fuel and other issues, but there is no indication that he was facing any trouble.<sup>60</sup>

---

<sup>58</sup> The July 1945 amnesty freed roughly forty percent of Gulag prisoners. See Alexopoulos, "Amnesty 1945," 274.

<sup>59</sup> For the letter, see Tsentr dokumentatsii noveishei istorii Tomskoi oblasti (TsDNI TO) f. 607, op. 1, d. 465 [*perepiski s organami ministerstva vnutrennikh del SSSR po Soiuzu i Tomskoi oblasti*], ll. 175-176. The letter is dated 17 July 1947.

<sup>60</sup> For the meeting protocol, see TsDNI TO f. 1076, op. 1, d. 7 [*Protokolov zakrytogo partsobraniia pervichnoi partorganizatsii ITK no. 8*], l. 6-7 [*Protokol no. 7 Obshchego part.sobraniia ITK no. 8 ot 25 fevralia 1947 goda*]. It is not entirely clear whether or not Kotliarevskii's case was discussed at a later date. The file does not contain a complete set of party meeting protocols for 1947.

Without further information it is impossible to say definitively why authorities chose to prosecute Kotliarevskii at this time. Interestingly, however, Brovchenko's letter to the Party Committee notes that Kotliarevskii is Jewish, originally from Odessa.<sup>61</sup> Kotliarevskii was not the only Jew to face the wrath of Siberian camp authorities at this time. A report to the Party Committee dated January 1948 recommended the removal of I. B. Monarkh, a Jew, from his position as the director of Corrective-Labour Camp "A" of the Tomsk Province Colony Department. The report, signed by the director of the special inspection (*osoboi inspektsii*) for the Tomsk Province MVD, suggested that Monarkh—a decorated war veteran and a member of the MVD since 1924—had stolen money from the camp in connection with the 1947 monetary reforms.<sup>62</sup>

While it is difficult to say what motivated the cases against Kotliarevskii and Monarkh, 1946 had seen the beginning of campaigns against "Jewish nationalism," particularly against Jewish cultural figures seen as insufficiently Soviet.<sup>63</sup> Any form of "national deviation" was a problem at this time; over the next couple of years the cultural campaign—or the Zhdanovshchina, named after the Central Committee's architect of the attacks, Andrei Zhdanov—would take on an increasingly anti-Semitic character. Many prominent Jews lost their jobs and/or were the subject of criminal proceedings.<sup>64</sup> Anti-

---

<sup>61</sup> TsDNI TO f. 607, op. 1, d. 465, l. 175.

<sup>62</sup> TsDNI TO f. 607, op. 1, d. 729 [*O perepiske s organami MVD SSSR i oblasti*], l. 49. Unfortunately, the report (*spravka*) offers few details. The December 1947 monetary reforms were an attempt to stabilize the monetary situation in Russia following the war, when emphasis had naturally been placed on the war effort. Part of the problem was that because of the war, there was a reduced supply of goods, leading to an increase in money holdings (particularly in the countryside) and an increase in prices, especially for agricultural goods. The state opted to reduce the value of money holdings by an exchange of "several old rubles for one of a new type". For more see Joseph S. Berliner, "Monetary Planning in the USSR," *American Slavic and East European Review* 9, no. 4 (Dec, 1950), 237-254, especially 248-250.

<sup>63</sup> Benjamin Pinkus, *The Jews of the Soviet Union: The History of a National Minority* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 147.

<sup>64</sup> Amir Weiner argues that the "legitimizing myth" of the war left little room for the Jews, whose own suffering during the war could not supersede that of the Soviet people. This was compounded by the formation of the state of Israel (despite the USSR's almost immediate diplomatic recognition of Israel), for

Jewish campaigns grew to such an extent that some have argued that the Jews were the next targets of mass-deportation (or worse), and were saved only by Stalin's death in 1953.<sup>65</sup> Unfortunately, the available statistics on the disciplining of Gulag cadres do not take into account nationality, and it is difficult to know precisely the extent to which the Western Siberian camp personnel were affected. The above examples, however, indicate that they were most likely not immune to these broader currents in the Soviet Union.

Women in the Gulag were less likely than men to find themselves in strict regimen camp divisions. At Sibltag, for example, all three camp stations identified as “non-convoyed”—that is, where prisoners lived without guard—were for women prisoners only.<sup>66</sup> This is not to say, however, that conditions were not difficult for women. Solzhenitsyn states that “everything was harder for the women than for us men,” although part of this reflects Solzhenitsyn's own opinion about men and women's abilities to face various hardships.<sup>67</sup>

Much of Solzhenitsyn's information concerning women in the camps comes from the experiences of women at the Krivoshchekovsk brickyard, part of a Gulag subdivision under the Novosibirsk Province Camp and Colony Administration, and located within the city-limits of Novosibirsk. Solzhenitsyn notes that “[a]t this camp there were thieves, non-political offenders, juveniles, invalids, women and nursing mothers, all mixed up

---

now the Jews had a “homeland” and their loyalty was therefore, in the eyes of authorities, suspect. See Amir Weiner, *Making Sense of War: The Second World War and the Fate of the Bolshevik Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), especially Chapter Four: “Memory of Excision, Excisionary Memory,” 191-235. For more discussion of the anti-Jewish campaigns of the late-1940s, early 1950s, see also Yuri Slezkine, *The Jewish Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004) 308-315.

<sup>65</sup> For a recent discussion, see David Brandenberger, “Stalin's Last Crime? Recent Scholarship on Postwar Antisemitism and the Doctors' Plot,” *Kritika* 6.1 (2005) 187-204

<sup>66</sup> See GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 581. This is the *Liternoe delo: Sibirskii ITL* and contains 175 pages with detailed statistical information on each of the camp's subdivisions.

<sup>67</sup> For example, he seems to belittle women's concerns with their appearances. See Solzhenitsyn, *Gulag Archipelago III-IV*, 228. The quotation comes from 229.

together,” and that many men sexually abused the women there, leading to major problems with venereal diseases.<sup>68</sup> Venereal diseases could spread quickly through the camps and even cross the camp borders. According to Evsei L’vov, a Sibilag prisoner, de-convoyed prisoners “established relationships [*zavodili sozhitel’nikh*] in the nearby villages” and there “were instances when this ended tragically, that is, [with] venereal [diseases]”.<sup>69</sup>

Work was so difficult at the Krivoshchekovsk brickyard and the conditions so terrible, that according to Solzhenitsyn everything “that is feminine in a woman, whether it be constant or whether it be monthly, ceases to be”.<sup>70</sup> Yet Solzhenitsyn contradicts himself in this regard, noting that the “girls of Krivoshchekovo barracks also pinned flowers in their hair” to signify a camp marriage, and that illicit visits between men’s and women’s barracks were quite common both here and all over the Gulag.<sup>71</sup> Cohabitation could sometimes, moreover, take the form of a camp “marriage,” a practice that appears to have been quite common. These marriages occurred regardless of the legal marital status of the parties involved. Often the marriage was an unequal relationship in which the woman’s camp “husband” would “protect” her from other men in exchange, of course, for sexual relations.<sup>72</sup>

Naturally, heterosexual intimacy led to pregnancies. In January 1947 pregnant and nursing mothers made up 2.6 percent (432 persons) of the entire prisoner population

---

<sup>68</sup> Solzhenitsyn, *Gulag Archipelago III-IV*, 233.

<sup>69</sup> Memorial f. 2, op. 1, d. 84, l. 46. (L’vov, Evsei Moiseevich)

<sup>70</sup> Solzhenitsyn, *Gulag Archipelago III-IV*, 235-36.

<sup>71</sup> Solzhenitsyn, *Gulag Archipelago III-IV*, 237-38.

<sup>72</sup> Margaret Buber-Neumann has a lot to say about relationships between men and women prisoners in the camps. A male prisoner who seemed to be well connected even proposed to take her as his camp wife, but she refused. See Margarete Buber, *Under Two Dictators* (London: Victor Gollansz LTD, 1949), 82. Buber-Neumann also notes (72) that it seemed to her that certain criminals were exempt from the rule separating men and women prisoners.

under the jurisdiction of the Novosibirsk Province Camp and Colony Administration.<sup>73</sup> Despite warnings against local administrators, pregnancy rates at the newly formed forestry camps, Sevkuzbasslag and Iuzhkuzbasslag, remained surprisingly high. As a whole for the Main Administration of Forestry Camps (GULLP), women comprised 53,889 out of the total 322,792 prisoners in early 1953 (16.7 percent) and the camps administered thirteen children's homes with a total of 3,569 children under two years of age.<sup>74</sup>

The inability to isolate men completely from women prisoners, even within the camp zones, reveals some limits to Soviet power in the camps. A report on conditions in Siblag for 1952 notes that,<sup>75</sup>

in the majority of camp subdivisions prisoner men live at women's camp stations, and women at men's, and they work together; so for example, at Suslovo division 191 [male] prisoners live in women's camp stations and work together with women. The uncontrollability of prisoners' behaviour [and] the lack of isolation of men from women prisoners engenders mass cohabitation [*sozhitel'stvo*], infractions of the camp regimen and the squandering of goods [*promoty veshchdovol'stviia*]. On the 1952 inspection day [*den' proverki*] there were 377 pregnancies registered.

Women in the final two months of pregnancy and nursing mothers (for nine months after the birth of the child) received increased rations, including dairy products, according to camp regulations.<sup>76</sup> As one might imagine, however, this was hardly a route to a more comfortable life within the camps. One of the most chilling accounts of pregnancy in the

---

<sup>73</sup> GANO f. R-20, op. 1, d. 378, l. 2

<sup>74</sup> GARF f. 8360 [*GULLP*], op. 1, d. 63 [*So spravkami po voprosami rezhima sodержaniia, komplektovaniia i trudogogo ispol'zovaniia zakliuchennykh, iav-apr 1953*], ll. 39-40.

<sup>75</sup> GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 739, ll. 3-4.

<sup>76</sup> Kokurin and Petrov, eds., *GULAG*, 482. A comparison of ration norms in this document reveals that in most cases (except for rye bread) women in this category received about the same or better rations than Stakhanovites in the camps, who received extra rations on top of the norms for workers fulfilling their duties. There were certain items (such as animal fats) that women in this category received at a much higher rate; they were also supposed to receive daily rations of milk (400g), a product that was not given to any other category of prisoner.

camps comes from Hava Volovich, who spent time in Ukhta in the far north and whose daughter was born in the camp barrack, rather than any sort of medical facility. Volovich was able to stay with her daughter for a year, but then was transferred to the “mothers” camp, where her “pudgy little angel with the golden curls soon turned into a pale ghost with blue shadows under her eyes and sores all over her lips”. There her daughter was placed in a home for camp children, and Volovich could only see her during visiting hours or by bribing the nurses. Volovich remembers the nurses treating the babies horribly, not feeding them properly, beating them regularly, and so on. There was a huge death rate resulting in “plenty of empty beds [...] even though the birth rate in the camps was relatively high”. Poor conditions for babies and children are revealed in statistics, too. In 1952, eighty-four children died in Sibltag, many from TB and pneumonia.<sup>77</sup> In that year, authorities discovered 377 pregnancies in Sibltag and 734 cases of cohabitation. This occurred even though Sibltag’s director, Velikanov, had been given specific instructions to isolate women prisoners from men prisoners, even in production zones and medical facilities.<sup>78</sup>

Until the age of two, camp children were supposed to be housed at NKVD children’s homes. As Volovich describes, conditions at these homes were generally horrible. One former doctor at a camp children’s home, who was also a prisoner, writes that:<sup>79</sup>

In the children’s home there were around 200 children under the age of two. [...] The illness rate amongst the children was incredibly high. I was exhausted from work and did not have one night of normal sleep: 3-4 times per night [I would] awaken to sick children. The bosses interfered all day: then one comes, then

---

<sup>77</sup> GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 739 [*Sibirskii ITL: Akty proverok, dokladnye zapiski i perepiska o sostoianii i raboty ITL*], l. 136.

<sup>78</sup> GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 469 [*Akty proverkh, dokladnye zapiski, obsory, plany meropriiatii, spravki i perepiski o rabote i sostoianii Sibirskogo ITL MVD, July 1951-Dec 1952*], l. 1.

<sup>79</sup> Dr. A. I. Kaufman, *Lagernyi vrach: 16 let v Sovetskom Soiuzze – vospominaniia sionista* (Tel-Aviv: Am Oved, 1973) 232.

another to walk, to look – all for show, of course. They were afraid of liability because the children were [technically] “free” ... Why the illnesses? Why did the child die? [They would ask.] And when I told them about the lack of care—not enough orderlies, nannies, nurses; the disgusting food—the boss would wave his hand and hurry off.

At around the age of two, children born in the camps were usually transferred to orphanages.<sup>80</sup> But this was not always the case. In mid-1947, for example, forty children were removed from the jurisdiction of the Novosibirsk Province Camp and Colony Administration upon reaching the age of two, and transferred to provincial orphanages *or* relatives.<sup>81</sup> This practice—the transfer to orphanages or to relatives—was made official by a decision (*postanovlenie*) of the Soviet of Ministers of the USSR in 1949.<sup>82</sup>

Volovich’s story, not surprisingly, ended tragically. Her daughter died, and the overall experience was, for Volovich, the most traumatic of her time in the camps: “That is the whole story of how, in giving birth to my only child, I committed the worst crime there is.”<sup>83</sup>

Occasionally, it seems, in an effort to control the number of children and pregnant women in the camps—who were hardly, after all, productive labourers—there would be partial amnesties for prisoner mothers with children in the camps. It is worth noting that these amnesties freed prisoners not because of good behaviour in the camps—reeducation had little to do with it—but because the prisoners were a burden on the system, and could contribute little to production, underscoring the *economic* function of the Gulag. On the

---

<sup>80</sup> A 1949 directive (*ukaz*) of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR stated that women serving sentences could have their children with them until the child reached the age of two. See Doc. no 280 in S.S. Vilenskii et al., eds., *Deti GULAGA 1918-1956*, (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnyi fond “Demokratia,” 2002), 477.

<sup>81</sup> GANO f. R-20, op. 1, d. 378, l. 2.

<sup>82</sup> See Doc 281, “Postanovlenie Soveta ministrov SSSR no. 2213 “O sokrashchenii sroka sodержaniia pri osuzhdennykh materiakh detei i peredache detei starshe dvukh let na sodержanie blizkikh rodstvennikov ili v detskie uchrezhdeniia,”” in Vilenskii, *Deti GULAGA*, 478.

<sup>83</sup> For Volovich’s memoir, see Hava Volovich, “My Past,” in Simeon Vilensky, ed., *Till My Tale Is Told: Women’s Memoirs of the Gulag* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 240-276, esp. 260-264.

other hand, certain categories of pregnant women and mothers were not allowed to leave at all, suggesting that the Gulag, despite the frequent fluidity of its borders and the “revolving door” of incarceration/release, functioned as a penal institution designed to remove undesirables from Soviet society, rather than solely an economic institution. Thus in the 1949 amnesty for “pregnant women and women with young children,” authorities ordered freed all prisoners in this category except those serving sentences for “counter-revolutionary crimes, banditry, premeditated murder, robbery [*razboi*], the theft of socialist property, [and members] of organized gangs or groups of large sizes”.<sup>84</sup> Clearly, however, the frequent release of pregnant women and mothers with small children reveals that authorities saw these prisoners as less dangerous than men, yet another example of gender stereotyping on the part of Soviet authorities.<sup>85</sup>

Authorities saw pregnant and nursing women as a burden both administratively and economically. Rations for pregnant and nursing women were, for most types of food, higher than those of a camp-Stakhanovite worker, meaning that authorities had to provide scarce resources to prisoners who were not significantly helping the camp’s economic bottom line. One interesting local case illustrates the main issues, from an administrative point of view, regarding pregnant and nursing women. Corrective-Labour Colony 9 of the Tomsk Province Colony Department held many pregnant and nursing women. In a 1952 report to the Tomsk Province Party Committee, Didorenko, the director of the Tomsk Province Colony Department, noted that “using the labour of this contingent of women prisoners entails great difficulties and inconveniences,” as nursing mothers were

---

<sup>84</sup> See Doc. No. 279, “Ukaz Prezidiuma verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR “Ob osvobozhdenii ot nakazaniia osuzhdennykh beremennykh zhenshchin i zhenshchin, imeiushchikh maloletnykh detei,” in Vilenskii, *Deti GULAGa*, 477. In this case, by “young children,” they meant children under 7-years old.

<sup>85</sup> For more on the regime’s tendency to view women as less dangerous than men, see Lynne Viola, “Bab’i Bunty and Peasant Women’s Protest during Collectivization,” *Russian Review* 45.1 (1986): 23-42.

supposed to feed their children every two to four hours, depending on the child's age. Corrective-Labour Colony 9 was an agricultural colony, and fieldwork was conducted at least half a kilometre away, and often several kilometres from the camp zone. As Didorenko pointed out, "If [we] create work brigades only from the contingent of women prisoners who are breast-feeding, in this case it is necessary to take a break every two hours and convoy the prisoners [back] to the living zone, where the children are located. This would mean work would occupy only 50 percent of the time". But, Didorenko continued, it would be impossible to organize work brigades only of breast-feeding mothers, meaning that interruptions would be necessary for regular brigades and there would not be enough guards to convoy the prisoners. Didorenko concludes by arguing that nursing mothers should not be used at all in fieldwork, only for work that could be completed within the zone.<sup>86</sup>

This proposal evidently did not go over well. In early 1953 a Tomsk Province Party Committee commission investigated complaints against Didorenko for "incorrect actions [*nepravil'nykh deistviakh*]". The commission found many problems with Didorenko's work, including the failure to use nursing mothers at Corrective-Labour Colony 9 properly in work:

ITK-9 holds 80 women-mothers, the children of whom are located in a nursery [*v dome mladentsa*] at the ITK. Thirty-three personnel (doctors, nannies, nurses and others) serve these children. Despite this, of the 80 women only 15 are sent to work. In this manner it happens that women, sentenced for grave [*tiazhkie*] crimes and held at the state's expense, don't do anything; and 33 persons are devoted to [the care of] their children, at the state's expense, [and] the children are also held at the state's expense.<sup>87</sup>

---

<sup>86</sup> For Didorenko's letter, see "Pis'mo nachal'nika OITK UMVD po Tomskoi oblasti v Tomskii obkom KPSS Maksimovu ot 19.12.1952 g.," TsDNI TO f. 607, op. 1, d. 948, ll. 443-444.

