Sarah Badcock and Judy Pallot

Introduction

Transportation to the Arctic circle and the interior of Eurasia by successive Russian states is perhaps the most iconic and certainly the most long-lived of territorial strategies of social control, and has been utilized from the sixteenth century to the present time. In both Imperial Russia and the Soviet Union, a large proportion of convicts sentenced to custody were sent to the peripheries without the right, when they were released, of returning home. The convict journeys we discuss in this chapter encounter successive stages of Russian history from Imperial Russia, eighty-two years of Soviet power, and the past twenty-five years of post-Soviet transformation. Inevitably, generalization over such a time span risks oversimplification. We discuss the experience of exile over the centuries through individuals' experiences, drawing on a combination of published testimonies and autobiographies, outsiders' reports and conversations with those still living.

While elements of Russia's penal history are globally distinctive, Russia did not operate in a penal vacuum. The Russian state engaged with broader transnational discourses that developed in the nineteenth century about the move from punishment to control and reform of prisoners, and the development of a unified penal system.[1] In Europe these changes marked a broader shift away from convict transportation, while in Russia and the Soviet Union the selection of remote places as sites of punishment and exclusion endured. The Russian state was uniquely positioned to use movement

[1] See Bruce F. Adams, *The Politics of Punishment. Prison Reform in Russia, 1863-1917* (De Kalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1996).

for, and as, punishment against its citizens. Russia's Empire sprawled across a single great continent, unlike the western European maritime Empires, and this made the division between centre and colonies diffuse and uncertain. Siberia was an integral part of the polity, but was also treated as a colonial space and a zone of exclusion, which could serve a triple function of punishing miscreants, colonizing empty space, and protecting the homeland by removing pernicious influences.

Throughout this chapter, we will refer to the subjects of punishment as exiles. We use this term to encapsulate those who were deported, transported and resettled as well as those whose destination was a contained space like a camp or a prison. In using a single term to describe different elements of the punished population, we do not intend to imply that their punishments are essentially the same thing. By selecting this terminology, however, we seek to emphasise the integral nature of movement and displacement to a variety of different punishment modalities. The longevity of the use of the peripheries as the primary site of punishment has created a distinctive punishment style in Russia that we describe as 'in exile imprisonment'.[2] The term encapsulates the idea that a custodial sentence necessarily involves being sent away to a distant location. It is the product of merging two punishment modalities, exile and confinement. While these two modalities were legally separate for much of Russian history they have nevertheless been intricately inter-related for at least the past two centuries. Historians of Russia have until recently struggled to incorporate the dual modality of exile into their theorization of punishment, tending to compartmentalize deportation and imprisonment.[3] In this respect, research on Russia lags behind that on

[2] This concept was first developed in Judith Pallot and Laura Piacentini, *Gender, geography and punishment: The experience of women in carceral Russia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).
[3] Sarah Badcock's recent work specifically engages with the interrelations between transport, confinement and exile: *A prison without walls? Eastern Siberian exile in the last years of Tsarism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

other jurisdictions, which while maintaining a distinction between mobile and static punishments, have long recognized that what happens at the destination is integral to any understanding of penal transportation.[4]

This chapter is structured thematically, with each section exploring a specific aspect of penal journeys, drawing on examples from across our chronological remit. The first section offers a brief exploration of the context and history of exile in Russia, the intersections of Russian experience with Foucauldian theory, and the problems implicit in the binary treatment often meted out to 'political' and 'criminal' exiles. The second section explores penal journeys, looking in turn at journeys on foot and in carriages, by boat and in trains. The third and final section outlines five destinations for exiles, considering hard labour prisons, exile, special settlements, the gulag camps and contemporary prisons. We conclude with some reflections on the implications of Russian exile for punishment today.

Historical uses of exile in Russia

Prisoner exile has been used in Russia since the sixteenth century but its character and purpose has changed over time; it has been used as a means for settling empty lands, securing frontiers, mobilizing labour and natural resources, incapacitating and exacting retribution against offenders and of social regulation. [5] The Decembrists, a

[4] For example, Katherine Beckett and Steve Herbert, 'Penal Boundaries: Banishment and the Expansion of Punishment', *Law and Social Inquiry* 35, no. 1 (2010): 1-38; S.A., McClennan, *The dialectics of Exile: Nations, Time, Language, and Space in Hispanic Literatures* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2004).

[5] Adams, *The politics of punishment*; Badcock, *A prison without walls?*.; Daniel Beer, *The house of the dead: Siberian exile under the Tsars* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2016).; Andrew A. Gentes, 'Katorga: Penal labour and Tsarist Siberia', *Australian Slavonic and East European Studies* 18, nos 1-2 (2004) pp. 41-61; Andrew A. Gentes, *Exile to Siberia, 1590-1822* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); Elena Katz and Judith Pallot. "Prisoners' Wives in Post-Soviet Russia:'For my Husband I am Pining!'." *Europe-Asia Studies* 66 no. 2 (2014): 204-224; Judith Pallot and Katz, E *Waiting at the Prison Gate: Women, Identity and the Russian Penal System* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2017), chapter 1.

group who came to epitomize the sufferings of political exile in late Imperial Russia, were punished with Siberian exile as a result of their participation in a failed rising against the tsar Nicholas I in 1825. The wives of some of the conspirators accompanied their husbands voluntarily, and their names became watchwords for penal suffering and female endurance and loyalty.[6] By the end of the nineteenth century, the use of exile as a tool for colonization had receded in significance, as free settlement of the Empire's peripheries had made penal colonization rather redundant. The purpose of exile was emphasized more as a means to punish the individual through movement and exclusion, and as a means to protect the State by removal of dangerous elements of society from its core. A clear paradox emerged in this period that bedevilled late Imperial policy makers. As the peripheries of the Empire became progressively more settled, more 'Russian' and more integral to the polity, they correspondingly became less suitable as sites for exile.[7] Some large metropolitan prisons and reformatories equivalent to Pentonville and Philadelphia State Penitentiary were built in Russia, but they failed to undermine the primacy of expulsion and exile as a means of exacting retribution and of social control. The late Imperial Russian state expressed a commitment to move away from exile and towards more controlled and contained forms of penal management. Exile to Siberia was abolished on 12 June 1900 except for political and religious offenders, but despite this legislation, the use of Siberia as a destination for exile actually increased significantly between 1900 and the revolution of 1917.[8]

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[6] See Ludmilla A. Trigos, *The Decembrist myth in Russian culture* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

[7] The Siberian regionalist movement made this the central element of their argument. See Nikolai Mikhailovich Iadrintsev, *Sibir' kak kolonii. Sovremennoe polozhenie Sibiri, ei nuzhdy i potrebnosti, ei proshloe i budushchee* (St. Petersburg: Tip. I.M. Sibiriakova, 1882), especially chapter 6.

[8] Russian State Historical Archive, f. 1405, op. 88, d. 10215, ll. 304-305. From the journal of the meeting of the commissions about the measures to abolish exile, 16 December 1899, explaining

After the 1917 Revolution, exile was incorporated into the Soviet penal code. Exile was used throughout the Soviet period as a means of dealing with social deviancy, criminality and political opposition both as a single punishment, and in combination with a carceral sentence. The use of exile, in its broadest sense, began to be used after the Revolution as a preventative mechanism that was applied collectively against potential class enemies and other groups believed to constitute a threat to national security or social order. Collective deportations were an extreme form of 'regulation by exclusion' that took the groups and individuals affected by them to different destinations and on different terms. The best-known examples were the deportations of the households of alleged rich peasants during of the collectivization drive in the 1930s and of variety of ethnic groups during, and in the immediate aftermath, of the German invasion of the USSR and the Soviet annexation of the Baltic States and territories on the Western borderlands.[9] These delivered whole households or separate family members to destinations in the northern forests of the Urals and West Siberia and the semi-deserts of Northern Kazakhstan, where they were given the task of setting up collective farms or mobilized into the timber, mining, construction industries alongside convicts and free workers.

These mass deportations had, in fact, been anticipated well before the rise of Stalin. The deportation of whole social groups as a preventative measure had its antecedents in the 1905 and 1917 revolutions and in the 1920s when forced migrations, internments, ethnic cleansing and exile were used by late Imperial and early

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the retention of political and religious exile (reproduced in A. D. Margolis, *Tiur'ma i Ssyl'ka v Imperatorskoi Rossii. Issledovanie i arkhivnye nakhodki*, ed. N. Gal'perina (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo "Lanterna" i "Vita", 1995), p. 26.

[9] For the Soviet exile system, P. M. Polian, *Ne po svoei vole. Istoriia i geografia prinuditel'nykh migratsii v SSSR* (Moscow*:* Memorial, 2001); Sheila Fitzpatrick, ed., *Stalinism: new directions* (London: Routledge, 2006); David R. Shearer, 'Crime and Social Disorder in Stalin's Russia. A Reassessment of the Great Retreat and the Origins of Mass Repression' *Cahiers du monde russe* 39 nos 1-2 (1998): 119-148.

Bolshevik government alike to cleanse potentially disruptive elements from cities.[10] Episodes of 'exisionary violence' continued through the 1920s in the so-called 'mass operations' that were used to cleanse the metropolitan centres of 'undesirable elements' from the 1920s.[11] These measures were applied to supposed class enemies but they also applied to 'ordinary criminals'. In the 1920s, for example, known recidivists were subject to pre-emptive banishment for periods of three years and in one measure that came to be known as the 'minus six', criminals and other potentially disruptive elements were debarred from living in the six most important Soviet cities, including Moscow and Leningrad. The secret police, given the task of implementing the measure, deposited the victims on the outskirts of second order towns. There was a further pre-emptive sweep of the major cities to cleanse them of ex-convicts, currency traders, small-scale free traders (so called NEPmen) and other undesirable elements in 1927 and 1928. 'Dangerous elements' such as beggars and hooligans were removed from the gold mining areas from 1928 onwards.

Deportations aimed at particular social strata continued to be used by the State after Stalin's death in 1953 and were used, albeit on a lesser scale, by his successors to remove potentially troublesome elements from the major cities. In the later Soviet period, Moscow and St Petersburg were kept free of disorder by preventing juvenile offenders who had served their sentence in borstal or juvenile labour colonies from returning to their home cities.

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[10] Paul Hagenloh *Police, crime, and public order in Stalin's Russia, 1930-1941* (Austin: University of Texas at Austin, 1999); Paul Hagenloh, '"Socially harmful elements" and the Great Terror', in Fitzpatrick, ed., *Stalinism*, 286-308; David R. Shearer 'Crime and social disorder in Stalin's Russia'. Similarly, recent work on Hitler's prisons has implicated the courts in the Holocaust: N. Wachsman, *Hitler's Prisons: Legal terror in Nazi Germany*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004).

[11] Olga Klimkova, 'Special Settlements in Soviet Russia in the 1930s-50s', *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 8 no. 1 (2007): 105-139; Hagenloh, '"Socially harmful elements"'; P. M. Polian, *Ne po svoei vole*; Lynne Viola, *The unknown gulag: the lost world of Stalin's special settlements* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

The resonances of Russia's tradition of the convict voyage are to be found in popular culture and among the people drawn into the penal nexus as prisoners, prisoners' relatives and penal personnel today. Historical references abound in today's prison lexicon – prisoners talk about being transported in Stolypin carriages, a reference to Peter Stolypin, the Russian prime minister associated with mass political repressions in the aftermath of the 1905 Revolution. The tsarist designation of exile destination in West Siberia as 'not such a faraway place' (*mesta ne tak otdalennie*) is a common euphemism in use among prisoner relatives to describe being imprisoned.

