All for the Front, All for Victory! The Mobilization of Forced Labor in the Soviet Union during World War Two

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Every communist must now be an agitator.

Chief of the Political Department (Politotdel) of Vladivostok Corrective Labor Camp (Vladivostoklag), November 1941[1]

Abstract

The Soviet Union, in its drive to mobilize its every resource to turn back the German invaders, used a unique institution: the Gulag, a forced-labor, detention, and exile system isolating millions of citizens from the body politic.[2] This essay seeks to understand the wartime Gulag both as a microcosm of the Soviet home front and as an integral participant in the campaigns to mobilize Soviet labor power in support of the war effort and to cleanse that very labor force of real and potential enemies of the Soviet state. Focusing on the institutions and population, economic production, political education, and the rigidification of detention of those defined as "especially dangerous," the essay explores the relationship between the Gulag and the larger Soviet polity. Although in economic and administrative terms the Gulag emerged as a burden to the Soviet state during the war, the Soviet leadership never even entertained the notion of dismantling the system. The Gulag was a pillar of the Soviet system, as important for its role in the battle to cleanse and shape the Soviet home front as for its role in military production.

The Role of the Gulag in the Soviet Union

The German invasion on June 22, 1941, brought the Soviet Union into an era of total war. Like every other combatant, the Soviets were forced to launch a total mobilization of their human and economic resources in the face of an unprecedented conflict in which the boundaries between the military and civilian spheres were consciously erased. The Soviet Union, however, brought a unique feature to its war effort: the Gulag, a forced-labor, detention and exile system isolating millions of citizens from the body politic. During the war, Soviet society faced three interconnected campaigns: the demand for increased labor output with less material compensation, intensified political exhortations to heroic labor, and a wide-scale battle to cleanse the home front of real and potential enemies. The Gulag was both a microcosm of the Soviet home front and an integral participant in the very mobilization of Soviet society. Studying the Gulag thus provides an advantageous vantage point from which to view Soviet labor at war.

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Although forced labor, concentration camps, and administrative exile existed almost from the first days after the October Revolution,[3] the Gulag emerged as a truly massive social phenomenon during the years of industrialization and collectivization through the late 1920s and early 1930s. The timing was no accident. These were the heady years of "building socialism," when the entire polity was called forth in a grand crusade to sculpt a radically new "socialist" society and a radically new "Soviet" man. In the Soviet ethos, this grand transformation could not be achieved merely through legislative action. The Bolsheviks expected and sought merciless, violent class struggle to eradicate a variety of internal enemies whose very existence was perceived as a dangerous contamination of the new society. The Gulag was proudly established and celebrated as a weapon in this struggle with social filth.[4] The Gulag held those who were declared harmful to or unfit for the society being built. Some Gulag inmates would be defined as criminals in most societies, and some, like the peasant "kulak" deported during the campaign to collectivize agriculture, were a particularly Soviet category.[5] Conditions were brutal and mortality rates were frighteningly high, with total deaths in the Gulag reaching well into the millions. Yet millions also survived and were released. No fewer than twenty percent of the Gulag population was released every year.[6] At no point did the Gulag evolve into a system of industrialized death camps. Most Gulag prisoners stood at a crossroads. From the inhuman conditions in detention camps, prisoners would either reach redemption (and return to the social body) or final excision from society (through death).[7]

The evolution of the Gulag was tied directly to the broader events in Soviet politics and society. As the priorities of the Soviet state shifted over time, so too did the contingent detained in the Gulag and the very boundary within the Gulag between redemption and excision. This article traces the relationship between the Gulag and Soviet politics and society through the years of the Second World War, when the Gulag, its inmates, and its staff were subjected to total mobilization for war. The Soviet battle with its perceived internal enemies continued throughout the war, and the Gulag continued to play an important role in this battle. Yet, as before the war, the Soviet authorities went to tremendous lengths to recreate Soviet society within the Gulag, and study of this internal Gulag world highlights significant elements of the wartime mobilization of Soviet society. After a brief discussion of the Gulag's institutions and population on the eve of the war and the changes that occurred during the war, the essay will explore three areas of penal activity—economic production, political education, and the battle with the "especially dangerous" inmates—that reflected the relationship between the Gulag and the larger Soviet polity. While the Gulag's specific production tasks were reoriented toward military industry, its *raison d'être* of the prewar—the definition and enforcement of the boundaries between reintegration into and final excision from the Soviet social body and as such the definition and enforcement of the proper characteristics of the Soviet citizen—was somewhat altered, but never dropped. Although in economic and administrative terms the Gulag emerged as a burden to the Soviet state during the

war, the Soviet leadership never entertained the notion of dismantling the system. The Gulag was a pillar of the Soviet system, as important for its role in the battle to cleanse and shape the Soviet home front as for its role in military production.

Gulag Institutions and Populations Before and During the War[8]

The ongoing drive to define the boundaries between redemption and excision required a system allowing an ever finer categorization of the detained population. The Soviet penal system can only be understood through careful consideration of its perpetually evolving range of institutions. Each institution served the whole as part of a hierarchy defining the detained population in terms of danger and redeemability. In 1941, the primary institutions of the Gulag were prisons, corrective labor camps, corrective labor colonies, special settlements (exile), and corrective labor without deprivation of freedom. Prisons held those under active interrogation prior to sentencing and held a select portion of sentenced inmates. Those serving their sentence in prisons, deemed unworthy or too dangerous for inclusion in the labor camp and colony population, rarely worked and were often kept in strict isolation.[9] Corrective labor camps, the brutal Gulag concentration camp made so familiar by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, housed individually sentenced prisoners with a term of more than three years. Corrective labor colonies, very similar to camps but typically smaller, housed those with terms of one to three years. Inmates of both camps and colonies were employed either in the economic system run by the penal administration itself, or they were contracted out for employment by other Soviet economic enterprises.[10] The camp, colony, and prison populations were composed of both common criminals and political prisoners.[11] Special settlements held all those forced into exile. Typically exiled as large groups and settled with family units intact, special settlers were only infrequently kept behind barbed wire.[12] Rather, they were forbidden to leave a certain territory and were required to register with and appear before local authorities on a regular basis. Special settlers were employed just as regular, undetained workers, although local penal authorities appropriated five percent of their income to cover the administrative costs associated with oversight of exiles. Finally, a large portion of the population was sentenced to forced labor without deprivation of freedom. They continued to work at their regular jobs with a portion of their wages garnished as a fine for their transgressions. Thus, the Soviet penal system offered a tremendous amount of flexibility in subjecting people to varying levels of detention. Even within these institutions, prisoners could be assigned to relatively lighter or harsher conditions of detention, allowing an even finer categorization of prisoners.[13]

At the outset of the war, the Gulag was comprised of eighty-five large corrective labor camps[14] and a huge number of corrective labor colonies, prisons, and special settlements spread throughout the Soviet Union.[15] On January 1, 1941, corrective labor camps and colonies officially held just over 1.9 million persons, prisons detained almost 490,000 persons,[16] and 930,000 persons were la-

beled "special settlers" and held in exile.[17] Furthermore, some 1.2 million individuals were working at corrective labor without deprivation of freedom.[18]

The Gulag population changed rapidly during the war. Most significantly, the camp and colony population dropped by half through 1944, the special settlement population grew rapidly due to wartime exile of national populations, and new camps were created for prisoners of war and repatriated civilian and military populations. Mass release and mass death reduced the camp and colony population from 2.3 million at the start of the war to 1.2 million on July 1, 1944.[19] Over one million camp and colony prisoners sentenced for crimes perceived as insignificant were released to join the Red Army. Those sentenced for "counter-revolutionary and other especially dangerous crimes" were excluded from the releases.[20] Some 552,000 elderly persons, invalids, and pregnant women were released early,[21] as were 43,000 Polish and 10,000 Czechoslovakian citizens in accord with these nations' new status as allies.[22] At the same time, the Soviets' own figures (likely understated) show frightful mortality rates in the Gulag, significantly higher than the prewar years. The Soviet Union as a whole faced a disastrous food situation in 1942–1943.[23] As hunger struck Soviet society, it hit the Gulag population—the lowest priority for the Soviet state and the least capable of organizing an informal system of food supply outside the state—particularly hard. One of every four inmates of Soviet corrective labor camps and colonies died in 1942. Just over one of every five died in 1943. During the worst months in mid-1942, death rates approached an annualized mortality rate of thirty-five percent. From January 1, 1941, through January 1, 1945, Gulag authorities documented 822,418 deaths in camps and colonies.[24]