<sup>87</sup> See "Spravka o proverke zhaloby o nepravil'nykh deistviakh nachal'nika OITK UMVD tov. Didorenko," TsDNI TO f. 607, op. 1, d. 1923, l. 138.

The Party Committee commission recommended a strict administrative reprimand for both Didorenko, in charge of all of Tomsk's labour colonies and the director of Labour Colony 9. Interestingly, although the total number of prisoners at Labour Colony 9 is unclear, eighty nursing mothers is a significant number, given that the whole of the Tomsk Province Colony Department in 1952 averaged around 2400 prisoners.<sup>88</sup>

Clearly, rules supposedly separating men from women prisoners as well as forbidding intimate relations between camp personnel and prisoners were easily subverted. The camp authorities' inability to prevent illicit encounters between men and women is yet more evidence both of the porous nature of the Gulag's borders (internal borders, in this case) and the failure to create, in practice, a well-ordered concentration camp.

### ***Resistance***

Historians and memoirists alike tend to view organized resistance by prisoners as something that occurred on a large scale only after Stalin's death. Antecedents to this appeared in the post-war Stalin era, however, particularly in the form of organized national groups, most notably from the Baltic countries (only incorporated into the Soviet Union briefly in 1940-41 and then with the Soviet victory over Nazi Germany) and Ukraine.

Yet in important respects, resistance was everywhere in the Gulag, and for the whole of its existence. As Lynne Viola argues, Soviet authorities in general tended to see resistance in day-to-day survival strategies: "The greater part of official 'resistance' consisted of acts of resistance that could be described as survival strategies, cultural and

---

<sup>88</sup> TsDNI TO f. 607, op. 1, d. 948, l. 440.

religious customs, opportunism, and, at times, sheer common sense, transformed into resistance by the Stalinist lens”.<sup>89</sup> Clearly, this holds true in the Gulag as well. From escapes to the cohabitation of men and women prisoners to black market activity and the smuggling of correspondence, to the procurement of extra rations through favours and connections, many prisoners found ways of subverting Soviet authority in the camps. When the Procurator for the Soviet Union complained in early 1953 that in the forestry camps, including Sevkuzbasslag and Iuzhkuzbasslag in Western Siberia, de-convoyed prisoners, “[u]sing full freedom due to lack of surveillance [*iz otsutsviem nadzora*], [...] freely use vehicles, trains, visit stores, clubs, movie-houses and other social areas, drink, take on mistresses, engage in hooliganism, and so on”, he inadvertently exposed the inability of Soviet power to function absolutely.<sup>90</sup> In economic production, moreover, the widespread practice of *tufta*, whereby prisoners and brigade leaders would find creative ways to fudge daily quota figures, can also be viewed as subversive activity, even if clearly a survival strategy. Collectively these types of activities prevented the Gulag from becoming a “closed universe,” or even an efficient camp system.<sup>91</sup> On the other hand, one could also argue that without some of these forms of resistance (particularly *tufta*) the system could not have survived at all. In other words, much like the black market in the

---

<sup>89</sup> Lynne Viola, “Introduction,” in Viola, ed., *Contending with Stalinism: Soviet Power & Popular Resistance in the 1930s* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002) 1-16, quotation 14. See also her “Popular Resistance in the 1930s: Soliloquy of a Devil’s Advocate,” 17-43 of the same volume.

<sup>90</sup> GARF f. R-8360, op. 1, d. 63, l. 8.

<sup>91</sup> Wolfgang Sofsky, *The Order of Terror: The Concentration Camp* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997) 14. Here Sofsky argues that the main reason the concentration camp is the most extreme form of terror is precisely because it forms a closed universe, cut off from society. The Gulag, however, was not a closed universe.

broader Soviet economy, certain deviations from official regulations may have been necessary in order to keep the system from collapsing.<sup>92</sup>

These forms of resistance are reminiscent of James Scott's description of peasant resistance in South-East Asia. As Scott points out, open and organized resistance was "dangerous, if not suicidal". It is more important, then, that we understand "*everyday* forms of peasant resistance [...] the ordinary weapons of relatively powerless groups: foot dragging, dissimulation, desertion, false compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, slander, arson, sabotage, and so on".<sup>93</sup> These types of activities are what Scott famously refers to as the "weapons of the weak," weapons that for the most part were readily available to—and widely used by—Gulag prisoners.

Throughout the Gulag's existence, authorities worried constantly about one particular form of resistance, perhaps because it was such an obvious threat to the desired absolute power of the camp system, or perhaps because it undermined attempts to cleanse the Soviet body of unwanted elements. And that was the escape. Organized, direct resistance was uncommon during the Stalin-era, but it nevertheless occurred everywhere, and often in the context of escapes. In 1931 at Siblag, for example, a reportedly organized group of prisoners murdered the director of their camp (*komandirovka*) and stole rifles, supplies, and horses. Two of the prisoners were killed in the escape attempt, one returned voluntarily, and the other two remained at large at the time of the report.<sup>94</sup> While perhaps

---

<sup>92</sup> This is something akin to the argument of Merle Fainsod in *Smolensk under Soviet Rule* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958), who talked about inefficiencies as a "release valve" for some of the tension inherent in the Soviet system.

<sup>93</sup> See James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), esp. xv-xvi.

<sup>94</sup> Doc no. 2, "Iz informatsionnogo obzora no. 2 nachal'nika GULAG L.I.Kogana po ispravitel'no-trudovym lageriam OGPU za noiabr'-dekabr' 1930 g.," 30 January 1931, in A.V. Dobrovskaja, V.A. Kozlov, and S.V. Mironenko, eds., *Istoriia stalinskogo Gulaga Tom 6: Vosstaniia, bunty i zabastovki zakliuchennykh* (Moscow: Rosspen, 2004), 113 (henceforth, ISG 6).

not as dramatic, violent resistance in the context of escapes resurfaced from time to time. In 1949 at a camp of the Novosibirsk Province Camp and Colony Administration a group of “prisoner-recidivists” at the Krivoshchekovsk station allegedly made knives and “other forbidden items,” hiding them in one of the barrack’s stoves. Knowing that many of the camp station’s personnel were absent on Saturday evenings, the group supposedly planned to use this time “to attack the day-supervisors and the watch [*vakhterov*] and murder them” in order to escape. The plot was uncovered before this happened, however.<sup>95</sup>

Another escape attempted at a special camp in nearby Krasnoiarsk Territory in 1950 dramatically illustrates an intersection of the black market and organized resistance. Within the wall planks of a camp storage facility the MVD found “a foreign-made pistol with 49 cartridges, a shotgun with ammunition for 450 charges, explosive materials [*vzryvveshchestva*], a 30 m[etre] fuse, 5 maps of Krasnoiarsk Territory, 3 Finnish knives, 1,600 rub[les] in money and 40kg of food”. According to the report, a civilian working in the camp as an explosives expert (*vzryvnikom*) at a cement factory, and himself a former prisoner, had smuggled these items to those attempting to escape.<sup>96</sup>

That escape was a major form of resistance is undeniable. In fact, during the war, the main reasons for re-arrest while serving a sentence in the camps were for organizing an escape attempt or for having been re-captured following an escape.<sup>97</sup> It is possible, of course, that camp authorities used the charge of “attempted escape” to punish

---

<sup>95</sup> Doc no. 57, “Ukazania GULAG no. 9/9/157 nachal’nikam pervykh otdelov (otdelenii) ispravitel’no-trydovyykh lagerei i kolonii o merakh po predotvrashcheniiu banditskikh proiavlennii i pobegov zakliuchennykh v vykhodnye dni,” March 1949, *ISG* 6, 204-05.

<sup>96</sup> See Doc no. 150, “Iz spravki 1-go otdela GULAG o rabote pervykh otdelov (otdelenii) ITL, UITLK, OITK po preduprezhdeniiu prestupnoi deiatel’nosti sredi zakliuchennykh v lageriakh i koloniiakh MVD,” in *ISG* 4, 299-300.

<sup>97</sup> Edwin Bacon, *The Gulag at War: Stalin’s Forced Labor System in Light of the Archives* (New York: New York University Press, 1994), 158.

troublesome prisoners, but there is no doubt that escapes were a key concern of central authorities. An April 1941 joint circular of the NKVD, People's Commissariat of Justice, and Soviet Union Procuracy referred to escapes as "one of the most heinous forms of sabotage of camp life and production" and called for punishing escape under Article 58-14 of the criminal code, a counter-revolutionary offense.<sup>98</sup> According to one scholar, the post-war "special camps" were designed primarily for isolation and to reduce escapes, rather than for economic reasons.<sup>99</sup> In 1947, the year before the special camps were created, there were 8,440 escapes from the Gulag, which was the post-war peak. Only 2,728 escapees were re-captured that year, too. This may seem like a large number of escapes, but it is a drastic improvement over the 45,755 escapes in 1933, in the Gulag's early days. In 1952, there were only 1,466 escapes.<sup>100</sup>

At times organized resistance took on a peculiar character. In 1949, the Gulag's Third Department noted that several prisoners from Sevkuzbasslag, all serving "lengthy" sentences, created "privileged [*privilegirovannnye*] conditions" for themselves by using prisoners with light sentences as servants. These privileged prisoners, moreover,

---

<sup>98</sup> Doc no. 75, "Tsirkuliar NKVD, NKIu i Prokurora SSSR no. 87/06/PR/29 ob usilenii bor'by s pobegami zakliuchennykh iz ITL. 28 apr 1941," in *ISG 4*, 188.

<sup>99</sup> Barnes, "Soviet Society Confined," 250. For more on the special camps, see also Zhak Rossi [Jacques Rossi], *Spravochnik po GULAGu* (Moscow: Prosvet, 1991), 377-378.

<sup>100</sup> For the 1947 figure, see Doc no. 52, "Svodnye dannye o chislennosti zakliuchennykh GULAG v 1945-1947," in *ISG 4*, 134. The 1933 figure is mentioned in Applebaum, *Gulag*, 394. The 1952 figure comes from Doc no. 54, "Svodnye dannye o chislennosti zakliuchennykh GULAG v 1952-1954," in *ISG 4*, 135-136. Note also that Applebaum gives a 1947 escape figure of 10,440 (Applebaum, *Gulag*, 395). Her footnotes, unfortunately, lead only to a *file* at GARF (f. 9414, op. 1, d. 2632), without a page (*list'*) reference. Giving archival citations without page (*list'*) numbers is a major flaw of Applebaum's book, whether it was the publisher's decision or the author's decision. Note that Figure 3.3 of the present dissertation, on escapes, only includes escapes from ITLs, which accounts for the differences in numbers.

conducted anti-Soviet agitation, planned an armed escape, promoted work-refusals amongst the prisoners, and also beat and stole from other prisoners.<sup>101</sup>

Prisoner-on-prisoner violence made up a significant proportion of the violence within the Gulag itself,<sup>102</sup> once again blurring the distinction between perpetrator and victim, but also revealing one way in which the system, intentionally or not, prevented mass, organized resistance. Privileges for certain prisoners or groups of prisoners—through sanctioned means or even by force, as in the above case—meant that a united front amongst all prisoners against the regime was extremely unlikely. In this way, camp authorities may have actually benefited from criminal groups in the camps, as the tensions and violence between hardened criminals and the so-called politicals prevented organized, mass resistance. As the above case reveals, however, this was for the authorities a double-edged sword, as these criminal groups often took control of their own affairs, helping to undermine camp regimen and camp economic production and no doubt contributing to the growing realization that the Gulag was more of a burden than a benefit to the state. A key reason that some of the post-Stalin Gulag uprisings were more successful was that various prisoner groups were able to overcome their differences to present a united front against camp and central authorities.<sup>103</sup>

One interesting post-war Gulag revolt occurred in Western Siberia, at the Eighth Camp Subdivision of the Kemerovo Province Camp and Colony Administration in June 1951. It seems that in opposition to a planned transfer (*etap*), several prisoners armed

---

<sup>101</sup> Doc no. 58, “Iz obzora nachal’nika 3-go otdela 1-go upravleniia GULAG P.G. Agripa po otdel’nym sledstvennym delam pervykh otdelov (otdelenii) ispravitel’no-trydovykh lagerei i kolonii za 1 polugodie 1949,” *ISG* 6, 205.

<sup>102</sup> For more on prisoner-on-prisoner violence, see Barnes, “Soviet Society Confined,” 235-239.

<sup>103</sup> See, for example, Steven A. Barnes, ““In a Manner Befitting Soviet Citizens”: An Uprising in the Post-Stalin Gulag.” *Slavic Review* 64, no. 4 (2005): 823-850.

themselves with “knives and iron items [*zheleznymi predmetami*]” and threatened several supervisors (*nadziratelei*) with murder.<sup>104</sup> Fearing for their lives, the supervisors fled from the watchtower. The armed prisoners forcibly took the keys to the penalty isolator and freed the prisoners within the isolator. They then created “mass disorder [*massovykh besporiadkov*]” within the camp subdivision.

What was this “mass disorder”? Apparently, the group of prisoners, now armed also with axes and sharp metal objects, under threat of murder forced the other prisoners to gather at the watchtower (*vakht*), where the prisoners threw stones and other items at the watchtower and shouted and sang songs. When ordered to cease these activities, the organizers reportedly threatened to beat any prisoners who gave in to the camp commander’s demands. The organizers then stormed the division’s headquarters where they destroyed several boxes containing “secret and strictly secret directives [*predlozhenie*]” and also destroyed numerous prisoner files, including three of their own. They then ransacked the headquarters, causing 5,108 rubles in damage. The next day, they were again ordered to cease their activities, but instead barricaded themselves in a barrack, throwing bricks at guards to defend themselves. It was only when the Militarized Guard brandished its weapons that the prisoners finally gave up. One prisoner died during the course of the “disorder”.

The description of events, of course, raises almost as many questions as it answers. Where was the Militarized Guard in the first place? Did this small group of prisoners actually *threaten* other prisoners into participation (the singing of songs might indicate

---

<sup>104</sup> The description of the event comes from Doc no. 65, “Iz prigovora lagernogo suda UITLiK UMVD Kemerovskoi oblasti po obvineniiu I.I.Kamyshenko [...] v organizatsii masovykh besporiadkov zakliuchennykh” 30-31 Oct 1951, *ISG 6*, 221-222. Note that *ISG 6* includes six documents pertaining to this “mass disorder,” most of which are complaints from the accused that they had been unfairly associated with the events.

otherwise)? How did they originally obtain their knives? Was this act of rebellion really only a disruption caused by opposition to a transfer or did it relate to other issues within the camp?

Complicating the picture, some of the alleged organizers denied their involvement, denials that, given the general lack of order in the camp subdivision, are certainly plausible. B. N. Valetov, for example, claimed to have spent much of the period of the revolt in hiding at the subdivision's Cultural Educational Section (KVCh) clubhouse; another, V. S. Sukhikh, was in the subdivision's hospital (*v statsionare*) at the time and, according to his complaint, could produce witnesses and documentary evidence to back up this claim.<sup>105</sup> Camp officials at the Kemerovo Province Camp and Colony Administration would have been under pressure to blame specific individuals, and it would hardly be surprising if their investigation of the affair was lacking; on the other hand, prisoners involved in the incident clearly had every incentive to show that they had not been involved.

Without greater access to documentation, it is impossible to know the frequency of such occurrences.<sup>106</sup> It is likely, however, that such occurrences, while not common, happened several times per year in the area's camps. In January 1952, for example, the head of the MVD Administration for Kemerovo Province noted that in 1951 at the camps of the province (the Kemerovo Province Camp and Colony Administration, Siblag, Sevkuzbasslag, Iuzhkuzbasslag, Arlichevlag, Kamyshlag) there had been "5 instances of mass disorder [*massovykh besporiadkov*] and 10 riots [*volynokh*], and also 120 cases of banditry [*banditiskikh proiavlenii*], resulting in the murder of 118 prisoners and 198

---

<sup>105</sup> See docs 66 and 67, *ISG 6*, 223-225.

<sup>106</sup> Many of the documents relating to Gulag uprisings from *ISG 6* are housed in the archives of the former KGB, still mostly closed to researchers.

injured persons”.<sup>107</sup> Three of the five cases of mass disorder occurred at the camps of the Kemerovo Province Camp and Colony Administration; clearly authorities there experienced continued difficulties in controlling the camp population. If “mass disorder” always referred to the types of incidences described in detail above (which, again, is not clear), then prisoner rebellion within the Gulag was a significant problem before Stalin’s death. It is also not entirely clear what would have occurred at the “riots” (*volynki*). According to Lynne Viola, this term was usually a designation for a spontaneous event, and thus could possibly be forgiven by the authorities. On the other hand, those very same authorities certainly had every incentive to show that planned, organized resistance did not occur in their camps, and therefore likely would have been more likely to report instances of resistance in a way that made them seem spontaneous.<sup>108</sup>

While black market activity, illicit interaction between men and women, and resistance most clearly show the regime’s inability to completely control both prisoners and personnel in the camps, it is worth briefly mentioning two other subjects—cultural-educational work and the special settlements—in order to clarify the post-war picture.

### ***Cultural-Educational Work***

The regime continued to fund numerous cultural-educational activities in the camps in the post-war years. Continuing the trend that began in the late-1930s, however, the language associated with these activities did not emphasise re-making individuals (the term “re-forging,” for example, is not used). Given the extensive documentation for the various

---

<sup>107</sup> See Doc no. 79, “Iz doklada nachal’nika UMVD po Kemerovskoi oblasti o rabote otdela ITL za 1951 g.,” Gvozdkova, ed., *Prinuditel’nyi trud*, 223-224.

<sup>108</sup> For more on the Stalin-era terminology of resistance and on official reports about resistance, see Viola, “Popular Resistance in the Stalinist 1930s,” esp. 30-31.

camps' Cultural-Educational Departments (KVO) in the post-war years, however, cultural activities are easy to trace, and it is abundantly clear that the department remained an active and important part of camp life. Most camps held multiple movie screenings per month, maintained libraries with collections numbering in the thousands, produced wall-newspapers, and supported theatre troupes and orchestras. Sports teams also were not uncommon and chess tournaments widespread.