Russia is not a good fit with Foucauldian models, which posit a modernising state moving away from punishment of the body, and towards control, regulation and regimentation in the penal space of the modern prison.[12] Corporal punishment did recede in the nineteenth century, and imprisonment became increasingly prominent in imperial Russia, and a mass phenomenon in early Soviet Russia. But in the early years of Soviet power this was not associated with greater State knowledge and control over the bodies and minds of the punished. The Russian and early Soviet state sought but failed to 'know' its population.[13] In the Imperial period, the state struggled to even establish the location and approximate numbers of its punished population.[14] Foucault represented transportation as a transitional, pre-modern form of social control occupying a space, temporally and existentially, between sovereign punishment and modernity's disciplinary technologies.[15] His failure to understand the carceral nature of the Russian exile system, as brilliantly observed by Jan Plamper, led him to make the rather extraordinary argument that the Soviet gulag's inspiration

[12] For a discussion of this, see Laura Engelstein, "Combined Underdevelopment: Discipline and the Law in Imperial and Soviet Russia," *The American Historical Review* 98, no. 2 (1993): 338-353.
[13] For a good exploration of this, see Yanni Kotsonis, *States of obligation : taxes and citizenship in the Russian Empire and early Soviet Republic (*Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2014).
[14] Badcock, *A prison without walls?*, p. 15.
[15] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979).

lay in the French system of *relégation*.[16] The location of camps in the inhospitable geographical peripheries and the long and painful journeys that convicts endured to reach them figure in all accounts of the Soviet gulag, but it is the labour camp - the place of confinement - that has become universally accepted as the defining feature of the Stalin penal system. Recent research focusing on particular places has produced more integrated histories of punitive spaces in the peripheries, while our understanding of the process of mass deportations has been enhanced by Lynn Viola's pioneering study.[17]

Foucault's notion of the modern penal system controlling and knowing both the body and the mind of the prisoner is confounded by the daily realities of Russia's penal space. Accurate figures about the actual numbers of exiles in Siberia were only correlated at the end of the 1890s. There was no concrete information on death rates, on escapes, or on how many exiles had ended their sentences and left the region. Official statistics often did not include spouses and children that accompanied the exiles.[18] The broad figures that emerge serve to expose the differences in scale between Imperial Russian and Soviet punishment. Imperial Russia sent around half a million people into exile from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century, and approximately a further one million people were exiled to Siberia between 1800 and 1917. These approximate figures did not reflect actual numbers of exiles in their places of residence. A significant number of exiles ran away. The Irkutsk prison inspector reported in 1897 that they did not know exactly where 67% of the exiles in

[16] Jan Plamper, 'Foucault's Gulag', *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 3 no. 2 (2002): 255-280. See Sanchez, in this volume, on *relégation*.
[17] Nick Baron, *Soviet Karelia : politics, planning and terror in Stalin's Russia, 1920-1939* (New York: Routledge, 2007); Kate Brown, 'Out of Solitary Confinement: The History of the Gulag', *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 8 no. 1 (2007):67-103; Wilson T. Bell, 'Was the Gulag an Archipelago? De-Convoyed Prisoners and Porous Borders in the Camps of Western Siberia', *The Russian Review* 72, no. 1 (2013): 116-141; Viola, *The unknown gulag*.
[18] Nikolai Mikhailovich Iadrintsev, *Statisticheskie materialy k istorii ssylki v Sibir'* (St Petersburg, 1889), volume 6, p. 331.

the region were.[19] Though large when compared to other contemporary transportations (for example of Britain, France and Japan; see Anderson, Maxwell-Stewart, Sakata and Sanchez in this volume), these numbers pale when compared with the numbers of people expelled to the peripheries during the Soviet era. One source estimates that nearly six million people were deported as members of a social group or received a sentence in the criminal courts.[20] The deportations of peasants during the collectivization drive (1930) and of ethnic groups during wartime (1941-2) clearly stand out.[21] Scholars are still trying to establish the number of convicts who were sent to gulag camps in Siberia and the North and northern Kazakhstan between 1929 and 1961, and who faced exile after the completion of their sentence. The currently available figures, including convicts sentenced to camps in the European USSR and in metropolitan centres, are generally now accepted as being in the range of 10-12 million. While rates of incarceration today are nowhere near the grotesque figures in the millions for the Stalin gulag, Russia remains a high imprisonment society, like the Latin American states (Edwards, in this volume).[22] Since 2000, prison population rates have been falling in Russia from over one million prisoners in total in 2000 (729 prisoners held per 100,000) to 686,200 (445 prisoners per 100,000 population) in 2015. While this reduction in prison population by almost half is

[19] Margolis, *Tiur'ma i Ssyl'ka* p. 37.
[20] For the period 1889-1912, see *Svod statiticheskikh svedenii o posudimikh, opravdannikh I osuzhdennikh po prigovoram obshchikh sudebnikh mest, sudebno-mirovikh ustanovlenii I uchrezhdenii, obrazovannikh po zokonopolozheniiam, 12 Iulia 1889 goda za 1912* (Petrograd: M-vo Iustitsii, 1873-1912). For the post-revolutionary period, see Polian, *Ne po svoei vole,* p. 239
[21] Polian, *Ne po svoei vole.*, pp. 239-241.
[22] Russia ranks third, behind the USA and China, for its absolute prisoner population, and is second after the USA for its rate of imprisonment among the industrialized countries of the world (http://www.prisonstudies.org/highest-to-lowest/prison-population-total?field_region_taxonomy_tid=All) accessed 20 October 2016.

remarkable, contemporary imaginings of the former Soviet Union as a gulag society have endured.[23]

The majority of exiles across our period were rank-and-file criminals from the lower classes and the hundreds of thousands of men, women and children from the peasant and labouring classes caught up in mass peasant and ethnic minority deportations.[24] Some exiles were convicted in a court for a specific offence, but many were exiled administratively, without recourse to the courts, both as individuals or as we have discussed already, as families or as part of whole social groups. A major distinction in the sources across our period was drawn between 'criminal' exiles and 'political' exiles. In both the Imperial and the Soviet periods, this binary reflected the existence of explicitly political offences in the criminal code. In the Soviet Union after the Second World War, it also reflected the concentration of prominent political convicts in special camps.

A challenge for scholars across our period is the more or less complete absence of criminal exile testimonies until the present time. The only first person ego-documents of life in prison and exile were produced by political exiles. These accounts almost without exception presented sharp binaries between political and criminal exiles, with the politicals portrayed as morally, culturally and intellectually superior to criminal exiles. In Gulag testimonies the categories of criminal and political victims of Stalin's repression are mapped onto those deserving and undeserving of their fate. Criminal offenders, many of whom would have been sentenced in the Soviet period for trivial

[23] Laura Piacentini and Elena Katz, 'Carceral framing of human rights in Russian prisons', *Punishment and Society* 19, no. 2 (2017): 221-39.
[24] The mass deportations were applied firstly in the 1930s against peasants who opposed collectivization of farming. They were branded as kulaks, or rich peasants. The so-called ethnic deportations during and immediately after World War II were applied against ethnic groups who were thought to support the German invasion of Russia or, post 1945, were opponents of the Soviet occupation in the Baltic States and western borderlands in Moldovia and West Ukraine.

offences, appear in testimonies very rarely. Such binaries occlude a more nuanced understanding of daily realities in exile, and have served to dehumanize criminals in penal narratives.[25]

In the post-Stalin years the proportion of 'official' political offenders declined.[26] Reforms of the criminal and correction codes in the 1960s de-criminalised some actions that had in previous decades sent victims to the camps, legal process replaced the most egregious voluntarism in the criminal-justice system, and punishments became more proportionate to the crime than previously. But the USSR remained a highly punitive society and, after a brief respite under Khrushchev, continued to react to political dissent, threatened and actual, with prison sentences, exile or, in a new torment, sectioning for psychological treatment. [27] Sentencing took forward the post-war era practice of separating political and criminal offenders. In post-Soviet Russia the definitions of criminality and understandings of offending behaviours have changed. Political offences were eliminated from the criminal code in 1997 and some other offences were decriminalised. The majority of prisoners in Russia today are young men serving sentences for drugs-related offences, theft and burglary. The incarcerated population in this respect bears much greater resemblance to prison populations in other developed countries.

[25] See Wilson T. Bell, 'Gulag historiography: An introduction' *Gulag Studies* 2-3 (2009-10): 9.
[26] That is of those convicted under Article 70 for 'anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda'.
[27] On the use of psychiatry against political dissidents see, Sidney Bloch and Peter Reddaway, *Russia's Political Hospitals: the Abuse of Psychiatry in the Soviet Union* (London: Futura Publications, 1977); Zhores and Roy Medvedev, *A Question of Madness: Repression by Psychiatry in the Soviet Union* (New York: Norton, 1979).

Journeys

Across our period, travel constituted an integral part of exile punishment, framing exiles' divorce from society and their movement from the known to the unknown through the experience of dislocation and isolation. While a number of common features emerge in exile journeys, the differences outweigh the continuities over the years. The method of travel, for example, changed across centuries and political regimes. The advent of train transports from the late 1880s lessened the physical suffering of exilic journeys. In the Imperial period, convicts knew what their destination would be, whereas in the Soviet and post-Soviet landscape, exiles often did not, and often still do not, know their final destinations. While spouses and children sometimes accompanied exiles in Imperial Russia, these families came voluntarily. In the Soviet period, mass deportations of ethnic and social groups involved the forced movement of whole families or even whole communities. These mass deportations had catastrophic implications for the conditions of transit. Their scale and the exceptionally neglectful and callous approach of state attitudes in the Soviet period set it aside as quantitatively and qualitatively worse than what had gone before.

On foot and by carriage

Lengthy journeys on foot or by carriage characterized Imperial Russian exile, and continued to feature through the Soviet period. In Imperial Russia before the construction of the Trans-Siberian railway in the 1890s, exiles' journeys were broken into daily stages, which connected towns with other population points and also towns with their nearest railway or port. In Imperial Russia, security in transit tended to weaken the further the distance travelled from European Russia and from the major prisons, regardless of the prisoner's status. Prisoners were escorted along the way by

convoy commands on the main routes. Officers of the convoy commands were members of the regular army infantry, though in more remote locations irregular guards drawn from the local population sometimes escorted prisoners. While European Russia could boast a relatively well-developed network of gendarmes, and the major prisons and tracts employed military convoys, these melted away for prisoners directed to more remote locations. A baggage train followed every party, carrying luggage, invalids, prisoners from the privileged classes, the sick, women with young children and children under the age of twelve.[28]

Up until the 1880s, epic foot stages and crowded barges transferred convicts from central Russia to their penal destinations, usually in Siberia.[29] The officers of the Chernigov regiment, who had participated in the Decembrist rising at the end of 1825, for instance, travelled the entire 4,600 miles (7046 *versts*) from Mogilev to Nerchinsk *katorga* prison in eastern Siberia on foot. The journey took them eighteen months and was reportedly more agonizing than the hard labour sentence it preceded.[30] As Russia's railway network developed, the number of exile foot stages was reduced. The State sought to cut down on their length because they offered opportunities for escape, were expensive to administer, and tended to worsen conditions for those in transit. Semirechensk in Kazakhstan, Semipalatinsk in Turkestan, Archangelsk and Tobolsk headed the Main Prison Administration's shame list of provinces with the longest foot stages.[31]

[28] *Otchet po glavnomu tiuremnomu upravleniiu za 1908g* (Petrograd, 1910), p. 132.
[29] For an excellent discussion of this, see Daniel Beer, 'Penal Deportation to Siberia and the Limits of State Power, 1801-1881', *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 16 no. 3 (2015): 621-50.
[30] Margolis, *Tiur'ma i Ssyl'ka,* p. 59.
[31] *Otchet po glavnomu tiuremnomu upravleniiu za 1909g* (Petrograd, 1911), p. 127

The lack of other means of transport in much of eastern Siberia beyond Irkutsk meant that prisoner parties still went on foot and by barge between settlements, often for hundreds of miles. This means of transport necessitated long periods of time set aside for journeys, and long periods in transit prisons along the way. Conditions in Imperial Russian transit prisons were notoriously vile. Ekaterina Breshkovskaia, a political exile and grand dame of the revolutionary movement, recalled the state of those which she encountered in 1878 on her journey to prison in Kara, eastern Siberia:

> They [Siberian prisons] were individual republics, full of violence, abuses, thefts, dirt, infection and disorder. The prisoner had absolutely no rights…The prisons were in a terrible state of disrepair. They were dirty and unpainted. The passages were not swept; the chimneys and stoves were not cleaned. There were no lights except one tiny, smoking lamp at the end of the passage.[32]

Time spent in transit prisons constituted an integral part of exilic journeys. Length of stay varied from overnight to several months. Prison administration regulations stated that special stage buildings were to be built every fifteen to twenty miles for overnight stops. They were usually wooden huts, and were maintained either by the local community or by the state, dependent on whether the tract was internal, or for exile. The stage buildings, even according to reports of the Main Prison Administration, were not fit for purpose. The Main Prison Inspector's report described them in 1910 as 'in general ... dilapidated, stuffy, poorly equipped and conducive to escape'.[33] They had changed little since the political prisoner Petr Iakubovich had described the filth, overcrowding, cold, starvation and lawlessness of the staging posts on the road to Siberia in 1887.[34] Irkutsk's governor-general himself acknowledged that conditions

[32] Ekaterina K. Breshko-Breshkovskaia, *Hidden Springs of the Russian Revolution* (London: Oxford University Press, 1931), pp. 185-186.
[33] *Otchet po glavnomu tiuremnomu upravleniiu za 1908g*, p. 131.
[34] Petr F. Iakubovich, *In the world of the outcasts: notes of a former penal laborer*, ed. Andrew A. Gentes (New York: Anthem Press,, 2013), pp. 15-21.

for prisoners on foot stages were extremely miserable: for the whole 2,000 miles from Irkutsk to Yakutsk, apart from the first point outside Irkutsk, there were no stage buildings. Prisoners had to stay in small, dilapidated and dirty township or village prisons, or even more frequently, because of the lack of transit prisons, in the homes of residents, in the open, or in tents.[35] This meant that the movement of prisoners was only possible during the warmer months of the year. Money for food for these disordered transfers did not always arrive in good time, and there was often a severe shortage of the clothes necessary for the severe northern cold.[36]

Yakutsk town was a short stop for many exiles on their journeys further north. While the journey to Yakutsk town from Irkutsk was long and arduous, it could be overshadowed by the journeys that exiles made to their final named destinations in among the most sparsely populated and remote parts of the Russian Empire. The path from Yakutsk to Viliuisk stretched for 470 miles, from Yakutsk to Ust-Maia was 222 miles, from Yakutsk to Verkhoiansk was 596 miles, and the journey from Yakutsk to Sredne-Kolymsk was 1,534 miles.[37] Exiles and their convoys had to travel by sledge, on horseback, by reindeer, or with dogs in Yakutsk region, because of lack of roads, high rocks, hills, swamps, and impassable forest.[38]

Aleksandr Dobrokhotin-Baikov travelled from Moscow's Butyrka prison to distant Yakutsk province in 1911. Even though his main modes of transport were train and boat, travel on foot and in carts were also key features of his experience. He had to

[35] National Archive of the Sakha Republic (henceforth NARS), f. 12, op. 2, d. 1260, pp. 120-124.
[36] NARS, f. 12, op. 2, d. 2160, pp. 120-124.
[37] Pavel L. Kazarian, *Iakutiia v sisteme politicheskoi ssylki Rossii 1826-1917 gg* (Yakutsk: GP NIPK Sakhapoligrafizdat, 1998), p. 235, table 6.
[38] Vladimir Berenshtam, "Yakutskaia oblast' i ssylka," in *Za pravo! Soderzhanie sbornika.* (St. Petersburg: Izdatel'stvo O.N. Popovoi, 1906), p. 198.

walk from Irkutsk central prison to Aleksandrovsk *katorga* and transit prison, around 40 miles away, over two days:

> After two weeks we were directed on foot, a party of 200, to Aleksandrovsk central. The journey around the hills was an absolute Golgotha. Physically exhausted by sitting and bad food, several of us, me included, could not walk far and fell from incapacity. Rough handling and blows from the soldier convoy forced us to get up and moving again. And then again we fell, and again gun butts. Somehow we dragged ourselves forward. We were no more than a week in [Aleksandrovsk] central.[39]

Dobrokhotin-Baikov's final destination was Viliuisk town, 460 miles north of Yakutsk town. He travelled there by sledge with another exile, a factory worker called Sitnikov, in 1912, just as winter was starting. They two men were given the clothes and things that they needed, and travelled with a Cossack and a Yakut as guards and guides. They travelled went in a special long sledge drawn by reindeer, and sometimes they had to be freed from snowdrifts, and stopped in Yakut *yurts* along the way. Though the journey was physically and emotionally challenging, the exiles' material needs were met, and they did not report any hostile attitudes from their guards.

Exiles' experiences of transit depended heavily on the attitudes of their convoy officers. Irina Kakhovskaia was arrested in April 1907 and sentenced to twenty years of hard labour for her activities with the Maximalist Socialist Revolutionaries, an extremist revolutionary group.[40] Kakhovskaia gave a terrifying account of what happened in her convoy on her journey on foot from Irkutsk to Nerchinsk. The first part of the journey was very peaceful, but the mood changed abruptly after a handful

[39] A. Dobrokhotin-Baikov, 'V Yakutskoi ssylke (zapiski rabochego)' in *Sibirskaia ssylka: Sbornik pervyi*, ed. N. F. Chuzhak (Moscow: Glavlit, 1927).

[40] Kakhovskaia served only six years of her *katorga* sentence before she was amnestied in 1914. She opposed the Bolsheviks after the revolution, and was only released from prison after Stalin's death, in 1955. See V.V. Shelokhaev et al. (eds.) *Politicheskie partii Rossii: Konets XIX- pervaia tret' XX veka: Entsiklopediia* (Moscow: Rosspen, 1996), pp. 245-247.

of prisoners attempted to escape. The entire convoy was held responsible for it. They were all woken roughly in the night, and subjected to searches and abuse. At dawn, they were woken and beaten with gun butts as they marched through a swamp. The prisoners were badly hurt, coughing blood and collapsing. She recalls that they longed then for the security of prison.[41] Political prisoners in the late Imperial period presented these accounts of brutality and callousness as both extraordinary and outrageous. Such abuses were not the norm in Imperial Russia. While individual convoy officers may have behaved in this way, prisoners in the Imperial period had an expectation of decent and humane treatment, and political prisoners complained bitterly if this were denied them.

An important factor in how transit was experienced was the health and status of the prisoners themselves. While journeys in the Far north were arduous for the young single men that made up the bulk of exiles, they took on a new dimension of trauma for those who were struggling with sickness or who had to provide care for vulnerable children. A number of memoirists vividly describe their own illnesses, and the illnesses and deaths of their travelling companions. Dmitrii Iakovlev was a political exile who served a term of hard labour before being transferred from Turkestan to Yakutsk for exile in August 1915. He stayed in Irkutsk transit prison for more than a month, where a typhus epidemic broke out in the filthy and overcrowded cell shared by around 200 people. He was already feeling unwell when he was called for transit to his place of exile, but he was determined to travel, and to get away from the transit prison. His convoy had to walk about 16 miles to the first stop. After six miles, Iakovlev requested a place on the cart for the sick, but was refused because he had no official statement of illness. He collapsed and was carried by other political exiles to

[41] E. Kakhovskaia, "Iz vospominanii o zhenskoi tiurme," *Katorga i ssylka*, no. 9 (1926), p. 160ff.

the stage point. He was subsequently transferred, along with four other sick men, a further 82 miles to Bayandaya. All the men had typhus. When Iakovlev recovered sufficiently to travel onwards, he was transported by sledge to his place of exile in Yakutsk region.[42] While Iakovlev's experience was distressing, we should stress that the Imperial state sought to treat his illness, however crudely, and to ensure he was medically fit before continuing his journey. This was to contrast sharply with the indifference exhibited towards human suffering in the Soviet period.

In the Soviet period, while mechanized means of transport were ubiquitous, journeys on foot continued to form important parts of penal journeys. Arrival at the final stop on the journey by railcar, ship or ferry was usually the start of movement on foot to the final destination camp, colony or special settlement. Prisoners generally walked between sub-divisions of labour camp complexes, or went on tractors or in prison vans. Evgenia Ginzburg described a 47 mile walk to a new site in November of 1941 when she was serving her ten-year sentence in Kolyma. The temperature was 40 degrees below zero, and she had no suitable clothes or boots for such an undertaking. She was supposed to complete the journey in a single day, accompanied by a relay of different guard escorts.[43]

Fyodor Vasilevich Mochulsky worked as an officer of the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs (the NKVD or secret police) in two prison labour camps between 1940 and 1946, Pechorlag and 'Camp no. 3'. Pechorlag was a railroad building camp above the Arctic circle, and 'Camp no. 3'was established to restore the road that

[42] Dm Iakovlev, 'Ot katorgi k ssylke; okonchanie sroka katorgi' in *Sibirskaia ssylka: Sbornik pervyi*, ed. N. F. Chuzhak (Moscow, 1927).
[43] Evgeniia Semenovna Ginzburg, *Within the whirlwind* (London: The Harvill Press 1989), vol 2, pp. 96-7. In the event she was able to break her journey overnight in Mylga.

linked Moscow to Kharkiv, which had been destroyed during World War II.[44] In one of the few published testimonies from gulag bosses, Mochulsky recalled the 45 or more-day journey that anyone destined for Pechorlag in the Komi republic in northern European Russia had to undertake if their starting point was Moscow. The journey consisted of a train from Moscow to Arkhangel'sk on the White Sea, a steam boat across what he called the 'choppy Barents Sea' to the 'port' of Narian-Mar, a river boat up the Pechora river to the confluence with its tributary, the Usa, and a change into smaller river boats, which would go up-stream until the river was too shallow to proceed further. From the point of disembarkation, the columns of prisoners then had to walk the final leg of the trip. The camp at Pechora was only accessible for two months of the year when the river was unfrozen, and convoys late in the season were often forced to make the final trek through early blizzards in the quickly approaching Arctic winter. Mochulsky describes how prisoners left for the camp as soon as they landed, with each given a wheelbarrow loaded with bricks or other materials needed at their destination:

> [They] set out under armed guard to walk the rest of the way to Abez [the camp headquarters]. They had to stomp down a path (sometimes this meant brutally hacking at the foliage) along the Usa river. The Usa's marshy floodlands were covered with thickets of dense shrubbery, stunted northern forests of dwarf birches and low spruce trees.[45]

This journey could take several weeks and when the exiles arrived, at least in the early years of the camps, the convicts would find almost no barracks in which to house them and barely any food. First-time convicts were often forced to set out on

[44] Fyodor Vasilevich Mochulsky and Deborah A. Kaple, *Gulag boss: A Soviet memoir* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 38.
[45] Mochulsky and Kaple, *Gulag Boss,* p. 17

their journey in the clothes in which they had been arrested, so they were rarely appropriately dressed for such lengthy and often freezing cold marches.