These demographic changes presented significant challenges to the wartime camps and colonies as mostly young, healthy men were transferred to the Red Army from the prisoner population and from the Gulag staff. At 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, less experienced, less healthy, older, and more feminine voluntary staff.[25] The Soviet working population at large shifted even more strongly toward elderly, juvenile and female contingents.[26] The evacuation of twenty-seven camps and 210 colonies with one-third of the entire Gulag population (750,000 prisoners) from areas overrun by the Nazi advance (a part of the tremendous evacuation of Soviet economic enterprises from the same regions) further challenged the Gulag. Prisoners, apparently of less consequence than industrial equipment, were denied access to transport and forced to evacuate on foot over distances up to one-thousand kilometers, only to be reinterned in existing or newly created camps and colonies.[27]

Furthermore, the ongoing battle to cleanse the home front confronted the Gulag with the challenge of integrating tremendous new contingents and creating new institutions. Some two million Soviet citizens fell under the wartime mass ethnic deportations.[28] These national deportations solidified an ethnicization of the Gulag's population, especially its exile contingent, that began well before the war. While nearly all exiled in the early 1930s were officially categorized

as kulaks, i.e., in terms of social class,[29] by the mid-1930s Soviet authorities began to exile non-Russian peoples based solely upon their nationality.[30] By January 1945, only 646,965 of 2,137,769 exiled peoples were still classified as former kulaks. All the rest, except for a very small group (under five thousand) of religious sect members, were classified exclusively in ethnic terms.[31] The ethnicization of camps, colonies, and prisons was less obvious in prisoner demographics than in the practices of these institutions. While Gulag authorities differentiated prisoners by nationality throughout the 1930s,[32] nationality became the primary category of Gulag identity among staff and prisoners in the latter 1930s and during the war.[33] The ethnicization of the Gulag mirrored the rising significance of ethnic and national identities in the Soviet Union by the late 1930s and during the war.[34]

Two other new wartime prisoner contingents required the creation of new detention institutions. Once the Soviet army went on the offensive, the Gulag began to integrate prisoners of war into its detained labor force. By the end of 1944, seventy-five prisoner-of-war (POW) camps on Soviet territory held some 1.1 million POWs.[35] Furthermore, throughout and after the war, the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs (NKVD) operated filtration camps through which all former POWs and all Soviet citizens living in areas under German occupation passed. These camps were tasked with uncovering spies, traitors, and deserters from among these populations. Some six million Soviet citizens ultimately passed through filtration camps. No fewer than 500,000 were sent to the Gulag and many were shot.[36] This filtration process offers irrefutable evidence of the Soviet polity's continued preoccupation with cleansing its population, even in this time of an unprecedented need for laborers and military servitors.

Changes in the Gulag contingent challenged penal authorities throughout the war. The camp and colony prisoners, the backbone of Gulag labor production, dropped significantly.[37] At the same time, the Gulag had to integrate many new detained groups, few of whom worked directly for the industries of the Gulag itself. Furthermore, Soviet authorities tasked the Gulag with strengthening the isolation of a detained population perceived as more dangerous in a time perceived as more dangerous than ever before.

The Gulag's Wartime Economy

"To live means to work," declared a *Pravda* article in July 1943, echoing an old Bolshevik truth that labor meant more than just economic output; it was the defining characteristic of humanity and, in penal politics, the ultimate tool for the return of the prisoner to society.[38] Capitalist society, in this mind set, rendered labor a degraded, exploitive activity, leading many proletarians to a life of crime. To reform the criminal, the Soviet penal institution needed only show through labor that work in a socialist polity was no longer exploitive but heroic.[39] The significance of prisoner labor was only reinforced in the crusading, industrializing atmosphere of the Soviet 1930s. Driven to cleanse their new society of potentially contaminating elements, the Soviet state detained an ever-larger

population in the Gulag. These prisoners were an integral part not only of economic construction but also of the construction of a new society. The Gulag population served as a labor army on the most grandiose agricultural, industrial, and construction projects of the socialist construction era. Millions of prisoners lost their lives to the White Sea-Baltic Sea Canal, the gold mines of Kolyma, the coal mines and state farms of central Kazakhstan, and to hundreds of other enterprises springing up in the Soviet Union's harshest climatic conditions. The life of a Gulag laborer was cheap, yet Gulag labor was never divorced from its roots as transformer of man. For those who survived (and survival itself was at least tentatively tied to labor through the direct link between an individual prisoner's food rations and his labor output), labor served both as a means and measure of fitness for reintegration into society.

During the war, all Soviet laborers, in and out of the Gulag, were worked more mercilessly than ever.[40] Official regulations during the war required only that prisoners be given three days off per month and an eight-hour period of rest for sleep each day.[41] Similarly, outside the Gulag, employers were empowered on June 26, 1941, to require three hours of overtime per day and to cancel leave and holidays.[42] In the Gulag, even minimal rest periods were frequently violated. By the outbreak of the war, the Gulag had developed an array of punishments and rewards to compel prisoner labor. For shirking work or consistent under-fulfillment of labor norms, prisoners of labor camps and colonies could be given an additional sentence. They could be transferred to strict regime camp points or temporarily isolated in a "penalty isolator," a cold, wet solitary-confinement prison within the camp, where prisoners were given almost no food and not allowed to see the light of day.[43] Exiled special settlers were subject to arrest and transfer to a labor camp for the tiniest of disciplinary or labor infractions.[44] Furthermore, the Gulag had developed a system of mutual responsibility for the enforcement of labor discipline. Prisoners worked and their work was judged in brigades; therefore, each individual in the brigade, and especially the brigade leader, had a stake in the performance of labor by every other member of the brigade.[45] Other long-standing Gulag practices tied prisoner food rations, living space, and other essential supplies to labor productivity; in the famous Bolshevik credo, "He who does not work will not eat."[46] Not even productive labor could guarantee sufficient food during the hungry war years, when average prisoner calorie intake dropped by no less than thirty percent.[47] Many prisoners survived only through a network of contacts providing access to the necessities of life outside of these official channels. As virtually every memoir testifies, these internal networks solidified ties to nationality groups, criminal gangs, political factions, and other groupings in Gulag society. Informal and illegal trade with Gulag staff and other voluntary workers extended this Gulag society outside the barbed wire.

Similar practices marked the life of the laborer outside the Gulag. The Soviet state, battling the effects of high labor turnover and a significant manpower shortage, tied all employees to their enterprises in December 1941. Those leaving their job without permission were subject to five to eight years of im-

prisonment.[48] Food rations were differentiated according to the perceived importance, difficulty, and danger of one's labor. Furthermore, increased rations were offered as inducement to highly productive shock work or Stakhanovite labor, while nonworking, able-bodied adults received no rations. The highest category of rations could provide four to five times the food of the lowest.[49] Outside the Gulag, life was also marked by a significant increase in informal and illegal trade of food products as a means of survival.[50]

Intensive labor practices allowed the Gulag to make a significant production contribution to the war effort. The Gulag's population was more readily transferred from place to place than the free population.[51] Using this complete control of their labor force, the Gulag authorities were able, with amazing rapidity, to convert their civilian industries to a military-industrial task and to create new camps to aid the reconstruction of evacuated industry.[52] The Gulag's experience with the rapid integration of newly detained populations allowed the Soviet authorities to organize quickly the labor use of both POWs and internal deportees. In addition to its own economic production, the Gulag by 1944 "rented" the labor of over 900,000 prisoners to other people's commissariats.[53]

The Gulag's own wartime economic achievements were substantial but costly. The Gulag chief V. G. Nasedkin, reporting to superiors on the Gulag's work during the first three years of the war, provided a rather rosy picture of Gulag economic output. Gulag prisoners provided much needed labor on a wide range of important defense constructions from oil refineries and aviation factories to railroad construction and coal mines.[54] Gulag industries produced food, clothing, and an array of military objects, including by 1944 25.5 million 82-millimeter and 120-millimeter mortars, 35.8 million hand grenades, 9.2 million anti-infantry mines, 100,000 air bombs, and over 20.7 million ammunition casings.[55] Excluding special settlers,[56] Nasedkin reported total output of Gulag industries for the first three war years in "exchange prices" (*otpusknye tseny*) at 10.67 billion rubles with a yearly net profit rising from 0.45 billion rubles in 1940 to 1.03 billion rubles in 1943.[57]

