

poem no longer interested anybody. I felt hurt. 26
I like to share with others the things I love.

- Weren't you afraid that you would be made to stand for hours and that they might even start beating you up?
- No, I wasn't. They did not beat me. But they forced me to sign the paper without reading it. I was no longer asked any questions and I did not tell them anything. I did not read what they had written. I was told: five years.
- The sentence was better than could have been expected. You were suspected of spying. They could have sentenced you to more than 5 years. You got off with a short sentence because you had refused to write what they had wanted you to.
- Most likely that was the reason for a relatively short sentence. But you remember that there was a woman who told me I would get a five-year sentence. I did not believe her at that time.

There came a day when they came to take me to my new place of exile.

I remember some women I made friends with who were also taken away from the cell. It was not easy to part with some nice people who were kind to me and whom I helped as much as I could.

There was a woman, a meteorologist. She was leaving and I gave her something. I don't remember exactly what I gave her. When she had left I found among my things a pair of wonderful woolen stockings she had left for me. She had very few things and

she was so generous. She had told me when and how ²⁷ she had been arrested. She was on the train going to Moscow from Kiev. There was somebody she knew on the train. Somebody said something. I don't think it's worth while to recall the details.

After I was given the sentence I was taken to another cell. The winter was over. It was May 1939. There were 20 women in the cell. There was a woman there who had to leave her little daughter when she was arrested. She was Jewish, she lived not far from Odessa. Her daughter must have been born out of wedlock but her mother had longed for the child. She was proud of the girl, she adored the girl and enjoyed every minute they spent together. When she was arrested the girl was 6-7 years old. The woman was a lawyer by profession. She was intelligent, she was tortured for a long time. I don't know whether they beat her up but she was tortured, she missed her daughter very much. I met her in the cell where we stayed before we were deported. We all had something in common.

— Were you allowed to get parcels from home?

— Yes, we were allowed to get a certain number of things we couldn't do without. I had a pair of white summer shoes on. In winter I stopped going out and I was given a worn-out pea-jacket. But the pea-jacket was good as it kept me warm. I mention it because the pea-jacket will play a certain role in the future. I asked for some things that I needed, a dressing-gown in particular. After the first three days in the camp it was stolen. I got a pair of socks which I badly needed. I wore my summer shoes throughout the entire winter

It did not matter much when we were in prison and 28 were allowed to go for a short walk on the roof of the building. But when we came to the camp, rains started. We had to wade through mud. I was given a pair of shoes two sizes too large. By the way, they were quite comfortable.

- Where were you taken to? Was it difficult for you to endure the hardships of the guarded trip?
- I don't think it was. It was the beginning of May. We were going north, but nevertheless we saw that spring was approaching. We went by train for some time, then by boat. There were bunks on the train. I slept on the lower bunk because I could not climb to the upper one. Zelma Fedorovna Ruoff slept on the bunk above me.
- She was with you on the train. I know that she lived in the same barrack. What was she like?
- She was German. She was very well educated. Her parents came to Russia a few years before World War I. When the war began, her parents went back to Germany. She had spent her childhood here in Russia. Russian was her mother tongue. She had read a lot, and some of the Russian writers were her favourite authors. She had learned to appreciate Russian poetry. When she grew up she returned to Russia. We became close friends in the camp. I admired her intelligence and personality. She was much older than I. When we were on the train, she gave up the lower bunk to me and climbed to the

upper one.

We had a problem. We were not taken to the toilet. To be more exact, we were taken there only once a day but we needed to be taken there more often. Sometimes the train stopped and did not move for hours, but we were not allowed to go anywhere. I had a small basin. All the women used it. There was a hole in the floor. It was a carriage for transporting cattle.

- What did you drink? Were you given water?
- I think so because I don't remember feeling thirsty. I had no problem with food; I ate very little. Later I understood that I had eaten mainly bread because other things were inedible. I did not need much bread because we did not get enough exercise.

All the women on the train were convicted of political crimes. There was only one woman who was convicted of a crime, she was on the train with her child.

In the camp we met women who were convicted of law breaking. My dressing gown was stolen almost at once.

On the train we had a problem with a toilet. The train moved slowly. We often had long stops. We arrived at night and were taken to the port to wait for a ship which was to take us to Norilsk.

- Did you know where you were brought to?

No, we didn't. When our train arrived at this ^{30.} small town, we were taken to the local prison. We spent a day there. We were led to the bath-house. The tap in the bath-house was out of order. We undressed and were absolutely naked when a man came to fix it. The women felt embarrassed and tried to protest. The man looked at them and said: "Don't you understand what will become of you in the camp? All of you will become whores." It was almost true: most women can hardly endure life if they are deprived of men. Undoubtedly it depends on a woman's personality.

It was Sunday when we were walking through the town to the wharf to wait for a steamer. As each of us had received some things from home when we were in prison, we had to carry heavy parcels. We felt better when we were allowed to put the bundles on the cart. The town was small and clear. There were many people walking along the street. There were many young people among them. None of them seemed to see us. They did not seem to notice that we were walking quite close to them surrounded by our guards and dogs. We began to suspect that they were doing it deliberately. I suppose there were two reasons why these people would not look at us. It might have been that they ^{might} have got used to seeing prisoners walking in this direction. Besides, local people might have been ordered to ignore prisoners.

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- Were these the first people you saw after leaving the prison?

- We were not very much interested either. They were young people dressed up as it was Sunday. They would not pay any attention to us. We even felt hurt: you are free and you pretend not to notice prisoners. Later I understood that they may not have been allowed to look at us or perhaps they were sick and tired. They had seen so many prisoners walking in the direction of the port.

- Were there many prisoners in this group?

- I think there were about fifty of us. I remember only one old woman standing near her house. She stood looking at us and crying. There were dogs on both sides of our column and fifty women dragging themselves along. We came to the wharf that was badly in need of repair. We knew the boat was to arrive here. We came and spent the night there sitting on our things. It was quite light that night as the sun did not set. We were sitting on our things trying to make ourselves comfortable. One of our women began to sing a song. She had a good voice. Those who knew the song joined her. Nobody stopped us. We felt free!

When the boat arrived we went on board. We put down our things, spread some things on the floor and lay down. Zelma began to recite a poem by R. Kipling. She knew English

and tried to memorize the poem. Later when we were in the camp, she slept on the upper bunk leaving the lower one for me. She would get on to her bunk and lowering her head to see me would ask: "Ray, dear, do you remember the third line of the second verse?" It often happened that there was no light. We had some oil-lamps. "What a disgusting smell!" And that was just the proper time for reciting poetry.

- What was the barrack like? Was it wooden or made of brick?

- It was a wooden barrack. It was rather clean. We were ordered to keep it clean. The women left it in the morning and came back late in the evening. We all slept there. I first met criminals and "urkas" there. My dressing-gown was immediately stolen. One of the "urkas" was quite close to me. Her bunk was next to mine. A little later my gloves were stolen. It was very cold and my hands were frozen and hurt terribly. But one of the urkas made friends with me. I had a kettle. I don't remember how I got it. I think I exchanged something to get the kettle from someone who was released. I was very lucky to get the kettle. When we began to receive parcels we got some tea. Once this urka knowing that I had a kettle came and said in a low voice: "Oh, you've got a kettle and we're going to have a birthday party. Would you like to join us?" I said: "Thanks, but I'd rather have a nap" or something of this kind. Later she returned the kettle. I complained

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to her that I was very upset as my gloves had been stolen. My fingers were swollen and hurt badly. "Where did you keep your gloves?" "Under the pillow." "What a foolish thing to do to put your gloves under the pillow." I did not say anything. In the evening she brought me back my gloves. It must have been very generous of me to give them my kettle. A few weeks later I was again praised and thanked for giving them my kettle: "You did not refuse when you were asked!" My generosity was appreciated.