Boats

Even though the convict journey in Russia was distinguished by being continental, boat and steamship travel figure prominently in the stories of convict transportation in nineteenth and twentieth-century Russia. In the Imperial and Soviet periods, Siberia's great rivers were utilized to move exiles. Sea journeys were more often a feature of the Soviet period, which used the northern archipelagos as key penal destinations. Ekaterina Breshkovskaia recalled the vessel on which she travelled in 1878 with horror:

> The barge was small, dirty and stinking. Our compartment for 'the nobility' has been a horrid, foul hole. We could well imagine the condition below in the dark, stuffy underdecks of this barge bound for Tomsk.[46]

In fact, water transport made journeys in eastern Siberia during in the pre-Soviet period significantly less arduous. The journey to Yakutsk, more than 1800 miles from Irkutsk, was mostly traversed on river barges up the Lena.[47] Dobrokhotin-Baikov recalled that on his journey north, the transfer onto river barges at Kachuga represented a tranquil stage of his carceral journey. The exiles were able to rest on the small barges, lying or sitting on the roof, warmed by the autumnal but still hot sun and admiring the beautiful Lena views. Exiles disembarked in small groups along the way. When the barge reached Ust-Kut the prisoners were transferred to an enormous barge, and then to a steamer that took them to their final destination. By this time it was September, when the frosts started. Sometimes snow fell. The Lena was

[46] Breshko-Breshkovskaia, *Hidden springs,* p. 183.
[47] Kazarian, *Iakutskaia politicheskaia ssyl'ka,* p. 233.

beginning to freeze. The prisoners began to feel colder and colder as they approached Yakutsk. They had summer clothes on, and suffered severely from the low temperatures. When the exile party finally arrived, the steamer pulled up at its autumn stop, over 4 miles from town.[48]

The Soviet Union's first concentration camp for political prisoners was on the Solovetski islands in the White Sea, 150 miles south of the Arctic Circle, and involved a long sea passage from the Arctic port of Kem'. The Solovki, as the archipelago was known, figured prominently in Alexander Solzhenitsyn's account of the gulag and inspired his metaphor of the penal archipelago. The symbolism of sea journeys, ports and remote islands pervades his narrative. In fact, journeys over water became integral to the journey to the most distant camps and special settlements on the Eurasian continent. Mochulsky recalled hearing prisoners 'singing their criminal songs' below deck on his trip to the Pechorlag, the main camp complex on the Pechora river in the Komi republic,. They were not allowed on deck and they had to be accompanied by an armed guard when they needed to visit the bathroom.[49]

Some of the most notorious sea crossings of the gulag era were in the Far East as prisoners were transported through the Sea of Okhotsk to Magadan, the furthest north-eastern extremity of the Eurasian landmass, where convicts worked in gold mines. These journeys ranked as among the most harrowing element of gulag experience. Evgenia Ginzburg travelled to Kolyma in the hold of the SS Dzhurma, an aging steam ship used as a convict transport. Prisoners had to endure up to two weeks of uncomfortable sea crossing. Ginzburg describes the hold to which they were confined for the whole trip as 'a greasy place of tangible stuffiness':

[48] Dobrokhotin-Baikov, 'V Yakutskoi ssylke', p. 184.
[49] Mochulsky and Kaple, *Gulag Boss,* pp. 15-16.

> Packed tightly in our hundreds, we could hardly breathe; we sat or lay on the dirty floor or on one another, spreading our legs to make room for the person in front.[50]

Ginzburg was fortunate that her sea journey was 'uneventful' – she was ill with dysentery and so was disembarked separately with the sick and the corpses of those who had died on the crossing that were stacked and counted on the harbour side. Others have testified to voyages marked by drownings and mass rapes by guards or criminal gangs.[51] The most notorious incident was when the SS Indigirka capsized in December 1939, and more than 700 prisoners were drowned in the Sea of Okhotsk.[52]

Trains

The railway was the principal means of long distance transportation in the twentieth century and remains so today. The development of the Trans Siberian railway from the 1890s onwards transformed convicts' journeys from European Russia to destinations up to Irkutsk.[53] The railway provided a cheaper, more rapid and more humane means of transport than the foot stages that preceded them. Aleksandr Dobrokhotin-Baikov recalled his train journey to Irkutsk vividly:

> We left Butyrka prison [in Moscow] on a hot day in June, and set off for Siberia in a 'protected' prisoners' wagon. After a long and distressing journey in sealed dirty wagons, with stops for several days in prisons of towns en route...we arrived in Irkutsk in the middle of August, where we were imprisoned in the regional prison. Sitting in the dirty, wooden, relatively large general barrack,

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[50] Ginzburg, *Into The Whirlwind,* pp. 267-8.
[51] For reports of orchestrated gang rapes on ships, see Janusz Bardach, *Man is wolf to man: Surviving the Gulag* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999) pp. 191-3.
[52] The Indigirka drownings are described in Martin J. Bollinger, *Stalin's Slave Ships: Kolyma, the Gulag Fleet, and the Role of the West* (Westport: Praeger, 2003), p. 4
[53] The building of the Trans-Siberian railway began in 1892. The stretch from Krasnoyarsk to Irkutsk was completed in 1899.

> together with criminal trash, was a nightmare. Filth, stench, the appalling swearing of the criminals- all this acted on us badly. [54]

Baikov recalled his train journey as a hot, dirty, miserable affair, but the experience of penal train transport in late Imperial Russia is not easily comparable with Soviet transportation. The volumes of exiles and convicts that were moved around the country at the height of the Stalin repression raised many challenging logistical questions for the authorities but, in reaching solutions, the impact on the people being transported was discounted. Transportation at the height of the mass deportations and expansion of the gulag typically involved overcrowded conditions, long stationary periods, slow movement, lack of information about length, direction and destinations of journeys, violence and half light. The transportation itself was punitive, degrading and life threatening.

Gulag prisoners were delivered to the Siberian north or to the deserts of Kazakhstan in train journeys that could take weeks. Train travel in this period claimed lives and produced an indelible mark on the psyches of the people who survived.[55] Evgenia Ginzburg described the conditions in 'van 7', the train that transported her east to Siberia from Yaroslavl, where she had spent three years in solitary confinement. Ginzburg was transported alongside other women politicals, most of whom were members of the intelligentsia. The month was July and temperatures in the carriage soared. The women developed a strict rota for sitting by the three-inch gap in the door or at the window. Water was rationed, and the euphoria she had felt on escaping her years of solitary confinement was soon quashed:

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[54] Dobrokhotin-Baikov, 'V Yakutskoi ssylke'

[55] Alexander Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago* (New York: Harper Collins, 2007), volume 1 part 2, pp. 489-532. Chapter 1, 'The Ships of the Archipelago', has a detailed description of life in the cattle trucks used for the majority of convict transports.

> It was so stuffy that we hit on the expression 'gas-oven', which was not yet in current use. There was the dust, the sweat, the overcrowding and, worse than any of it, the thirst. [56]

The journey to Vladivostok took over one month and was punctuated by periods when the train stopped between stations for days at a time, and the women were forbidden to speak. There were other stops, such as at Sverdlovsk in the Urals, when the women were marched from the train to be disinfected. Ginzburg describes how the women recited poetry to one another in an attempt to escape from the pains of the present and she recalled that they generally looked out for one another and supported the sick. During the course of the journey other women convicts from all over the Soviet Union were added to the already crowded wagon, so that by the time they reached the transit camp at Vladivostok, they were a geographically and socially mixed company. In the Vladivostok transit camp, prisoners were put to work in quarries to await the next convoy to their final destination in the Far East.

Train travel was the main mode of transport used for the mass peasant deportations in the early 1930s, and the deportation of ethnic minorities and the nationalities of newly acquired territories in World War Two. These deportations posed specific challenges for the Soviet state. Unlike the transportation of gulag convicts, they involved whole families travelling together along with certain of their possessions, and their journey was not normally preceded by a long period of interrogation and incarceration in remand jail that had adapted them to life in the ways of the gulag 'state within a state'. [57] The kulak deportations in the early 1930s in many respects laid the framework for all subsequent transports.

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[56] Ginzburg, *Into the Whirlwind,* p. 227

[57] On this concept see for example Edwin Bacon, *The Gulag at war : Stalin's forced labour system in the light of the archives* (New York: Palgrave, 1994), p. 69.

The deported families were loaded onto cattle trucks from special collection points. Heads of households who had been subject to prior arrest and incarceration would be reunited with their family at this point. Every family was allowed to bring with them two months of food rations, the tools they would need to build dwellings and to work at their destination such as axes, shovels and carpentry tools, as well as a variety of domestics items such as blankets, clothing and kitchen utensils. The baggage allowance per family was 900-1,080 lbs.[58]

The railway trucks that were used to transport the families were provided with a stove, chimney flue, three buckets (for boiled water and human waste) and plank beds. They were designed for forty people, but this figure was normally exceeded. The principle of self-government was used to maintain order in the rail car. In practices that resonated with Imperial penal experience, one peasant was selected as the leader (*starosta)* to act as the point of contact with the convoy, communicating messages and organising the collection of boiled water and food when the train stopped at stations. Such formal arrangements were rarely adhered to, and the accounts given by people who endured these transports are harrowing. They tell of freezing temperatures, hunger, illegal expropriations of personal belongings and chaos at the collection points with small children becoming separated from their parents and siblings. Dysentery ravaged the deportees due to the lack of hygiene. The occupants of the trucks could not see to gauge where they were and in any event they rarely had any idea of where they were going, except that it was northwards. One testimony recounted the terrible conditions within the train carriage:

> If someone could look into our car, then even the heart of stone would tremble, and they would see such horror that even barbarians do not know. It is shameful

[58] Viola, *The unknown gulag,* 38.

> to put infants in prison and our [rail] car is worse than a prison. There is no place to sit or lie down: for the first two days, we travelled without any water and fed the children snow.[59]

Scrolling forward to the present day the rail journey remains traumatic for many.In the decades after the death of Stalin conditions in transports improved as the reduction in numbers of prisoners having to be moved meant that purpose-built carriages could be used which had bathroom facilities, fixed bunks and better ventilation. However, the overcrowding, poor food, overlong journeys and the convoy guards' degradation rituals that had developed during the gulag years were to endure. Even after the Russian Federation joined the Council of Europe the movement of prisoners from one institution to another has only belatedly found its way on the radar of human rights and prison condition monitors. Just as in the Soviet period, lack of knowledge about the destination is central to exiles' pains of punishment, as one contemporary male prisoner described:

> You are absolutely unsettled; you do not have any stability; you are in motion—and—you have these searches ... always these searches ... on the *etap* [prison transport] you can't access any of your own food ... you have to eat what they provide or what they don't provide—that's all suffering. At the same time you are surrounded by people you don't know. So it's a very nerve-wracking environment. After all you never know where you'll end up—so that's why it's punishment.[60]

So deeply embedded is the experience of exile in Russian culture that prisoners today also locate themselves on the same historical landscape as did Ginzburg and her compatriots in van 7 of the convict transport to Vladivostok. When, for example, prisoners talk in interviews about going to 'another country' or insist that it is normal for Russians 'to be sent to *katorga*' or that women from the south are 'in exile' in

[59] Viola, *The unknown gulag*, 42.
[60] Interview by Pallot with Igor Sutyagin, June 2015.

colonies in the North and Siberia, they are positioning themselves within an historical stereotype about Russian incarceration as exile.[61] These stereotypes do not just inform the understandings of prisoners themselves but research has found that their relatives also draw on Russia's long-standing practices of exile to construct their identities with wives and partners of today's prisoners calling themselves Decembrists (*dekabristiki)* or 'camp followers'.[62]

Destinations.