Comparing the Gulag's economic production to that of the entire Soviet Union reveals a less rosy picture. As a percentage of gross national product (GNP), the Gulag was significantly unproductive per capita. During those same three years of the war in Nasedkin's figures, the inmate labor force averaged three percent of the total civilian Soviet working population.[58] Producing an estimated 3.56 billion rubles per year (Nasedkin's 10.67 billion rubles divided by three years), the Gulag produced a mere 1.9 percent of the average GNP for 1941–1943, significantly below its proportional representation in the work force.[59] As to the "profit" that Nasedkin claimed, one is skeptical of its validity considering the low productivity of prison labor and the tremendous expense of running the Gulag system. Even in the near absence of labor costs for the inmate population, the Gulag had to provide all means of subsistence—shelter, food, and clothing—and spent substantial amounts on surveillance, guards, staff, political education, bureaucracy, secrecy, etc.[60]

Despite the constant attempts to increase productivity, the Gulag may nev-

er have been a profitable institution. As early as 1941, the Gulag chief recognized that the typical Gulag laborer produced fifty percent of that produced by the corresponding free laborer.[61] Even if Gulag and other Soviet authorities operated under the illusion that the Gulag was profitable or that it could be made profitable, the illusion was certainly shattered by 1953. In the immediate aftermath of Josef Stalin's death in March 1953, a substantial portion of the Gulag's population was released, largely due to the system's drain on the state budget.[62] Yet the Gulag was never exclusively about profits and economic productivity. If the Soviet Union won the war through economic production, it did so despite and not because of the Gulag. Nevertheless, at no point during the war did the regime entertain the notion of dismantling this increasingly wasteful and inefficient institution. The Gulag, after all, was not a mere economic institution. It was a pillar of the polity as a whole.

Politicized Labor in the Gulag

Soviet authorities went to tremendous lengths both before and during the war to recreate Soviet society within the Gulag. Soviet society was intensely politicized, and this politicization permeated the Gulag as well. It was never enough for Gulag prisoners (or free Soviet laborers) merely to fulfill their labor norms; every prisoner was required to understand the significance and maintain the appropriate political attitude toward his task.[63] Only if prisoners understood "the context . . . of their tasks," i.e., the international and domestic political context, would they "not only fulfill and overfulfill the norms but fulfill two to three times the norms."[64]

Gulag authorities, like authorities in other Soviet institutions, treated every failure and every success as political. Every problem was ascribed to insufficient political education, and every problem could only be solved by improving political literacy. Hence, when the surveillance and police department of one camp encountered poor discipline among the militarized guard, who were showing up to work inebriated, cohabiting with female prisoners, and engaging in drinking parties with the heads of prisoner detachments, it blamed the problem on insufficient political education of the guard by local Communist party and Komsomol (Communist Youth League) organizations.[65]

The Gulag authorities approached the tasks of labor productivity and discipline among the inmates with the tools available from their decade of prewar experience. While political education of prisoners was the primary responsibility of the six thousand employees of the Gulag's cultural-educational department, every Gulag employee was charged with these tasks of political education.[66] The Gulag's employees brought every major economic and political campaign of Soviet society to their inmates, from socialist competition to "Stakhanovite" labor methods and production conferences for outstanding workers.[67] The cultural-educational section led political discussions, oral newspaper readings, and lectures among prisoners throughout the war to foster "feelings of patriotism among prisoners" and a sense of inclusion in the activities of

the front.[68] Even POWs were subjected to considerable political, "antifascist" education, as they were "acquainted with the methods of socialist construction."[69] Similar means spread Soviet political education to every level of society, both before and during the war. "Red Corners" in factories, party cells, Komsomol organizations, trade unions, press, radio, and cinema were all charged with spreading the message of "defense of the motherland."[70]

The particular content of political education in the Gulag reveals much about the operation of Soviet society and the Soviet penal system during the war. Revealing how a prisoner was to be redeemed, the Gulag's transformative activities offer a picture of the characteristics perceived proper for a true Soviet citizen. A 1944 brochure written by a Gulag cultural-educational worker named Loginov is a rich source for such analysis. Entitled *The Resurrected* (*Vozvrashchennye k zhizni*, literally, "Returnees to Life") and circulated for internal use only, Loginov's "notes of a cultural worker" offers anecdotal accounts of his alleged successful reeducation of Gulag prisoners to teach proper cultural-educational work to other Gulag workers.[71] Loginov understood his primary task as the reeducation of criminals, transforming them into "conscious and hard-working members of socialist society."[72] His words reveal the close tie in the Soviet mind set between proper political consciousness and productive labor.

All of Loginov's tales begin with a prisoner who violates camp discipline, refuses to work, and remains isolated from the collective of prisoners. Loginov takes a personal interest in the laggard, learns about their past, their criminal activities, and their political mood.[73] Then, based upon this knowledge, he is able to determine an effective individualized method of reeducation. As a rule, every case required a liberal dose of conversation about political topics. Eventually, the prisoners recognize their mistakes, return to work and typically take a place among the camp's best laborers.[74]

At the same time, Loginov revealed again that not all prisoners could be resurrected: "They often ask me if all who emerge from the ITL [corrective labor camps] are corrected into useful members of society? No, not all, but the majority is and this is our great service."[75] There was no need to elaborate on the fate of those who were not part of his "majority."

So, what were the topics of all those political conversations? First and foremost, they "conversed for a long time about the principles of socialism. . . ."[76] No matter where conversations led—the war, the heroes of Stakhanovite labor, "every chapter" of the Stalin Constitution, ethics and morals in Soviet society, or labor competition—Loginov related all these topics to the hopes and joys of living in the land of Soviet socialism, where convicted criminals had the capacity to become once again "conscious builders of socialism."[77] The war, referred to as a great campaign "in defense of the socialist fatherland," was also a frequent topic of conversation. Unfortunately, lamented Loginov, many people "did not understand the historic tasks of the patriotic war[,] . . . continuing to live and work as in old times."[78] Loginov urged cultural-educational workers to "call forth a feeling of hatred for the bloody and vile enemy."[79] Prisoners, he wrote, must understand that their "weapons" in the struggle with the enemy was their "labor."[80]

All of these conversations and all of this propaganda activity was matched in every sphere of Soviet society during the war. Workers were exhorted to "work in the factory as soldiers fight at the front" and to "work not just for yourself but for your comrade who has gone to the front." The Stakhanovite movement and shock work so common in the 1930s were given new impetus as the Soviet population was called to heroic feats of labor.[81]

Historians have frequently noted the reemergence of a certain Russian nationalism in the war years; Russian historical figures, especially those with military achievements to their credit, were rehabilitated and the Orthodox Church was allowed some latitude to reconvene its activities. Further, they argue, socialism and revolution played a much diminished role.[82] Yet one can see evidence of a conception in which national patriotism (and not just Russian national patriotism) and devotion to a socialist, Soviet polity were not competing ideas. Perhaps Richard Overy put it best, describing the use of "heroes of the past viewed through red-tinted spectacles."[83] Consider Loginov's story of Samuil Gol'dshtein, whose Jewishness is never specifically mentioned but is made obvious to Loginov's readers as one of only two individuals in the brochure identified by surname. Gol'dshtein's story starts like every other. He refused to contribute his labor to the drive for military victory and was "calmly holed up in a penalty isolator" for repeated refusal to work and violation of the camp regime. Loginov began to work with Gol'dshtein, but his first several conversations were wholly unsuccessful. Then, one day, Loginov finally discovered the key to rehabilitating this particular prisoner. Loginov explained to his charge: "A cutthroat, slaughterous battle is happening now at the front. . . . The best sons of our motherland are giving their lives for honesty, freedom, the independence of our country, for the lives of their families, friends and for you. You criminally sit in the isolator" and do not help the front. Gol'dshtein was unmoved. Loginov continued, "Do you know what kind of goals the fascists seek in the war with us? . . . I explained to him who this Hitler was, the kinds of goals he was seeking." Loginov explained to Gol'dshtein the nature of the "fascist cutthroats" and their desire for "world domination." Still, Gol'dshtein remained silent. Finally, Loginov explained "the essence of racial theory and Hitler's new order in Europe. . . . So why do you behave like a traitor? By your behavior, you play into the hands of the enemy." Finally, he had reached Gol'dshtein, who "began to weep like a little boy." Gol'dshtein exclaimed, "Forgive me! . . . I never thought that refusal to work was traitorous. But now I understand that this is so. Give me the chance to wash away my sin." Gol'dshtein immediately returned to work and became one of the most productive laborers in the camp. Soon, with Loginov's support, Gol'dshtein was released into the Red Army.