- Was the camp large? Was it near Vorkuta?

- There was a narrow river near the camp, and you could get to Vorkuta by boat. Two or three months later when we had already managed to adapt ourselves to local conditions and had begun to get parcels, we were suddenly ordered to move to Vorkuta. We were living on one of the farms belonging to Vorkuta. We packed our things and were led to the bank of the river. We had already got used to the place. We had made friends. I could not take my kettle with me. We all felt very unhappy.

We came to the bank carrying all the things we needed and began to wait for the boat which was to take us to Vorkuta. We were sorry to leave the place. It was a small group of nice, friendly people. We spent a sleepless night. The boat was to arrive in the morning, but it didn't. Another day passed but the boat did not arrive. Later we were told that the boat was not coming as the river had frozen. And we were led back to the camp. We all felt happy.

- Did you manage to get back your kettle?

- I was on good terms with urkas. My relationships with other women were also good. There had been no women in the camp before we arrived. On the first or the second day of our arrival, a man, a Jew came to talk with me. He was wearing a dirty shirt. His hands were rough and dark. He asked me a lot of questions. He wasn't well-educated, but bright and understanding. We had a talk. Before leaving he took a cake out of his dirty pocket and gave it to me. His hands did not look clean either. Later I found out that he was a metal worker (a locksmith). He was also a convict who had already spent some years in the camp. He wanted to hear what was going on in the country. There had been no women in the camp before us.

When the boat brought us to the place and we were allowed to disembark, we were kept in the yard for a long time. The yard was separated from the zone where men lived by a wire net. Some men immediately ran into their part of the yard and looking at us through the net began to ask us all kinds of questions. "Women? Are you arrested as wives? Are there children here too?" I told them that there was a pregnant woman in my cell. They would not believe us. "They can't have arrested a pregnant woman."

When I told them that I had a case of my own, ^{that} an action was brought against me,

they said: You should have signed the paper at once. You would have been brought here but your leg would not have been injured. Then you would have appealed to the authorities and you would have been released."

Now I go back to the time when I was in prison (in Butyrka). There was a woman in our cell whose husband was arrested. She and her three-year-old boy lived in a communal apartment. She went out to buy some bread. She was arrested and taken to prison. She did not know what had happened to her son. The investigator said: "You will never see your son." It was a terrible case.

The doctor, who was also a convict, said I should do some work in a sitting posture. My first job was to straighten nails. They always had a shortage of nails. They gave me nails that had been used and I was to straighten them with a hammer. Frankly speaking, I did not do it well. I was not good at it. So they gave me another task. I was to make baskets. It was autumn and we had some "stuff" for making baskets. It was a collective farm growing vegetables. They needed baskets for vegetables. We were supposed to send vegetables to Vorkuta.

- What did the men do?
- There were about a dozen cows there. The men looked after the cows, fed them and milked them.

They liked their job. They had a glass of milk when they were lucky and managed to persuade the cow to give some more milk. There was a very nice young man there. He used to say: "My cow likes me very much. I lower my head and tell her to comb my hair and the cow licks my head." He liked the job, but he had to get up at 4 a.m.

So the men were to look after the cows. Later both men and women cut willow-bush to make baskets. It was autumn. It grew very cold. We were sitting in the barn on the floor. There was no light except candles and small jars with oil (kerosene), a kind of an oil lamp.

In our barack we also had jars with kerosene, you could not read with a light like that. But the worst thing was the way people talked. There were many thieves and other criminals living in the same barack. When they talked we found it unbearable. We wanted to stop our ears. Their language was nauseating even when they joked. We could hardly stand their jargon. That was a serious problem. But later I understood that they found it unbearable to associate with political prisoners. Once I went to the wash-room when I was not supposed to and saw two "urkas" washing their hands. They did not see me enter the room. One of them said: These political prisoners are disgusting. I hate to live so close to them. I wish we did not have to share our baracks with them."

see on

When we had our dinner-break, we were allowed to sleep for an hour on the working day

began at 6 and lasted until it got dark.

We did not have enough sleep. During the break we hoped we would be able to sleep for half an hour.

16 But we couldn't fall asleep because of the noise these rirkas made talking to each other. Their language hurt us, drove us to despair. But our presence, the way we spoke and our manners got on their nerves too. They felt more sure of themselves than political prisoners. We had felt it when we were on board the ship together. There was a woman (urka) with a child on board the ship. The woman started a terrible row to get an egg or some milk for her child. She demanded that food should be given at once. She shouted at the top of her voice. She knew it was her right to get some food for her child and she was sure she would get what belonged to her.

There was another young woman who had been arrested several times. Once when she said she would be released in three months, I couldn't help saying: How lucky you are! Whereas she added: "You don't know what you are talking about. What am I to do when I am free?"

She despised me, a political prisoner, for not knowing what problems she would have to face when she was released.

Palaces on Monday

J. Arch Getty

EVERYDAY STALINISM. ORDINARY LIFE IN EXTRAORDINARY TIMES:

SOVIET RUSSIA IN THE 1930S

by Sheila Fitzpatrick.

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IT WAS NOT until the 1970s that 'Soviet studies' evolved into 'Soviet history'. The totalitarian model, with its focus on government control of an inert population, gave way to the study of modern Russian society. The new Soviet social history insisted that society mattered, even in dictatorships, that the Stalinist regime had had to deal with a society whose traditions, structure and inertia could derail or modify the state's plans. Although society never 'won' the contest, neither were the state's victories complete. Even in the 1930s, the regime, which wanted communal farms, sometimes had to settle for private plots and privatised cows.

Sheila Fitzpatrick is the most prolific and influential historian of the Soviet Union working today. Her 11 books and numerous articles have guided two generations of scholars eager to prise open the mysteries of the Soviet experiment. It was Fitzpatrick who, twenty years ago, advanced the proposition that state and society were engaged in an 'informal negotiation', a suggestion that was inflammatory at the time but is now the received wisdom. It was her study of education and social mobility that first documented the existence of support for Stalinism. In a deceptively unpretentious collection of essays, published in 1978, she set the terms for a twenty-year debate on whether policy initiatives always originated 'from above' or could also come 'from below' as part of a 'cultural revolution'.