Imperial hard labour prisons (*katorga*)

Peter I inaugurated the use of penal hard labour, known as *katorga*, in 1696, and it embraced the principle of both punishing offenders and utilising their labour for state goals. Nerchinsk, a complex of mining industries in the Zabaikal region of Siberia, was the central locus of *katorga* until the middle of the nineteenth century when its mines were largely exhausted and convicts were transferred to the gold mining complex of Kara in the adjoining valley. In 1884 the state began the transfer of convicts from Kara and Nerchinsk to Sakhalin, the island off Russia's eastern coast that became a penal colony site. Sakhalin became Russia's most notorious penal destination until the Treaty of Portsmouth in 1905 gave the southern part of the island to the Japanese, and ended its penal use by the Russians.[63] After 1905, there was an exponential increase in the numbers of *katorga* prisoners, from 6,123 in 1905 to 31,748 in 1912.[64] The majority of *katorga* prisons were in Siberia, though the increase

[61] See these issues discussed in Pallot and Piacentini, *Geography, Gender and Punishment*, chapter 7.
[62] Pallot and Katz, *Waiting at the Prison Gates,* chapter 1.
[63] Gentes, 'Katorga: Penal labour and Tsarist Siberia'.
[64] Badcock, *A prison without walls?*, p. 29.

in the number of *katorga* prisoners necessitated the building of two European *katorga* prisons, in Shlisselburg near St. Petersburg in 1907, and in Orel in 1908.[65]

The Imperial state overall showed itself poorly placed to profit from convict labour. Ironically, life in hard labour prisons in the early twentieth century was characterized by a lack of work. In Nerchinsk in 1896, only 42% of the 1159 prisoners were medically fit to work, mainly because of poor food and conditions.[66] Of the prisoners incarcerated in Aleksandrovsk *katorga* prison near Irkutsk in 1909, 52% did not work at all. This was because there were insufficient workshops and large town settlements near the prisons. Aleksandrovsk, unlike Nerchinsk, was not built around a mining complex, so had relatively few on-site labour opportunities. The lack of work within the prison complex meant that many prisoners were idle for much of their time. This rather confounds our imaginings of hard labour regimes, and left the prisoners seeking out means to fill their time in incarceration. Some prisoners worked within the prison, in workshops and gardens, and in the prison itself, in the kitchens, filling lamps, and supervising solitary cells and corridors. There were places for around 300 men to work within the prison workshops. Prisoners were paid for this work. The largest workshop was the sewing shop. As well as meeting prison needs, the shops fulfilled orders from outside the prison, including for example the production of signal flags for the Zabaikal railway. The joiners' workshop made furniture and building materials both for the prison and for outside orders.[67]

A varying proportion of the prisoners worked outside the prison, either in the free command, which had its own barracks outside the prison, on the prison farm, or

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[65] M. H. Gernet, *Istoriia tsarskoi tiur'mi v piatikh tomakh* (Moscow, 1953), volume 5, pp. 21-22, 252-254.

[66] I. A. Malinovskii, *Ssylka v Sibir. Publichnaia lektsii. Chitaniia v Tomske v Noiabre 1899 goda* (Tomsk, 1900).

[67] Nina Nikolaevna Bykova, 'Istoriia Aleksandrovskago tsentrala (1900- Fevral' 1917gg.)' (Kandidatskii Nauka, Irkutsk State University, 1998), pp. 111-115.

further afield in local industries, mines, and especially road and rail construction projects. Those prisoners with long sentences, and also around 500 so called 'state criminals', who had been sentenced for violent crimes against the state, were not sent off prison grounds because of the risk of escape. Use of prisoner labour intensified during the First World War, as prisoners were utilized on road and rail building, and urgent infrastructure projects.[68]

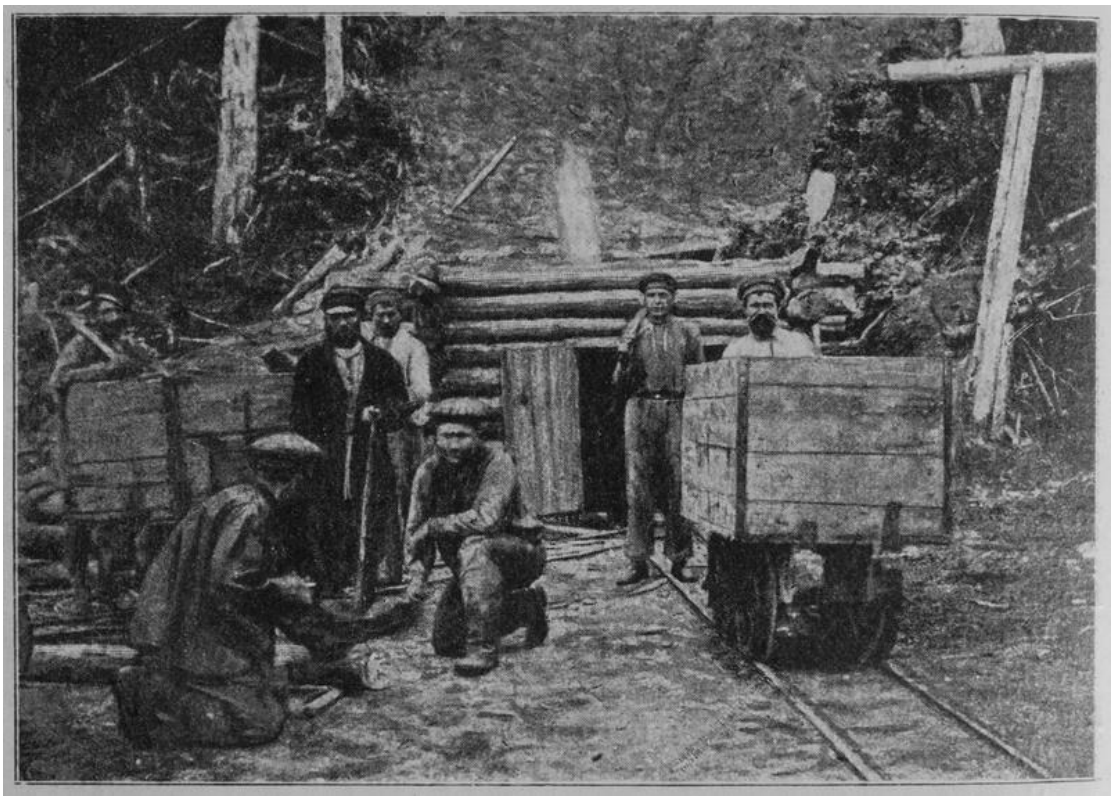

Illustration ONE. Hard labour prisoners at the entrance to the mine in Sakhalin, early twentieth century.

Katorga work was widely recognised to be inefficient and expensive, not least because *katorga* prisoners were 'bad workers' due to their poor health and lack of vigour. The exception to this was the use of *katorga* labour on the Ussuri, Amur, Transbaikal and Priamur railroads, especially after 1905, where *katorga* prisoners proved to be a cost effective and efficient workforce. Prison and exile labour had been

[68] *Otchet po glavnomu tiuremnomu upravleniiu za 1915g* (Petrograd, 1917), part 6, pp. 50-57.

used to good effect in earlier railway construction, and had been used since 1891.[69] The Trans-Siberian railway route was constructed between 1891 and 1916, and provided a significant source of employment, for locals, convicts, exiles and workers from other regions. Labour conditions were exceptionally difficult and unpleasant, because of the unforgiving climate and the difficult terrain. The ground was frozen until mid-July, but once it thawed, it turned into a swamp, and labourers sometimes worked in up to two feet of water.[70] The project was unable to attract enough free labour, because of eastern Siberia's sparse population, and prison labour was therefore used extensively.[71] A total of 9,000 prisoners and 4,500 exiles worked on the railroad. Indeed, prisoner labour on the Amur and Transbaikal railways was considered such a success that in 1914 suitable prisoners were transferred to Siberia from European *katorga* prisons for this work.[72]

A number of memoirists described their labour on the Amur cart road, or *Kolesukha*. Andrei Sobol', who was to become well known as a writer in the early Soviet period, was one such writer.[73] Sobol' was just eighteen years old when he was sentenced to four years' *katorga* in 1906, for participating in an illegal Jewish Socialist organisation. *Kolesukha* was a road that linked Blagoveshchensk with Khabarovsk, and was completed between 1899 and 1909, using *katorga* labour almost exclusively. The workers were organized into working teams of ten, *desiatniki*. Sobol' recalled that political prisoners were distributed around the working teams, so that there were only one or two politicals to eight or nine criminal prisoners on each. Each team had a

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[69] V. F. Borzunov, *Proletariat Sibiri i dal'nego vostoka nakanune pervoi Russkoi revoliutsii (po materialam stroitel'stva transsibirskoi magistrali, 1891-1904gg)* (Moscow: Nauka, 1965), p.32.
[70] Steven G. Marks, *Road to Power: The Trans Siberian Railroad and the Colonisation of Asian Russia, 1850-1917* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1991), p. 171.
[71] Petr K. Gran, *Katorga v Sibiri. Izvlechenie iz otcheta o sluzhebnoi poezdke nachal'nika glav. tiurem. upravlennia P.K. Grana v Sibir v 1913 g* (St. Peterburg: Tipo-litografiia S-Peterburg. odinochnoi tiur'mi, 1913), p. 41.
[72] *Otchet po glavnomu tiuremnomu upravleniiu za 1914g.* (Petrograd, 1916), p. 36.
[73] Zsuzsa Hetényi, *In a maelstrom: The history of Russian-Jewish prose (1860-1940) (*Budapest: Central European University Press, 2008), pp. 196-200.

daily quota of earth to shift, a figure described as unachievable. The workers walked between one and five miles in the morning to get to their place of work, and could drink tea on site, but returned to their barracks for lunch. The work itself was hard manual labour, moving stones, clearing ground and felling wood. Former Sakhalin administrators found work on the Amur project, as did a significant number of former Sakhalin convicts.[74] Andrei Sobol' evocatively recalled that conditions broke even the hardened Sakhalin lags.[75] Another memoirist, a political exile called E.P. Dubinskii, described terrible working conditions, with the team working in waist deep water, and swamps, and soaked to the skin. The dry days were no better, because then the workers were covered with great clouds of biting mosquitoes.[76] F. Drozhzhin, another *katorga* prisoner, described similar working conditions, with intense heat, constant thirst, and a plague of blackflies day and night, alongside massively overcrowded sleeping quarters.[77] Despite certain inconsistencies, these memoirs present a clear picture of physically challenging working conditions, and norms of labour production that are reminiscent of gulag working practice. They also make it clear, however, that the economic benefits of the work were recognized, and that while conditions were unpleasant, workers' basic needs were provided for, and they were cared for by the state. The death rates were modest, unlike the execrable death rates witnessed in Soviet forced labour projects.[78]

[74] F. Vrubelskii, "Vospominaniia ob Amurskoi kolesnoi doroge," *Katorga i ssylka* (1923).
[75] Andrei Sobol', "'Kolesukha'", *Katorga i ssylka* (1921), p. 101.
[76] E. P. Dubinskii, "Pobeg s 'Kolesukhi'," *Katorga i ssylka* (1922), p. 112.
[77] F. Drozhzhin, "Listki iz zabytoi tetradi (Vospominaniia ob Amurskoi kolesnoi doroge)," *Katorga i ssylka* (1921), pp. 68-69.
[78] Marks, p. 184; Golfo Alexopoulos, 'Destructive-Labor Camps: Rethinking Solzhenitsyn's Play on Words', *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 16, no. 3 (2015):499-526

Exile

Exile was a heavily used punishment in Russia. The Main Prison Administration described exile as a 'prison without walls' in 1900, and this conceptualisation resonates with our understanding.[79] The conditions under which exiled social groups lived in many respects can be understood as a form of imprisonment.[80] For those convicted of crimes in both the Imperial and Soviet periods, exile was usually added to the end of a sentence of hard labour in prison, often without the right to return home on completion of the term. For those exiled without recourse to the courts, the punishment of exile was usually finite and did not involve imprisonment except in transit prisons en route to the final destination.

In Imperial Russia, the distances exiles were sent were generally related to their threat to public and state order. Less serious transgressions or first offences might be punished with shorter terms of exile in European Russian destinations. Aleksandr Engel'gardt was a University Professor who was exiled to his family estate in Smolensk province in 1871 for disseminating democratic ideas among his students.[81] His exclusion from Russia's capitals was the entirety of his punishment- he was free to write and to work on his own property. Semion Kanatchikov was a skilled metal worker living in St. Petersburg who was administratively exiled in 1900 for his political involvement in radical circles, first to his home village, and then to Saratov.[82] Kanatchikov continued to be politically active in the workers' movement, and was

[79] See Badcock, *A prison without walls?*, p. 1.
[80] Lynna Viola conceptualises deported kulaks as among the first gulag prisoners. See Viola, *The unknown gulag*.
[81] A. N. Engelgardt and Cathy A. Frierson, *Aleksandr Nikolaevich Engelgardt's Letters from the country, 1872-1887* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); A. N. Engel'gardt, *Iz derevni. 12 pisem 1872-1887* (Moscow: Mysl', 1987).
[82] S. I. Kanatchikov, *A Radical Worker in Tsarist Russia - The autobiography of Semion Ivanovich Katatchikov*, ed. Reginald E. Zelnik (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986), pp. 145-232.

subsequently imprisoned and exiled in Irkutsk, in eastern Siberia, between 1910 and 1916.

