Libraries in Hell: Cultural Activities in Soviet Prisons and Labor Camps from the 1930s to the 1950s

Ilkka Mäkinen

This article describes the nature and purpose of Soviet prison and labor camp libraries during the Stalin era. Data were gathered from recollections of former political prisoners published in the West. Solzhenitsyn's *The Gulag Archipelago* is the most important source. Soviet prison libraries, which were sometimes quite large, seem to have continued directly the tradition of their czarist predecessors. Corrective camp libraries are seen in the context of Soviet penal theory and of Soviet library history in general. The organizational unit taking care of the cultural work in the camps was called the Culture and Education Section (acronym KVCh); the library was situated in an area called the red corner or the club. Camp libraries were too small to have real meaning for the great masses of prisoners, but individual prisoners were sometimes able to benefit from them.

> . . . that special smell, the smell of prison libraries, which emanated from Soviet literature. . . .
>
> *Nabokov*[1]

Introduction

There is life in boiling geysers, and there are libraries in hell.[2] This article seeks to describe cultural activity, especially libraries, during the Stalin era (from the beginning of the 1930s until the middle of the 1950s), in the network of Soviet prisons and corrective labor camps known as the Gulag.[3] The Soviet penal system reflected the general objectives of the society: building a socialist state meant that the nation, a whole family of nations, must be reeducated. Part of the population—criminals and "elements alien to the proletariat"—was deemed to be in need of special education or correction, even though the incorrigibility of some was taken for granted. The most important instrument of correction was collective labor, but the support of cultural propaganda was required, and reading and the libraries were an essential part of this.

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This article describes the nature and purpose of libraries in Soviet prisons and camps. Taking at face value the principles that allegedly were behind the Soviet penal system, one must conclude that libraries and other cultural activities should have been exceedingly important in prisons and camps. The article endeavors to show, however tentatively, how it was in reality, how the prison and camp libraries stood in relation to Soviet library history in general, and how prisoners utilized the libraries, whether as prescribed by the authorities or as they themselves wished.

Data for this article have been gathered mainly from recollections of former political prisoners published in the West. Prison and camp libraries are seen from the point of view of political prisoners, which means that there is not so much a question of prison librarianship as such. It would have been as legitimate to approach Soviet prison librarianship using the point of view of ordinary criminals, but this was not possible because of the nature of the source material available.

In the course of the research no use could be made of Soviet archives, nor was it possible to interview former prisoners. This article should be seen as a product of an exploratory study based on literature that was available before the recent events in the Soviet Union. Its aim is to open a new perspective for research. Later there will be more thorough studies based on archival research. Opening archives will certainly shed light on the official aims, organization, resources, and other aspects of camp libraries, but it is also quite probable that most of the experiences and emotions conveyed by personal recollections do not appear in official records. The archives of the Gulag cannot describe the real meaning of literature and libraries for inmates. Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's *The Gulag Archipelago, 1918–1956: An Experiment in Literary Investigation* is the most important source of information on this aspect of the Gulag, as on any aspect of it.[4] Solzhenitsyn used as his material his own reminiscences, interviews with former fellow prisoners, and memoirs, both published and clandestine. Oral historical tradition has its problems of reliability, as much as we believe in the sincerity of the narrators. Thus care has also been taken to find sources independent of Solzhenitsyn that he cannot have made use of and that cannot have used his work. Data obtained from different sources would appear to be mutually corroborative.

Besides Solzhenitsyn, I have used internationally known memoirs of former camp inmates or "zeks" as they were called inside the Gulag. Naturally, this article can mention only some of the many books on the Gulag. This theme is passed over in silence in many recollections, but it nevertheless seems that reading and libraries play an important role in the stylistically and factually best books. Many of those who have written their memoirs were devoted to literary culture even before their camp experiences. The most outstanding examples are Solzhenitsyn and Eugenia Ginz-

burg. In prison and camp conditions literary culture, reading, and especially poetry could be the last glimmer of light to keep one alive and sane.[5] Cultural activity gave life a meaning in an environment where human life did not have great value, at least not value in itself. Poems and tales sometimes also had quite a practical exchange value, as noted below.