The 1990s saw another revolution in Soviet historiography. In the early part of the decade, the secret archives of the Soviet Party and Government began to be opened and scholars flocked to Moscow. Some were eager to find definitive answers to old questions, but others were interested in altogether new matters. One of the topics that preoccupies historians is the relationship between the population and the Stalinist regime, and whether the Soviet people resisted it, passively accommodated to it, or actively and passionately supported it. Different historians have different views on these matters. Secret documents suggested to Lynne Viola and Jeffrey Rossman that peasants and workers did not sit quietly and take whatever the regime dished out. Stephen Kotkin, on the other hand, was struck by how little resistance there was, and shows that Soviet citizens (like most people in most countries) simply accepted and accommodated to the prevailing system. Influenced by Foucault, he describes the Soviet people as learning to 'speak Bolshevik' in order to manoeuvre within the existing power matrices. Some have gone further. Demonstrating the impact of the 'literary turn' in historical analysis, Jochen Hellbeck looked at a number of diaries and makes it clear that many not only accepted and believed in Stalinism: they actively tried to remould their souls to become one with the regime's goals.

Sheila Fitzpatrick's recent writings have explored resistance, accommodation and adherence in several settings. She is not really interested in sweeping assertions or grand theorising and doesn't mind being accused (as she sometimes is) of theoretical poverty or of the crime of 'essentialism': strictly empirical analysis is her preferred method. It is not that she is scornful of theor-

etical approaches: her work on Soviet social identities and culture shows that she can use these ideas and vocabularies when she wants to. She has simply not found a grand theory that explains her facts. In her view class analysis does not make much sense at a time when some classes were melting away and new ones forming, and familiar categories like 'peasant' or 'working class' were made up of entirely different people from those who used to carry these labels. She is also doubtful of the explanatory force of Foucault's multiple discourses of power when we still know so little about what was actually happening out there in society.

Fitzpatrick's urban Homo Sovieticus of the 1930s had to deal with three overwhelming obstacles to a normal life: an arbitrary, incompetent and unpredictably violent state; shortages of food, clothing and shelter (and just about everything else); and constant cataclysmic upheavals that made life impossible to plan. Tens of millions of people changed their jobs, homes, class and self-identity as an unprepared but determined state suddenly abolished the market and took control of every element of agriculture, industry and trade. All this would of itself have been traumatic enough, yet the regime decided at the same time to carry out the most rapid industrialisation in history while, for political reasons, deliberately crushing the social groups – traders, factory-owners, engineers and commercial farmers – that had been at the heart of modernisation elsewhere. Millions of people moved to towns that had no new housing and little adequate sanitation. Most fateful of all was the decision to destroy private farming in favour of an untested and unpopular system of collective agriculture. Without it, there would have been chaos. As it was, millions died of starvation and millions more went hungry for years.

None of this is news. We have been studying this process from outside and from above for years. We knew about Stalin's decision to launch this revolution and have had a steadily increasing supply of statistical data. Fitzpatrick and others have documented the aggregate changes in politics, culture and society that accompanied it, but until now we have known precious little about the most intriguing question of all: how did ordinary people manage? How did they live when it was virtually impossible to find satisfactory food, clothing and shelter? What mental processes enabled them to deal with the unpredictability of terror? And why do so many of them have positive memories of the time and of the regime that caused their suffering?

The bureaucracy of the 1930s was staffed by inexperienced recruits, drawn into the Party to cope with the new economic tasks which the leadership imposed. Most were

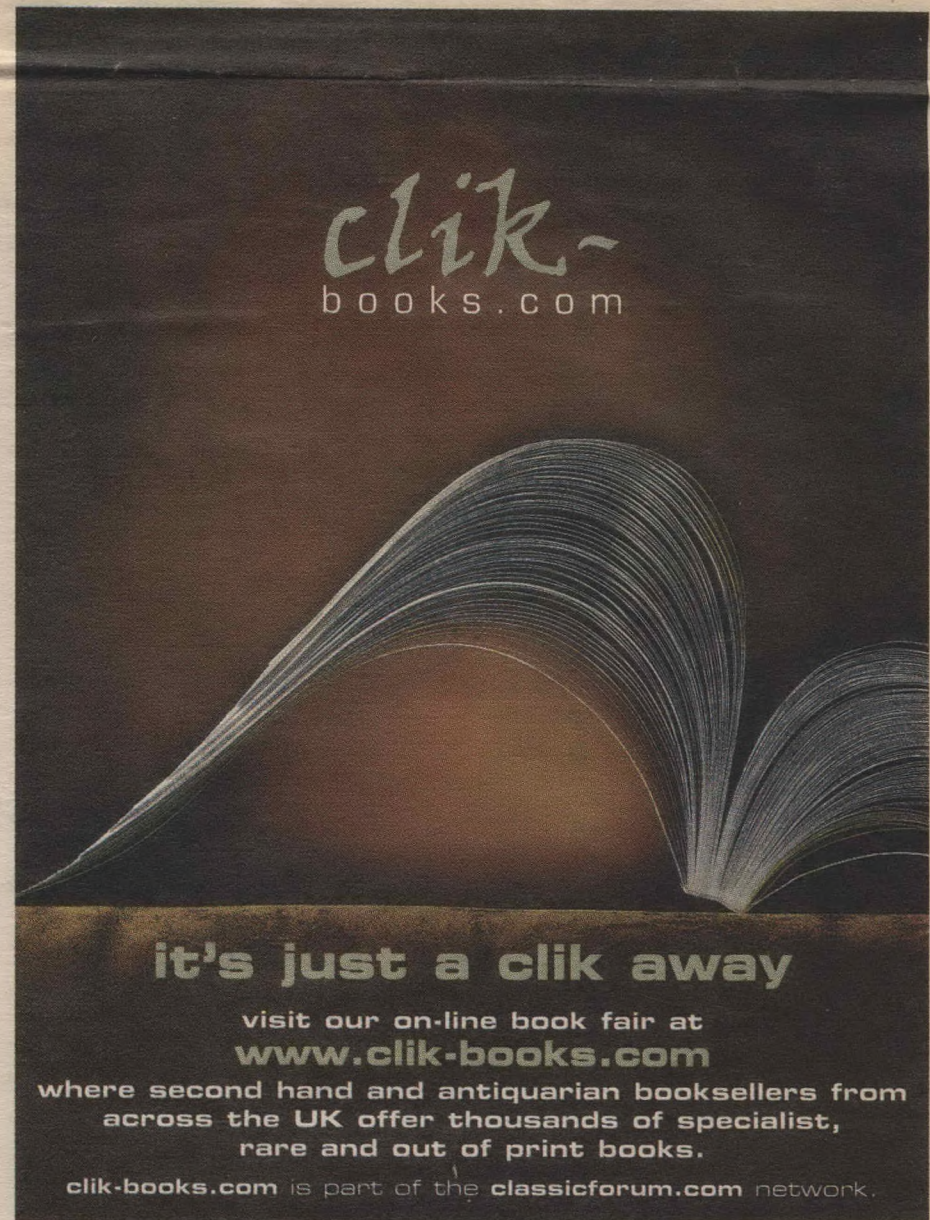
poorly educated and many were corrupt, arbitrary and inefficient. The simplest matters were caught up in webs of red tape and pointless paperwork that made the new plebeian bureaucrats feel important. Although there was no shortage of rules and regulations, virtually everyone, at every level, felt free to interpret and impose regulations as they liked, regardless of Moscow's policies. A pyramid of 'little Stalins' extended from the top down to the lowest administrative level. Each petty bureaucrat had his patron or chief above him and a set of subordinates and clients below. The result for the population was arbitrariness accompanied by random and frequent punishments. One collective farm chairman imposed large fines for impolite language. In Stalin-grad city officials fined anyone caught travelling on a streetcar in dirty clothes – which made things difficult for factory workers in a factory town. In Astrakhan one could be forced to pay 100 roubles for wearing a hat in the wrong place. The punishments associated with the terror of 1937 just as arbitrary.