Gol'dshtein's story reveals again the rising significance of ethnicity in the Gulag and in Soviet society before and during the war and presages the development of ethnic politics in the postwar period. Gol'dshtein's particularity, the aspect of his identity requiring specialized attention from his cultural-educational worker, was his ethnicity. Loginov was certainly aware of the activities of Nazi

concentration and death camps. As he wrote in his introduction, "In contrast to capitalist countries, where concentration camps are places of torture and death for people, the corrective labor camps of the Soviet state are singular schools for the reeducation of worldviews, bequeathed to us by capitalist society." Although he does not specifically mention Nazi concentration camps, his reference is clear.[84] Loginov's conversations with Gol'dshtein were clearly shaped by this knowledge and the prisoner's Jewishness—"the essence of racial theory" clearly refers to the atrocities committed against Jews by Hitler's regime, even though the particularity of the Jews in Nazi racial theory was never spelled out. Although never explicitly, Loginov has clearly called forth universal feelings of Soviet patriotism through a veiled particular appeal to Gol'dshtein's Jewishness. Significantly, the story reflected the parallel erasure of Jewish particularity in official commemoration of the war outside the Gulag.[85]

Four months after Gol'dshtein's release, he wrote a letter to Loginov telling him about the seventy-seven fascists he had destroyed near Kiev and asked Loginov to remind the prison workers that their work was aiding the defeat of the enemy. After destroying another fifty-five "fritzes," Samuil Gol'dshtein died in battle.[86] The Gulag received many such letters that it used to motivate prisoners in the rear.[87] Many former prisoners received medals or entered the Communist party while five—Matrosov, Breusov, Otstavnov, Serzhantov, and Efimov—were awarded the exalted order of Hero of the Soviet Union.[88]

One final lesson from Loginov's brochure is the unit of measure for the success or failure of prisoner reeducation: labor. Loginov's wards were unreformed when they refused to work, and their transformation created in them a desire to work and to work well. Through their labor, they became participants in the grand struggle to build a new society and to destroy the fascist enemy.[89] Once again, labor was of much more significance than mere economic output.

The Hierarchy of Danger

By the beginning of 1942, the Germans had advanced deeply into Soviet territory. Three million Red Army soldiers had been taken prisoner and at least 1.5 million were dead from all causes. The civilian economy was nearly ruined, and most of the Soviet government had been evacuated from Moscow.[90] In this atmosphere one of the first large-scale armed uprisings hit the Gulag. On January 24, 1942, 125 prisoners at the far north Vorkuta corrective labor camp (Vorkutlag) disarmed the camp's militarized guard, attacked the nearby district center of Ust'-Usa, and captured the local telegraph office, cutting off communication with other regions. They then executed the guard of the local militia's holding cell, freeing forty-two prisoners, twenty-seven of whom joined their band.[91] The battle to liquidate the group lasted over a month with sizable losses on both sides. Among the prisoners, there were forty-eight killed, six suicides, and eight captured. Among NKVD forces, there were thirty-three killed or seriously injured, twenty casualties, and fifty-two cases of serious frostbite. The resulting in-

vestigation blamed the uprising on a counterrevolutionary organization created in October 1941 by former "Trotskyists" in the camp. For their part in the uprising, forty-nine prisoners were sentenced to death.[92]

Only three days after the uprising began, Lavrentii Beriia, the head of the NKVD, personally sent a letter to all chiefs of corrective labor camps and to republic- and local-level NKVDs describing this uprising and prescribing measures to prevent further uprisings. Camp guards should be battle ready and instructed that any violation or weakening of vigilance among them would be dealt with harshly. Any prisoners or even former prisoners sentenced for counterrevolutionary or especially dangerous crimes serving the camp in positions of authority should be replaced by free laborers. Extra measures should be taken to protect weapons in the camp. The head of the camp surveillance system should check up on all agents and informants and take measures to reveal any "rebellious-bandit moods" among prisoners. Any prisoners expressing terrorist moods or preparing armed escapes should be arrested.[93]

The uprising caught the authorities off guard, but it was not entirely unexpected. From the very first day of the war, the Soviets expected a battle on the home front. In a radio speech on July 3, 1941, Stalin proposed, among other tasks for the Soviet people, "to organize remorseless struggle with all disorganizers of the rear, deserters, panic-mongers, circulators of rumors, and to destroy spies and saboteurs."[94] The battle at the front was to be matched by an intense battle to cleanse the rear. In the latter battle, the Gulag played a decisive role.

On the first day of the German attack, the NKVD issued an order for the creation of special camp zones where counterrevolutionary and other especially dangerous criminals were placed under heightened guard.[95] On the same day, the NKVD halted all releases of prisoners sentenced for betraying the motherland, espionage, terror, sabotage, Trotskyism, rightism, banditism, and other serious state crimes. An even wider group of Gulag prisoners, including anti-Soviet agitators, serious military criminals, armed assailants and robbers, recidivists, socially dangerous elements, family members of traitors, and other especially dangerous criminals, were to stay in camps after the completion of their sentence, although they were granted all the rights of camp staff (except for the right to leave the camp vicinity). These "semireleased" prisoners lived in a nervous limbo, where any violation of discipline led to immediate reincarceration until the end of the war.[96]

With the combination of the disastrous retreats of the Red Army, the 1942 Vorkuta uprising, and the rising share of "counterrevolutionary" criminals in the Gulag population, Soviet authorities must have sincerely feared their prisoner population. In retrospect, the Gulag chief certainly envisioned the detained contingent as dangerous. "From the first days of the war, enemy activity among the prisoners was significantly intensified," he wrote. "Anti-Soviet activity manifested itself in the establishment of multimember rebellious organizations and groups, preparations of armed and group escapes . . . , circulation among the prisoners of defeatist fascist agitation, strengthening of banditism and other criminal activities."[97] Careful as ever to put the best face on the Gulag for high-

er authorities, Nasedkin did not mention the Vorkuta uprising at all, instead describing a litany of planned uprisings thwarted by Gulag authorities.

In their battle against such uprisings, the Gulag authorities paid special attention to the call for increased surveillance, recruiting many more prisoners for their agent-informant network. While the number of prisoners declined, the agent-informant network grew by 186 percent, raising the proportion of informants among the camp population from 1.7 percent in 1941 to eight percent in 1944.[98] An agent-informant network operated also among the special settlers, but on a much smaller scale, comprising approximately two percent of the population in 1944.[99] With the assistance of this network, the Gulag authorities carried out systematic "operative-prophylactic measures" against anti-Soviet activities. They maintained an operative accounting of 76,000 prisoners, Soviet ethnic Germans drafted into labor armies, and Gulag staff on suspicion of such crimes as espionage, wrecking, and anti-Soviet agitation. Within the camps and colonies, some 148,000 individuals were arrested from 1941 to 1944 for criminal activities, mostly for refusal to work, attempts to escape, anti-Soviet agitation, and for embezzlement and other property crimes. For more serious crimes, 10,087 prisoners, 526 Soviet Germans in labor armies, and 245 voluntary staff were sentenced to death.[100]

In accord with the growing ethnicization of Soviet conceptions of the enemy, participation in criminal and counterrevolutionary organizations was understood in an ethnic context during the war. Singled out for their participation in rebellious organizations were prisoners from the Baltic states, agents of the German occupiers, former military servitors sentenced for anti-Soviet activities, and Soviet Germans drafted into labor armies. The Gulag chief claimed to have uncovered and liquidated 603 rebellious organizations in the camps and colonies from 1941 to 1944, whose usual goal was the armed overthrow of the Gulag militarized guard and transfer to the side of the fascist military. All members of these organizations were "repressed."[101] In July 1942, for example, twenty-two members of an "insurrectionary counterrevolutionary organization" were arrested before they could carry out their goal of disarming the guard and "joining the fascists in battle."[102] One should, of course, skeptically evaluate the existence of such "rebellious organizations," particularly those liquidated before carrying out any actual rebellious activity. The Gulag authorities expected and were expected to uncover such organizations, and the pressure they may have placed upon their agents to uncover such rebellious elements must have been severe.[103]