Recidivists and those associated with more serious offences were exiled to more distant locations. While the journey to exile incorporated prisons, confinement and close supervision, exile itself offered comparative freedom. Dmitrii Iakovlev, a political exile who served a term of hard labour, recalled his time in exile between 1915 and 1917 very vividly. When he first arrived in Tutursk colony, his place of exile, a village near Verkholensk in Irkutsk province, not far from the river Lena, he was astonished by the lack of formality and apparent freedom of exile:

> We arrived at the township [administration]. [It was] a large wooden building. I went inside. The driver gave over papers. I was asked my name, how old, what state possessions I had, and so on. Finished. 'Go' they said to me. I don't understand where to go. 'Go- you are free.' I was dumbfounded, and stayed standing on the spot, not moving. Someone I had met when I arrived took me by the hand and led me out of the door. [83]

Exiles were generally responsible for themselves once at their destinations, and were subject to nominal supervision. The pains of exile were primarily of isolation, dislocation and the pains of neglect. While in prison, exiles had access to healthcare, shelter and food, however rudimentary. In exile, these basic requirements were not met by the state, which in more remote environments assured great hardships for exiles without private means.[84] Siberia was the most commonly used exile destination, from the inception of the punishment at the end of the seventeenth century until the collapse of the Imperial regime in 1917. Lived experience of Siberian exile was very much contingent on where one was sent. Eastern Siberia was both more remote and

[83] Iakovlev, 'Ot katorgi k ssylke', p. 116.
[84] Sarah Badcock, 'From villains to victims: Experiencing illness in Siberian exile', *Europe-Asia Studies* 65, no. 9 (2013): 1716-36.

less populated than western Siberia, and was therefore considered to be a more punitive destination. Yakutsk region, one of Siberia's most remote eastern outposts, was most feared, and became synonymous with the "most remote place in Siberia".[85] Only a handful of the most 'dangerous' political exiles were settled in extraordinarily remote locations in the region. While the climate and isolation were key elements of exile's punitive nature, it was the challenges of finding paid work that often defined exile experience. Work required spatial and occupational mobility, as exiles travelled around the region seeking employment in a range of different industries. Manual labour of various kinds was the main employment, along with work in mines, rivers and on the railways.[86] State dreams of exiles comprising a corps of agricultural settlers in the east were wildly unrealistic- though some exiles became peasant householders, most reverted to begging and criminal activity, because there was a shortage of available land, resistance to settlers from established residents, and because the exiles themselves often lacked the skills and resources needed for pioneer farming.[87]

As in tsarist Russia, exile was a punishment in Soviet Russia and, as before, it was associated with different degrees of restriction on recipients' civil rights. As applied in particular to the deported kulaks and ethnic groups in the 1930s and 1940s, it could confine people to particular places from which they could leave only with official permission, or it could simply exclude individuals from named places. Exiles could be subject to other restrictions such as of assembly and mixing with free populations and to requirements relating, for example, to work. Evgenia Ginzburg's ten year sentence

[85] Pavel L. Kazarian, *Iakutskaia politicheskaia ssyl'ka (istorichesko-iuridicheskoe issledovanie)* (Iakutsk, 1999), p. 68. For an excellent study of Sakhalin, see Sharyl M. Corrado, ' "The end of the Earth": Sakhalin island in the Russian Imperial Imagination, 1849–1906' (PhD dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2010).
[86] Badcock, *A prison without walls?*, pp. 106-115.
[87] Badcock, *A prison without walls?*, pp. 126-130.

in a labour camp was followed by five years of exile so that like other ex-convicts, her new freedom was conditional. Her status as an exile 'subject to deprivation of civil rights' was spelled out in the documentation she received on the expiry of her carceral sentence, as was the fact that she had served ten years for belonging to an underground organisation. Ginzburg could have left Kolyma for a less remote place 'on the mainland' but she had formed a relationship with the man who was to become her second husband while she was serving her sentence in Kolyma, so she chose to live out her exile near the camps in which she had been held for the previous decade just to be near him. She was free to find her own lodgings, to take on most types of work and to correspond freely with her relatives back home. Initially, Ginzburg took a room in Taskan, where Anton, her husband-to-be, was held. Taskan was a typical gulag settlement populated by camp personnel, their relatives and ex-prisoners, and for the few months Ginzburg lived there she was able to have regular meetings with Anton who, as a doctor, was relatively free to come and go. But when he was transferred to a more distant high security camp, she decided to move to Magadan. She was issued with an internal passport valid for one year that would allow her through the checkpoints that lined the roadways out of the Kolyma valley. On entering Magadan she experienced the shock of re-engaging with what passed for normal life in this part of the USSR. She was able to get a job in a kindergarten despite her status as an ex-58er; that is, political prisoner. She bedded down in an apartment with another ex-prisoner she had met in the camps who had set up a business recycling household goods of various sorts. This business supported her and the other former gulag inmates to whom she offered help. In the years after 1947 Magadan grew fast as it became the destination for released prisoners arriving either to find work or using it as the springboard for the onward to the mainland.

THE SPECIAL SETTLEMENTS

The Soviet era saw the creation of a particular type of exile settlement. The *spetsposelenia* or 'special settlement' (and later renamed *the trudposelenia* or 'work settlement') was the destination for the millions of people deported to the peripheries during the Stalin period on grounds of their belonging to the class of rich peasants or ethnic groups. These settlements were created from scratch in places remote from existing settlements in order to prevent the 'contamination' of ordinary citizens by the variously defined undesirable elements. Initially conceived as instruments of colonization for the North, they soon became an integral part of the apparatus of forced labour put to the service of fulfilling Stalin's five-year plans.[88] The deportees in special settlements numerically rivalled the convict population in labour camps. In 1949 a total of 2,679 special settlements had been created in the USSR, each with 700 families. They were situated preponderantly in the North of European Russia, the Urals and Western Siberia. Their populations were mixed, with new waves of deportees added to the original settlements, and whilst the first were typically located deep in the boreal forest to provide labour for the timber and wood processing industries ,there were also agricultural special settlements and settlements that provided labour for construction projects and extractive industries. We illustrate special settler experience through the story of one deportee, Filip Ipatovich.[89]

Filip Ipatovich has lived in a small village in the Gornozavodskii rural district on the western flanks of the Ural mountains since 1938. He was 81 when, sitting in on the bench outside his now dilapidated hut, he recounted his story. He had been born into a well-to-do peasant family in Vinnitsa, in the Ukrainian republic of the USSR, and was one of six children. In 1930, when he was just eight years old, his family were

[88] Viola, *The unknown gulag*, p. 4
[89] Filip Ipatovich was interviewed by Pallot in the summer of 2001.

categorised as kulaks and as a result they were deported to the Urals. The first destination for the family was Gainskii district in the very northwest corner of Perm' (then Molotov) region. Arriving in the district town, the family was loaded into one of a convoy of boats to be taken 75 kilometres up river to a landing called Pel'min Bor. This was to be the home for his and the other kulak families that had survived the journey from Ukraine. Filip described Pel'min Bor as an uninhabited place, backed by dense forest with no cultivable land. Arriving in the late summer, the settlers made *zemlyanki*, earthen dugouts covered with branches and sod, for shelter, and survived on food they had managed to bring with them, supplemented with berries and mushrooms from the forest. By the spring following their arrival, food was so scarce that Filip's mother had to feed the family on soup made of reindeer moss and pine bark. Filip remembers people 'dying like flies'. They were, he observes, 'treated like pigs in a place that nobody could find on the map.' The settlers deposited in this unpropitious place were supposed in the winter following their arrival to be harvesting timber, dragging it over the snow to the river bank to await the spring ice-melt for the onset of the *splav* (flotation) of logs, downstream to wood processing plants on the Kama river, one of the tasks of gulag prisoners in nearby Usol'lag. Filip recalled that conditions were so bad, food and appropriate clothing so scarce and the available tools so rudimentary that settlers were unable to meet their logging quotas. The settlers were not allowed to grow their own food because it was thought by the authorities that this would disincentivise forest work. When Filip's father managed to plant the seed potatoes the family had brought with them from Ukraine, they were ordered to destroy the plot. Malnutrition and typhus quickly became endemic and reached a peak in the terrible winter of 1933 when harvest failure as a consequence of collectivisation reduced food shipments to the north, exacerbating the already critical

food shortages in special settlements. Of 3,000 families transported at the same time as Filip's family, only 200 survived.

Within three years of the founding of Pel'min Bor, the decision was made to move the survivors elsewhere.[90] This was part of a policy change that re-imagined special settlers' functions from a 'colonization' to an 'economic' frame. This meant that special settler labour was to be directed to where it was needed.[91] Filip's family was transported south to Krasnokamsk on the Kama river where his father was put to work as a blacksmith and other family members deployed into forestry, as before. Filip recalls the excitement that they all felt when they saw bread for the first time in three years. Rations gradually improved and the family was able to acquire extra food by trading nets his mother knitted from thread they had brought with them with local free citizens. By now aged eleven, Filip accompanied his elder sister into the forest. The commandant in Krasonkamsk, reflecting a relaxation in the rule about food production, allowed the deportee households to grow food for subsistence.

Within a few years the family was relocated yet again to Ust-Turym in Gornozavodskii district on the western flanks of the Ural mountains, the site of the Imperial Russia's early iron industry. Diamonds had been discovered in the region, and in 1938 Stalin ordered that further prospecting should take place. In anticipation of the development of placer mines and river dredging for diamonds, more labour was moved into the drainage basin of the river Koiva. Filip's family was among the battalions of prison and special settlers transported at this time. Again the family had

[90] The only records that give population numbers for Pel'min Bor relate to 1950 when the settlement became the destination for ethnic deportees – ethnic Germans and Crimean Tatars - and Vlasovites (USSR citizens who formed a battalion to fight with German forces in the second world war). There were 81 families in the settlement in 1950, and 111 families in 1951. No further records exist, and the settlement no longer exists. The Perm' chapter of the NGO Memorial has collected existing data on the special settlements at pmem.ru/index.php?id=1620 (accessed 13 December 2016). The Pel'min Bor data are at =2723

[91] Polian, *Ne po svoei vole*, p. 77.

to set about building an earthen dugout in which to live, which they occupied along with five to ten other families. The settlers were now allowed an allotment to grow potatoes. In his interview in 2005, Filip recalls how in time barracks replaced earth dugouts and they were ready when the first wave of ethnic deportees, Germans from the Volga region, arrived. Although the relaxation of rules such as on food growing characterized this period, the special settlers remained subject to various restrictions. Within settlements the population was not allowed to assemble without the permission of the commandant, and they had no right of self-government. Settlers were not allowed to leave the settlement without the commandant's permission or to change where they lived within it.[92] The commandant dispensed discipline for violations of internal settlement rules, which included fines and arrest. Compared with prisoners, special settlers enjoyed certain rights which included the same pay (albeit with deductions) and protections about the length of the working day and vacations as free workers. By now, the population of special settlers had stabilized in the Northern Urals at around 250,000. Ust-Turym was one of 299 settlements. Thereafter the number of special settlers declined due to deaths, a decline in the rate of natural increase, escapes and marriage to free citizens and reassignments to other categories of workers or prisoners. In 1950 the number of special settlers in the north Urals was 90,860. The Urals ceased to be the chosen destination for the ethnic deportations of the early and post-war years. Nationwide, when Stalin died, the 2,753,356 deportees still confined to special settlements exceeded the 2,472,247 prisoners in the gulag.[93]

In the decades following the death of Stalin in 1953, the civil rights of special settlers were gradually restored. When the restrictions of movement on kulaks were lifted on

[92] Viola, *The unknown gulag*, pp. 9-96.
[93] Polian, *Ne po svoei vole,* p. 148.