The Politburo itself was rarely explicit about what it wanted, preferring instead to

give general 'signals' on new policies. Important changes in direction were indicated by vague speeches or articles – which, as Fitzpatrick shows, made it possible for the leadership to repudiate the disastrous consequences of a given policy's implementation. But she also points out that the administrative machinery was so clumsy and unsophisticated that it could respond only to simple directives: stop, go, faster, slower. In addition, there were the endless inexplicable contradictions between what Moscow instructed and what local officials actually did. Despite Politburo orders against purging Party members on grounds of their class origins, for example, local officials constantly arrested citizens for having dubious family connections. On this and many other fronts Moscow spent a good deal of time undoing the work of its local representatives.

Living standards plummeted as a result of Stalin's decision to concentrate on heavy industry, and in 1932-33, city-dwellers consumed a third as much meat as they had in 1928 and half the amount of bread their parents had eaten in 1900. Even to get that they often had to stand in line for many hours – police in Leningrad reported queues of 6000 people. Private shops and craftsmen disappeared, to be replaced by state stores that were either empty or stocked with defective goods. The list of near unobtainable items was long: lamps, soap, matches, pottery, hats, baskets, knives, dry goods and shoes, as well as construction and repair materials. Shopping had become, in Fitzpatrick's phrase, a 'survival skill'.

Everyone remembers shoes. Footwear bought in state stores usually fell apart in



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days. Sometimes assistants kept a large bin behind the counter, into which pair after pair would be thrown until one was found that was in a fit condition to sell to a customer. At the beginning of the 1935 school year in Yaroslavl, an important industrial city, there wasn't a single pair of children's shoes in any of the state stores. In Leningrad the situation was so bad that even when consignments of defective shoes arrived, the queues disrupted the traffic and the line of would-be purchasers was so dense that it was liable to push against and shatter adjoining shop windows.

As Fitzpatrick notes, it wasn't until the Khrushchev years that the regime put resources into new housing. In 1939, Pskov, a town of 60,000, had no streetcars and no paved roads. Stalingrad, a major industrial city, had no buses. Homo Sovieticus became accustomed to calculating housing quotients in square metres per person and average living space in Moscow dropped from 5.5 square metres per person to 4 in 1940. Most people lived in communal flats, with one or more families per room and shared kitchen and, with luck, toilet facilities — most Moscow flats in the 1930s had no bath and a third had no sewer connection. Unlucky or marginal people slept in corridors, entrances, corners of other people's rooms or barracks, sometimes together with their families. Friction was inevitable and led to gossip, denunciations and open conflict. The fact that every *kommunalka* veteran recalls the presence in the flat of a drunken old man and a demented old woman makes one wonder if this, too, were part of some bizarre bureaucratic plan.

HOW DID people cope morally and psychologically? For many, the only available response was grim resignation. Things had always been hard in Russia, and there was nothing to do but grumble and try to get by. Others, perhaps very many others, saw the shortages and difficulties as bearable because of the promise of the future held. In that sense this was a time of utopian enthusiasm, and there is good reason to believe that the optimism was not just an artefact of official propaganda.

Millions of people were moving up from field to factory, from factory to office. Education was expanding rapidly: there were 3 million high school students in the late 1920s; a decade later, there were 18 million. In the same period literacy rates doubled to more than 80 per cent. Contemporary memoirs record the universal obsession with studying, not only in order to move up in society but to help build the future. This was the time when optimistic young Khrushchevs and Brezhnevs worked day and night to overcome 'temporary' difficulties. They dreamed of 'future palaces' and a time when technology and industrial growth would bring plenty for all. Moscow was being rebuilt, and new monuments were everywhere. A new All-Union Exhibition of Economic Achievement attracted 30,000 visitors a day. For many, as Fitzpatrick shows, today's problems were merely bumps on the road to the promised land.

How did people set about getting the space and goods they needed? On one level, of course, they didn't. They suffered. But they suffered in varying degrees in an economic system whose unitary image hid a

variety of legal and illegal channels of distribution. The Stalinist economy was not an economy at all, at least not in the traditional sense of the word. On the face of it, everything was straightforward: the state monopolised all production and distribution and citizens used their wages to buy goods from the state shops. In reality, many — probably most — goods were not distributed this way, and many of the biggest distribution networks had nothing to do with money. When they talked about acquiring goods, Soviet citizens in the 1930s did not use words implying purchase or indeed any kind of economic transaction. Verbs that had to do with giving and getting replaced those that implied selling and buying. One did not 'buy': one 'got hold of'. Similarly, 'they' did not 'sell' things: they were 'giving them out'.

At times of extreme shortage, the regime rationed bread and other foodstuffs. Although presented as an extraordinary measure, rationing was so frequently imposed as to become the default means of distribution. Rationed goods could be purchased at fixed prices only on presentation of a ration card, and the quantities one could buy depended on several factors. Although in some periods factory workers' rations were larger than those of white-collar workers and even of some Party officials, on the whole, higher-status workers and officials were entitled to more and better goods. Entitlements also varied according to region and the kind of industry people worked in. In all its forms, however, the ration system distributed goods without regard to price or ability to pay.

People at all levels of society were allocated food, goods and accommodation through 'closed distribution' schemes at their workplaces. These ranged from free or nominally priced hot meals in factories to the 'closed shops' and 'special packages' of gourmet foods for high-ranking Party officials; from the reserved housing space allocated to a factory to relatively luxurious flats for senior officials. It was an economy of privilege rather than of wealth. In fact, as Fitzpatrick notes, the higher a person's status in the Party, the more goods they received, and the better their quality, as well as the lower their 'price'. No wonder those at the top could persuade themselves that socialism was at hand.

PATRONAGE was another way of getting hold of scarce goods and services. Powerful politicians presided over networks of clients and dependants: a given intellectual or artist would 'go to see' his or her politician; ordinary people, too, often found a patron in a local Party secretary, trade-union leader or factory manager. Thanks to their privileged position (or ability to steal), patrons were able to supply access to housing and goods that were otherwise unobtainable. Money wasn't necessarily involved: it wasn't unusual for patrons to 'give out' goods to their dependants. For the patron, the reward was power and prestige. For the client or supplicant, it was often the only way to get something they needed.

Two theatre managers, Ruslanov and Popov, lived in the same building. Popov hung flowerpots that Ruslanov did not like from his balcony. Ruslanov got an order

from the local police requiring the pots to be removed. Popov retaliated with an order from the city chief of police to leave them where they were. Ruslanov appealed to his patron, the chief of civilian police for the USSR, who ordered that the pots be removed. Popov retaliated through his patron, the Minister of Defence Voroshilov, who ordered that Popov not be bothered further. Ruslanov trumped Popov's patron with his own, the President of the USSR Kalinin, who ordered the removal of the flowerpots.