Apparently, the enhanced regime against some prisoners was not enough. During the war, the Gulag created yet another new institution, emblazoned with an old tsarist name for hard labor, *katorga. Katorga* was introduced in April 1943 as an alternative punishment for all sections of the criminal code under which a person could be sentenced to death. The authorities sought to use a small portion of the most dangerous and least redeemable state criminals at the harshest of all tasks, such as uranium mining, so as to protect the health of other Gulag prisoners.[104] The *katorga* regime required stricter isolation, a lengthened work-

ing day, and the heaviest labor in the subterranean world of mining.[105] Only a tiny fraction of Gulag prisoners were in *katorga* camps; by July 1944 only 5,200 of 1.2 million camp and colony prisoners were classified as such. For those unlucky few, life was horribly difficult. After less than two years of *katorga,* almost fifty percent of its inmates had become invalids.[106] Gulag authorities did not seek to improve their condition, only to bolster their ranks. An April 1945 draft order requested, in view of the rapid destruction of *katorga* laborers, "no less" than an additional sixty thousand *katorga* inmates.[107]

Soviet practices during the war revealed a state profoundly concerned with cleansing its home front of real and potential enemies. While over a million Gulag prisoners, perceived as less of a danger to the Soviet state, were released to join the Red Army, the remaining prisoners, classified as an especially dangerous element, were subjected to a substantially harsher regime. At the same time, the Soviet state diverted substantial resources of armed men to carry out the mass national deportations of the war, both during the war's most dangerous hours and when the tide had substantially turned in the Soviet Union's favor. Combined with the millions of citizens subjected to varying levels of punishment for violations of labor discipline during the war, all of these activities provided an atmosphere for the home front of violence and terror. This atmosphere, combined with various material and propagandist incentives, compelled the Soviet labor force to its massive economic achievements in support of the war effort.

The Postwar Decade

After four years of brutal, exhausting warfare, the Soviet Union emerged as one of the great victors from a war that had begun so disastrously. Despite any hopes the Soviet people may have held for a loosening of the political regime in the early postwar era, the battle on the home front was far from over.[108] The early postwar period offered no indication that the Gulag would cease to be a mass social phenomenon within fifteen years. Rather, the Gulag remained a pillar in the reestablishment of the Soviet system, following the Red Army into liberated territories so that every liberated district received its own corrective labor colony.[109] By 1944 the camp and colony population began to grow again.[110] Filtration camps continued their work to cleanse the populations living under German occupation and Red Army soldiers captured by the German military. Executions, arrests, and exile greeted the opposition in the brutal guerrilla wars fought between Soviet NKVD forces and members of nationalist military groupings in western Ukraine and the Baltics. Soviet POW camps sought to educate an antifascist element for active participation in the postwar German state. Mass arrests and deportations marked the "Sovietization" of the annexed western territories—the Baltic republics, western Ukraine, western Belorussia, and Moldavia. All these processes brought large new groups to the Gulag population—both ethnic and Red Army veterans—who substantially affected life in the postwar Gulag, just as they affected life in postwar Soviet society.

The war profoundly affected Soviet politics and society. The Soviet state

had survived near annihilation. In the wake of this Armageddon, Soviet authorities were less willing than ever to accommodate the elements they perceived as alien and dangerous. The postwar Gulag regime underwent a certain rigidification, marked especially by a number of changes in 1948. On February 21, 1948, the Soviet Council of Ministers ordered the formation of a new subset of camps called "special camps" (*osobye lageri*). These camps were formed to house a select portion of "especially dangerous state criminals." The special-camp regime was very similar to *katorga* camps created during the war, but special camps held a much larger portion of the Gulag population in strict isolation from other prisoners. On the very same day, the Council of Ministers issued another order condemning all "especially dangerous state criminals" to permanent exile in the most distant regions of the Soviet Union upon completion of their term in camps.[111] Later in 1948, all people exiled during the course of the war were assigned the status of special settlers forever (*navechno*). Permanent exile was also applied to many postwar exile contingents, members of Ukrainian and Baltic military nationalist organizations and their families, and "Vlasovites" who fought against the Soviet army during the war. Baltic peoples, Moldavians, and populations from the Black Sea coast were exiled "forever" between 1949 and 1952.[112] The creation of categories of permanently exiled peoples marked an innovation in Soviet penal practice. Never before had a group of detained peoples (except those executed) been forthrightly denied the possibility of ever returning to the ranks of Soviet society. While Soviet practice, of course, had long consigned many to a nearly inevitable death in the locales of the Gulag, theoretically, at least, all sentences of detention were time-limited.

The Gulag was larger than ever before between 1950–1953, but its days were numbered. Stalin died on March 5, 1953. Three weeks later, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet issued an order "On Amnesty" that liberated 1,181,264 camp and colony prisoners, although all of those sentenced for counterrevolutionary and other especially serious crimes were excluded from release.[113] Over the remainder of the 1950s, the vast majority of the Gulag's inmates, including those sentenced for political crimes, were released. The demise of the Gulag in the 1950s yet again emphasized the conditions of its existence. The Gulag had been recognized for some years as a serious drain on the state budget, but it was only the largely political event of Stalin's death that made the dismantling of the system conceivable. Even then, however, there was definite reluctance to release those perceived as political enemies of the Soviet state. Only in the wake of a series of major uprisings in the special camps of Norilsk, Vorkuta, and Karaganda from 1953 to 1954 did the Soviet authorities finally begin to release these contingents of the Gulag population. Significantly, the uprisings were led in large part by the two significant postwar additions to the Gulag: the nationalists from the western provinces of the Soviet Union and Red Army veterans.[114]

The reintegration of these millions of former prisoners into Soviet society remains an open question. Throughout the Gulag's history, millions had died, but millions had also survived. The Gulag, as a mass institution, ended quickly, but the labor practices on which it was based—especially the explicit tie between

labor performance and proper political consciousness backed by the constant threat of force—and the memory of this institution by millions of its former inmates haunted the Soviet Union to its last days.

NOTES

1. Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii fond 9414, opis 3, delo 14, list 172 (hereafter GARF f. 9414, op. 3, d. 14, l. 172).

2. While the term "Gulag," an acronym of "Glavnoe Upravlenie Lagerei" (Main Administration of Camps), properly notes a specific, time-limited administrative institution tasked with oversight of the Soviet detention system, I use the term here and throughout in its more common usage since the publication of Solzhenitsyn's works to refer to the entire Soviet penal system.

3. As early as August 9, 1918, Vladimir Lenin noted the need for "concentration camps" as a part of a campaign of "mass terror against kulaks, priests and white-guardists." Concentration camps were also included in the decree issued by the Council of People's Commissars on September 5, 1918, "On red terror." See Galina Mikhailovna Ivanova, *Gulag v sisteme totalitarnogo gosudarstva*, (Moscow, 1997), 19. From 1918 through Josef Stalin's death in 1953, the detained population in the Soviet Union grew larger almost every year, with the exception of the war years, the subject of the present article.

4. In the early years of the Gulag, corrective labor camps were not only openly discussed but were a source of pride. In the mid-1920s, the newspaper and journal of the Solovetsky prison camp were open to national subscription. In the 1930s, Maksim Gor'kii and other prominent Soviet writers were led on an expedition to the construction of the Baltic-White Sea Canal. The resulting volume, issued not only in the Soviet Union but also in the United States in English translation, proudly announced the use of convict construction labor on the canal. The Bolsheviks were transforming humans as proudly as they were transforming nature. The massive death rate at Belomor was conveniently left out of the volume. Maksim Gor'kii, L. L. Averbakh, and S. G. Firin, *Belomorsko-baltiiskii kanal imeni Stalina; istoriia stroitel'stva*, (Moscow, 1934). In English, *Belomor: An Account of the Construction of the New Canal Between the White Sea and the Baltic Sea* (New York, 1935).

5. Officially, the term *kulak* applies to the wealthy peasant, the class enemy of the village who exploits the labor of his fellow peasants. In Soviet practice, the term and the corresponding deportation were applied to virtually any villager opposing the collectivization campaign.

6. J. Arch Getty, Gábor 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," *American Historical Review* 98 (1993):1041.

7. On the tensions within Soviet excisionary policies, see Amir Weiner, "Nature, Nurture, and Memory in a Socialist Utopia: Delineating the Soviet Socio-Ethnic Body in the Age of Socialism," *American Historical Review* 104 (1999):1114–55.