In its report on activities for the first half of 1951, the Cultural Education Department of the Tomsk Province Colony Department lists five main activities: 1) organizing labour competitions between camp subdivisions; 2) organizing “mass political work for *the early fulfillment of production plans*,” the fulfilling and over-fulfilling of individual work quotas, the lowering of costs and increased productivity, the effective use of equipment, and the better organization of labour; 3) giving practical experience in technical skills in order to improve production in part by promoting examples of excellent workers from within the camps; 4) fulfilling the orders and directives (*prikazy i ukazaniia*) of the Gulag and the MVD concerning the strengthening of camp regimen; and 5) giving “practical help” in the camp’s preparations for the spring-summer season.<sup>109</sup> In other words, although the Cultural-Educational Department involved itself in “mass-political work” and skills training, the purpose of these activities seems to relate entirely to economic production or the functioning of the camp itself, as opposed to reeducation. Siblag’s cultural-educational activities report for the same period makes this relationship explicit: “Mass political work, *as with all cultural-educational work in the camp*, was directed

---

<sup>109</sup> GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1655, ll. 45-46 [part of the *Ob’iasnitel’naia zapiska k otchetu za 1-e polugodie 1951 goda o rabote KVO OITK UMVD po Tomskoi oblasti*]. Emphasis added.

towards the strengthening of the camp regimen and discipline and the mobilization of prisoners for the fulfillment of production plans in all areas of the camp's economy".<sup>110</sup>

Lecture topics at Sibltag in the first half of 1951 must have seemed incongruous given the setting. Topics included "the struggle of the peoples of colonial countries for their freedom and independence" and "the Soviet state: the most democratic and most durable state in the world".<sup>111</sup> Political discussions were also held (some 1,989 just in the second quarter of 1951) on numerous topics as well, including "on the unity of the Soviet people" and the "timely preparation and carrying-out of the spring sowing". These discussions, according to the report, could have an inspirational effect: one brigade leader, following the aforementioned discussion on the spring sowing, declared that his brigade would increase its production. Reportedly this happened, as the brigade began fulfilling its norms at 121.5 percent instead of 105 percent.<sup>112</sup> Some of these discussions and lectures would, no doubt, have given prisoners a window into events within the Soviet Union and linked them ideologically with the Soviet state-building project. These types of political discussions differed little from similar discussions in factories and other Soviet institutions.

If some prisoners may have found a lecture on the struggle of colonial peoples ironic, given their own conditions, they nevertheless likely would have welcomed many of the

---

<sup>110</sup> GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1662 [Title from Opis'], l. 81 [from the Dokladnaia zapiska o kul'turno-vospitatel'noi rabote v Sibirskom ITL MVD za pervoe polugodie 1951g.]. Emphasis added.

<sup>111</sup> GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1662, l. 82. The report lists 11 lecture topics (followed by "and other topics"), translated here: 1. Twenty-seven years without Lenin, under the leadership of Com[rade] Stalin – on Lenin's path; 2. The Soviet state – the most democratic and most durable state in the world; 3. The main rights and responsibilities of Soviet citizens; 4. 33<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of the Soviet Army and the *Voenna-Morskogo flota*; 5. News of the fulfillment of the post-war five-year plan and the restoration and growth of the USSR's economy; 6. May 1<sup>st</sup>: a holiday of labour and of peace; 7. The struggle of peoples of colonial countries for their freedom and independence; 8. On the international situation; 9. The great construction projects of communism; 10. International women's day: 8<sup>th</sup> of March; 11. The struggle for peace: a matter for all peoples of the world.

<sup>112</sup> GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1662, ll. 82-83.

camp cultural activities. Sibltag in 1951, for example, had seventeen libraries with a total of over 22,000 books and reported over 10,000 readers for the second quarter of the year. In the first half of the year, moreover, there were 1,145 film-screenings using twelve mobile film projectors. The camps showed “only Soviet films and films from countries of people’s democracies,” evidence that Cold War rhetoric had entered the Gulag. Listed films include *Konstantin, Zaslunov, Velikoe zarevo, Dalko [sic] ot Moskvyy*,<sup>113</sup> *Venskie devushki, Ditia Dunaia, Docheri kitaia* and “many others”. These films would not have been significantly different from those screened at any Soviet cinema at the time. Sibltag also reported forty-seven separate artist’s circles and 464 concerts in the first half of the year.<sup>114</sup> Cultural-educational sections (KVCh) at individual camp subdivisions and camp stations also produced wall-newspapers.

Various sporting and recreational activities also occurred: chess tournaments appear to have been particularly common, as was camp theatre. Interestingly, instructions on regimen within the camps and colonies actively promote activities such as chess, while imposing strict penalties for card playing, as the latter was associated with gambling.<sup>115</sup> It appears, then, that a level of *kul’turnost’*, or culturedness, was encouraged, at least officially, for the majority of Gulag prisoners.<sup>116</sup>

---

<sup>113</sup> This in itself is fascinating: “Far from Moscow” was originally a Stalin-prize winning book about the development of the Far East written by Vasilii Azhaev. As it turns out, Azhaev was himself a former Gulag prisoner and he based *Far from Moscow* on one of BAMlag’s construction projects. See Thomas Lahusen, *How Life Writes The Book: Real Socialism and Socialist Realism in Stalin’s Russia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997).

<sup>114</sup> GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1662, ll. 100-102.

<sup>115</sup> For an example of an Operational Order permitting chess, but forbidding cards, see GARF f. 9401, op. 1a, d. 56, l. 45. An NKVD Operational Order from 1940 also explicitly lists chess as one of the activities that a camp’s Cultural-Educational Section should organize. GARF f. 9401, op. 1a, d. 64, l. 14ob.

<sup>116</sup> This is another similarity with the pre-war years. See Wilson T. Bell, “One Day in the Life of Educator Khrushchev: Labour and *Kul’turnost’* in the Gulag Newspapers,” *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 46.3-4 (2004), 289-313.

### *Special Settlements*

Although from 1944 no longer under direct administration of the Gulag, the settlements remained a key part of the landscape of punishment under the MVD's control, and thus deserve mention in the context of the Gulag's post-war development in the region.

The population of the special settlements changed dramatically during the war and post-war periods. Many orders and decrees removed "former kulaks" from the special settlement registers. An October 1942 directive freed the families of those serving in the Red Army. A January 1945 decree emancipated many more settlers.<sup>117</sup> Then, in September 1946 the MVD and the Procuracy for the Soviet Union issued a joint order freeing "former kulaks" who had children in the Red Army or who had participated in the war; who had received government awards; and women who had married non-special settlers. This was not an insignificant number: in Kemerovo province alone 49,513 of the approximately 60,000 "former kulaks" in the province's special settlements were removed from the settlement registers as a result.<sup>118</sup> The number of "former kulaks" in the settlements would continue to dwindle until 1954, when the regime finally emancipated those remaining.<sup>119</sup> As the number of former kulaks fell dramatically, however, many new groups were deported to Western Siberia during the war and its aftermath, including large numbers of Volga Germans, Kalmyks, Ukrainians and Baltic peoples. In other words, the settlements shifted from a place for deported peasants, to a place for minority groups that the regime deemed suspicious or problematic.

---

<sup>117</sup> Lynne Viola, *The Unknown Gulag: The Lost World of Stalin's Special Settlements* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997) 170, 178.

<sup>118</sup> Zemskov, *Spetsposelelentsy v SSSR*, 140.

<sup>119</sup> Viola, *Unknown Gulag*, 179.

As of 1 January 1953, the provinces of Novosibirsk, Tomsk and Kemerovo housed a total of 311,855 special settlers, making the region the Soviet Union's second largest forced settlement area at the time, behind only Kazakhstan. Ethnic Germans, mostly deported from the Volga region, made up over half (169,532 or 54.4 percent) of the region's deportees. The next three largest groups were the "ounovtsy" (members of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists, who had opposed Soviet rule during World War II) at 40,476 (13.0 percent); deportees from the Baltic States at 26,215 (8.4 percent); and 19,070 Kalmyks (6.1 percent). There were only 12,340 "former kulaks" residing in the area's special settlements, mostly in Kemerovo Province. Indeed, in general the wartime deportations combined with the restoration of the rights of many of the original "kulaks" meant that, as a whole, the region had seen a shift in the settlement population away from remote area of Narym, in northern Tomsk Province, towards the southern, more industrial areas in Kemerovo and Novosibirsk Provinces. Kemerovo Province on its own held thirty-nine percent of the region's special settlers in January 1953, compared with Tomsk Province's 25.7 percent.<sup>120</sup>

### ***Conclusion***

The Gulag reached its peak population figures in the period from 1945-1953. Camp guards and personnel had also honed their abilities to prevent escapes, which were, during this period, much less frequent than during the pre-war years. The strict regimen "special camps," established in 1948, also reveal that there were serious efforts at isolation during the post-war era. For these and other reasons, the Gulag appeared to be at

---

<sup>120</sup> For the figures presented here, see Zemskov, *Spetsposelelentsy v SSSR*, 214-215.

the height of its power during the late-Stalin era. The MVD's empire of forced labour was enormous.

Yet the post-war Gulag is complicated. Beria increasingly saw the camps as a failure, from an economic perspective, and efforts to give the prisoners more incentives—wages, renewed offers of early release—did little to improve the efficiency of forced labour. The persistence of informal networks and personal connections, exemplified in such issues as black market activity, relationships between men and women in the camps, and acts of resistance, made the creation of an efficient, machine-like system almost impossible. Clearly, moreover, the speed at which first Beria, and then Nikita Khrushchev, reformed the system following Stalin's death in March 1953, suggests disillusionment with the system as it had evolved. Just as the early Soviet period had not necessarily anticipated such a large penal and forced labour system, the post-Stalin era also suggests that the harshest aspects of the system, at least, were unnecessary even from the Soviet point of view.

## CONCLUSION

“What’s the highest building in [Leningrad]?”  
“It’s St. Isaac’s Cathedral.”  
“No, it’s not. It’s the Shpalerka [the former NKVD  
prison]. Because from the top floor, you can see all  
the way to Kolyma.”  
- Common Soviet anecdote<sup>1</sup>

The above anecdote, adjusted for one’s own city, was common in the Soviet Union. One, of course, did not need to see all the way to Kolyma to set eyes on the Gulag. Camps were everywhere, and for most years the majority of prisoners were in European parts of the country, with the Moscow region and the European north comprising two of the most prominent areas for prisoner distribution.<sup>2</sup> Western Siberia was one of those areas where the Gulag, with its special settlements, corrective-labour camps, and corrective-labour colonies, was involved in many aspects of regional economic activity.

Western Siberia was an attractive region for penal camps. It was far from Moscow, but not so far as to make access difficult. It had abundant natural resources, which helped to create Siberia’s most important industrial area (the Kuzbass). It was a relatively populous region, too, meaning that some sort of places of confinement were necessary.

---

<sup>1</sup> As quoted in Adam Hochschild, “Foreword,” Janusz Bardach and Kathleen Gleeson, *Man Is Wolf to Man: Surviving the Gulag* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999) x.

<sup>2</sup> See the Appendix of the present dissertation.

But it is precisely Western Siberia's place in the middle—it was not Kolyma, nor was it Moscow—that makes it an important region to study. Its main camp, Sibilag, was never a priority camp, and Sibilag's economic activities—agriculture, contract labour, forestry, mining, and so on—mirrored the activities of the Gulag as a whole. Western Siberia, therefore, can help us answer the question that began this dissertation: What was the Gulag?

It is clear that the Gulag was a place of death, of disease, of hunger, and of exhaustion. It existed in a society where violence, both rhetorical and actual, was pervasive. And the Gulag was part of the Soviet Union's modernization process, but in a manner that was “neo-traditional” in practice.

The Stalin-era Gulag remains difficult to define precisely because of the inherent tensions between the modern and the traditional that characterize its development. After all, the Gulag was in some ways emblematic of modernity. Modern practices—from information gathering to surveillance to state intervention in everyday life—permeate the Gulag in ways similar to other modern penal institutions, on a scale and with a level of brutality that is almost unimaginable. The Gulag's day-to-day operations, however, reveal the prevalence of very traditional, pre-modern practices. Individual camp commanders ran their camps like fiefdoms, and a prisoner's experience depended considerably on the whims of those immediately in charge, rather than on rules and regulations sent from Moscow. Informal networks allowed some prisoners, personnel, and local populations to exchange goods, services, and information. These characteristics,

and others, including an increasingly arbitrary, heavy-handed and secretive criminal-justice system, run counter to accepted formulations of modern penal systems.<sup>3</sup>

The tensions between the modern and the traditional are readily apparent throughout the Gulag's history. In Chapter I, we traced the origins of the Gulag, noting that, in the 1920s, the Soviet regime initially attempted a radical departure from its tsarist predecessors. That departure consisted of non-custodial sentences for minor crimes and a leniency in most matters of criminal justice that was new to Russia's history.<sup>4</sup> The rapidly expanding Gulag, officially founded in 1930 in the midst of a period of intense modernization and population displacement, was in fact a similar—if larger-scale—response to questions that had long plagued rulers in Moscow and St. Petersburg. The Gulag *appeared* to solve the problems of extracting the country's natural wealth for development purposes, and the long-standing "peasant question." The resort to large-scale forced labour of peasants was hardly new in Russia's history. Even the use of convict labour in remote areas carried over, of course, from the tsarist period. And although the scale of the Gulag's operations owed much to modern infrastructure and state interventionist practices, one of the major attempts at solving these questions—the special settlements—reveals that the regime had myriad difficulties translating into practice the settlements as they existed on paper, complete with schools, medical facilities, and so on. Ultimately, given the lack of resources plaguing the settlements, it is not even clear that a smooth-running, efficient system was the goal.

---

<sup>3</sup> See Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, edited Colin Gordon, trans. Gordon et al. (New York: Pantheon, 1980), 119; and Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995).

<sup>4</sup> Peter H. Solomon, Jr., *Soviet Criminal Justice under Stalin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 30.

If the settlements had major problems with supply, living conditions, and economic efficiency, the camps themselves exhibited similar tendencies. For all the pretences of a modern bureaucracy, early in its history Siblag's directors ran the camp much like a fiefdom, ignoring orders from Moscow, and failing to provide Moscow with important information.<sup>5</sup> As Chapter II illustrates, while Siblag was a site of immense suffering, certain Siblag subdivision directors succeeded in providing their prisoners with sufficient food and housing. This was indeed the exception rather than the rule, but it nonetheless demonstrates the degree to which a prisoner's experience depended largely on the whims and abilities of his or her immediate supervisors, rather than bureaucrats in Moscow or, even, in Novosibirsk. Clearly, the regime as a whole—as well as local Gulag bosses—were more concerned with results than process. Many camp personnel at Gornoshorlag, for example, received awards for their service in completing the Gornaia-Shorskaia Railway, while Tomasinlag—existing for roughly the same period—closed in the midst of chaos and confusion, with calls to arrest some of its top administrators. Both camps, however, experienced similar problems with escapes, inefficient production, and brutal living conditions. The difference was that Gornoshorlag produced easily identifiable results, whereas Tomasinlag failed to complete one of its tasks, the orderly resettlement of “refugees” to the area in 1940.

Indeed, the appearance of a functioning bureaucracy was perhaps more important than an actually functioning bureaucracy. The tension between the modern and the traditional is nowhere more apparent than in the myriad rules and regulations promulgated by the NKVD in the immediate pre-war years, the subject of Chapter III. On

---

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Document 1, “Spravka ULAG o khoziastvennoi deiatel'nosti lagerei” (no earlier than 1 April 1930), Oleg Khlevniuk, ed., *Istoriia Stalinskogo Gulaga: Tom 3: Ekonomika Gulaga* (Moscow: Rosspen, 2004), 62.

paper, these regulations reveal a very modern impulse: categorizing and tracking individuals, collecting information on them, and creating and maintaining an efficient bureaucracy, with well-ordered rules governing most aspects of camp life and death. Understaffed bureaucracies, however, often meant that authorities had difficulties tracking individual prisoners. Many of the regulations—such as the twelve separate ration regimes or the seven different forms for the camp censor—would have been nearly impossible to follow to the letter. Indeed, officials often found it easier to ignore central regulations and to resort to data falsifications, such as the widespread *tufta*, when necessary. At their most extreme, Gulag regulations actually encouraged and entrenched informal practices.

World War II—the subject of chapters IV and V—forced the regime to focus the Gulag on its new priorities, especially the economic mobilization in aid of the war effort. The war, however, shattered any pretensions of stability and efficiency within the Gulag. Mortality rates reached their highest recorded levels in 1942-43, but even these data clearly underestimate the total deaths. Officials—in a cynical effort to improve statistics—sought to release those prisoners deemed seriously ill, so that those prisoners would not burden the camps, economically, and their deaths would not affect camp mortality rates. While this phenomenon exposes an amoral bureaucracy, it is also another example of the tendency to place more emphasis on the *appearance* of a functional system, rather than making changes necessary to improve the system's functionality. The war, nevertheless, reveals a clearly modern use of mass mobilization, as the entire camp system in Western Siberia shifted to war-related production, and efforts to mobilize prisoners included a mixture of state-driven coercion and propaganda.

Wartime evacuations and the shift to wartime production, not to mention mobilization for the Red Army, meant that there was a huge turnover of camp personnel. Many, including guards, brought family members with them to the camps. Some of the region's top Gulag officials hired relatives for camp positions and even secured housing for relatives in local cities. Indeed, clan structures and informal networks played an important role in day-to-day activities. Many of these networks operated like *blat*—the exchange of favours to the benefit of all parties involved. So while the camp personnel exhibited a certain banality or ordinariness—most do not seem to have been highly ideologically motivated, and most came from modest backgrounds and were poorly educated—they nevertheless were not simply cogs in a bureaucratic machine. Many of their actions actually undermined the bureaucratic mechanism.

In the post-war period, the subject of Chapter VI, the bureaucratic mechanism seemed to work much more efficiently. After all, the Gulag reached its peak population, but also was quite successful at preventing escapes. Mortality rates, following a spike with the 1947 famine, were also lower than they were in the pre-war period or during the war.<sup>6</sup> The persistence of cultural-educational activities also underscores the importance of the Gulag as a place of individual reeducation, a clear goal of modern penal systems. Nevertheless, Lavrentii Beria, in charge of the MVD, became increasingly concerned with the camps' inefficiencies. Efforts at professionalizing the system by adding wage labour for prisoners and reinstating incentives for early release did not seem to work, as persistent problems in the camps with black market activity, illicit encounters between men and women, and even outright resistance, reveal. Following Stalin's death in March

---

<sup>6</sup> Anne Applebaum, *Gulag: A History* (New York: Doubleday, 2003), 582-583.

1953, Beria took almost immediate action to reduce the size of the camps, an effort that Nikita Khrushchev, at first, continued.