13th August 1954, many of the peasants who had been transported in 1929-33 began to leave. In Ust-Turym, Filip recalls, there was an immediate exodus of ethnic Germans to northern Kazakhstan. Filip, now married with two children to another settler, was among those who decided to stay. As he explained, he did not want to have to encounter the people who had denounced his father, now deceased, in his native village. He continued to be employed in forestry until the end of his working life.

THE GULAG CAMP

The kulak deportations of the early 1930s to the northern Urals prefigured what was to come with the gulag camps. The gulag camps differed in their geographical spread, which was more extensive and which took some convicts yet further from the European core and into even more hostile environments, both in the Arctic and in the deserts of the interior. Among the most feared destinations were the gold mines of Kolyma, in the Soviet Far East, to which Evgenia Ginzburg was transported. She spent ten years moving between different institutions and places in Kolyma, managing to survive through a combination of luck and her own guile.

Kolyma is located in the furthest north-eastern extremities of Russia. Its capital is Magadan. Gulag camps were established in this region because of its rich gold and silver deposits, but these areas are among the most inhospitable on earth for human habitation. The greater part of it lies in the Arctic Circle and the whole region is underlain by continuous permafrost. Kolyma is snow bound for more than half the year and its northern latitude means that daylight is very limited for four months of the year. .Average January temperatures are -19 to -38 centigrade but some of the lowest temperatures anywhere in the world have been recorded in the interior. The

population of the Kolyma region consisted of the convicts and the military battalions and interior ministry officers deployed to guard and manage them, exiles who had come to the end of their sentence but were not permitted, or chose not, to leave the region, family members of the guards, 'free' workers assigned to the region, and a small number of indigenous people. Inevitably, the combination of the Arctic and sub-Arctic environment with the appalling working and living conditions, produced extremely high mortality rates among convicts. The harrowing experiences of the convicts exiled to this 'pole of cold and cruelty'[94] are described in a number of iconic testimonies, and historians continue to debate the extent to which the underlying rationale for the severity of treatment meted out to the convict contingent was the physical annihilation of the regime's opponents.[95]

The vast and complex task of developing the gold mining operations in Kolyma, involving tens of thousands of convicts, inevitably created a need for subordinate enterprises that serviced the camps and mining operations. In part free workers assigned to the region provided these, but typically for the gulag, it was prisoners who fulfilled these roles. While the bulk of the convicts in Kolyma, men and women alike, worked in mining or timber harvest and construction, there was a small minority that managed to secure other jobs that were less life threatening. Evgenia Ginzburg was among these, largely through the good luck of running into people who had known and respected her husband or with whom she had forged relationships in prison, on

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[94] Solzhenitsyn. *The Gulag Archipelago*, volume 2, p. 112.

[95] Among the best known testimonies is Varlam Shalamov, *Kolyma tales* (Harmondsworth: Penguin,1994). See also Robert Conquest, *Kolyma: The Arctic Death Camps*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978); David J. Nordlander, 'Magadan and the Economic History of Dalstroi in the 1930s' in *The economics of forced labor the Soviet Gulag*, eds Gregory and Lazarev (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2003); David J., Nordlander, 'Magadan and the evolution of the Dal´ stroi bosses in the 1930s' *Cahiers du monde russe* 22 no. 2 (2001): 649-666; David J. Nordlander 'Origins of a gulag capital: Magadan and Stalinist control in the early 1930s', *Slavic Review* 57 no. 4 (1998): 791-812; Leona Toker, Varlam Shalamov's Kolyma', in *Between Heaven and Hell: The Myth of Siberia in Russian Culture*, eds G. Diment and Y. Slezkine (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1993), pp. 151-169.

the journey or already in Kolyma. During the ten years of her sentence she was variously put to work as a nursery nurse, in chicken houses, on a dairy farm, in a factory, as a medical assistant, and felling trees. Evgenia Ginzburg described the living conditions that awaited most women and men convicts all over the USSR at the end of their journey of transportation. In her writings we learn much detail about the everyday life and conditions under which convicts lived, worked and died, but particularly striking for the 'long history' of the convict transport in Russia are her descriptions of institutions that carried forward inheritances from the nineteenth century and which have cast a shadow over today's penal system. Confinement in the gulag isolated the convict from the outside world, but within the boundaries of territorial camp complexes penal institutions were remarkably porous. Kolyma is a good example; its geographical remoteness in a barren landscape meant the few routes out were easily controlled. It was for good reason that even today inhabitants of the region refer to the rest of Russia as 'the mainland'. With geography providing the defence against escape, the authorities within Kolyma were content to allow prisoners to work outside the confines of the camp. Those given 'non-convoy' status did not have to be accompanied by a guard.[96] Evgenia Ginzburg describes how when she was working in the chicken house at the Elgan camp on the Kolyma river north of Magadan 'the guards got used to me' and would allow her out of the work compound:

> By now, it was sufficient for me to glance at the little window and say "with your permission ....," for the long iron bolt to slide to the left and the door of the guardhouse to open before me. Only Pretty Boy Demyanenko would ask "Are you going far?" But even he was content with the standard reply that I was off to the hospital for medicine.' [97]

[96] Wilson Bell, 'Was the Gulag an Archipelago?', pp 116-141.
[97] Ginzburg, *Within the whirlwind,* p 87. Ginzburg referred to the guard as 'pretty boy' because of his boyish good looks.

Not all convicts secured such freedom of movement for themselves. The experience of the world beyond the compound was for others in the daily march to and from the gold mines and labour under guard all day long.

The arrangements for living and working in the gulag were based on the principles of collectivism, joint responsibility (*krugovaya poruka*) and self-government. Prisoners were organized into work brigades and these brigades occupied a shared space in barracks and were driven out to work in the forests, mines or construction sites together. Living conditions were usually primitive. Ginzburg shared accommodation in Elgen with other women working in supporting services:

> Our quarters were two sagging shacks, barnacled with ice, overlaid with snow, and with holes in the roof. Every day we had to plug these holes anew with lengths torn from old, cast off duffle coats.[98]

Under the principle of joint responsibility a shortfall or disciplinary offence on the part of one member of a brigade or barracks led to shared punishment for all, the intention being to incentivize everyone towards plan fulfilment. 'Self government' served a different, but related, purpose, allocating to a convict the role of representative and leader for the mass of prisoners in a brigade or barrack. The convicts were responsible themselves for domestic order in the barracks, cleaning them, keeping the wood stove burning and deciding rotas; the convict representative's task was to make sure that this ran smoothly. Life in the barracks as Ginzburg recounts depended upon the other convicts.

While Ginzburg's account tends to stress the importance of convict friendships and mutual support, she also recounted the very worst of barracks life when she was sent

[98] Ginzburg, *Within the whirlwind,* p.17.

to Izvestkovaya, 'the isle of the damned.'[99] Ivzestkovaya was an especially remote and distant sub-division of the Kolyma camp where the convicts worked in lime quarries. Here she was bullied for being an intellectual:

> Both the girls and the guards were at one in their instinctive recoil from me, a being from another planet. I was not allowed to rest after a trek. A pick was put into my hand the moment I appeared ... and I was told "get a move on, get a move on! Off to the lime quarries". The first day my norm fulfilment was 14 per cent and I got no bread.[100]

Life back in the barracks at night was marked by noise, suffocating heat from the stove that belched out smoke into the poorly ventilated space and perpetual fear of assault from the guards and other prisoners. In referring to her barrack cohabitants in the most de-humanising terms as 'humanoids', lepers, drunkards, drug addicts and syphilitics, Ginzburg's narrative is true to the criminal/political binary that we discussed in the introduction. There is no reason to doubt either the episode of guard violence and rape she describes in the barracks or the horror of her experiences, but her implied assumption that criminal women were is some way immune to the horrors around them is problematic. The resources on which any individual can draw to survive are not the same; the behaviours of the powerless and vulnerable are myriad and not always easy to understand. Ginzburg's experiences nevertheless reinforce an underlying truth about the gulag. Whatever local arrangements might pertain for managing prisoners, however good or bad the camp boss (and Ginzburg encountered personnel who helped her as well as those who were sadistic and punitive), and whatever an exile's relationships with other captives, the system was maintained and reproduced by violence, fear and degrading treatments that no prisoner, political or criminal, could avoid.

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[99] Ginzburg, *Within the whirlwind,* p. 101.
[100] Ginzburg, *Within the whirlwind,* p. 102.

CONTEMPORARY PRISONS

In the twenty-first century, the most common destination for convict journeys in Russia is the correction colony (*ispravitel'naya koloniya*). This is the securitised institution in which offenders with carceral sentences are confined for the purposes of incapacitation, deterrence, rehabilitation and retribution. Today, in the Russian Federation, convicted offenders are either given custodial or suspended sentences or subjected to alternative forms of punishment. The proportions between these might be very different in Russia from elsewhere in Europe but the modalities, on paper at least, are the same. A Foucauldian would argue that the later decades of the Soviet era witnessed the final and long overdue 'birth of the prison' in Russia. In the 1990s the post-Soviet state removed exile from the repertoire of punishments in the correctional code and joined the Council of Europe, which in theory committed it to developing humane and individualised approaches to punishment. And yet, as we have shown, former practices remain including the despatch of convicts to distant destinations in the peripheries of remote geographical margins. It is true that journeys take less time than in the past and physical conditions are less uncomfortable, but the degradations and pains of the journey-to-prison figures prominently in the narratives of twenty-first century convicts and are certainly experienced punitively.[101]

The similarities do not end with the journey, however. The carceral institution that awaits the vast majority of convicted prisoners at their destination is an institution that bears only passing resemblance to the Western penitentiary. The new arrival in one of Russia's more than 700 'correctional colonies' is processed into an institution that

[101] Dominique Moran, Laura Piacentini, and Judith Pallot, 'Disciplined mobility and carceral geography: Prisoner transport in Russia', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 37, no. 3 (2012): 446-460; Pallot and Piacentini, *Geography, Gender and Punishment,* chapters 7 and 8.

has carried forward features of labour camps and labour colonies of the Soviet Union and even of nineteenth century *katorga.* The resemblance is both physical and organisational. Thus, today's correctional colony consists of a territory enclosed by fences and barbed wire and corner watchtowers, with the internal space divided into successively smaller units by high wire fences. The primary subdivision is into the domestic, production and administrative zones that are occupied respectively by the dormitory barracks, industrial buildings and workshops, and the staff (*shtab*). The barrack blocks in the domestic zone are usually two to three storeys high, each floor occupied by a separate numbered detachment, a group of up to 120 prisoners who sleep in a communal dormitory. Wire and wooden fences divide the external entrances to each floor. Prisoners' movement around the colony space, between and within zones is controlled, collective and regimented. The production zone typically consists of large factory buildings, the number depending upon the size of the colony, and a collection of small workshops in which the labour of the prisoners is deployed in the production of a range of industrial and consumer goods made to state order or for sale in the open market. There are facilities for fulfilling the colony's needs in food (colonies have bakeries and, some, their own farms), building materials and services. The typical colony is provided also with a canteen, concert hall, library, surgery, punishment cells, a visitors' block where family visits take place and a parade ground for morning and evening roll calls. Towering over the assemblage of buildings is the onion dome or minaret of the Russian Orthodox Church or Mosque, constructed since communism's collapse to offer spiritual guidance to inmates.

It was to just such a colony in Ivanovo that Lyudmila was transported in 2006 to serve a four-year sentence for grievous bodily harm.[102] Lyudmila was 38 years old when she was interviewed, and the mother of five children aged 10 to 21. She had married when she was 16 and had her first child a year later. Her husband, the father of her children, was violent and it was Lyudmila's attempt to escape from this that resulted in her imprisonment. She was halfway through a suspended sentence she had received for physically injuring her husband during a domestic dispute when another incident involving her husband and father-in-law took place, which resulted in her hospitalisation with a broken leg. In hospital, with the agreement of her eldest daughter, she made the decision to flee. She discharged herself and managed for the next eighteen months to hide out with a friend in another region, but the police eventually apprehended her. The violation of the terms of her license triggered the carceral sentence, which after four years was now nearing its end. In one month Lyudmila was due to be released.