Acquaintances and even total strangers wrote to national leaders like Molotov or Stalin with requests, which were often granted. Some of these 'transactions' were quite strange. I found a letter in the archives from the widow of Alexander Shliapnikov, a Bolshevik dissident who was arrested and shot in 1937. After her husband's execution, she wrote to Yezhov, the head of the NKVD and the man responsible for her husband's death, with a request for help in finding employment. (Not surprisingly, the language of such petitions was unchanged from the time when peasants begged noblemen or tsars for support.) Despite her late husband's 'enemy' status, Yezhov ordered that work be found for her. In 1936, when the Old Bolshevik Nikolai Bukharin was already under suspicion, he wrote to Yezhov requesting a new dacha and permission for his wife to join him on a business trip to Paris. The nouveau bureaucrat Yezhov graciously approved both requests.

The saying 'better a hundred friends than a hundred roubles' acquired real meaning at such times, as did the term *blat*, which refers to personal advantage derived from friends and acquaintances. Patronage implies a hierarchical relationship; *blat* was about who you knew and about chains of reciprocal relationships: Andrei can get shoes, Pavel's uncle can get train tickets, Masha's friend can get you a coat. Every Soviet citizen remembers the importance of these connections: 'If you need to buy something in a shop, you need *blat*. If it's difficult or impossible for a passenger to get a train ticket, then it is simple and easy *po blatu*. If you need a flat, don't ever go to the housing administration, to the procurator: better to use just a little *blat* and you will have your apartment.' Sometimes these networks of acquaintances, relatives and friends of friends overlapped with patronage systems. It was not uncommon to score points with one's boss by using friends to acquire goods for him or even supplies for the factory or workplace. *Blat* wasn't confined to the black market. Fitzpatrick describes a 1930s cartoon in which a shop assistant tells a customer: 'He's a courteous man, our store manager. When he sells cloth, he calls the customers by name.' 'Does he really know all the customers?' the man asks. 'Of course. If he doesn't know someone, he doesn't sell to them.'

Other ways of acquiring goods and services were less savoury. Fitzpatrick describes the exploits of the famous Bay Leaf Gang, a group of speculators in tea and spices, who made 1.5 million roubles. Graft and corruption were endemic in the Stalinist system of distribution. Workers stole materials and tools. Managers used their position to divert goods from state channels into *blat* or patronage networks, or to black-market

Breathing Space.

(Don't take it for granted)



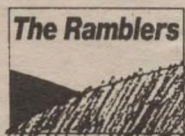
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gangs. Store managers were notorious for moving goods into shady channels of distribution and train conductors were known for helping to transport goods illicitly. The archives are full of stories of clever swindlers and con men. One Party inspector reported that a state farm director had sold 450 of the farm's pigs on the black market. Asked why the local authorities had not prosecuted him, the inspector replied: 'We examined the case, and it turned out that the mayor and the prosecutor had themselves received pigs from the state farm, and everybody was happy.'

Party Secretary Maslov and his assistant Pimenov led a group of crooks in the Stalin-grad region. Local courts would confiscate a newly convicted criminal's property and sell it to friends – who might include the judges' wives. Maslov blocked investigations of complaints against 'his people' and managed to quash 43 indictments on grounds of insufficient evidence.

Needless to say, it wasn't always clear where necessity stopped and crime started. Some kinds of workplace theft, for example, were essential to keep the economy going. A construction foreman complained:

We think: what to do? We went to supply organisations, showed them the construction plans and said: give us the materials. They just stared at us blankly and said they had no material. Then they said: 'Ivan Ivanovich, if you give us meat, bread and money – on a certain freight car you will find the nails and glass you need; you will get everything.' We thought again, what to do? If we wait, we cannot build. If we break the law, we can. We decided to break the law.

The regime may have boasted about the virtues of collectivised agriculture, but we have known for a long time that it was really the private plots that fed the country. Thanks to Fitzpatrick, we now know that 'leaks' in the urban economy may turn out to have been equally important. What the sources we have at present don't allow us to estimate with any precision is the size of the leaks and how much was bled from the official pipeline. Fitzpatrick is properly cautious, observing only that they 'took the harsh edge off the Stalin system', but it is clear that the closer we look, the more we find happening outside official channels.

And the regime knew it. One of Fitzpatrick's most interesting chapters, 'Conversations and Listeners', is about its constant attempts at surveillance. From the latest instalments of Khrushchev's memoirs, we know that Stalin installed listening devices in the homes of his most trusted lieutenants. This was a regime which, despite blandishments and its brave propaganda claims, was very insecure about its hold on power. Politburo members carried revolvers for fear that angry citizens would try to ambush them in public. If a joke was going the rounds, detailed reports on its circulation were compiled. Student drinking and travelling societies were seen as 'counter-revolutionary'. The police arrested some students from Saratov who tried to get German visas for a holiday, claiming they were spies. A report on this ridiculous incident was sent to the Politburo for serious discussion and 'political evaluation'. The Politburo was even afraid of dead people: if an ordinary citizen committed suicide the

Politburo would commission a report and insist that conclusions be drawn. Suicide, according to Stalin, was a dangerous political act.

Ironically, ignorance of what was really going on in society was itself responsible for much of the fear. Yezhov gathered a large file of 'unexplained incidents' for investigation: they included car accidents, plane crashes, firearm accidents involving children, fistfights, industrial accidents, even floods. Surveillance was, we know, routine: it was also almost unbelievably extensive. I recently came across a document in the Party's archive suggesting that in Leningrad alone in 1934, a cadre of 2700 intelligence 'residents' each ran a circle of 10 regular 'informants'. A further network of 2000 'special informants' was attached to factories, schools and government departments, with each informant expected to gather information from 10 'casuals'. Moscow had a network twice that size, and Stalin was informed that in the USSR as a whole there were at least half a million regular informants.

Discrete channels of information reported on the popular mood. A network of Party committees compiled reports on the opinions their members expressed at meetings, but so did the disciplinary chain of command, the Party Control Commission. As they made their way up the hierarchy the reports were filtered, on the one hand, by Party officials, on the other, by the police. By and large, Party reports emphasised popular support while police reports magnified dissent. Reports from single sources were equally unreliable. An NKVD official might be tempted to exaggerate the prevalence of dangerous opinions in his region in order to justify budget increases. Or he might want to minimise reports of dissent in order to show he was doing a good job of getting rid of the bad apples in his orchard.

The archives I have seen show that the Politburo was dissatisfied with the reports it was receiving and reluctant to trust them. Stalin complained publicly about the 'nauseating reports' he was getting from self-interested officials. In 1934, Yezhov told him that NKVD networks around the country were unprofessional, incompetent and unreliable. Official fear and ignorance of society were among the main causes of the terror – the Yezhovshchina – as the regime prescribed regional quotas for execution with only a vague idea of who its 'enemies' were. By 1939, when the executions stopped, nearly a million Soviet citizens were dead.

STALINISM, with its shortages and rationing, surveillance and terror, Party privileges and patronage, enthusiasm and utopianism, is gone. As Fitzpatrick argues, the system of those years was the product of a very specific set of early 20th-century circumstances, but many of the things she describes – the hardships as well as the coping strategies – are still in operation in Russia today. Housing remains cramped and substandard, no longer because it is in short supply, but because so much of the stock has been privatised, gentrified, and taken out of the reach of most people. The average Russian today relies on all kinds of networks and subterfuges to secure and

maintain a decent place to live. Many of my friends rent out their flats to rich people and live in crowded hovels, often with relatives, in order to survive on the rent that comes in. Their new lodgings bear a sad resemblance to the communal flats of the 1930s and 1940s.