8. Edwin Bacon was one of the first scholars to gain access to archival materials on the Gulag during the war. He was able to review a limited number of documents over a very short period of time. One of the main documents he used, a 1944 report of the Chief of the Gulag central administration, has been published since the appearance of Bacon's book. I have used this report extensively. Some of the figures from the report appear in Bacon's book as well, although my use of them is substantially different. Edwin Bacon, *The Gulag at War: Stalin's Forced Labour System in the Light of the Archives* (London, 1994). The Gulag chief's report appears as "Gulag v gody voiny," *Istoricheskii Arkhiv* 3 (1994):60–86.

9. One of the best descriptions of a late 1930s Soviet solitary confinement prison is in Eugenia Semyonovna Ginzburg, *Journey into the Whirlwind* (New York, 1967). Ginzburg was later transferred from prison to a corrective labor camp.

10. Corrective labor camps were directly subordinate to central authorities, while corrective labor colonies were the responsibility of republic and local commissariats of internal affairs.

11. While one's categorization had real and sometimes lethal consequences for the prisoner, the relative proportions and the boundary between the common criminal and political prisoner are still not terribly clear. Getty et al. go to tremendous lengths in their efforts to prove that the Gulag was not populated primarily by political prisoners, whom they understand as the

"counterrevolutionaries" sentenced under the notorious Article 58 of the Russian Federation's criminal code or under corresponding articles of the criminal codes of other union republics. However, as John Keep quite rightly observes, many indicted under articles other than 58 would certainly not be considered criminal in many countries. Furthermore, a prisoner's article of conviction did not necessarily have a direct relationship to the reason he or she was repressed. John Keep, "Recent Writing on Stalin's Gulag: An Overview," *Crime, Histoire & Societes* 1 (1997):100–101.

12. Often, the head of the household was arrested and sent to a corrective labor camp, while the rest of the family was exiled together.

13. A compelling argument can be made that the hierarchy of detention extended out of the Gulag and into Soviet society. At least since the introduction of the internal passport system, Soviet citizens were not able to move about with complete freedom, and those deprived of internal passports—as were the peasants—were practically tied to their place of residence.

14. These camps are more properly considered complexes, vast and sprawling, each containing innumerable "camp points"—the individual, barbed-wire enclosures that are more commonly envisioned in the term camps.

15. GARF, f. 9414, op. 1, d. 328, l. 6.

16. Some of the most vigorous scholarship on the Soviet Gulag since the opening of the archives has concerned the debate over numbers. I choose, consciously, not to enter the debate, as I am more interested in the qualitative significance of the Gulag rather than its quantitative size. The Gulag was a brutal and inhumane institution no matter how many millions of inmates it held. Even the lowest estimates reveal the Gulag as a massive social phenomenon. Its significance for the social, political, and cultural history of the Soviet Union cannot be questioned. The figures I present should be considered minimums and subject to future revision. The debate was reviewed at length in Edwin Bacon, *Gulag at War*, and John Keep, "Recent Writing." Here, the figures come from Viktor N. Zemskov, "Zakliuchennye, Spetsposelentsy, Ssyl'no-poselentsy, Ssyl'nye i Vyslannye: Statistiko-geograficheskii aspekt," *Istoriia SSSR* 5 (1991):152–53.

17. Viktor N. Zemskov, "Sud'ba 'Kulatskoi Ssylki': 1930–1954 gg.," *Otechestvennaia Istoriia* 1 (1994):124–25.

18. "Gulag v gody voiny," 71.

19. These figures are from the 1944 report of the chief of the Gulag administration. "Gulag v gody voiny," 64. The numbers offered by Viktor Zemskov differ. Zemskov offers a total of 1,929,729 in camps and colonies on January 1, 1941, and a total of 1,179,819 on January 1, 1944. Zemskov, "Zakliuchennye, Spetsposelentsy," 152. Even if the totals do not agree, the large downward trend of the numbers during the war years is similar.

20. GARF, f. 9414, op. 1, d. 330, l. 61. "Gulag v gody voiny," 65. Far fewer exiled "former kulaks" were released to join the Red Army. Only 60,747 of these former kulaks entered the Red Army during the war. However, when the head of a household joined the Red Army, typically the entire family was released from special settler status. Combined with other releases, the total number of exiled former kulaks dropped from 911,716 on January 1, 1942, to 669,687 on January 1, 1944, and to 599,477 on January 1, 1946. Zemskov, "Sud'ba," 131–133; "Kulatskaia ssylka na nakanune i v gody velikoi otechestvennoi voiny," *Sotsiologicheskie issledovania* 2 (1992):20.

21. GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1146, l. 33.

22. "Gulag v gody voiny," 65.

23. The disaster was not in food supply alone. Mark Harrison estimates that the real national income of the Soviet Union fell by more than forty percent between 1940 and 1942 with between sixty-six to seventy-five percent of national economic resources devoted to the military. Mark Harrison, "Resource Mobilization for World War II: The U.S.A., U.K., U.S.S.R., and Germany, 1938–1945," *Economic History Review* 41 (1988):185.

24. GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 328, l. 82. These figures come from background materials used by the Gulag chief in preparing his 1944 report. In his report he does not offer the details of camp mortality.

25. "Counterrevolutionary and other especially dangerous state criminals" rose from twenty-seven to forty-three percent during the war. The female prisoner population rose from seven to twenty-six percent. The proportion of prisoners "Fit for heavy labor" dropped from 35.6 to 19.2 percent. GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 328, l. 8; and "Gulag v gody voiny," 62–67. Meanwhile 120,000 Gulag staffers, including 93,500 out of 135,000 members of the militarized guard, were sent to the front. The portion of militarized guard between ages twenty and forty dropped from eighty-

six to thirty-eight percent, while only twenty percent of Gulag employees had worked in the NKVD since before the war. GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 328, l. 3; "Gulag v gody voiny," 62, 72.

26. John Barber and Mark Harrison, *The Soviet Home Front 1941–1945: A Social and Economic History of the USSR in World War II* (New York, 1991), 144–145.

27. GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 328, l. 9; "Gulag v gody voiny," 64. Many industrial workers also evacuated on foot. See Richard Overy, *Russia's War: A History of the Soviet War Effort: 1941–1945* (New York, 1998), 170–1.

28. During the war, approximately 950,000 ethnic Germans were deported, along with over 600,000 northern Caucasian peoples, 225,000 Crimean peoples, almost 95,000 people from Georgia, and over 90,000 Kalmyks. An additional 120,000 Germans were deported between 1945 and 1948. Zemskov, "Spetsposelentsy (po dokumentatsii)," 8. Gulag Chief Nasedkin's report also speaks of the "mobilization" into labor columns of a contingent of 400,000 Soviet citizens of nationalities fighting against the Soviet Union (Germans, Italians, and Romanians among others). It is unclear whether this contingent is included in the totals of deported Germans. "Gulag v gody voiny," 71; GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 328, l. 2. "Spetspereselentsy v SSSR v 1944 godu ili god bol'shogo pereseleniia," *Otechestvennye arkhivy* 5 (1993):99.

29. By the end of 1932, a total of 3.4 million peasants had been deported. Deaths and amnesties reduced the number of "former kulaks" in exile to slightly under one million by the beginning of the war. Nikolai Bougai, *The Deportation of Peoples in the Soviet Union* (New York, 1996), 15.

30. The process started with deportations of Poles in 1935–1936, while the Korean populations of the far eastern regions were the first nationality to be deported as a whole in 1937. Bougai, *The Deportation of Peoples*, 27–37; Keep, "Recent Writing," 102. The ethnicization was heightened by exile from the newly annexed western territories between 1939 and 1941. From February 1940 to June 1941, around 380,000 Poles were deported from the newly annexed western regions of the Ukrainian and Belorussian SSRs and from Lithuania. Viktor N. Zemskov, "Spetsposelentsy (po dokumentatsii NKVD-MVD SSSR)," *Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniia* 11 (1990):5. John Keep notes differing totals between 1.2 and 1.5 million for all deportations from these western territories in the prewar period. Keep, "Recent Writing," 102. The integration of this population, with a non-Soviet set of historical memories from the interwar period, influenced the development of the Gulag into the postwar years. See, for example, one labor camp worker's account of the inability of some Polish prisoners to make sense of the Gulag on the basis of their imprisonment experiences in interwar Poland. GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1146, l. 36b. The role of these prisoner contingents from the western territories in the Gulag strikes after Stalin's death is discussed by Andrea Graziosi, "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.

31. "Spetspereselentsy v SSSR," 109.