If the tensions between the modern and the traditional make the Gulag difficult to define, so, too, do the tensions between the economic and the political. Political and economic motivations for the system existed together, sometimes reinforcing one another (as in the case of the ideologically charged White Sea-Baltic Canal, which emphasized reeducation and economic benefit), and sometimes contradicting one another (as in the cases of local officials granting privileges to “counter-revolutionary” prisoners, because those prisoners had important economic skills). The Gulag’s initial expansion was due to political factors – the “war” against the peasantry. Likewise, its expansion in 1937-38 had more to do with the politics of the “Great Terror” than the economics of the penal system, even if the Gulag opened up many new forestry tracts during this time. On the other hand, natural resources determined the locations of many camps and their subdivisions, local camp administrators clearly saw the fulfilment of production quotas as their most important task (even gearing cultural activities towards this goal), and some central leaders—particularly Beria—tried to develop the system along economic lines. In the Soviet Union itself, the economic and the political were two sides of the same coin, and the Gulag was not an exception to this rule.

Despite the efforts to create well-ordered concentration camps, Gulag authorities simply did not have sufficient personnel for constant and efficient surveillance. Nor could they create a “closed universe,” completely cut off from society.<sup>7</sup> Camp directors were forced to permit large numbers of prisoners to move outside of the camps unescorted by

---

<sup>7</sup> Wolfgang Sofsky, *The Order of Terror: The Concentration Camp* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997) 14.

guard. These prisoners frequently engaged in illicit activity, such as smuggling goods and correspondence, or even watching movies, frequenting stores, and taking on mistresses in local towns. The presence of de-convoyed prisoners, plus such issues as contract prisoners who worked alongside free workers, widespread black-market activity, and the lack of borders altogether at some camp stations, partially undermine Solzhenitsyn's depiction of the Gulag as an archipelago, an empire of isolated islands separated from the Soviet mainland.

Yet if the Gulag does not completely fit our understanding of modern punishment, Sofsky's definition of the "concentration camp" as a "closed universe," or Solzhenitsyn's description of the Gulag as an archipelago, we need, then, to account for the Gulag's persistence. If it was so inefficient and rarely, if ever, worked properly, why did it last for such a long period of time? The easy answer would be to blame Stalin and/or Stalinism, as the system of penal camps only reached massive proportions once Stalin consolidated his power, and that same system shrank considerably after Stalin's death. Certainly the mass mobilizations of the Stalin era and the rapid, "telescoped," development during this period required some form of coercion. Violence was part of Stalin's Soviet Union. It was, indeed, a "violent society".<sup>8</sup> However, more subtle reasons explain the Gulag's existence than simply placing all of the blame on Stalin.

If the model for modern punishment, as explained by Foucault, does not necessarily describe the Gulag, his understanding of the operation of power is nevertheless

---

<sup>8</sup> See Christian Gerlach and Nicholas Werth, "State Violence—Violent Societies," *Beyond Totalitarianism: Stalinism and Nazism Compared*, Geyer and Fitzpatrick, eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009) 133-179; and Peter Holquist, "State Violence as Technique: The Logic of Violence in Soviet Totalitarianism," in *Landscaping the Human Garden: 20<sup>th</sup> Century Population Management in a Comparative Framework*, ed. Amir Weiner (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003) 19-45.

instructive. For Foucault, power is both repressive *and* productive.<sup>9</sup> What, then, did the operation of Soviet power produce, vis-à-vis the Gulag? We can regard the persistence of informal networks and systems of privilege as the remnants of an earlier era, certainly, but it is also possible that these very networks and systems existed *because* of the Soviet system, and not *in spite* of the Soviet system. Rather than creating an efficient, highly regulated system, the “extreme Soviet statism” and hyper-bureaucracy of the Stalin era actually helped to entrench informal practices.<sup>10</sup>

One of the first scholars to examine issues of day-to-day governance in the Soviet Union, using Soviet archives, was Merle Fainsod in his seminal work, *Smolensk under Soviet Rule*.<sup>11</sup> Fainsod felt that the Soviet Union, like Nazi Germany, was a totalitarian regime, meaning that Soviet subjects completely lacked any autonomy. Fainsod, however, was frequently struck by the inability of Soviet power to function in an efficient manner in Smolensk. Rather than arguing that these occurrences undermined the very idea of totalitarianism, however, he argued instead that the inefficiencies were akin to an “escape valve,” releasing pressure from the system, and thus allowing the system to function.

The inefficiencies of the Gulag operated, in some ways, as an “escape valve.” Given the vast distances of the Soviet Union and the natural obstacles that the climate imposed, it is unlikely that the Gulag could have functioned efficiently even if authorities had devoted enough personnel, food, and medical supplies to make this happen. Local officials developed their own mechanisms of running the camps, while prisoners tried to

---

<sup>9</sup> Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, esp. 118-119.

<sup>10</sup> On extreme statism, see Terry Martin, “Modernization or Neo-Traditionalism? Ascribed Nationality and Soviet Primordialism,” in *Stalinism: New Directions*, ed. Sheila Fitzpatrick (New York: Routledge, 2000) 348-367, esp. 360. On hyper-bureaucracy, see Chapter III of the present dissertation.

<sup>11</sup> Merle Fainsod, *Smolensk under Soviet Rule*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958) 450.

develop their own mechanisms of survival. Sometimes, as in the cases of *tufta* (the falsification of work norms) and black market activity, these mechanisms overlapped. Thus while these informal practices helped to undermine the regime's goals for the system (whether those goals related to isolation or economic output), they were nevertheless necessary for the survival of the system. For the system as a whole—and more specifically for some prisoners and some personnel—therefore, the informal practices of day-to-day life in the camps helped to release the “pressure” inherent within the increasingly rigidly codified system.

Most prisoners, of course, experienced not this release of pressure, but levels of suffering that are almost impossible to imagine. Indeed, the “release” of pressure likely made life more difficult for a majority of prisoners, as arbitrariness and the sporadic delivery of supplies negatively impacted their lives. It was the majority of prisoners, after all, who suffered when camp officials sold supplies on the black market and abused their positions, even if these officials did so with the help of some prisoners. The granting of privileges to certain prisoners, moreover, whether through formal or informal means, likely prevented resistance on a mass scale, as these practices made it more difficult for the prisoners to present a united front against the camp administration. Ironically, then, the Gulag's informal practices acted as a release of pressure from a system that likely could not have existed without these releases.

Thus, while the Gulag clearly engaged in the modernization of the Soviet Union under Stalin, both by using prisoner labour in key industries and by helping isolate those deemed dangerous to the state-building project, the Gulag's path is best seen as “neo-traditional.”

*Post-Script: The post-Stalin Gulag in Western Siberia*

The five years following Stalin’s death saw the release of approximately four million prisoners from the Gulag.<sup>12</sup> If, to borrow Solzhenitsyn’s archipelago metaphor, there had been few “reverse waves” during the Stalin era, this all changed with the mass amnesties under Stalin’s successors.

Western Siberia experienced these “reverse waves,” but in a less dramatic fashion. The prisoner population declined in the region (see Figure 7.1), but more slowly than the general rate. On 1 January 1954, the population of the four largest camps in the region—Siblag, Voroninlag, Sevkuzbasslag and Iuzhkuzbasslag—stood at 51,192, or roughly 3.86 percent of the Gulag’s total prisoner population. For 1959 we can estimate this percentage at 5.32, and for 1960 at 6.42. In particular, the Kemerovo Province camps of Sevkuzbasslag and Iuzhkuzbasslag grew in both absolute and relative size, following an initial decline after Stalin’s death. This deserves mention, in part, because one might think that as the region developed economically, there would be less need for forced labour, but Kemerovo Province was both more densely populated and more heavily industrialized than most other areas of Siberia.

**Figure 7.1: 1 January populations for key Western Siberian camps, 1953-1960<sup>13</sup>**

Year	Siblag	Voroninlag	Sevkuzbasslag	Iuzhkuzbasslag	Gulag total
1953	30,114	33,983	18,174	24,629	2,468,524

<sup>12</sup> Miriam Dobson, *Khrushchev’s Cold Summer: Gulag Returnees, Crime, and the Fate of Reform after Stalin* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009) 109.

<sup>13</sup> The camp population figures come from *Sistema ispravitel’no-trudovykh lagerei v SSSR, 1923-1960: Spravochnik*, compiled by M. B. Smirnov, edited by N. G. Okhotin and A. B. Roginskii, (Moscow: Zven’ia, 1998) 392, 194, 386, and 520. The Gulag total figures for 1954-1956 come from Document 49, A. B. Bezborodov, I. V. Bezborodova and V. M. Khrustalev, eds. *Istoriia Staliniskogo Gulaga: Tom 4: Naselenie Gulaga: chislennost’ i usloviia sodержaniia* (Moscow: Rosspen, 2004), 135, and for 1959 and 1960 from A. I. Kokurin and N. V. Petrov, eds., *GULAG (Glavnoe upravlenie lagerei) 1917-1960* (Moscow: “Materik,” 2002), 447.

	---	5 MARCH	1953: DEATH	OF STALIN	---
1954	17,410	10,904	8,976	13,902	1,325,003
1955	12,593	11,102	11,948	17,612	1,075,280
1956	9,268	9,307	12,379	18,199	781,630
1957	10,908	8,909	12,880	20,084	?
1958	10,150	6,884	?	?	?
1959	?	6,197	11,341	19,844	862,707
1960	6,929	3,174	10,260	17,036	582,717

As de-Stalinization gained momentum, authorities sought to understand the excesses of the Stalin years, especially following Khrushchev's February 1956 "secret speech" denouncing the crimes of the Stalin era.<sup>14</sup> In April 1956, a former NKVD investigator, who had been stationed in the Narym area during the years of the "Great Terror," claimed, "at the time [1937-38] I had no idea that the cases against citizens were fabricated," but, "from today's perspective," it was clear that "all sorts of files" contained falsified documents.<sup>15</sup> However, the accounting of the Stalin era was not without moral ambiguity. Khrushchev himself did not denounce the rapid industrialization or collectivization campaigns that led to the Gulag's growth, for example, and focused instead on party members who had been unjustly arrested in 1937 and 1938. The general public, moreover, showed some sympathy towards some of the former prisoners, but clearly feared others, and worried about the effects of dismantling the camp system. Recent scholarship has also revealed the public's decidedly mixed reaction to Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, first published in November 1962 in the journal *Novyi mir*.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>14</sup> For the text of the speech, see "Speech to the 20<sup>th</sup> Congress of the C.P.S.U." at <http://www.marxists.org/archive/khrushchev/1956/02/24.htm> (last accessed 29 July 2010)

<sup>15</sup> Tsentr dokumentatsii noveishei istorii Tomskoi oblasti (TsDNI TO) fond 607, opis' 1, delo 2268, list 156 (Protokol doprosa).

<sup>16</sup> See Miriam Dobson, "Contesting the Paradigms of De-Stalinization: Readers' Responses to *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*," *Slavic Review* 64.3 (2005): 580-600.

Indeed, the massive reductions in prisoners, first with amnesties for prisoners serving relatively light sentences and then, under Khrushchev, the release of many Article 58ers, led to problems in the region.<sup>17</sup> Over half of the former prisoners who had arrived in Novosibirsk as a result of the Amnesty of 1953 chose to remain in the city. Here, they faced discrimination and rampant unemployment, which some estimates place possibly as high as fifty percent.<sup>18</sup> In fact, crime became such a problem in Novosibirsk, especially around the area of Combine 179, that the city's police chief demanded that the Provincial Party Committee procure several hundred soldiers to help with security.<sup>19</sup>

The region's camps did not experience the same large-scale strikes as some parts of the Gulag, although smaller strikes and disturbances occurred.<sup>20</sup> Sibltag remained operational as throughout the 1950s, as did many of the area's main camps, including Sevkuzbasslag and Iuzhkuzbasslag, both forestry camps in Kemerovo Province. Due in large part to Khrushchev's de-Stalinization campaign, political prisoners would now make up only a small fraction of the prison camp and colony population. A return to more repressive criminal justice measures, however, meant that the Soviet Union's prison camp population grew once again as the 1960s progressed.<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup> The first post-Stalin amnesty came on 27 March 1953, just three weeks after Stalin's death. This amnesty targeted "Prisoners who had displayed a conscientious attitude toward work and whose crimes did not represent a 'significant danger for the state'." (See Dobson, *Khrushchev's Cold Summer*, 37). The amnesty decree also reduced the sentences of many other prisoners. Like the amnesty of 1945, this amnesty did not affect most Article 58ers.

<sup>18</sup> See Marc Elie, "Les politiques à L'égard des Libérés du Goulag: Amnistiés et réhabilités dans la région de Novosibirsk, 1953-1960," *Cahiers du Monde russe* 47.1-2 (2006): 327-348, esp. 330.

<sup>19</sup> Elie, "Amnistiés et réhabilités," 334.

<sup>20</sup> For more on the post-Stalin uprisings see, for example, Applebaum, *Gulag*, 484-505; Steven A. Barnes, "'In a Manner Befitting Soviet Citizens': An Uprising in the Post-Stalin Gulag," *Slavic Review* 64.4 (2005): 823-850; and Marta Craveri, "The Strikes in Norilsk and Vorkuta Camps, and their Role in the Breakdown of the Stalinist Forced Labour System," in Marcel van der Linden and Tom Brass, eds., *Free and Unfree Labour: The Debate Continues* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1997): 363-378.

<sup>21</sup> This is an important theme in Dobson's work. See Dobson, *Khrushchev's Cold Summer*.

In the end, it is difficult to say whether or not the Gulag in Western Siberia was a “success” from the regime’s point of view. Even during the Stalin era, the region was never home to a priority camp, and thus often had to fulfil economic plans using unfit prisoner contingents, while healthier prisoners were sent elsewhere. The Gulag never met its goal of economic self-sufficiency, and Western Siberia itself developed rapidly in the Stalin era, suggesting a waning need for forced labourers. It does not appear, moreover, that forced labour was the catalyst for growth in the region. The wartime evacuations of factories and personnel to the region, as well as the wartime mobilization effort, probably did more to encourage rapid development in the area than any Gulag camp, colony, or special settlement. The cruel irony, then, is that the tremendous suffering of the Soviet Union’s forced labourers resulted in few significant economic contributions. The Gulag was terribly inefficient, both as a site of economic activity, and as a site of isolation.

*Appendix: Distribution of Gulag Prisoners by Region*

The popular image of the Gulag is one of remote concentration camps, completely isolated from society, where escape would be pointless because there would be nowhere to go. While there is certainly truth to this image, it is not completely borne out by reality. The Gulag had camps everywhere. Indeed, a map of federally administered Gulag camp headquarters in the former Soviet Union reveals many camps near population centres, including in European Russia near Moscow (see Figure A.1). Even many of the camps east of the Urals are located in the southern, more populated regions of Siberia.

**Figure A.1: Map of Federally Administered Gulag Camps<sup>1</sup>**



Even from this map, of course, we see clusters of camps in sparsely populated areas, such as Kolyma, the Far East, the Urals, and northern European Russia. But generally

<sup>1</sup> Map comes from the Memorial Society website: <http://www.memo.ru/history/nkvd/gulag/maps/ussri.htm> (last accessed: 7 July 2010)

speaking the presence of so many camps in populated areas counters the popular image of the Gulag as a system of camps completely isolated from Soviet society.

If we examine camps and colonies administered by provincial, territorial or republic level NKVD administrations, moreover, the presence of camps in or around population centres is even more striking. Almost every province, territory and republic had its own Administration of Corrective Labour Camps and Colonies or Department of Corrective Labour Colonies, usually administered from the regional capital, by the regional NKVD administration. These camps do not appear on the map, above (Figure A.1). Prisoner populations in these camps ranged from several hundred prisoners to tens of thousands, depending on the time and place. In other words, these locally administered camps held huge numbers of prisoners (Figure A.2).

**Figure A.2: 1 Jan Prisoner Population, Locally Administered Camps<sup>2</sup>**

Year	1935	1937	1939	1941	1945	1949	1953	1957	1960
Pop.	307,093	375,376	381,581	434,624	745,171	1,139,874	741,643	315,882	306,438

In 1949, the peak year listed, there were eight regions that housed over 30,000 prisoners in locally administered camps: Ukrainian SSR (156,825), Sverdlovsk Province (63,330), Khabarovsk Territory (37,576), Uzbek SSR (37,447), Molotovskaia (Perm) Province (34,102), Moscow Province (31,692), Kemerovo Province (31,679), and Kazakh Territory (30,566). These are a mix of central and remote regions.

---

<sup>2</sup> This information is adapted from Table 2: “*Chislennost’ zakliuchennykh v ITU, podvedomstvennykh territorial’nykh organam GULAGa*,” in Chapter 4 of *Sistema ispravitel’no-trudovykh lagerei v SSSR, 1923-1960: Spravochnik*, compiled by M. B. Smirnov, edited by N. G. Okhotin and A. B. Roginskii, (Moscow: Zven’ia, 1998), 533-537 (henceforth cited as *Sistema*). The data here are not entirely clear. For example, *Sistema* includes Sibltag as a federally administered camp, even though it was technically the Administration of Corrective Labour Camps and Colonies of the Administration of the NKVD of Novosibirsk Province (UITLiK UNKVD NSO) from 1937 until 1942, when Sibltag was re-created and it split into two camp administrations. Yet, the table cited here lists the Novosibirsk Province figures as lower than those available from other sources (1939: 9,842; 1941: 7,962; 1945: 17,877; 1949: 15,188; 1953: 9,692; compare these figures with those in Chapters IV and VI of the present dissertation). In any case, it is not clear that these locally administered camps had much autonomy, as central Gulag and NKVD directives applied to them as well as to the federal camps.

Given the presence of both federally and locally administered camps, deciphering the population density—or distribution—of prisoners is not easy. One on-line research project has attempted to do so, and it includes Gulag population density maps for the Stalin era and beyond. While these maps—using data from the Memorial Society—are very helpful, they appear to include only prisoners at federally administered camps, and not the local corrective-labour camp and colony administrations/departments.<sup>3</sup> If we use Memorial’s data on federally administered camps in combination with the data for the local camps (available for selected years), then we can begin to understand the extent of prisoner distribution during the Stalin era.<sup>4</sup>

On their “Map of the Gulag,” the Memorial Society has divided the former Soviet Union into eighteen geographic regions. In order to align with the topic of the present dissertation, Figure A.3 (see below) adds a nineteenth region, “Greater Novosibirsk,” which removes Novosibirsk and Tomsk Province from the map’s “East Urals/West Siberia” region and Kemerovo Province from the map’s “East-Central Siberia” region, and combines them. Adding the 1 January prisoner population for selected years for each federally administered camp in each mega region, plus that of the locally administered camps, will give us an idea of where most prisoners were sent, regardless of the actual number of camps in the area. In order to avoid a completely cumbersome table, but also to be able to use the available data on locally administered camps (which includes only selected years), Figure A.3 includes the population figures for five years: 1935, 1939, 1945, 1949 and 1953. The mega-regions are listed geographically roughly from east to

---

<sup>3</sup> See the impressive “Mapping the Gulag Research Project,” ESRC, 2009-2010 [<http://www.gulagmaps.org/>] (last accessed 26 July 2010)

<sup>4</sup> These data are available in *Sistema*, and on-line on Memorial’s interactive “Map of the Gulag” (see Figure A.1).

west, while the territorial entities contained within each mega-region are listed in Figure A.4, at the end of the Appendix.