It took Lyudmila two tortuous weeks to travel the 2,456 kilometres from Omsk, the Siberian city where she was stood trial, to her destination, correctional colony no. 7 in Ivanovo. Correctional colony number 7 had been founded in 1938, one of the hundreds that proliferated at that time to accommodate the vast inflow of convicts dispatched to the gulag during Stalin's Great Terror. With an inmate population today of just under 700, the Ivanovo women's colony is small and its twelve detachments, each with a maximum of 70 women, are, correspondingly, smaller than average. After two weeks of quarantine that included a medical check up and an assessment of her work capability, Lyudmila was allocated to a detachment that was assigned to work in

[102] Lyudmila is the name given to one of the women prisoners interviewed in 2010 in an ESRC-funded project, the result of which are reported in Pallot and Piacentini, *Gender, geography and Punishment*. The full transcript of this and other interviews is held in the ESRC data base, but is subject to author's permission for access.

the clothing factory. For the past four years Lyudmila had worked eight to ten hour shifts, six days a week, machine-sewing police uniforms and fire service overalls.

Reviewing the past four years as a convict, Lyudmila describes how the first months were the most traumatic. Whilst on remand in Omsk other women, repeat offenders, had told her frightening stories of what awaited her and these were largely borne out on arrival. The first introduction to the detachment, securing a place in the society of prisoners, trying to fulfil her personal work target having never used a sewing machine before and learning the 'regime rules' caused stress, depression and attempts at self-harm. For Lyudmila it was the other women in the detachment rather than prison guards she feared most initially:

> Actually, it wasn't the screws that were most frightening; it was the *zeks* (convicts) who were the greatest threat. If you obeyed the rules and worked hard you were more-or-less alright with the screws... on the contrary, it is when you see that mass of women that it really gets to your nerves. They come up to you, the 'bosses'. At first I was terrified just to go to the shower ... I had never been in such a mass of women; women are all different, of course. You had to figure them out and behave differently to each one. I was like a zombie to start with.

Lyudmila eventually adapted to the communal life of the barracks but, typically for prisoners in Russian correctional colonies, was never able properly to relax. Nevertheless, now an old-timer, she knows how to get on with everyone and to avoid conflicts. The 'friendships' she made were, she explained, always temporary and conditional: "I would eat together with another girl, and we'd get on and ... we'd find a common language. But then in three months, we'd split up, of course." Such relationship, Lyudmila, explains, are fundamentally mercenary; they survive only so long as the parties had something to give or trade such as food parcels from relatives. In Russian correctional colonies today as was the case in the Soviet period, the food

and produce parcel are not only important to prisoner health supplementing the often poor prison diet (in the past they were crucial to prisoners' very survival) but they are the basis of the internal market among prisoners in goods and services. High status prisoners in the barracks hierarchy can 'buy' the services of low status prisoners with a packet of cigarettes, while the regular receipt of parcels in itself confers status. In this respect Lyudmila was in a vulnerable position as her living relatives could not afford to send her parcels; rather, she tried to send small amounts of money to her children from her work in the sewing factory.

Lyudmila's labour has been her saviour during her years of imprisonment. It earns her a small amount of money that she can use in the commissary shop and to pay the alimony she is charged for her children, and, even more important to her, it allows her to escape into her own space. Her introduction to work in the clothing plant had been very stressful:

> It had never entered my head that I would have to learn to sew. The first time I sat at the machine and pressed the foot pedal, I thought to myself, 'mama mia, I'll never be able to do this.' Of course, I sew a treat now!

In time, Lyudmila found that her work helped time passed more quickly. She explained that it is only when she is at work that she can escape the reality and especially her deep yearning to see her children. Her attempt to remain constantly active during her four year sentence has not dulled the pain of the separation from them. They are unable to visit her because the colony was so far from their home in Omsk region.

During the four years Lyudmila has been incarcerated in Ivanovo, she has never been taken outside the correctional colony fences. The Soviet practice of allowing some prisoners to work outside colonies without supervision (the non-convoy prisoners),

and the sight of the columns of convicts being taken out to work in the forests or to provide labour for building projects and civilian factories, has disappeared in the last twenty years, even from those territories that still effectively function as prison service fiefdoms. There is one category of prisoners that is an exception to this rule. These are offenders either sentenced to colony-settlements (*kolonii-poselniya*) or transferred to them at the end of their sentence. According to the Russian prison service, *kolonii-poselniya* are 'open prisons' in the Western mould, but the similarities are only partial. The story of one current prisoner, Artur, reveals how geography and distance combine to create a very distinctive form of punishment in Russia today.[103]

Artur's story was told to us in an interview with his mother, Fatima, a Tatar woman living in one of the Volga republics. Artur was involved in petty theft of food when he was a conscript in the naval port of Murmansk on the Barents Sea. This led to his discharge from the navy and a suspended sentence. Artur was then arrested a second time, for joyriding. Since he had violated the terms of his license, this resulted in a three year custodial sentence. He served this in a correctional colony about a hundred kilometres from home, not far in Russian terms. The offense that earned him his current 5 ½ year sentence was the theft of a mobile phone. Initially, he was incarcerated in a general regime colony on the Volga but after a year he was relocated to a colony-settlement 2,000 kilometres away in West Siberia. Artur is a drug addict, whose life prior to his arrest had become increasingly involved with the underground of criminal drugs dealers and the *narkokontrol*, the organization responsible for uncovering drugs crime, for which, his mother explains, he worked as an informant.

[103] This interview was taken as part of an AHRC project on prisoners' relatives that is reported in Judith Pallot and Elena Katz, *Waiting at the Prison Gate.* Fatima's interview is discussed in chapter 6.

The colony-settlement in which Artur is serving his sentence is a sub-division of a strict regime correctional colony (IK3) in the settlement of Kharp in the Arctic Circle. Kharp is a penal settlement (*regimnii peselok)* whose sole function since its inception has been to support correctional institutions. Kharp (its name meaning in native Nenets language 'Northern Lights') stands at the foot of mountains in the barren tundra, 45 miles north east of Salekhard, in the Yamalo-Nenets region. In the gulag period, Salekhard was intended to be the destination of the northern polar railway that was built, but never finished, by convict labour. Prior to the first convoy of prisoners arriving in the 1950s, it was the site of a railway halt consisting of a few houses for the railway workers. Today, there are two correctional institutions, colonies numbers 3 and 18. Number 3 is a special regime colony, the second strictest category in Russia, but it has two other facilities subordinate to it: a colony-settlement and a high security disciplinary block (EKPT), both housing fifty prisoners. The capacity overall is for 1100 prisoners. Some of the Russian Federation's most serious and dangerous offenders are confined here, including terrorists, serial killers and today's political prisoners. Platon Lebedev, a colleague of Mikhael Khodorkovksy the former owner of the oil company Yukos and one of the Russian Federation's new generation of political prisoners, was imprisoned here from 2003 to 2006.

Artur and the other colony settlement inmates are kept separate from these serious offenders, although the dormitory in which they sleep at night is in the colony's compound. Under the rules governing colony-settlements, Artur is allowed out of the compound during the day to go to work in the settlement, and he can prepare his own meals. His work consists of repair and maintenance around the settlement, in the houses of the prison personnel and public buildings. Artur has to pay for his upkeep out of his wages, but at a lower rate than in correctional colonies. He is able to

socialise with the free population at his place of work. In some settlement-colonies the prisoners are accompanied to work and in others they make their own way but have to stick to a prescribed route. Usually, there are restrictions on entry to public buildings and retail outlets. The 7,500 people that make up Kharp's free population are almost all connected with the colonies in some way, either as workers or relatives of those connected to the prison. It is not therefore the most appropriate place to help offenders make the transition back to normal life, which, apparently, is its rationale. The set-up is resonant of Stalinist 'special settlements'. Kharp is so distant and difficult to reach that Artur's mother Fatima has never visited him. However, she fulfils the role expected of mothers of convicts in Russia today of sending Artur a produce parcel every month consisting of food and cigarettes. Artur is married with a young son but his wife moved away, leaving Fatima to care for her grandson.

Conclusions

In the preceding pages we have described the enormous variety in the convict voyage in Russia over a period of five centuries. There have of course been fundamental changes in how the Russian state has punished offenders, but distance, the convict transport and the encounter with unfamiliar environments have been constants in the state's approach to solving problems of criminality, social deviancy and political opposition. This is as true for today's opponents of the regime like Khodorkovsky sentenced for 'correction' in penitentiaries located six time zones to the east of Moscow, as it was for the Decembrists sent to hard labour and life exile for their opposition to the State. At the beginning of this chapter, we introduced the concept of 'in exile imprisonment' to underline the point that punishment in Russia has always incorporated some element of exile. This can be understood in its broad non-legal

sense, regardless of whether what has awaited the convict or deportee has been in *katorga*, the gulag camp, prison or restriction on where the offender is permitted to live. In Russia, the use of geography to punish has been normalized over two centuries. It has survived as an institutional form and as a cultural practice because it articulates the specific message that the Russian state will deal with offenders (however understood at any time) by expulsion to the periphery. The disciplining power of exile and banishment in Russia has *expanded* punishment, taking the capillary of power into the arena of transportation through space.[104]

The carrying forward over centuries of this particular institutional form of punishment has also reproduced specific 'harms' or sufferings. Travel to exile has intensified the harms that may already have been inflicted during the investigatory process, imprisonment 'on remand' or show trial and anticipated those that wait them at their destination. Over time, therefore, the prison transport in Russia was transformed into a space where the standard degradation routines of confinement—including poor food rations, barking dogs, surveillance, flow control, loss of self and autonomy—have been habitually played out. Transportation in Russia has never been simply a case of moving people from one place to another but has always been a punishment in its own right. It is understood and experienced as such by prisoners and penal personnel alike. In the Foucauldian sense, the modes of transport whether by foot, train or ship, were among the technologies employed by successive states to render the convict or exile docile, the easier to control at the destination. The words of one woman ex-prisoner interviewed in 2010 makes this point:

> You see they are already victims, broken and therefore compliant with the regime they find there. This contemptible system means that the person who is

[104] Beckett and Herbert, 'Penal Boundaries'..

> humiliated just wants to escape, for it all to stop. She comes, shall we say, like fresh meat; those who have been through it once, know what's going on and they hate it but do nothing, they do nothing. Why? Because it's a vicious circle, you understand? That is, when she arrives in the colony she's already done for. Her personality is already broken, she's lost her reason.[105]

When prisoners are sent to remote regions, the friction of distance exacerbates the problems they face maintaining family and social networks and coping with the sense of loss, alienation, and isolation that incarceration brings. Long prison transports, such as have always existed in Russia and the former Soviet Union, underline for prisoners their physical separation from significant others and from their former identities. They also create an impaired sense of geography leading to feelings of being "out-of-place."

In his theoretical portrait of exile and madness, *The Ship of Fools*, Foucault presents the exile as the "prisoner of the passage" stuck in "a barren wasteland between two lands that can never be his own."[106] In Russia's case, prisoners were at various times transported to places with the most challenging environments for human existence, often with inadequate and inappropriate clothing, too little food and inadequate shelter. For those prisoners for whom the destination is some form of incarceration, the harms inflicted by spatial and geographical dislocation are added to the 'regular' pains of imprisonment, as described in the seminal work of the prison sociologist Gresham Sykes.[107] In the pages above, we have used the words of convicts and exiles from the nineteenth to the twenty-first century to try to convey some sense of the inhumanity of the system of exile which exists *sui generis*, quite apart from the

[105] Pallot and Piacentini, *Geography, Gender and Punishment*, p. 133.
[106] Michel Foucault, *The History of Madness* (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 11.
[107] Gresham M. Sykes, 'The pains of imprisonment', in Gresham M. Sykes, *The society of captives: A study of a maximum security prison* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958), pp. 63-78.

excessive cruelty of the notorious punishment regimes of the Stalin gulag or Tsarist *katorga*.