32. For example, Gor'kii, Averbakh, and Firin, *Belomor*, describes special barracks for national minorities: "Uzbeks, Bashkirs, Tadzhiks, Yakuts—the most backward people on the construction, branded as idlers in the camp paper *Reforging*" (252). The establishment of national minority divisions and barracks echoed the particularization of nationalities throughout the Soviet Union. See Yuri Slezkine, "The USSR as a Communal Apartment, Or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism," *Slavic Review* 53 (1994):414–52.

33. For the significance of national identity among prisoners, see Joseph Scholmer, *Vorkuta* (New York, 1954).

34. Compare, for example, the rehabilitation of national heroes, not only Russian but also among the other peoples of the Soviet Union.

35. GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 328, l. 22. As early as September 1939, the NKVD created an administration to organize detention and labor utilization of prisoners of war. Its first prisoners were Polish soldiers captured in autumn 1939, but the numbers became significant only in 1943, when the Soviet advance to the west started in earnest. On May 11, 1945, the Soviet Union held just under 2.1 million POWs. Ivanova, *Gulag v sisteme*, 56; "'Voennoplennye oznakomilis' s metodami sotsialisticheskogo stroitel'stva,' Dokladnaia zapiska MVD SSSR," *Istochnik* 1 (1999):83–88.

36. Ivanova, *Gulag v sisteme*, 52–53.

37. In 1943 and 1944, the State Committee of Defense forbade prisoners working in the defense industry from leaving their place of work upon the completion of their sentence until the end of the war, but the damaging losses of prisoner laborers had already taken place. GARF

f. 9414, op. 1, d. 38, l. 23. Similar laws had been applied to portions of the civilian working population since 1940.

38. "Bol'sheviki Karagandy v bor'be za ugol'," *Pravda*, July 24, 1943.

39. For a solid overview of the relationship between Bolshevik views of crime and punishment and the early development of the Gulag, see Michael Jakobson, *Origins of the Gulag: The Soviet Prison-Camp System, 1917–1934* (Lexington, KY, 1993).

40. The Gulag's voluntary staff was also worked mercilessly. When the guard was understaffed, as it was throughout the war, they often worked thirteen to fifteen hours per day, often without days off. Yet for the slightest lapse of vigilance allowing a prisoner to escape they could be criminally charged. Suicide and alcoholism were common. See Ivanova, *Gulag v sisteme*, 172, 185–86.

41. "Gulag v gody voiny," 65, 68.

42. Barber and Harrison, *The Soviet Home Front*, 61; Overy, *Russia's War*, 80.

43. On transfer from one camp point to another as a means of punishment, see Ginzburg, *Journey*, 417. On penalty isolators, see Jacques Rossi, *The Gulag Handbook: An Encyclopedia Dictionary of Soviet Penitentiary Institutions and Terms Related to the Forced Labor Camps* (New York, 1989), 501–2.

44. Special settlers constantly feared arrest. See Rachel and Israel Rachlin, *Sixteen Years in Siberia* (Tuscaloosa, AL, 1988), 110–11.

45. On the collective responsibility of the brigade, see Aleksandr I. Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago, 1918–1956: An Experiment in Literary Investigation*, three volumes (New York, 1991), v. 2, 117.

46. GARF f. 9414, op. 4, d. 145, l. 5.

47. "Gulag v gody voiny," 69.

48. During the war, an average of one million Soviet laborers were charged each year with absenteeism. Barber and Harrison, *The Soviet Home Front*, 163–164.

49. Ibid., 62–63, 81–82.

50. William Moskoff, *The Bread of Affliction: The Food Supply in the USSR During World War II* (Cambridge, UK, 1990).

51. Some industries were given the right to force the transfer of their civilian workforce; see Barber and Harrison, *The Soviet Home Front*, 60–61.

52. "Gulag v gody voiny," 65.

53. "Gulag v gody voiny," 66–67. As Ivanova notes, however, the Gulag was such an inefficient institution, they could not even manage a profit when hiring out their labor force to other institutions. Ivanova, *Gulag v sisteme*, 115.

54. GARF, f. 9414, op. 1, d. 328, ll. 17, 26.

55. "Gulag v gody voiny," 79–81, 83.

56. Exiled special settlers typically worked in industries outside of the NKVD. Only 4.34 percent worked in NKVD industries on October 1, 1941, although the NKVD derived income from a five percent garnishment of the special settlers' salaries. Viktor N. Zemskov, "Kulatskaia ssylka," 16.

57. "Gulag v gody voiny," 85. The ruble was not a convertible currency. No meaningful translation into dollar amounts can be made. Rather, as follows, I will attempt to draw some comparisons between the size of the Gulag economy and the Soviet economy as a whole.

58. Based on figures from Mark Harrison, *Accounting for War: Soviet Production, Employment, and the Defence Burden, 1940–1945* (New York, 1996), 98 and 269, for Gulag prisoners employed in NKVD industries, Gulag prisoners subcontracted out, and total working population. These numbers exclude special settlers and POWs whose labor did not figure in to Nasedkin's account. From 1940 to 1945, the percentages run 2.3, 3.3, 3.9, 2.9, 2.4, and 2.5, respectively. Even as the total Gulag labor force contracted, its portion of the total working population remained relatively constant due to the simultaneous contraction of the civilian labor force.

59. As Harrison's lengthy study attests, calculating Soviet economic output is an extremely complex subject. Without question, my presentation here simplifies the matter significantly. Nonetheless, the figures at least provide some sense of the Gulag's economic production in comparison to the total Soviet economy. These figures most likely err on the side of showing the Gulag as more productive than it really was since two groups of Gulag laborers (the small portion of special settlers working in Gulag industries and undetained forced laborers) are included in the totals for economic production but not in the total labor force. Furthermore, the fig-

ures take no account of the tremendous number of Gulag staffers needed merely to operate Gulag industries.

60. Merely the secrecy involved in operating the Gulag bureaucracy was a tremendous expense. In 1940 alone, the NKVD circulated over twenty-five million secret packets of correspondence, each requiring special handling. By 1948, Gulag administrative costs alone topped 11.5 billion rubles per year. Ivanova, *Gulag v sisteme*, 96, 113–14.

61. Ivanova, *Gulag v sisteme*, 102.

62. Ibid., 142–47. Elena Zubkova, *Russia After the War: Hopes, Illusions, and Disappointments, 1945–1957* (New York, 1998), 164–70.

63. As a decorated Stakhanovite miner declared at the first Karaganda *oblast'* party conference in 1937, "Comrade Stalin in his speech at the Central Committee plenum correctly stated that 'wreckers do not always try to wreck, but sometimes they try to fulfill plans and prove themselves . . .' Every wrecker tries to prove himself and under the flag of a party card will wreck us." Fulfilling plans alone was never sufficient proof of one's innocence or honesty. Even though this meeting occurred during the worst period of the terror, the statement reflects the ethos throughout the Stalin period. Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Sotsial'no-Politicheskoi Istorii (RGASPI), formerly RTsKhIDNI, f. 17, op. 21, d. 1612, l. 6. For more on the politicization of labor and life in the Soviet Union, see Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley, 1995).

64. GARF f. 9414, op. 3, d. 14, l. 173. Many scholars writing about the Gulag have depicted it primarily as a slave labor system designed and populated to provide a cheap source of labor power to the Soviet state. These scholars gloss over the political and ideological elements of labor in the Soviet 1930s. Industrialization was not merely a means of increasing economic output; it was also a means of "building socialism." Similarly, Gulag labor was not merely a means of extracting economic output; it was also a means of creating a new man out of the prisoner. For the economic interpretation of the Gulag, see David J. Dallin and Boris I. Nicolaevsky, *Forced Labor in Soviet Russia* (New Haven, 1947); Edwin Bacon, *Gulag at War*; and James R. Harris, "The Growth of the Gulag: Forced Labor in the Urals Region, 1929–1931," *The Russian Review* 56 (1997):265–280.

65. GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 39, ll. 68–71. Also found in French translation in Nicolas Werth and Gael Moullec, eds., *Rapports Secrets Sovietiques: La Societe Russe Dans Les Documents Confidentiels, 1921–1991* (Paris, 1994), 380–81. Other examples of problems blamed on poor political work can be found at GARF f. 9414, op. 3, d. 14, l. 174, and f. 9414, op. 3, d. 22, l. 30. The archives are filled with many other similar examples. For just one example of this attitude outside the Gulag, see "Bol'sheviki Karagandy v bor'be za ugol'," where successful coal mining was credited to proper political work by Communists. *Pravda*, July 24, 1943.