**Figure A.3: Gulag Prisoner Distribution, Selected Years**

<i>Mega-region</i>	1935	1939	1945	1949	1953
1 North-East	36,790	139,995	90,365	143,104	177,559
2 Amur-Pacific	216,586	321,285	122,560	120,486	144,324
3 Baikal-Buriatia	7,510	118,407	40,747	103,351	94,840
4 Siberia: North	0	11,560	31,822	72,399	88,056
5 Siberia: East-Central	7,309	23,521	53,400	70,269	79,162
6 <b><i>Greater Novosibirsk</i></b>	<b>72,318</b>	<b>79,784</b>	<b>84,798</b>	<b>130,916</b>	<b>158,659</b>
7 East Urals/West Siberia	13,917	61,479	126,564	166,104	176,832
8 Kazakhstan	43,299	47,705	87,500	117,511	124,799
9 Central Asia	45,693	55,303	58,393	60,199	42,280
ASIA (in thousands)	443.4	859.0	696.1	984.3	1,086.5
10 European North	107,144	333,478	185,834	309,763	334,079
11 Volga-Urals	14,128	90,559	152,232	213,902	220,790
12 Volga-Southern Urals	63,973	110,324	167,039	179,574	209,644
13 Caucasus	10,426	8,115	48,692	56,034	50,822
14 Russian Caucasus	25,907	35,380	49,700	86,877	106,081
15 Ukraine and Moldova	60,467	47,312	39,440	173,470	114,556
16 Central Black Earth	3,630	10,000	22,781	23,861	16,113
17 Leningrad region	67,583	49,960	8,503	48,386	25,396
18 Moscow region	221,234	74,630	92,685	106,951	172,479
19 Belarus and the Baltics	6,769	5,174	6,633	62,750	39,428
EUROPE (in thousands)	581.3	764.9	773.5	1,261.6	1,289.4

Note that there are a few caveats regarding the data in Figure A.3. The “Map of the Gulag” divides the Ural Mountains amongst several different mega regions, which also include non-Ural provinces and territories (Siberia: North; East Urals/West Siberia; European North; Volga-Urals; and Volga-Southern Urals). This division has the advantage of separating European from Asian provinces, territories, and republics, but the disadvantage of making it difficult to gauge the full extent of prisoners sent specifically to the Urals, which was probably on the whole where authorities sent the greatest number of prisoners. The data below also do not include special settlers. And, finally, the numbers should be considered estimates. Not every camp lists a 1 January population

figure for each of the years listed, for example, so for these camps Figure A.3 uses the closest available figure (except for 1953, where it uses the closest available figure prior to Stalin's death, as the Gulag population changed drastically after Stalin's death). Due to name changes of various camps, it is also possible that several camp totals are missing from this table.<sup>5</sup> Finally, it appears that a few of the camps listed on the map are actually subdivisions of the locally administered camps, meaning that it is possible that for certain regions a small number of prisoners have been counted twice.<sup>6</sup> The data in Figure A.3 are nevertheless useful for comparative purposes, region by region, and, in any case, all available Gulag population data are more of an estimate than a precise figure, given that prisoners in transit were not counted for individual camps and that officials often had trouble tracking individual prisoners.

On the whole, from Figure A.3, we can conclude that the largest regions by prisoner population tend to be remote areas, particularly the Urals, the northern areas of European Russia, and the Far East. The Moscow region and Ukraine (in 1949) are exceptions to this, and clearly the large numbers in the Novosibirsk region when compared to Siberia North suggest that extreme isolation was not the Gulag's only purpose. For most years, the number of prisoners held in places of confinement within European areas of the Soviet Union was *greater than the number held in areas east of the Ural Mountains*, however. Of the European areas, northern, more isolated, areas, where many well-known

---

<sup>5</sup> The table uses the map data in conjunction with the data from *Sistema*, in order to prevent this from happening as much as possible.

<sup>6</sup> Take, for example, the Mineevskoe LO KhoZU MVD in Gor'kii Province. It is included as a separate camp on the map, but is listed under the jurisdiction of the UITLK UNKVD for Gor'kii Province. For 1949 the map lists the camp's population at 2,000 prisoners, while the chart in *Sistema*, 534, lists the population for the whole UITLK for Gor'kii Province in 1949 at 9,451. It is possible, then, that the 2,000 prisoners from the Mineevskoe LO have been counted twice, once as a separate camp and then once as part of the locally administered camps. There are not very many of these examples, however, and the numbers are relatively small, so the general figures are useful, regardless.

camps were located (such as Vorkutlag, Pechorlag and Belbaltlag) held a huge number of prisoners. Indeed, European North was the single largest mega-region on 1 January of four out of the five years in question. The Moscow region also held a very large number of prisoners, including the most in the entire camp system in January 1935.

Of the regions east of the Urals, the Greater Novosibirsk region—by far the smallest geographically—was clearly a key area, but not the most important. Out of nine Asian mega-regions, Novosibirsk placed third in 1935, fourth in 1939, fifth in 1945, third in 1949, and third in 1953 in terms of prisoner population.<sup>7</sup> The North-East (Kolyma) mega region is clearly important, but is not as large as one might think, given Kolyma's symbolic status as the heart of the Gulag. Considering all nineteen mega-regions, the North-East ranked ninth in 1935, third in 1939, seventh in 1945, sixth in 1949 and fourth in 1953. The Greater Novosibirsk region—Siberia's most densely populated in terms of general population—had a prisoner population not far below that of the North-East (and, in 1935, even held more prisoners).

In conclusion, then, the distribution of prisoners in the Soviet Union reveals some of what we would expect (large numbers of prisoners in isolated areas), but also clearly shows that the strong association of the Gulag with Siberia and the Far East is misleading.

**Figure A.4: List of territorial entities within each mega region**

1. North-East (Chukotskii avt. okrug; Kamchatskaia obl.; Koriaskii avt. okrug; Magadanskaia obl.; Respublika Sakha)
2. Amur-Pacific (Amurskaia obl.; Evreiskaia avt. obl.; Khabarovskii krai; Primorskii krai; Sakhalinskaia obl.)
3. Baikail-Buriatiia (Aginskii Buriatskii avt. okrug; Chitinskaia obl.; Irkutskaia obl.; Respublika Buriatiia; Ust'-Ordynskii Buriatskii avt. okrug)

---

<sup>7</sup> Note that the East Urals/West Siberia figures are in this ranking misleading, as most of the prisoners in this region were located in Sverdlovsk Province, which is generally considered to be part of the Urals, rather than Siberia. Omsk Province, for example, did not have a large number of prisoners.

4. Siberia: North (Evenkiiskii avt. okrug; Iamalo-Nentskii avt. okrug; Khanti-Mansiiskii avt. okrug; northern Krasonairskii krai; northern Tiumenskaia obl.)
5. Siberia: East Central (Altaiskii krai; Krasnoiarskii krai; Krasnoiarskii krai: Respublika Khakassia; Respublika Gornyi Altai; Respublika Tuva)
6. Greater Novosibirsk (Kemerovskaia obl.; Novosibirskaia obl.; Tomskaia obl.)
7. East Urals/West Siberia (Kurganskaia obl.; Omskaia obl.; Sverdlovskaia obl.; Tiumenskaia obl.)
8. Kazakhstan (Kazakhstan)
9. Central Asia (Kirgiziia; Tadzhikistan; Turkmeniia; Uzbekistan)
10. European North (Arkhangel'skaia obl.; Kareliia; Murmanskaia obl.; Nenetskii avt. okr.; Respublika Komi; Vologodskaia obl.)
11. Volga-Urals (Chuvashskaia respublika; Gorkovskaia obl.; Kirovskaa obl.; Komi-Permiatskii avt. okrug; Kostromskaia obl.; Mariiskaia respublika; Permskaia obl.; Udmurtskaia respublika)
12. Volga-South Urals (Bashkirskaa respublika; Cheliabinskaia obl.; Kuibyshevskaa obl.; Mordovskaia ASSR; Orenburgskaia obl.; Penzenskaia obl.; Saratovskaia obl.; Tatarskaia respublika; Ul'ianovskaia obl.)
13. Caucasus (Armeniia; Azerbaidzhan; Gruziiia)
14. Russian Caucasus (Adygeia; Astrakhanskaia obl.; Checheno-Ingushetiia; Dagestan; Kabardino-Balkariia; Kalmytskii; Karachaevo-Cherkassia; Krasnodarskii krai; Rostovskaia obl.; Severnaia Osetiia; Stavropolskii krai; Volgogradskaia obl.)
15. Ukraine and Moldaviia (Ukraine, Moldaviia)
16. Central Black Earth (Belgorodskaia obl.; Brianskaia obl.; Kurskaia obl.; Lisetskaia obl.; Orlovskaa obl.; Tambovskaa obl.; Voronezhskaa obl.)
17. Leningrad region (Leningradskaa obl.; Novgorodskaa obl.; Pskovskaa obl.)
18. Moscow region (Iaroslavskaa obl.; Ivanovskaa obl.; Kaluzhskaa obl.; Moskovskaa obl.; Riazanskaa obl.; Smolenskaa obl.; Tul'skaia obl.; Tverskaia obl.; Vladimirskaa obl.)
19. Belarus/Baltic (Belorussiia; Estoniia, Kaliningradskaa obl.; Latviia; Litva)

## Glossary

- Article 58ers                      Prisoners sentenced under Article 58 of the Criminal Code, the article covering so-called “counter-revolutionary activity.” Article 58ers are often termed “politicals” or “political prisoners” in the memoir literature.
- Corrective-Labour Camp/Corrective-Labour Colony                      The Gulag administered two types of prison camp systems, Corrective-Labour Camps (*Ispravitel’no-trudovye lageri*, or ITL) and Corrective-Labour Colonies (*Ispravitel’no-trudovye kolonie*, or ITK). Camps tended to be located in more remote locations, and tended to incarcerate prisoners with longer sentences, than Colonies.
- Chekist                              Commonly used term for NKVD agents. The original state security force following the revolution was called the Extraordinary Commission (*Chrezvychainaia komissii*) or ChK, “Cheka,” for short. Thus, the agents of the Cheka were *chekisty*, or “chekists.” Even after the Cheka evolved into the OGPU and then the NKVD, the term remained common.
- Cultural-Educational Department/ Section                      Translation of *Kul’turno-vospitatel’nyi otdel/chast’* (KVO/KVCh). This was the camp administrative department responsible for cultural and educational activities, as well as propaganda, within the camps. The Cultural-Educational Sections also played a role in monitoring prisoners’ behaviour.
- GANO                                  State Archive of Novosibirsk Province (*Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Novosibirskoi oblasti*)
- GARF                                  State Archive of the Russian Federation (*Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rossiskoi federatsii*)
- GATO                                  State Archive of Tomsk Province (*Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Tomskoi oblasti*)
- ISG*                                      *Istoriia stalinskogo Gulaga*: a multi-volume document collection on the history of the Gulag, cited as *ISG* in the footnotes, followed by the volume number (e.g., *ISG 4*).
- ITL/ITK*                                See Corrective Labour Camp/Colony
- Katorga*                                Originally a type of hard-labour prison camp punishment instituted during the reign of Peter the Great. The term was resurrected in

1943 for the camps with the strictest regimen. Prisoners of these camps were referred to as *katorzhniki*.

<i>Kulak</i>	A so-called wealthy peasant; literally means “fist”. The dekulakization campaign of the early 1930s sent hundreds of thousands of “kulak” families into exile in the North, Siberia, the Urals and Kazakhstan.
Labour Settlement	See “Special Settlement.”
Memorial Society	A Russian NGO founded in the late 1980s in order to create a memorial to Gulag victims. Now devoted to human rights issues in Russia, to preserving the memories of Gulag survivors, and to collecting and publishing information about the Gulag.
Militarized Guard	See “VOKhR.”
NKVD	The People’s Commissariat of Internal Affairs ( <i>Narodnyi kommissariat vnutrennikh del</i> ). Originally a commissariat (ministry) of the Russian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic (RSFSR), it became an all-Union organization in 1934. At this time, it absorbed the OGPU. The NKVD oversaw the regular police, security police, places of detention (including the Gulag), fire-fighting, and other institutions. It was divided in 1946 into the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) and the Ministry of State Security (MGB).
OGPU	The Unified State Political Administration ( <i>Ob’edinennoe gosudarstvennoe politicheskoe upravlenie</i> ). This was the all-Union organization in charge of state security; it was absorbed into the newly formed all-Union NKVD in 1934.
Province	The Soviet Union was divided politically into several administrative regions. These included the <i>krai</i> and the <i>oblast’</i> . I have chosen to translate <i>krai</i> as “territory” and <i>oblast’</i> as “province.”
<i>Punkt</i>	See “Station”
RGAE	Russian State Archive of the Economy ( <i>Rossiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv ekonomiki</i> )
RGASPI	Russian State Archive for Social and Political History ( <i>Rossiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv sotsial’no-politicheskoi istorii</i> )

Second Department	The Accounting and Distribution Department, sometimes called the URO ( <i>Uchetno-raspredelitel'nyi otdel</i> ). Each subdivision had its own Second Section ( <i>Uchetno-raspredelitel'naia chast'</i> )
Special Settlement	Exile settlement, at first for the kulaks during the dekulakization campaigns, and later for the exile of national groups. At times these were called “labour settlements,” but for simplicity’s sake this dissertation refers to them as special settlements (and to their inhabitants as special settlers) throughout.
Station	Translation of <i>punkt</i> . Individual camps were divided into subdivisions ( <i>podrazdelenie</i> , sometimes, <i>lagotdelenie</i> ), which in turn were divided into camp stations ( <i>punkty</i> ), although occasionally individual camp stations, particularly transit stations, were not part of a separate subdivision and answered directly to the camp administration. An individual <i>punkt</i> might hold from several hundred to a few thousand prisoners.
Subdivision	Each camp of the Gulag was divided into numerous sub-camps, or subdivisions ( <i>podrazdelenie</i> ), which in turn were divided into even smaller camps, called stations ( <i>punkty</i> ).
Territory	The Soviet Union was divided into several administrative regions. These included the <i>krai</i> and the <i>oblast'</i> . I have chosen to translate <i>krai</i> as “territory” and <i>oblast'</i> as “province.”
Third Department	The Operative-Chekist Department ( <i>Operativno-chekistskoe otdelenie</i> ), the camp department subordinate to the Gulag’s Operative-Chekist Administration, which reported directly to the Deputy-Director of the NKVD. The Third Department represented state security organs within the camps, and was in charge of investigating regimen infractions. Camp subdivision and station administrations had Third Sections ( <i>tret'ia chast'</i> ), usually located in their own building, outside of the zone.
TsDNI TO	Centre for the Documentation of the Contemporary History of Tomsk Province ( <i>Tsentr dokumentatsii noveishei istorii Tomskoi oblasti</i> )
<i>Tufta</i>	Slang term for the falsification of work quotas.
VOKhR	Acronym for the Militarized Guard ( <i>Voenizirovannaya okhrana</i> ), which conducted most of the guarding duties within the Gulag. They were “militarized” in the sense that, like soldiers, they lived together in barracks, received pay, and were often armed.