There is no shortage of goods in the shops: everything one could want (and then some) is for sale in Moscow today. The problem is that there is very little the vast majority of Russians can afford – which means that they routinely resort to the old blat networks to 'get hold of' the things they need. Last year, friends of mine got hold of plane tickets through friends of friends who worked at the airline and used their discounts. My colleague bought a cheap computer through his friend Nikolai's cousin. His wife had their Moscow kitchen tap repaired by an army buddy of her friend's uncle, who did it in exchange for a bottle of vodka.

Patronage, too, remains essential. Everybody knows that when someone changes his job, he takes 'his people' with him and is replaced by someone else with his own client group. This goes some way to explaining why one sees large numbers of idle young men and women 'working' in shops and, especially, banks: the manager's clients must be given jobs. One middling businessman of my acquaintance has about sixty employees in his small enterprise. For them, however, it is not an employer-employee relationship. He 'takes care' of 'his guys' in return for their loyalty. If a worker's mother needs surgery, my friend pays for it. If someone's child needs help getting into a private school, my friend arranges it.

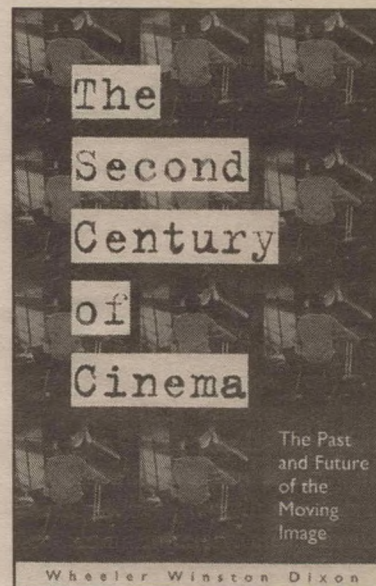
Organised crime provides the quintessential model of a patronage network, and it would be hard to conduct any kind of business in Russia today without mafia connections. Sergei M. has a business in St Petersburg. Like everyone else who does business anywhere in Russia, he pays for protection ('getting a roof', as it is called) from a mafia group. One day he quarrelled with a customer and the disgruntled customer's mafia 'roof' showed up in his office with a loaded gun, demanding a refund. Sergei was allowed to call his own 'roof', who arrived forthwith with his own weapons. The two mafiosi had a calm discussion, which established that the patronage network of Sergei's 'roof' reached higher than that of the customer. Sergei was not disturbed again. Little has changed since Popov and Ruslanov had their quarrel: the winners are still the ones with the strongest patrons.

Another thing that hasn't changed are the vague and easily repudiated 'signals' which the Government issues instead of rational laws which it intends to enforce. It is also as incompetent and corrupt as it was in Stalin's day: even more than in the 1930s, officials at all levels use their position to collect bribes and divert resources into private networks. Taking a leaf out of the Stalinist book, the Government tries to encourage enthusiasm and support by rebuilding Moscow and throwing up all kinds of monuments to the future. But in Stalinist times, such things inspired a certain pride and hopefulness: now few people care. 'Palaces on Monday' is a notion of the past. □

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Inside the Gulag

Anne Applebaum

Sistema Ispravitelno-Trudovikh Lagerei v SSSR, 1923–1960: Spravochnik
(The System of Labor Camps in the USSR, 1923–1960: A Guide)
edited by N. G. Okhotin and A. B. Roginsky.
Moscow: Zvenya, 598 pp.

Labor Camp Socialism: The Gulag in the Soviet Totalitarian System
by Galina Mikhailovna Ivanova.
M. E. Sharpe, 208 pp., \$62.95; \$24.95 (paper)

Gulag v Komi Krai
(The Gulag in the Komi Region)
by N. A. Morozov.
Siktivar: Siktivkarskii Universitet, 181 pp.

Gulag v Karelii (The Gulag in Karelia)
edited by Vasily Makurov.
Petrozavodsk: Karelskii Nauchni Tsentr RAN, 225 pp.

Vyatlag
by Viktor Berdinskikh.
Kirov: Kirovskaya Oblastnaya Tipografia, 318 pp.

Polyansky ITL
(Corrective Labor Camp)
by S. P. Kuchin.
Zheleznogorsk (Krasnoyarsk-26):
Museino-Vystavochny Tsentr
Zheleznogorska, 256 pp.

Till My Tale Is Told:
Women's Memoirs of the Gulag
edited by Simeon Vilensky.
Indiana University Press,
364 pp., \$35.00

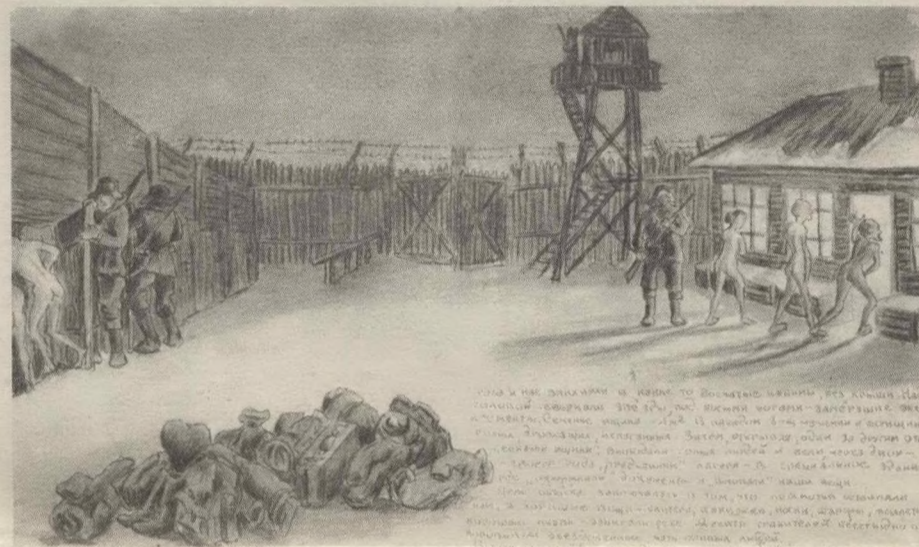
To some Russians, the memory of a first encounter with Alexander Solzhenitsyn's *Gulag Archipelago* is as much a physical memory—the blurry, mimeographed text, the dog-eared paper, the dim glow of the lamp switched on late at night—as it is one of reading the revelatory text itself. Although nearly three decades have passed since unbound, hand-typed samizdat manuscripts of the work began circulating around what used to be the Soviet Union, many can also still recall the emotions stirred by possessing the book, remembering who gave it to them, who else knew about it, whom they passed it on to next. In part, this was because *The Gulag Archipelago*, banned at home and published to great acclaim abroad, had the allure of the forbidden.

But the book's appearance also marked the first time that anyone had tried to write a history of the Soviet concentration camps, using what information was then available, mostly the "reports, memoirs and letters by 227 witnesses," whom Solzhenitsyn cites in his introduction. Many knew fragments of the story, from the cousin who had been there or the neighbor's nephew who worked in the police. No one, however, had attempted to put it all together, to tell, in effect, an alternative history of the Soviet Union, without which the previous fifty years were hard to comprehend, even for those who had lived through them.