66. GARF f. 9414, op. 3, d. 14, l. 173.

67. The "Stakhanovite" labor movement involved heroic over fulfillment of daily work norms by individual Soviet laborers.

68. The topics of political discussions included "the heroic struggle of the Red Army," the partisan movement, the war and construction, the productivity of labor in a time of war, Lenin and Stalin as founders of the Red Army, and others. See GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1441, ll. 236–37. Almost identical discussions took place among the nonprisoner staff of the Gulag. The most significant differences were the focus on "revolutionary vigilance" and the cultivation of a certain hatred for the "enemies of the people" populating the camps. GARF f. 9414, op. 3, d. 14, ll. 118–34; Ivanova, *Gulag v sisteme*, 173. Nasedkin reports over 32,000 lectures in the Gulag during 1943 alone. "Gulag v gody voiny," 72.

69. "Voennoplennye oznakomilis,'" 83–88.

70. Barber and Harrison, *The Soviet Home Front*, 68.

71. GARF f. 9414, op. 4, d. 145, l. 2b.

72. Ibid., l. 3.

73. Compare the comments of one Vladivostoklag division head in November 1941 on the "poor" work of the cultural-educational sections, who "do not know the moods of the prisoners." Ibid., op. 3, d. 14, l. 186. Interestingly, knowing the political mood of the prisoners was also the job of the camp surveillance system. See the discussion of the surveillance system to follow.

74. The similarities between Loginov's anecdotes and those in Gor'kii, Averbakh, and Firin, *Belomor* are striking.

75. GARF f. 9414, op. 4, d. 145, l. 3. His stories also reveal yet again the capriciousness of the Soviet political system. Consider, for example, Ekaterina Sh., whose husband was shot in 1937 as a "double-dyed spy." After her husband's execution, Ekaterina was arrested for "loss

of vigilance of a Soviet wife." It seems that had she exhibited enough "vigilance," she would have realized her husband was a spy. Ibid., l. 4b.

76. Ibid., l. 5.

77. Ibid., l. 7.

78. Ibid., l. 10b.

79. Ibid., l. 11.

80. Ibid., l. 12.

81. Barber and Harrison, *The Soviet Home Front*, 69–70, 160–161, 174–176.

82. See, for one example, ibid., 30, 68–72; Overy, *Russia's War*, 161–163.

83. Overy, *Russia's War*, xxi. In the main text, however, Overy himself also subscribes at times to the notion that revolution and socialism disappeared from official propaganda. At other times, he recognizes the continued significance of defending the Soviet Union as a force of "socialist progress." Compare 114–115 with 153. One should not lose sight, either, of the rehabilitation of non-Russian historical figures during the same period or the limited reemergence of Islam in Central Asia.

84. GARF f. 9414, op. 4, d. 145, l. 3. The point of comparison is particularly interesting. When Gorky and others prepared their celebration of Belomor in the early 1930s (a book that reads remarkably like Loginov's brochure), they asserted the superiority of Soviet corrective labor over American prisons like Sing Sing, a New York State penitentiary in Ossining, New York. Gor'kii, Averbakh, and Firin, *Belomor,* 207. International comparison was still important to the Gulag's supporters. During the war, however, the representative of international capitalism was not America, but Nazi Germany.

85. On the postwar disappearance of particular Jewish suffering and particular Jewish heroism into the universal story of Soviet suffering and Soviet heroism, see Weiner, "Nature, Nurture and Memory."

86. GARF f. 9414, op. 4, d. 145, ll. 11–12b.

87. By mid-1944, camps had received at least 348 letters from former prisoners serving in the Red Army. Ibid., d. 325, l. 52. Transcriptions and excerpts from some of these letters can be found at ibid., d. 325, ll. 61–65; d. 1146, ll. 37b-38; and d. 1449, ll. 5–6.

88. "Gulag v gody voiny," 65. These five names are mentioned again and again in the archives. They became the symbol of the Gulag's success in reforming prisoners.

89. As Eugenia Ginzburg wrote, "We, the outcasts, racked by four years of suffering, suddenly felt ourselves citizens of this country of ours. We, its rejected children, now trembled for our fatherland." Eugenia Ginzburg, *Within the Whirlwind* (New York, 1981), 27. Strictly in terms of commitment to labor, the Gulag successfully engaged both prisoners loyal to and devout enemies of the Soviet state order. For the former, see I. V. Kashkinoi, "'Ia khochu znat' prichinu moego aresta . . . ": Pis'mo V. N. Pilushchuka—byvshego zakliuchennogo Karlaga," in *Golosa Istorii. Muzei Revoliutsii*, vypusk 23, kniga 2, ed. I. S. Rozental' (Moscow, 1992), 170–85. Pilushchuk describes his own battles as a prisoner of the Karaganda corrective labor camp (Karlag) to provide "a grain basis for the front." "Weighing the situation as it was in the country and at Stalingrad," he even gladly risked his life to blow up ice threatening the destruction of a dam. I thank Jan Plamper for providing this source. For an avowed enemy of the Soviet state drawn to labor effectively anyway, see Dmitri Panin, *The Notebooks of Sologdin* (New York, 1976).

90. Barber and Harrison, *The Soviet Home Front*, 29–30.

91. The description of the uprising comes from Beriia's letter of January 27, 1942. At that time the battle against the uprising continued with nearly one hundred prisoners still on the loose. GARF, f. 9414, op. 1, d. 45, ll. 102–5.

92. These figures come from Ivanova, *Gulag v sisteme*, 54, who relies on an article in *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, January 23, 1992.

93. GARF, f. 9414, op. 1, d. 45, ll. 102–5.

94. Here, the head of the Politotdel of Vladivostoklag quotes Stalin's speech to a November 24, 1941, meeting of the party activists. Ibid., d. 14, l. 158.

95. Some were even perceived as too dangerous to live, especially in the face of the German onslaught. For example, on September 11, 1941, in the Medvedev forest, 157 political prisoners from Orel prison were executed on Stalin's orders. Among those executed was the famous Left-Socialist-Revolutionary Mariia Spiridonova. Considering the history of political executions in the 1920s and 1930s, it is surprising that she and these other prisoners were still alive by 1941. "Tragediia v medvedevskom lesu: o rasstrele politzakliuchennykh Orlovskoi tiur'my," *Izvestiia TsK KPSS* 11 (1990):124–31.

96. GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 328, ll. 6, 48. For a local camp experience with the "concentration" of these categories of prisoners into "special zones" under strengthened guard, see ibid., op. 3, d. 14, ll. 136–49. On calls for additional vigilance among Gulag workers, see ibid., ll. 163–68.

97. "Gulag v gody voiny", 74.

98. Ibid.

99. Zemskov, "Kulatskaia ssylka," 22.

100. "Gulag v gody voiny," 74–75.

101. Ibid., 75–76.

102. Werth and Moullec, eds., *Rapports*, 384–85.

103. Ivanova opines that these "organizations" existed "only on paper," since Gulag workers in their meetings never spoke of "organizations" but only of individual or group escapes. Ivanova, *Gulag v sisteme*, 55.

104. GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1146, l. 28b; Ivanova, *Gulag v sisteme*, 53.

105. GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 328, l. 5.

106. I have found no figures on mortality rates, but they must also have been high.

107. GARF f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1146, l. 28b. By September 1947, the *katorga* population did reach sixty thousand. Ivanova, *Gulag v sisteme*, 53.

108. On these hopes and their fate in postwar Soviet society, see Zubkova, *Russia after the War*.

109. "Gulag v gody voiny," 85.

110. GARF, f. 9414, op. 1, d. 330, l. 55.

111. Ivanova, *Gulag v sisteme*, 64–67.

112. Ivanova, *Gulag v sisteme*, 67–68; Zemskov, "Spetsposelentsy (po dokumentatsii)," 9–10, 16; Zemskov, "Prinuditel'nye migratsii iz Pribaltiki v 1940–1950-kh godakh," *Otechestvennye arkhivy* 1 (1993):4–19. Many former corrective labor camp inmates were rearrested in 1948 for the purpose of changing their status to "permanent, lifelong exile." See Ginzburg, *Within*, 294, 311.

113. *Pravda*, March 28, 1953; Zubkova, *Russia after the War*, 165–66.

114. See Graziosi, "The Great Strikes."