## Bibliography

### Primary Sources

#### *Archival Sources*

GANO (*Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Novosibirskoi oblasti / State Archive of Novosibirsk Province*)

- fond P-4 (Novosibirsk Province Party Committee)
- fond P-260 (Political Department of the Novosibirsk Province Corrective Labour Camp and Colony Administration)
- fond R-20 (Novosibirsk Province Procuracy)
- fond R-600 (Documents of the Novosibirsk Memorial Society)

GARF (*Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rossiskoi Federatsii / State Archive of the Russian Federation*)

- fond 8360 (Main Administration of Forestry Camps)
- fond 9401, opis' 1a (NKVD operational orders)
- fond 9414 (Gulag)
- fond 9479 (Special Settlements)

GATO (*Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Tomskoi oblasti / State Archive of Tomsk Province*)

- fond R-1151 (Corrective-Labour Colonies of Tomsk Province)
- fond R-1152 (Tomasinlag)

Memorial Society Archives

- fond 2 (Personal memoirs)

RGASPI (*Rossiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv sotsial'no-politicheskoi istorii / Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History*)

- fond 17 (Central Committee of the Communist Party)
- fond 560 (Memoirs relating to the "period of the cult of personality")

RGAE (*Rossiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv ekonomiki / Russian state archive of the Economy*)

- fond 7484 (Ministry of Agriculture)
- fond 7733 (Ministry of Finance)

Tomsk Memorial Society Archives

TsDNI TO (*Tsentr dokumentatsii noveishei istorii Tomskoi oblasti / The Centre for the Documentation of the Contemporary History of Tomsk Province*)

- fond 80 (Tomsk City Party Committee)
- fond 242 (Political Department of Tomasinlag)
- fond 356 (Party Organization of the Third Camp Station of Siblag)

fond 607 (Tomsk Province Party Committee)  
fond 1076 (Party Organization of the Tomsk region ITK no. 8)  
fond 1492 (Party Organization of the Tomsk region ITK no. 7)  
fond 4151 (Primary Party Organization of Tomasinlag)

### *Newspapers*

*Sibirskaia perekovka*

*Sibirskaia Pravda*

### **Published Archival Documents**

- Bikmetov, R. S., N. V. Galkin, V. A. Sergienko and S. A. Suzdal'tseva, eds. *Neizvestnyi Kuzbass, 1943-1991 gg: Sbornik arkhivnykh dokumentov*. Kemerovo: Izd-vo "Sovremennaia otechestvenna kn.," 1993.
- Bol'shakova, A. V., S. A. Krasil'nikov, and B. P. Trenin, eds. *Nazinskaia tragediia: Iz istorii zemli Tomskoi: Dokumental'noe nauchnoe izdanie*. Tomsk: Nauka, 2002.
- Danilov, Viktor P. and Sergei A. Krasil'nikov, eds. *Spetspereselentsy v Zapadnoi Sibiri 1930-vesna 1945 g.* 4 vols. Novosibirsk: Nauka and Ekor, 1992-1996.
- Danilov, Viktor P., Roberta Manning and Lynne Viola, eds. *Tragediia sovetskoii derevni: kollektivizatsiia i raskulachivanie: dokumenty i materialy v 5 tomakh.* 5 vols. Moscow: Rosspen, 1999-2006.
- Dugin, A. N., ed. *Neizvestnyi GULAG: Dokumenty i fakty*. Moscow: Nauka, 1999.
- Frierson, Cathy, and Semyon Vilensky, ed. *Children of the Gulag*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010.
- Gvozdkova, L. I., ed. *Prinuditel'nyi trud: Ispravitel'no-trudovye lageria v Kuzbasse (30-50e gg.)*. 2 vols. Kemerovo: Kuzbassvuzizdat, 1994.
- The GULAG Press 1920-1937*. The Netherlands: IDC Publishers, 1999. Microfiche.
- Khlevniuk, Oleg V. *The History of the Gulag: From Collectivization to the Great Terror*. Trans. Vadim Saklo. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004.
- Khlevniuk, Oleg V. et al., eds. *Zakliuchennye na stroikakh kommunizma: GULAG i ob'ekty energetiki v SSSR: Sobranie dokumentov*. Moscow: Rosspen, 2008.
- Khlusov, M. I. and V. P. Dmitrenko, eds. *Ekonomika GULAGa i ee rol' v razvitii strany: sbornik dokumentov*. Moscow: In-t rossiskoi istorii RAN, 1998.
- Kokurin, A. I., ed. "Gulag v gody voiny: Doklad nachal'nika Gulaga NKVD SSSR V.G. Nasedkina. Avgust 1944 g." *Istoricheskii arkhiv*, no. 3 (1994): 60-86.
- Kokurin, A. I., and Iu. Morukov. "GULAG: struktura i kadry." *Svobodnaia mysl'* 8 (2000): 111-128.
- — —, eds. *Stalinskie stroiki GULaga: 1930-1953*. Moscow: Materik, 2005.
- Kokurin, A. I., N. V. Petrov, and V. N. Shostakovskii, eds. *GULAG (Glavnoe upravlenie lagerei) 1917-1960*. Moscow: Materik, 2000.
- Korallov, M. M., ed. *Teatr GULAGa: Vospominaniia, dokumenty, ocherki*. Moscow: "Memorial", 1995.
- Kozlov, V. A., et al., eds. *Neizvestnaia Rossiia: XX vek.* 4 Vols. Moscow: Istoricheskie nasledie, 1992-1994.
- Kozlov, V. P., Iu. N. Afanasiev, A. O. Chubar'ian, R. Conquest, E. Danielson, T. Emmons, P. Gregory, O. V. Khlevniuk, V. S. Khristoforov, V. A. Kozlov, S. V. Mironenko, A. I. Solzhenitsyn, A. K. Sorokin, and A. N. Iakovlev, eds. *Istoriia*

- stalinskogo Gulaga: Konets 1920-kh – pervaiia polovina 1950-kh godov.* 7 Volumes. Moscow: Rosspen, 2004 (volumes 1-6) and 2005 (volume 7).  
 Volume 1: *Massovye repressii v SSSR.* S. V. Mironenko and N. Werth, eds.  
 Volume 2: *Karatel'naia sistema: struktura i kadry.* N. V. Petrov and N. I. Vladimirtsev, eds.  
 Volume 3: *Ekonomika Gulaga.* O. V. Khlevniuk, ed.  
 Volume 4: *Naselenie Gulaga: chislennost' i usloviia sodержaniia.* A. B. Bezborodov, I. V. Bezborodova, and V. M. Khrustalev, eds.  
 Volume 5: *Spetspereselentsy v SSSR.* T. V. Tsarvskaiia-Diakina, ed.  
 Volume 6: *Vosstaniia, bunt'y i zabastovki zakliuchennykh.* V. A. Kozlov and O. V. Lavinskaia, eds.  
 Volume 7: *Sovetskaia repressivno-karatel'naia politika i penitentsiarnaia sistema v materialakh Gosudarstvennogo arkhiva Rossiiskoi Federatsii: Anotirovannyi ukazatel' del.* A. V. Dobrovskaiia, V. A. Kozlov, and S. V. Mironenko, eds.
- Krasil'nikov, Sergei A, ed. "Rozhdenie Gulag: diskusii v verkhnikh eshelonakh vlasti." *Istoricheskii arkhiv* 4 (1997): 142-56.
- Maksheev, V. and Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, eds. *Narymskaia khronika, 1930-1945: Tragediia spetspereselentsev. Dokumenty i vospominaniia.* Moscow: Russkii put', 1997.
- Pipes, Richard, ed. *The Unknown Lenin: From the Secret Archives.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996.
- Uimanov, V. N., ed. *Repressii. Kak eto bylo... (Zapadnaia Sibir' v kontse 20-x - nachale 50-x godov).* Tomsk: Izdatel'stvo Tomskogo Universiteta, 1995.
- Vilenskii, S. S., ed. *Soprotivlenie v Gulage: Vospominaniia. Pis'ma. Dokumenty.* Moscow: Vozvrashchenie, 1992.
- — —, ed. *Poeziia uznikov GULAGA: Antologiia.* Moscow: Materik, 2005.
- Vilenskii, S. S., A. I. Kokurin, G. V. Atmashkina, and I. Iu. Novichenko, eds. *Deti GULAGA : 1918-1956.* Moscow: Mezhdunarodnyi fond "Demokratiia", 2002.
- Viola, Lynne, V. P. Danilov, N. A. Ivnikskii and Denis Kozlov, eds. *The War Against the Peasantry 1927-1930: The Tragedy of the Soviet Countryside.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005.
- Zaitsev, E. A., ed. *Sbornik zakonodatel'nykh i normativnykh aktov o repressiakh i reabilitatsii zhertv politicheskikh repressii.* Moscow: Respublika, 1993.
- Zaitsev, V. V., ed. *Letters from the GULag 1943-1948.* Special issue, *Soviet and Post-Soviet Review* 30, no. 1 (2003): i-110.

#### ***Published Memoirs/Literary Accounts Cited***

- Adamova-Sloizberg, Olga. "My Journey." In Simeon Vilensky, ed. *Till My Tale Is Told: Women's Memoirs of the Gulag.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999.
- Alin, D. E. *Malo slov, a gor'ka rechen'ka: Nevydumannye rasskazy.* Tomsk: Volodei, 1997.
- Bardach, Janusz and Kathleen Gleeson. *Man Is Wolf To Man: Surviving the Gulag.* Berkely: University of California Press, 1999.
- Baryshnikova, T. N. "Dorogaia moia kul'tbrigada." In L. S. Mukhin, ed. *Ozerlag: kak eto bylo.* Irkutsk: Vost.-Sib. kn Izd-vo, 1992.

- Belousov, V. *Zapiski dokhodiagi*. Ashkhabad, Turkmenistan, 1992.
- Berger, Iosif. *Krushenie pokoleniia. Vospominaniia*. Translated Ia. Berger. Florence: Aurora, 1973.
- Boldyrev, N. N. "Zigzagi sud'by." In Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, ed., *Pozhivshi v GULAGE: Sbornik vospominanii*. Moscow: Rus. put', 2001, pages 73-140.
- Buber, Margarete. *Under Two Dictators*. Translated by Edward Fitzgerald. London: Victor Gollanz, 1949.
- Dotsenko, Paul. *The Struggle for a Democracy in Siberia, 1917-1920: Eyewitness Account of a Contemporary*. Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1983.
- Fel'tgeim, O. "Konets ssylki." *Annales contemporaines/Sovremennia zapiski* LXVIII (1939).
- Ginzburg, Eugenia. *Journey Into the Whirlwind*. Translated Paul Stevenson and Max Hayward. New York: HBJ, 1967.
- . *Within the Whirlwind*. Translated Ian Boland. New York: Harvest/HBJ, 1982.
- Gorchakov, Genrikh Natanovich. *Vospominaniia*. Jerusalem: Ierusalim.izdat.tsentr, 1995.
- Granovsky, Anotoli. *I Was An NKVD Agent*. New York: The Devin-Adair Company, 1962.
- Kaufman, Dr. A. I. *Lagernyi vrach: 16 let v Sovetskom Soiuze – vospominaniia sionista*. Tel-Aviv: Am Oved, 1973.
- Klein, Aleksandr. *Kleimenye, ili, Odin' sredi odinokikh: Zapiski katorzhnika*. Syktyvkar, 1995.
- Larina, Anna M. *Nezabyvaemoe*. Moscow: Izd-vo APN, 1989.
- . *This I Cannot Forget: The Memoirs of Nikolai Bukharin's Widow*. Introduction by Stephen Cohen, translated by Gary Kern. New York: W. W. Norton, 1993.
- Levi, Primo. *The Drowned and the Saved*. Translated by Raymond Rosenthal. New York: Vintage, 1989.
- Medvedskaia, Kseniia Dmitrievna. "Life Is Everywhere." In Veroniva Shapovalov, ed. *Remembering the Darkness: Women in Soviet Prisons*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001, pages 225-241.
- Mochulsky, Fyodor Vasilevich. *Gulag Boss: A Soviet Memoir*. Translated and edited by Deborah Kaple. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Noskovich, N. A. "Vospominaniia 'pridurka'" *Neva* 4 (2001): 165-183.
- Pol'skaia, Evgeniia Borisovna. *Eto my, Gospodi, pred Toboiu*. Nevinnomyssk, 1998.
- Razgon, Lev. *Plen v svoem otechestve*. Moscow: Kn. sad, 1994.
- Sats, N. I. *Zhizn' - iavlenie polosatoe*. Moscow: Novosti, 1991.
- Severiukhina, Ninel'. *Proshchanie s detstvom: Fragmenti semeinoi khroniki 1941-1944*. St. Petersburg: Izdatel'stvo imeni N.I. Novikova, 2004.
- Shalamov, Varlam. *Kolyma Tales*. Trans John Glad. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1980.
- Shapovalov, Veronica, ed. *Remembering the Darkness: Women in Soviet Prisons*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001.
- Sidorov, Sergei Alekseevich. *Zapiski sviashchennika Sergiia Sidorova*. Moscow: Pravoslav. Sviato-Tikhov Bogoslov. In-t., 1999.
- Solzhenitsyn, Aleksandr. *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*. Trans by Max Hayward and Ronald Hingley. New York: Bantam Books, 1990.

Vilensky, Simeon. *Till My Tale Is Told: Women's Memoirs of the Gulag*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999.

Volovich, Hava. "My Past." In Simeon Vilensky, editor. *Till My Tale Is Told: Women's Memoirs of the Gulag*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999: 240-276.

## Secondary Sources

### Reference Works

Bosworth, Mary, ed. *Encyclopedia of Prisons & Correctional Facilities*. London: Sage Publications, 2005.

Bell, Wilson and Marc Elie, compilers. "Selected Bibliography of Historical Works on the Gulag." *Gulag Studies* 1 (2008): 143-160

Iumashev, M. I., and B. A. Zhaleiko, eds. *Sbornik zakonov SSSR i Ukazov Prezidiuma Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR (1938-iul'-1956)*. Moscow: Gos.Izd. Iuricheskoi literatury, 1956.

Kokurin, A. I. and N. V. Petrov, compilers. *Lub'ianka: Organy VChK-OGPU-NKVD-NKGB-MGB-KGB 1917-1991: Spravochnik*. 2 vols. Moscow: Materik, 1997 & 2003.

Petrov, N. V. and K. V. Shorkin, compilers. *Kto rukovodil NKVD. 1934-1941: Spravochnik*. Moscow: Zven'ia, 1999.

Roginskii, A. B. and V. A. Tikhanova, eds. *Tvorchestvo i byt GULAGa: Katalog muzeinogo sobraniia Obshchestva "Memorial" = Art and Life in the Gulag: "Memorial" Society Museum Catalog*. Moscow: Zveni'ia, 1998.

Rossi, Zhak [Jacques Rossi]. *Spravochnik po GULAGu*. Moscow: Prosvet, 1991.

Roth, Mitchel P. *Prisons and Prison Systems: A Global Encyclopedia*. London: Greenwood Press, 2006.

Smirnov, M. B., A. B. Roginskii and N. G. Okhotin, eds. *Sistema ispravitel'no-trudovykh lagerei v SSSR, 1923-1960: Spravochnik*. Moscow: Zven'ia, 1998.

### Selected Websites

Criminal Code of the RSFSR (1926):

<http://law.edu.ru/norm/norm.asp?normID=1241189&subID=100093745.100093777#text>

Gulag: Many Days, Many Lives: <http://www.gulaghistory.org/>

Mapping the Gulag Research Project: <http://www.gulagmaps.org/>

Marxists Internet Archive: <http://marxists.org>

Memorial Society: <http://www.memo.ru>

Moscow Center for Prison Reform: <http://www.prison.org/>

Sakharov Center Gulag Memoir Database: <http://www.sakharov-center.ru/asfcd/auth/>

Seventeen Moments in Soviet History: <http://www.soviethistory.org>

Virtual'nyi muzei Gulaga: <http://www.gulagmuseum.org/>

### Secondary Sources (published)

Adler, Nancy. *The Gulag Survivor: Beyond the Soviet System*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 2002.

- Alexopoulos, Golfo. "Amnesty 1945: The Revolving Door of Stalin's Gulag." *Slavic Review* 64, no. 2 (2005): 274-306.
- . "Exiting the Gulag after War: Women, Invalids, and the Family." *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 57.4 (2009): 563-579.
- . "Portrait of a Con Artist as a Soviet Man." *Slavic Review* 57.4 (1998): 774-790.
- . "Stalin and the Politics of Kinship: Practices of Collective Punishment, 1920s-1940s." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 50.1 (2008): 91-117.
- . *Stalin's Outcasts: Aliens, Citizens, and the Soviet State, 1926-1936*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003.
- Alekseev, V. V. et al., eds. *Rabochii klass Sibiri v period uprocheniia i razvitiia sotsializma*. Novosibirsk: Nauka, 1984.
- Applebaum, Anne. *Gulag: A History*. New York: Doubleday, 2003.
- Arendt, Hannah. *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*. Revised and enlarged edition. New York: Penguin Books, 1994.
- . *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. New York: Harcourt, 1968.
- Armanski, G. *Maschinen des Terrors. Das Lager (KZ und GULAG) in der Moderne*. Münster: Verlag Westfälisches Dampfboot, 1993.
- Azarov, O. "Kedrovyi sor: La vie quotidienne dans un camp du Goulag a l'époque Stalinienne." *Vingtième Siècle*, no. 43 (1994): 69-87.
- Bacon, Edwin. *The Gulag at War: Stalin's Forced Labour System in the Light of the Archives*. New York: New York University Press, 1994.
- Barber, John, and Mark Harrison. *The Soviet Home Front, 1941-1945*. New York: Longman, 1991.
- Barenberg, Alan. "Prisoners Without Borders: Zazonniki and the Transformation of Vorkuta after Stalin." *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, 57.4 (2009): 513-534.
- Barnes, Steven A. "All for the Front, All for Victory!: The Mobilization of Forced Labor in the Soviet Union during World War Two." *International Labor and Working-Class History* 58 (2000): 239-260.
- . "'In a Manner Befitting Soviet Citizens': An Uprising in the Post-Stalin Gulag." *Slavic Review* 64.4 (2005): 823-850.
- . "Researching Daily Life in the Gulag." *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 1.2 (2000): 377-90.
- Baron, Nick. "Conflict and Complicity: The Expansion of the Karelian Gulag, 1923-1933." *Cahiers du Monde russe* 42.2-4 (2001): 615-648.
- . "Production and Terror: The Operation of the Karelian Gulag, 1933-1939." *Cahiers du Monde russe* 43.1 (2002): 139-179.
- Bauman, Zygmunt. *Modernity and the Holocaust*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1989.
- Bell, Wilson T. "Gulag Historiography: An Introduction." *Gulag Studies* 2-3 (2009-2010): 1-20.
- . "One Day in the Life of Educator Khrushchev: Labour and *Kul'turnost'* in the Gulag Newspapers." *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 46, no. 3-4 (2004): 289-314.
- Berliner, Joseph S. "Monetary Planning in the USSR." *American Slavic and East European Review* 9.4 (1950): 237-254.

- Beyrau, Dietrich. "Gulag: Die Lager und das Sowjetsystem." *Sozialwissenschaftliche Informationen* 29.3 (2000): 166-176.
- Blackwell, William. *The Beginnings of Russian Industrialization, 1800-1860*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968.
- Bollinger, M. J. *Stalin's Slave Ships: Kolyma, the Gulag Fleet, and the Role of the West*. Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2003.
- Boym, Svetlana. "'Banality of Evil,' Mimicry, and the Soviet Subject: Varlam Shalamov and Hannah Arendt." *Slavic Review* 67.2 (2008): 342-363.
- Borodkin, Leonid and Simon Ertz. "Coercion versus Motivation: Forced Labor in Norilsk." In Paul R. Gregory and Valery Lazarev, eds. *The Economics of Forced Labor: The Soviet Gulag*. Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2003.
- Borodkin, Leonid, Paul R. Gregory, and Oleg Khlevniuk, eds. *GULAG: Ekonomika prinuditel'nogo truda*. Moscow: Rosspen, 2005.
- Brandenberger, David. "Stalin's Last Crime? Recent Scholarship on Postwar Antisemitism and the Doctors' Plot." *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, 6.1 (2005): 187-204.
- Brody, Richard J. "Ideology and Political Motivation: The Soviet Home Front during World War II." *Carl Beck Papers in Russian and East European Studies*, no. 1104 (1994).
- Brooks, Jeffrey. *Thank You, Comrade Stalin! Soviet Public Culture from Revolution to Cold War*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000.
- Brown, Kate. *A Biography of No Place: From Ethnic Borderland to Soviet Heartland*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004.
- . "Gridded Lives: Why Kazakhstan and Montana Are Nearly the Same Place." *The American Historical Review* 106.1 (2001): 17-48.
- . "Out of Solitary Confinement: The History of the Gulag." *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian Studies* 8.1 (2007): 67-103.
- Browning, Christopher. *Nazi Policy, Jewish Workers, German Killers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- . *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland*. New York: Harper Collins, 1992.
- Bullock, Allan. *Hitler and Stalin: Parallel Lives*. New York: Vintage Books, 1993.
- Cesereanu, Ruxandra. "Prison Theatricality in the Romanian Gulag." *Intermarium* 4.2 (2000-2001).
- Channon, John. "Siberia in Revolution and Civil War, 1917-1921." In Alan Wood, ed. *The History of Siberia: From Russian Conquest to Revolution*. London: Routledge, 1991: 158-180.
- Chuz, Martha. *Woman and Child in the Modern System of Slavery – USSR*. Trans. O. Pruchodko. New York: Dobrus, 1962.
- Cohen, Stephen F. *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution: A Political Biography, 1888-1938*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980.
- Conquest, Robert. *Kolyma: The Arctic Death Camps*. New York: Viking Press, 1978.
- . "Victims of Stalinism: A Comment." *Europe-Asia Studies* 49.7 (1997): 1317-1319.
- Conroy, Mary. "Health Care in Prisons, Labour and Concentration Camps in Early Soviet Russia, 1918-1921." *Europe-Asia Studies* 52.7 (2000): 1257-1274.