It was in acknowledgment of the contribution Solzhenitsyn made to this alternative history that the editors of *Sis-*

tema Ispravitelno-Trudovikh Lagerei v SSSR, 1923–1960: Spravochnik (The System of Labor Camps in the USSR, 1923–1960: A Guide) decided to dedicate their book to the "twenty-fifth anniversary of the appearance of A. I. Solzhenitsyn's *Gulag Archipelago*." The *Spravochnik's* editors were themselves of the generation that had been most profoundly affected by the publication of Solzhenitsyn's work. They are all active members of the Memorial Society—an organization dedicated, since 1987, to writing the history of the Stalinist past, and to promoting human rights in the present.

Nevertheless, their book was intended to have an effect that would be



A group of new prisoners arrives in a camp, is stripped naked in the snow, and is thoroughly searched. From Naskalnaya Zhivopis ("Cliff Drawings"), the illustrated diaries of Evfrosiniya Kersonovskaya, a former prisoner whose drawings were published in Moscow in 1991. Kersonovskaya writes, "The goal of the search was to leave us the rags, and for the guards to take the good things—sweaters, mittens, socks, scarves, vests, good shoes—for themselves."

very different from Solzhenitsyn's. This was not only because they, like others, have been critical of Solzhenitsyn's many small errors of fact and emphasis: his general historical conclusions have in fact stood up extremely well, proving that prisoners' gossip was not so unreliable after all. What the wider community of camp survivors and historians dislike is rather the emotions surrounding *The Gulag Archipelago* and the tone of it, which is that of a great sage imparting a thundering moral lesson to his people. "Only those who had been there knew the whole truth," he writes of his fellow survivors: "But as though stricken dumb on the islands of the Archipelago, they kept their silence. . . ."¹

That Solzhenitsyn chose to put himself and his moral views at the center of the book also left it open to a particularly insidious form of attack: to discredit its substance, it was necessary only to discredit the author—to hint, as the Soviet government did, that he was a virulent nationalist, or even that he might not be altogether sane. The same was true of many of the memoirs published on the subject. When the editors of the *Spravochnik* began their "History of the Gulag" project in 1990, they, like many young Russian historians, were therefore consciously trying to produce a book

¹Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago*, Vol. 1 (HarperPerennial, 1991), p. x.

whose fortunes would not be so directly linked to those of its author, whose reception would not be colored by so many layers of emotion. They wanted the facts, as far as that was possible, to speak for themselves.

The result is a book that is different from Solzhenitsyn's *Gulag* in almost every possible way. Solzhenitsyn's book, circulated in samizdat in the early 1970s, was dramatically published abroad in 1974. The *Spravochnik's* plain black cover gives it a semi-official appearance, as does the fact that it was published under the joint auspices of Memorial and the State Archive of the Russian Federation. Nor has it had

otherwise empty tundra. The naming of the camps is therefore no mean feat: imagine trying to study the history of the Nazi camps without knowing whether Auschwitz is an actual place or a prisoners' nickname, a camp or a group of camps, which is exactly the situation in which earlier Soviet historians found themselves.

Nor is the placing of the camps a minor detail. We are all familiar with the image of the prisoner in the snowstorm, digging gold or coal with a pickaxe. There were plenty of them—millions, as the figures for the camps of Kolyma and Vorkuta make clear—but there were also, we now know, camps in central Moscow, where prisoners built apartment blocks or designed airplanes; camps in Krasnoyarsk where prisoners ran nuclear power plants; fishing camps on the Pacific coast; collective farm camps in southern Uzbekistan. The Gulag photo albums in the Russian State Archive are full of pictures of prisoners with their camels. From Aktyubinsk to Yakutsk, there was not a single major population center that did not have its own local camp or camps. In the Soviet Union of the 1940s, it would have been difficult, in many places, to go about your daily business and not run into prisoners. It is no longer possible to argue, as some Western historians have done, that the camps were known to only a small proportion of the population.²

Archives have also made possible the first serious studies of the institutional and administrative history of the camp system. Accounts of the history of the system as a whole are given in the two comprehensive historical essays at the beginning of the *Spravochnik*, as well as in Galina Ivanova's *Labor Camp Socialism: The Gulag in the Soviet Totalitarian System*—one of the first major books on the subject to emerge out of the old world of "official" history, its author being affiliated with the Russian Academy of Science.

Dozens of regional historians have also made use of provincial archives to describe the history of particular camps, unfortunately often without footnotes or bibliographies. N. A. Morozov's *Gulag v Komi Krai* (The Gulag in the Komi Region), Vasily Makurov's *Gulag v Karelii* (The Gulag in Karelia), and Viktor Berdinskikh's *Vyatlag* (describing the Vyatskii camps in northern Russia) are perhaps the three most professional. Also among the better books in this genre is S. P. Kuchin's *Polyansky ITL* (Corrective Labor Camp)—although it is one (there are others) in which the author tries to defend the Gulag's legacy.

Thanks to the work of these and other writers, we can now see that Feliks Dzerzhinsky, Lenin's chief of secret police, was mulling over a plan to use prisoners to exploit the Soviet Union's empty, mineral-rich far north as early as 1925; that the early camps in the Solovetsky Islands, run by the OGPU (then the name for the secret police),

²See, for example, Robert W. Thurston, *Life and Terror in Stalin's Russia, 1934–1941* (Yale University Press, 1996).

were the first to try to make prisoner labor profitable; and how the OGPU—with Stalin's full support—then wrested the entire prison system away from the justice and interior ministries in a series of institutional battles by the end of the 1920s.

We also know that it was precisely at this point that the Soviet camps ceased to be a harsh but recognizable form of the Western penal system and instead became something quite new. They became part of the Plan—the Five-Year Plan, that is—the program to industrialize the Soviet Union at inhuman speed. Although camp “cultural-education sections” would continue to spin propaganda about “rehabilitation” until Stalin's death, prisoners, in practice, ceased to be regarded as human beings and were rather considered to be expendable labor, to be fed as little as possible and worked as hard as possible. The essence of the OGPU's “profitable” system, invented in the Solovetsky Islands in the 1920s and sold so successfully to Stalin, was to feed prisoners according to their productivity. Prisoners were at times murdered in mass killings, at times deliberately frozen to death in punishment “isolators,” and at times shot by guards eager to claim bonuses for killing “escapees”; but for the most part, it was this system for allotting or denying food to prisoners, not deliberate killing, that caused the greatest number of deaths. The weak prisoner, in the famous words of one survivor,

quickly falls into a vicious circle. Since he cannot do his full quota of work, he does not receive the full bread ration; his undernourished body is still less able to meet the demands, and so he gets less and less bread.... He employs his last remaining strength to creep off into an out-of-the-way corner.... Only the fearful cold finds him out and mercifully gives him his sole desire: peace, sleep, death.³

By the time the camps began to expand in the late 1920s, the Soviet Union, a society allegedly inspired by Marx and Marxism, had taken the commodification of labor to new heights. In the concentration camps that emerged at the beginning of the 1930s, human beings' worth was calculated, like that of the camp horses, in units of labor. Perhaps unexpectedly, this attitude was already clearly reflected in the language of the Gulag's original founders, who, when they met in 1929 to discuss the expansion of the camps, spoke among themselves almost entirely in terms of economics.