- Corry, T. M. *Prison Labour in South Africa*. Cape Town: National Institute for Crime Prevention and the Rehabilitation of Offenders, 1977.
- Craveri, Marta. "Krizis Gulaga: Kengirskoe vosstanie 1954 goda v dokumentakh MVD." *Cahiers du Monde russe* 36.3 (1995): 319-44.
- — —. "The Strikes in Norilsk and Vorkuta Camps, and their Role in the Breakdown of the Stalinist Forced Labour System." In *Free and Unfree Labour: The Debate Continues*, edited by Marcel van der Linden and T. Brass, 363-378. Bern: Peter Lang, 1997.
- Dallin, David and Boris Nicolaevsky. *Forced Labor in Soviet Russia*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1947.
- Davies, R. W. "Stalin as Economic Policy-Maker: Soviet Agriculture, 1931-36." In Sarah Davies and James Harris, eds., *Stalin: A New History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- Dmitrenko, V. P., G. B. Kulakova and L. V. Iarushina, eds. *Vlast' i obshchestvo v SSSR: Politika repressii (20-40-e gg.): Sbornik statei*. Moscow: In-t rossiskoi istorii RAN, 1999.
- Dobrovolskii, I. V., ed. *Gulag: ego stroiteli, obitateli i geroi : Rossiia--po dorogam fanatizma i muchenichestva*. Moscow & Saint-Petersburg: Mezhdunarodnoe obshchestvo prav cheloveka, 1998.
- Dobson, Miriam. "Contesting the Paradigms of De-Stalinization: Readers' Responses to *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*." *Slavic Review* 64.3 (2005): 580-600.
- — —. *Khrushchev's Cold Summer: Gulag Returnees, Crime, and the Fate of Reform after Stalin*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009.
- — —. "'Show the Bandits No Mercy!': Amnesty, Criminality and Public Response in 1953." P. Jones, ed., *The Dilemmas of De-Stalinisation: A Social and Cultural History of Reform in the Khrushchev Era*. London: Routledge, 2005: 21-40.
- Ebedzhans, S. G., and M. Ia Vazhnov. "Proizvodstvennyi fenomen GULAGa." *Voprosy istorii*, no. 6 (1994): 188-190.
- Elantseva, O. P. *Obrechennaia doroga: BAM: 1932-1941*. Vladivostok: Izdatel'stvo Dal'nevostochnogo universiteta, 1994.
- Elie, Marc. "Les politiques à l'égard des libérés du Goulag: amnistiés et réhabilités dans la région de Novossibirsk, 1953-1960." *Cahiers du monde russe* 47.1-2 (2006): 327-348.
- Elkins, Caroline. *Imperial Reckoning: The Untold Story of Britain's Gulag in Kenya*. New York: Holt, 2005.
- Engelstein, Laura. "Combined Underdevelopment: Discipline and the Law in Imperial and Soviet Russia." *The American Historical Review* 98.2 (1993): 338-353.
- Epstein, Mikhail. "The Dialectics of *Hyper*: From Modernism to Postmodernism." In Epstein et al., eds. *Russian Postmodernism: New Perspectives on Post-Soviet Culture*. Providence: Berghan Books, 1999: 3-30.
- Ericson, E., Jr. "The Gulag Archipelago A Generation Later." *Modern Age* 44, no. 2 (2002): 147-161.
- Ertz, Simon. *Zwangsarbeit im stalinistischen Lagersystem eine Untersuchung der Methoden, Strategien und Ziele ihrer Ausnutzung am Beispiel Norilsk, 1935 – 1953*. Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2006.

- . “Building Norilsk.” In Paul Gregory and Valery Lazarev, eds. *The Economics of Forced Labor: The Soviet Gulag*. Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2003.
- Esper, Thomas. “The Condition of the Serf Workers in Russia’s Metallurgical Industry, 1800-1861.” *The Journal of Modern History*, 50.4 (1978): 600-679.
- Fainsod, Merle. *Smolensk under Soviet Rule*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958.
- Filtzer, Donald. *Soviet Workers and Late Stalinism: Labour and the Restoration of the Stalinist System after World War II*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- . “The Standard of Living of Soviet Industrial Workers in the Immediate Postwar Period, 1945-1948.” *Europe-Asia Studies* 51.6 (1999): 1013-1038.
- Fitzpatrick, Sheila. “Ascribing Class: The Construction of Social Identity in Soviet Russia.” In Sheila Fitzpatrick, ed., *Stalinism: New Directions*. London: Routledge, 2000: 20-46.
- . *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- . *The Russian Revolution*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994.
- , ed. *Stalinism: New Directions*. London: Routledge, 2000.
- Foucault, Michel. *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Translated by Alan Sheridan. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. New York: Vintage Books, 1995.
- . *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*. Edited by Colin Gordon, translated by Gordon et al. New York: Pantheon, 1980.
- Gellately, Robert. *Backing Hitler: Consent & Coercion in Nazi Germany*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Gentes, Andrew W. *Exile to Siberia: 1590-1822*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.
- . “Katorga: Penal Labor and Tsarist Siberia.” In Eva-Maria Stolberg, ed., *The Siberian Saga: A History of Russia’s Wild East*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2005, 73-85.
- Getty, J. Arch and Oleg V. Naumov, eds. *The Road to Terror: Stalin and the Self-Destruction of the Bolsheviks, 1932-1939*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999.
- . *Yezhov: The Rise of Stalin’s “Iron Fist.”* New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008.
- Getty, J. Arch, Gabor Rittersporn, and Viktor Zemskov. “Victims of the Soviet Penal System in the Pre-War Years: A First Approach on the Basis of Archival Evidence.” *The American Historical Review* 98.4 (1993): 1017-1049.
- Gerlach, Christian, and Nicholas Werth. “State Violence—Violent Societies.” In Michael Geyer and Sheila Fitzpatrick, eds. *Beyond Totalitarianism: Stalinism and Nazism Compared*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009, 133-179.
- Geyer, Michael. “After Totalitarianism – Stalinism and Nazism Compared.” With assistance from Sheila Fitzpatrick. In Geyer and Fitzpatrick, eds. *Beyond Totalitarianism: Stalinism and Nazism Compared*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009, 1-40.
- Geyer, Michael and Sheila Fitzpatrick, eds. *Beyond Totalitarianism: Stalinism and Nazism Compared*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

- Gilmore, Ruth Wilson. *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis and Opposition in Globalizing California*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007.
- Goldman, Wendy. "Stalinist Terror and Democracy: The 1937 Union Campaign." *The American Historical Review*, 110, no. 5 (2005): 1427-1453.
- . *Terror and Democracy in the Age of Stalin: The Social Dynamics of Repression*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- . *Women at the Gates: Gender and Industry in Stalin's Russia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Gorcheva, Alla Iu. *Pressa Gulaga, 1918-1955*. Moscow: Izd-vo Moskovskogo universiteta, 1996.
- Gorlizki, Yoram and Oleg Khlevniuk. *Cold Peace: Stalin and the Soviet Ruling Circle, 1945-53*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Graziosi, Andrea. "The Great Strikes of 1953 in Soviet Labor Camps in the Accounts of Their Participants: A Review." *Cahiers du Monde russe et soviétique* 33 (1992): 419-46.
- Graziosi, Andrea, Terry Martin and Jutta Scherrer, eds. *La police politique en Union Soviétique, 1918-1953*. Special issue *Cahiers du Monde russe* 42 no. 2-4 (2001).
- Gregory, Paul R. "An Introduction to the Economics of the Gulag." In Paul Gregory and Valery Lazarev, eds. *The Economics of Forced Labor: The Soviet Gulag*, 1-22. Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2003.
- . *Politics, Murder, and Love in Stalin's Kremlin: The Story of Nikolai Bukharin and Anna Larina*. Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2010.
- Gregory, Paul R., and Valery Lazarev, eds. *The Economics of Forced Labor: The Soviet Gulag*. Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2003.
- Gushchin, Nikolai Ia. "Demograficheskoe razvitie sovetskoi Sibiri: osnovnye etapy i problemy." In R. S. Vasil'evskii and N. Ia. Gushchin, eds. *Istoricheskaia demografiia Sibiri: Sbornik nauchnykh trudov*. Novosibirsk: Nauka, 1992.
- . "Raskulachivanie" v Sibiri (1928-1934 gg.). Novosibirsk: Ekor, 1996.
- Hagenloh, Paul. *Stalin's Police: Public Order and Mass Repression in the USSR, 1926-1941*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009.
- Harris, James R. "The Growth of the Gulag: Forced Labor in the Urals Region, 1929-31." *The Russian Review* 56 (1997): 265-80.
- Hellie, Richard. "The Economy, Trade and Serfdom." In Maureen Perrie, ed. *The Cambridge History of Russia, Volume 1: From Early Rus' to 1689*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006: 539-558.
- Hilger, Andreas. *Deutsche Kriegsgefangene in der Sowjetunion, 1941-1956. Kriegsgefangenenpolitik, Lageralltag und Erinnerung*, Essen: Klartext-Verlag, 2000.
- Hochschild, Adam. *The Unquiet Ghost: Russians Remember Stalin*. New York: Viking, 1994.
- Hoffman, David L. *Stalinist Values: The Cultural Norms of Soviet Modernity, 1917-1941*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003.
- , ed. *Stalinism: The Essential Readings*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2003.
- Hoffmann, David L. and Yanni Kotsonis, eds. *Russian Modernity: Politics, Knowledge, Practices*. London: St. Martin's Press, 2000.

- Holquist, Peter. *Making War, Forging Revolution: Russia's Continuum of Crisis, 1914-1921*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002.
- — —. "State Violence as Technique: The Logic of Violence in Soviet Totalitarianism." In Amir Weiner, ed. *Landscaping the Human Garden: 20<sup>th</sup> Century Population Management in a Comparative Framework*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004: 19-45.
- Holzman, Franklyn D. "The Soviet Ural-Kuznetsk Combine: A Study in Investment Criteria and Industrialization Policies." *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*. 71.3 (1957): 368-405.
- Hughes, James. *Stalinism in a Russian Province: Collectivization and Dekulakization in Siberia*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996.
- Ireland, Richard W. "A Want of Order and Good Discipline": *Rules, Discretion and the Victorian Prison*. Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2007.
- Isupov, V. A. "Na izlome: Smertnost' naseleniia Sibiri v nachale Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny." in R. S. Vasil'evskii and N. I. Gushchin, eds. *Istoricheskaia demografiia Sibiri: sbornik nauchnykh trudov*, 186-198. Novosibirsk: Nauka, 1992.
- — —. "Sotsial'no-demograficheskaia politika Stalinskogo pravitel'stva v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny (na materialakh Sibiri)." In V. A. Isupov, S. A. Papkov and I. M. Savitskii, eds. *Zapadnaia Sibir' v Velikoi Otechestvennoi voine (1941-1945 gg.)*. Novosibirsk: Nauka, 2004.
- Isupov, V. A., S. A. Papkov and I. M. Savitskii, eds. *Zapadnaia Sibir' v Velikoi Otechestvennoi voine (1941-1945 gg.)*. Novosibirsk: Nauka, 2004.
- Ivanova, Galina M. *Istoriia GULAGa, 1918-1958: Sotsial'no-ekonomicheskii i politico-pravovoi aspekty*. Moscow: Nauka, 2006.
- — —. "Kadry GULAGa." In I. V. Dobrovol'skii and G. M. Ivanova, eds. *GULAG: ego stroiteli, obitateli i geroi: Rossiia po dorogam fanatizma i muchenichestva*. Moscow: Mezhd. obshchestvo prav cheloveka, 1998.
- — —. "Kak i pochemu stal vozmozhn GULAG." In I. V. Dobrovol'skii and G. M. Ivanova, eds. *GULAG: ego stroiteli, obitateli i geroi: Rossiia po dorogam fanatizma i muchenichestva*. Moscow: Mezhd. obshchestvo prav cheloveka, 1998.
- — —. "Repressivnaia sistema i karatel'naia politika gosudarstva." In V. P. Dmitrenko et al., eds. *Vlast' i obshchestvo v SSSR: Politika repressii (20-40e gg.)*. Moscow: Institut rossiskoi istorii RAN, 1999.
- Ivanova, Galina M., and Donald J. Raleigh. *Labor Camp Socialism: The Gulag in the Soviet Totalitarian System*. Translated by C. A. Flath. Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 2000.
- Ivashov, L., A. Emelin, and V. Filatov. "GULAG v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi Voiny." *Voенно-istoricheskii zhurnal*, no. 1 (1991): 14-24.
- Jakobson, Michael. *Origins of the GULAG: The Soviet Prison-Camp System, 1917-1934*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1993.
- Johnson, Robert E. "Family Life-Cycles and Economic Stratification: A Case-Study in Rural Russia." *Journal of Social History* 30, no 3 (1997): 705-731.
- Kan, A. S. "Postsovetskie issledovaniia o politicheskikh repressiakh v Rossii i SSSR." *Otechestvennaia istoriia*, no. 1 (2003): 120-133.
- Kaneva, A. N. *Gulagovskii teatr Ukhty*. Syktyvkar: Komi knizhnoe izd-vo, 2001.

- Keep, John. "Recent Writing on Stalin's Gulag: An Overview." *Crime, Histoire & Societes* 1 (1997): 91-112.
- — —. "Wheatcroft and Stalin's Victims: Comments." *Europe-Asia Studies* 51, no. 6 (1999): 1089-1092.
- Kennan, George. *Siberia and the Exile System*. New York: Century Co., 1891.
- Kershaw, Ian and Moshe Lewin, eds. *Stalinism and Nazism: Dictatorships in Comparison*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- Khlevniuk, Oleg. "The Economy of the Gulag." In Paul R. Gregory, ed. *Behind the Façade of Stalin's Command Economy*. Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2001.
- — —. *The History of the Gulag: From Collectivization to the Great Terror*. Trans. Vadim Saklo. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004.
- — —. "Prinuditelniy trud v ekonomike SSSR: 1929-1941 gody." *Svobodnaya mysl'* (1992).
- — —. "Stalinism and the Stalin Period after the 'Archival Revolution.'" Translated by Paul du Quenoy. *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 2.2 (2001): 319-327.
- Khlevniuk, Oleg and Yoram Gorlizki. *Cold Peace: Stalin and the Soviet Ruling Circle, 1945-1953*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- Kizny, Tomasz. *GULAG: Life and Death inside the Soviet Concentration Camps*. Buffalo, NY: Firefly Books, 2004.
- Klimkova, Oksana. "GULAG: Ot mifotvorchestva k izucheniiu." *Ab Imperio*, no. 3 (2005): 501-528.
- Knight, Amy. *Beria: Stalin's First Lieutenant*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993.
- Kondrashin, V. V. *Golod 1932-1933 godov: tragediia rossiskoi derevni*. Moscow: Rosspen, 2008.
- Kotek, Joël and Pierre Rigoulot. *Le siècle des camps: détention, concentration, extermination: cent ans de mal radical*. Paris: JC Lattès, 2000.
- Kotkin, Stephen. *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995.
- Kotsonis, Yanni. "A Modern Paradox." In David L. Hoffmann and Yanni Kotsonis, eds. *Russian Modernity: Politics, Knowledge, Practices*. London: St. Martin's Press, 2000.
- Krasil'nikov, Sergei A. *Serp i molokh: krest'ianskaia ssylka v Zapadnoi Sibiri v 1930-e gody*. Moscow: Rosspen, 2003.
- — —. "Spetspereselentsy, spetsarteli i spetsorgany: mekhanizmu i rezul'taty spetskolonizatsii severa Zapadnoi Sibiri v 1930-e gg." In L. I. Borodkin et al., eds. *GULAG: Ekonomika prinuditel'nogo truda*. Moscow: Rosspen, 2005.
- Krasil'nikov, Sergei A., V. A. Il'nykh, G. A. Spitsyna and O. K. Kaytsevich, eds. *Nasha malaia rodina: Khrestomatiia po istorii Novosibirskoi oblasti, 1921-1991*. Novosibirsk: Ekor, 1997.
- Krysinska, Karolina and D. Lester. "Suicide in the Soviet Gulag Camps." *Archives of Suicide Research* 12.2 (2008): 170-179.
- Kuntsman, Adi. "'With a Shade of Disgust': Affective Politics of Sexuality and Class in Memoirs of the Stalinist Gulag." *Slavic Review* 68.2 (2009): 308-328.

- Kuziakina, Natalia. *Theatre in the Solovki Prison Camp*. Trans. B. M. Meerovich. Luxembourg: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1995.
- Kuznetsov, I. S. et al., eds. *Novonikolaevskaia guberniia—Novosibirskaia oblast': 1921-2000: Khronika, Dokumenty*. Novosibirsk: Sibirskoe otdelenie RAN, 2001.
- Lahusen, Thomas. *How Life Writes the Book: Real Socialism and Socialist Realism in Stalin's Russia*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997.
- Latkovskis, L. "I-II. Baltic Prisoners in the Gulag Revolts of 1953." *Lituanus* 51.3 and 4 (2005): 4-39 and 5-30.
- Ledeneva, Alena. *Russia's Economy of Favours: Blat, Networking and Informal Exchange*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Lenin, Vladimir. *The Development of Capitalism in Russia*. Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1956.
- Lewin, Moshe. *The Making of the Soviet System: Essays in the Social History of Interwar Russia*. New York: The New Press, 1994.
- Lichtenstein, Alex. *Twice the Work of Free Labor: The Political Economy of Convict Labor in the New South*. London: Verso, 1996.
- Liechtenhan, Francine-Dominique. *Le laboratoire du goulag: 1918-1939*. Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 2004.
- Lincoln, W. Bruce. *The Conquest of a Continent: Siberia and the Russians*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007.
- Lonsdale, Richard E. "Siberian Industry before 1917: The Example of Tomsk Guberniya." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 53.4 (1963): 479-493.
- Mäkinen, Ilkka. "Libraries in Hell: Cultural Activities in Soviet Prisons and Labor Camps from the 1930s to the 1950s." *Libraries and Culture* 28.2 (1993): 117-42.
- Malia, Martin. *The Soviet Tragedy: A History of Socialism in Russia, 1917-1991*. New York: The Free Press, 1994.
- — —. "A War on Two Fronts: Solzhenitsyn and the Gulag Archipelago." *Russian Review* 36.1 (1977): 46-63.
- Mancini, Michael. *One Dies, Get Another: Convict Leasing in the American South, 1866-1928*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1996.
- Manley, Rebecca. *To the Tashkent Station: Evacuation and Survival in the Soviet Union at War*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009.
- Marie, Jean-Jacques. *Le Goulag*. Paris: PUF, 1999.
- Markova, E. V., V. A. Volkov, A. N. Rodnyi, and V. K. Iasnyi. "Sud'by intelligentsii v Vorkutinskikh lageriakh: 1930-1950-e gody." *Novaia i noveishaia istoriia*, no. 5 (1999): 52-77.
- — —, eds. *Gulagovskie tainy osvoeniia Severa*. Moscow: Stroiizdat, 2001.
- Marks, Steven G. *Road to Power: The Trans-Siberian Railroad and the Colonization of Asian Russia 1850-1917*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991.
- Marrus, Michael R. *The Holocaust in History*. New York: Penguin Books, 1987.
- Martin, Terry. *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001.
- — —. "Modernization or Neo-Traditionalism: Ascribed Nationality and Soviet Primordialism." In Sheila Fitzpatrick, ed. *Stalinism: New Directions*. New York: Vintage Books, 2000, 348-367.

- Mazower, Mark. *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century*. New York: Vintage Books, 2000.
- — —. *Hitler's Empire: How the Nazis Ruled Europe*. New York: Penguin, 2008.
- Medvedev, Roy. "Solzhenitsyn: Truth and Politics." *Dissent* 24.2 (1977): 141-155.
- Moon, David. *The Russian Peasantry, 1600-1930: The World the Peasants Made*. London: Longman, 1999.
- Morozov, N. A. *Osobyie lageria MVD SSSR v Komi ASSR, 1948-1954 gody*. Syktyvkar: Syktyvkarskii godudarstvennyi universitet, 1998.
- Morozov, N. A., and M. B. Rogachev. "Gulag v Komi ASSR (20-50-e gody)" *Otechestvennaia istoriia*, no. 2 (1995): 182-187.
- Müller, Klaus-Dieter, Konstantin Nikischkin, and Günther Wagenlehner, eds. *Die Tragödie der Gefangenschaft in Deutschland und der Sowjetunion, 1941-1956*. Dresden: Böhlau, 1998.
- Nakhapetov, B. A. "K istorii sanitarnoi sluzhby Gulaga." *Voprosy istorii*, no. 6 (2001): 126-136.
- Nordlander, David J. "Origins of a Gulag Capital: Magadan and Stalinist Control in the Early 1930s." *Slavic Review* 57.4 (1998): 791-812.
- — —. "Magadan and the Evolution of the Dalstroi Bosses in the 1930s." *Cahiers du Monde russe* 42.2-4 (2001): 649-65.
- North, Robert W. *Transport in Western Siberia: Tsarist and Soviet Development*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1979.
- Nove, Alec. "How Many Victims in the 1930s?" *Soviet Studies* 42.2 (1990): 369-373.
- — —. "Victims of Stalinism: How Many?" In J. A. Getty and R. T. Manning, eds. *Stalinist Terror: New Perspectives*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- Ogot, Bethwell A. "Britain's Gulag." *Journal of African History*, 46.3 (2005): 493-505.
- Oshinsky, David M. *"Worse Than Slavery": Parchman Farm and the Ordeal of Jim Crow Justice*. New York: The Free Press, 1996.
- Pallot, Judith. "Forced Labour for Forestry: The Twentieth Century History of Colonisation and Settlement in the North of Perm' Oblast'." *Europe-Asia Studies* 54.7 (2002): 1055-1083.
- Papkov, S. A. "'Kontrevoliutsionnaia prestupnost' i osobennosti ee podavleniia v Sibiri v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny (1941-1945)," in S. A. Papkov and K. Teraiama, eds., *Ural i Sibir' v Stalinskoi politike*, 205-223. Novosibirsk: Sibirskii khronograf, 2002.
- — —. *Stalinskii terror v Sibiri, 1928-1941*. Novosibirsk: Izdatel'stvo Sibirskogo Otdeleniia Rossiiskoi Akademii Nauk, 1997.
- Papkov, S. A. and K. Teraiama, eds. *Ural i Sibir' v Stalinskoi politike*. Novosibirsk: Sibirskii khronograf, 2002.
- Pereira, N. G. O. *White Siberia: The Politics of Civil War*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995.
- Plamper, Jan. "Foucault's Gulag." *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 3.2 (2002): 255-280.
- Pinkus, Benjamin. *The Jews of the Soviet Union: A History of a National Minority*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.

- Pohl, J. Otto. *The Stalinist Penal System: A Statistical History of Soviet Repression and Terror, 1930-1953*. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 1997.
- — —. *Ethnic Cleansing in the USSR, 1937-1949*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1999.
- Pron'ko, V. A., and V. N. Zemskov. "Vklad zakliuchennykh GULAGa v pobedu v Velikoi Otechestvennoi Voine." *Novaia i noveishaia istoriia*, no. 5 (1996): 131-150.
- Raleigh, Donald J. *Experiencing Russia's Civil War: Politics, Society, and Revolutionary Culture in Saratov, 1917-1922*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002.
- Robson, Roy R. *Solovki: The Story of Russia Told Through Its Most Remarkable Islands*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004.
- Rosefielde, Steven. "Excess Deaths and Industrialization: A Realist Theory of Stalinist Economic Development in the 1930s." *Journal of Contemporary History* 23.2 (1988): 277-289.
- — —. "Stalinism in Post-Communist Perspective: New Evidence on Killings, Forced Labour and Economic Growth in the 1930s." *Europe-Asia Studies* 48.6 (1996): 959-987.
- Ruder, Cynthia. *Making History for Stalin: The Story of the Belomor Canal*. Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 1998.
- Savitskii, I. M. "Formirovanie kadrov oboronnoi promyshlennosti Novosibirskoi oblasti v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny." In V. A. Isupov et al., eds. *Zapadnaia Sibir' v Velikoi Otechestvennoi voine (1941-1945 gg.)*. Novosibirsk: Nauka, 2004.
- — —. "Sozdanie v Novosibirskoe krupneishego v Sibiri tsentra oboronnoi promyshlennosti v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny." In S. A. Papkov and K. Teraiama, eds. *Ural i Sibir' v Stalinskoi politike, 192-204*. Novosibirsk: Sibirskii khronograf, 2002.
- Scott, James C. *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985.
- Scherer, John L., and Michael Jakobson. "The Collectivisation of Agriculture and the Soviet Prison Camp System." *Europe-Asia Studies* 45.3 (1993): 533-546.
- Schrader, Abby M. "Unruly Felons and Civilizing Wives: Cultivating Marriage in the Siberian Exile System, 1822-1860." *Slavic Review* 66.2 (2007): 230-256.
- Semple, Janet. *Bentham's Prison: A Study of the Panopticon Penitentiary*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993.
- Service, Robert. *Stalin: A Biography*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005.
- Shanin, Teodor. *The Awkward Class: Political Sociology of Peasantry in a Developing Society: Russia 1910-1925*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972.
- Shearer, David. "Mastering the Soviet Frontier: Western Siberia in the 1930s." In Eva-Maria Stolberg, ed. *The Siberian Saga: A History of Russia's Wild East*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2005: 159-172.
- — —. *Policing Stalin's Socialism: Repression and Social Order in the Soviet Union, 1924-1953*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009.
- Smith, Kathleen E. *Remembering Stalin's Victims: Popular Memory and the End of the USSR*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1996.
- Slezkine, Yuri. *Arctic Mirrors: Russia and the Small Peoples of the North*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994.

- . *The Jewish Century*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004.
- . “The USSR as Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism.” *Slavic Review* 52.2 (1994): 415-452.
- Sofsky, Wolfgang. *The Order of Terror: The Concentration Camp*. Translated by W. Templer. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997.
- Sokolov, Andrei. “Forced Labor in Soviet Industry: The End of the 1930s to the Mid-1950s: An Overview.” In Paul Gregory and Valery Lazarev, eds. *The Economics of Forced Labor*. Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2003.
- Solomon, Peter H., Jr. *Soviet Criminal Justice under Stalin*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Solzhenitsyn, Aleksandr I. *The Gulag Archipelago, 1918-1956: An Experiment in Literary Investigation*. 3 Vols. Vol. 1 and 2 translated by T. P. Whitney, vol. 3 translated by H. Willetts. 1st ed. New York: Harper & Row, 1974-78.
- Stark, Meinhard. *Frauen im Gulag: Alltag und Überleben; 1936 bis 1956*. München: Hanser, 2003.
- Stettner, Ralf. «Archipel GULag»: *Stalins Zwangslager. Terrorinstrument und Wirtschaftsgigant*. Paderborn: Schoeningh, 1996.
- Stokes, Lawrence D. “The German People and the Destruction of the European Jews.” *Central European History* 6.2 (1973).
- Stolberg, Eva-Maria. “The Genre of Frontiers and Borderlands: Siberia as a Case Study.” In Eva-Maria Stolberg, ed. *The Siberian Saga: A History of Russia’s Wild East*. Frankfurt-am-Main: Peter Lang, 2004.
- , ed. *The Siberian Saga: A History of Russia’s Wild East*. Frankfurt-am-Main: Peter Lang, 2004.
- Sunderland, Willard. “Imperial Space: Territorial Thought and Practice in the Eighteenth Century.” In Jane Burbank et al., eds. *Russian Empire: Space, People, Power, 1700-1930*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007: 33-66.
- Suny, Ronald Grigor. *The Soviet Experiment: Russia, the USSR, and the Successor States*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- . “Stalin and His Stalinism.” In David Hoffman, ed. *Stalinism: The Essential Readings*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2003.
- Suslov, A. B. “Problema effektivnosti prinuditel’nogo truda v SSSR (1929-1953 gg.) (na materialakh Urala).” In S. Papkov and K. Teraiama, eds. *Ural i Sibir’ v stalinskoi politike*, 85-97. Novosibirsk: Sibirskii khronograf, 2002
- . “Sistemnyi element sovetskogo obshchestva kontsa 20-kh – nachala 50-kh godov: Spetskontingent.” *Voprosy istorii*, no. 3 (2004): 125-134.
- . “Spetskontingent i prinuditel’nyi trud v sovetskikh penitentsiarnykh kontseptsyakh 1930-kh godov.” *Otechestvennaia istoriia*, no. 5 (2004): 81-96.
- Suverov, V. M. and E. V. Suverov. “Povstancheskoe dvizhenie v Sibiri. 1920-1923 gg.” In S. V. Makarchuk, ed. *Sibir’: XX vek*. Kemerovo: Kuzbassvuzizdat, 1997.
- Timasheff, Nicholas S. *The Great Retreat: The Growth and Decline of Communism in Russia*. New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, 1946.
- Todorov, Tsvetan, ed. *Voices from the Gulag: Life and Death in Communist Bulgaria*. University Park, PA: Penn State Press, 2000.
- Toker, Leona. *Return from the Archipelago: Narratives of Gulag Survivors*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000.

- Tolczyk, Dariusz. *See No Evil: Literary Cover-Ups and Discoveries of the Soviet Camp Experience*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999.
- Tzouliadis, Tim. *The Forsaken: An American Tragedy in Stalin's Russia*. New York: Penguin, 2008.
- van der Linden, Marcel. "Forced Labour and Non-Capitalist Industrialization: The Case of Stalinism (c. 1929 - c. 1956)." In *Free and Unfree Labour: The Debate Continues*, edited by Torn Brass and Marcel van der Linden, 351-362. Bern: Peter Lang, 1997.
- Varasse, F. "The Society of the Vory-v-Zakone, 1930s-1950s." *Cahiers du Monde russe* 39.4 (1998): 515-38.
- Viola, Lynne. "The Aesthetic of Stalinist Planning and the World of the Special Villages." *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 4.1 (2004): 101-128.
- . "Bab'i Bunty and Peasant Women's Protest during Collectivization," *Russian Review* 45.1 (1986): 23-42.
- . *Peasant Rebels Under Stalin: Collectivization and the Culture of Peasant Resistance*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.
- . "'Tear the Evil from the Root': The Children of the *Spetspereselentsy* of the North," *Studia Slavica Finlandensia* 17 (2000).
- . *The Unknown Gulag: The Lost World of Stalin's Special Settlements*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Vo, Nghia M. *The Bamboo Gulag: Political Imprisonment in Communist Vietnam*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2004.
- Wachsmann, Nikolaus. "Between Reform and Repression: Imprisonment in Weimar Germany." *The Historical Journal* 45.2 (2002): 411-432.
- Weiner, Amir. *Making Sense of War: The Second World War and the Fate of the Bolshevik Revolution*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001.
- , ed. *Landscaping the Human Garden: 20<sup>th</sup> Century Population Management in a Comparative Framework*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003.
- Werth, Nicholas. "L'ensemble concentrationnaire de Norilsk en 1951." *XX<sup>ème</sup> Siècle*, 46 (1994): 88-99.
- . "L'amnistie du 27 mars 1953. La première grande sortie du Goulag." *Communisme*, no. 42/43/44 (1995): 211-225.
- . *Cannibal Island: Death in a Siberian Gulag*. Trans Steven Rendall. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007.
- . "Les enjeux politiques et sociaux du dégel: libérations massives du Goulag et fin des peuplements spéciaux, 1953-1957." In *Actes du colloque, L'héritage du totalitarisme en Europe*. Paris: Ed. du Rocher, 2005: 121-150.
- . "Part I: A State against Its People: Violence, Repression, and Terror in the Soviet Union." In S. Courtois, ed. *The Black Book of Communism: Crimes, Terror, Repression*, 33-268. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999.
- Wheatcroft, Stephen G. "Crises and the Condition of the Peasantry in Late Imperial Russia." In Esther Kingston-Mann and Timothy Mixter, eds. *Peasant Economy, Culture, and Politics of European Russia, 1800-1921*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991.

- — —. “The Scale and Nature of German and Soviet Repression and Mass Killings, 1930-45.” *Europe-Asia Studies* 48.8 (1996): 1319-1353.
- — —. “The Scale and Nature of Stalinist Repression and Its Demographic Significance: On Comments by Keep and Conquest.” *Europe-Asia Studies* 52.6 (2000): 1143-1159.
- — —. “Victims of Stalinism and the Soviet Secret Police: The Comparability and Reliability of the Archival Data. Not the Last Word.” *Europe-Asia Studies* 51.2 (1999): 315-345.
- Wood, Alan, ed. *The History of Siberia: From Russian Conquest to Revolution*. London: Routledge, 1991
- Wu, Harry Hongda. *Laogai—The Chinese Gulag*. Trans. T. Slingerland. Boulder: Westview Press, 1992.
- Zemskov, Viktor N. “Zakliuchennyi v 1930-e gody: Sotsial’no-demograficheskie problemy.” *Otechestvennaia istoriia*, no. 4 (1997): 54-79.
- — —. *Spetsposelentsy v SSSR 1930-1960*. Moscow: Nauka, 2005.
- Zinoman, Peter. *The Colonial Bastille: A History of Imprisonment in Vietnam, 1862-1940*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001.
- Zinov’ev, V. P., I. M. Rudaia, V. O. El’blaus, eds. *Neizvestnyi Seversk: Sbornik statei*. Tomsk: Izd-vo TGU, 1996.
- Zubkova, Elena. *Russia after the War: Hopes, Illusions, and Disappointments, 1945-1957*. Translated by Hugh Ragsdale. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1998.

### ***Secondary Sources (unpublished)***

- Barnes, Steven A. “Soviet Society Confined: The Gulag in the Karaganda Region of Kazakhstan.” PhD dissertation. Stanford: Department of History, Stanford University, 2003.
- Barenberg, Alan. “From Prison Camp to Mining Town: The Gulag and Its Legacy in Vorkuta.” PhD dissertation. Chicago: University of Chicago Department of History, 2007.
- Bell, Wilson T. “Was the Gulag an Archipelago: An Examination of De-Convoyed Prisoners in Western Siberia.” Presented at the “Conference on the History and Legacy of the Gulag.” Cambridge: Harvard University, 2006.
- Cohen, Edward D. “Disciplining the Party: The Expulsion and Censure of Communists in the Post-War Soviet Union, 1945-1961.” PhD dissertation. Chicago: University of Chicago Department of History, 2007.
- Edwards, Kristen. “Fleeing to Siberia: The Wartime Relocation of Evacuees to Novosibirsk, 1941-1943.” PhD dissertation. Stanford: Department of History, Stanford University, 1996.
- Ermolaeva, Oxana. “Making a Career in the GULAG Archipelago: The BBK-BBLag Personnel.” Paper for presentation at the 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Young Researchers Conference. Oxford, OH: Miami University, 2010.
- Getty, J. Arch. “The Fall of the Clans: The Rise and Fall of Vainov of Iaroslavl’.” Paper presented at the conference, “Stalinist Terror: Contexts, Origins and Dynamics.” Leeds University, Leeds, August, 2010.
- Krasil’nikov, Danila Sergeevich. “Lageria i kolonii na territorii Novosibirskoi oblasti v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi voyny (1941-1945).” Diplomnaia rabota.

- Novosibirsk: Department of Fatherland History, Humanities Faculty, Novosibirsk State University, 1999.
- Lahusen, Thomas. "Cinefication: A History of Film Distribution and Exhibition in the Soviet Union." Manuscript.
- Westren, Michael. "(Re)educating Special Settlers in Soviet Kazakhstan: Negotiating Language, Culture, and Nationality Policy, 1941-1958." Paper presented in Philadelphia at the Convention of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies, 2008.