According to the records of their conversations, the ministers and Politburo members who were planning what was to become one of the cruelest prison systems in the world never discussed the need to punish prisoners, never mentioned their living conditions, and certainly never referred to the official ideology of “re-education” in their internal debates about the new system, which went on for about a year. Stalin, although not present, took a great interest in the proceedings, occasionally intervening if the “wrong” conclusions were

reached.⁴ Throughout the series of meetings, the discussion was rather of how many prisoners would be needed to extract the resources of “underpopulated areas,” a euphemism for the barely habitable far north.

True, the consensus was to vary greatly, from camp to camp and from year to year, about precisely how inhumanly inmates should be treated. Death rates were much lower in the early 1930s and went up in 1933, at the time of national famine; they fell again and then were allowed to rise after 1937. Finally, they were brought down again, as Galina Ivanova points out, when Lavrenty Beria took over the NKVD, the renamed OGPU, in 1938. Arguing that the ill and the dying were destroying the efficiency of the NKVD's economic progress, Beria ordered the food rations to be raised and output to



A hospital for “strict-regime” prisoners, Vorkuta, 1945. This photograph was taken by camp guards, and was preserved in the Gulag's archives in Moscow.

be increased. This was not out of kindness: when there were other priorities, as there were during the war, food rations dropped again. What really interested him was proving that the NKVD could be a powerful part of the economy. Hence, for example, his special role in promoting the “Special Technical Bureau” of the NKVD, the offices and laboratories where prisoner-specialists, among them the brilliant engineer Andrei Tupolev, designed military aircraft and artillery systems and other technical projects. Their existence was known—Solzhenitsyn described them in his novel *The First Circle*—but only now is it possible to see how important they were to their founders.⁵

Contrary to popular belief, it was only in the 1940s that the Gulag then became, in the words of the *Spravochnik's* authors, a fully fledged “camp-industrial complex,” an integral and important part of the Soviet economy: the camps reached their peak in industrial might not, as is usually assumed, in 1937–1938 but in 1950–1952. How fully integrated and how important they were is still the subject of debate

⁴S.A. Krasilnikov, “Rozhdenia GULAGA: Diskusii v Verkhnikh Eshelonakh Vlasti,” *Istoricheskii Arkhiv*, No. 4 (1997), pp. 142–156. For Stalin's interventions, see Lars Lih, Oleg Naumov, and Oleg Khlevniuk, editors, *Stalin's Letters to Molotov* (Yale University Press, 1995), p. 212.

⁵Aleksandr I. Kokurin, “Osoboye Tekhnicheskoye Byuro NKVD SSSR,” *Istoricheskii Arkhiv*, No. 1 (1999), pp. 85–99.

between those who think prisoner labor was essential to the Soviet economy and those who think prisoner labor was a vast money-squandering and time-wasting distraction. In the former category are many of the Gulag's former bosses, who argued (and argue) that certain kinds of tasks could only have been completed at the required speed using prisoners. Alexei Loginov, former deputy commander of the Norilsk camps, gave a typical justification in an interview with Angus Macqueen for his documentary film *GULAG*, shown in July 1999 on BBC2.

If we had sent civilians, we would first have had to build houses for them to live in. And how could civilians live there? With prisoners it is easy—all you need is a

barrack, an oven with a chimney, and they survive.⁶

None of which is to say that the camps were not also intended to terrorize and subjugate the population. Certainly prison and camp regimes, which were dictated in minute detail by Moscow, were openly designed to humiliate prisoners. The prisoners' belts, buttons, garters, and items made of elastic were taken away from them; they were described as “enemies,” and forbidden to use the word “comrade.” Such measures contributed to the dehumanization of prisoners in the eyes of camp guards and bureaucrats, who therefore found it that much easier not to treat them as people, or even as fellow citizens.

Nowhere is this powerful ideological combination—the disregarding of the humanity of prisoners, combined with the need to fulfill the Plan—clearer than in the camp inspection reports, submitted periodically by local prosecutors, and now kept neatly on file in the Moscow archives. Discovering them almost by accident, I was shocked, at first, both by their frankness and by the peculiar kind of outrage they express. Describing conditions in Volgograd, a railroad construction camp in Tatarstan in July 1942, one inspector

⁶This film was the first in English to interview both prisoners and camp commanders. Excerpts from some of the interviews also appeared in an article by Angus Macqueen in *Granta* 64 (Winter 1998), pp. 37–53, under the title “Survivors.”

complained, for example, that “the whole population of the camp, including free workers, lives off flour. The only meal for prisoners is ‘bread’ made from flour and water, without meats or fats.” As a result, the inspector went on indignantly, there were high rates of illness, particularly scurvy—and, not surprisingly, the camp was failing to meet its production norms.

The outrage ceased to seem surprising after I had read several dozen similar reports, each of which used more or less the same sort of language, and ended with more or less the same ritual conclusion: conditions needed to be improved so that prisoners would work harder, and so that production norms would be met. Much odder is the fact that despite Beria's desire for profits, and despite a vast system of inspections and reports and reprimands, no improvements were made in the system once it was in place.

It might have been expected that small camps like Volgograd would have struggled to find food and supplies during the war years, particularly during the “hungry winter” of 1941–1942. But although conditions nationally did improve after the war, an inspection of twenty-three large camps in 1948 still concluded, among other things, that 75 percent of the prisoners in Norillag in northern Siberia had no warm boots; that the number of prisoners unfit for hard labor in Karelia had recently tripled; that death rates were still “too high” in half a dozen camps—too high, that is, to allow for efficient production.⁷ The reports make the reader recall the inspectors of Gogol's era: the forms were observed, the reports were filed, the effects on actual human beings were ignored. Camp commanders were routinely reprimanded for failing to improve living conditions, living conditions continued to fail to improve, and there the discussion ended.

Yet although it was, at the time, taken as axiomatic that prison labor was cheaper—in 1935, Genrikh Yagoda, then chief of the OGPU, wrote a letter to Stalin promising that every kilometer of road built by prisoners would be 50,000 rubles cheaper—the consensus among the new generation of Russian historians is that the camp system was in fact an inefficient diversion of the country's resources, which permanently damaged its economic development. In *Labor Camp Socialism*, Galina Ivanova points out that the economic activity of the secret police was, by the late 1940s, “so irrational and inefficient that even such a potentially lucrative form of commercial activity as ‘renting out workers’ did not bring the ministry any profit.” Oleg Khlevniuk, who is currently compiling a collection of Gulag documents for Yale University Press, also notes that in calculating the Gulag's efficiency, the system's masters failed to count the costs of the repressive system, including the costs of the guards, of the deaths, and most of all of the misdirected talent.⁸ How did it serve the country to have brilliant physicists (not all of them made it into Beria's “Special Technical Bureau”) digging coal?

⁷GARF, fond 8131, opis 37, delo 1253 and 4547.

⁸Oleg Khlevniuk, “Prinuditelny Trud v Ekonomike SSSR, 1929–1941 gody,” *Svobodnaya Msyl*, No. 13 (1992), pp. 73–84.

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