A number of personal memoirs on camp life have been published, even in Finland, and some of these have been useful. It is improbable that any of them were known to Solzhenitsyn. Finland fought against the Soviet Union in World War II, but still was able to retain its independence and democratic government afterward. Thus it was possible to publish truthful information on the conditions in the Soviet Union, even if there was considerable pressure from the East against publishing. In the other countries bordering the Soviet Union (from Poland to Bulgaria) such publishing was not possible. Due to the long common border, war, and other factors, many Finns were able to become personally acquainted with the Soviet system. The Finnish memoirs quoted here probably are not internationally known, so a brief description of their background is included.

Kerttu Nuorteva, a spy sent to Finland during World War II, was captured in 1942. In prison she made a complete confession and even wrote a book, published under a pseudonym, describing her prison and camp experiences in the USSR.[6] She had been arrested during the purges of 1937 and was sentenced to five years in a work camp. Her book is fragmentary and obviously appropriately abridged by Finnish wartime authorities, but it is still a valuable source, at least in its descriptions of emotions and milieus. It does not mention prison libraries, but it gives a vivid image of the general conditions and cultural activities of prisoners.

After the armistice between Finland and the Soviet Union (1944), a Control Commission of the Allied Powers was set up in Finland. In response to the demands of the Control Commission (in practice Russians), nineteen men accused of war crimes were arrested and deported to the Soviet Union in 1945. Some of these had emigrated to Finland after the Russian Revolution. They were sentenced to work camps on fabricated accusations (at least one was shot). Two of the men who were able to return to Finland alive, Unto Parvilahti and Boris Björkelund, published memoirs of their experiences.[7] As camp inmates they were Solzhenitsyn's contemporaries, but evidently they did not meet him, although all three were in the notorious Lubyanka prison at the same time.[8]

Most studies and personal recollections describe the period from the late 1930s to the middle of the 1950s. Official or semiofficial publications on the treatment and cultural activity of the prisoners date mostly from the early 1930s, when the system was still taking shape, and it was possible to discuss the objectives and practices of the system in public. The Soviet justice and penal system was meant to be totally different from that of the

old regime or the capitalist countries: correction and education must take priority over punishment. The principles of the new system were proudly presented at home as well as abroad, although even at that time some extremely unfavorable pieces of information had leaked out (e.g., on the inhuman conditions in the island prison of Solovetsky). A collection of articles edited by the chief prosecutor A. I. Vyshinsky, *Ot tiurem k vospitatel'nym uchrezhdeniam* (From Prisons to Rehabilitative Institutions, 1934), is an important semiofficial source on the cultural activity in the corrective penal system.[9]

Vyshinsky's book includes an article by D. Stelmakh on library services in Soviet institutions of corrective labor.[10] The author tries to show the immense progress in library services made in the Soviet era compared with czarist times. Under the old regime the educational work in the prisons was totally in the hands of priests, and many times more money was spent on churches and priests' wages than on schools and libraries. Libraries were small and strictly censored. In 1911 the czarist prison libraries contained only 71,608 titles and 262,005 volumes.[11]

According to Stelmakh, books had an altogether different meaning in the Soviet prisons or, in Soviet terminology, institutions of "those who are deprived of their freedom" (*lishënnye svobody*). The book was a tool in the political education of lawbreakers, in fostering productive-technical abilities, in gaining skills in different fields of work, in raising their cultural level, and in uniting them with the work collective of the builders of socialism.[12] The article presents statistics on the growth of book stocks and on the structure of collections, especially on the relative changes in fiction, political, and productive-technical literature in the prison libraries of the entire Soviet Union and of the Soviet republics. At the beginning of 1932 Soviet corrective labor institutions contained 700,683 books.[13] It is not easy to make comparisons between the Soviet and czarist holdings because Stelmakh does not reveal the number of prisoners in Soviet prisons, but if Rosenfielde's estimation is accepted (see note 6)—that, under Stalin, the number of prisoners (in prisons and camps) was constantly around 8.8 million—then the progress advertised by Stelmakh is not so laudable.

In spite of Stelmakh's assurances, libraries in Soviet prisons seem to have continued directly the tradition of czarist prison libraries. Stelmakh tells how bibles, gospels, and "literary trash" in the stocks of the libraries made way for contemporary political literature and classics.[14] Some of the prison libraries were established before the Revolution, although they, according to Stelmakh, were "dwarfish" and often without their own premises. Libraries established in the Soviet era were evidently formed on the old pattern. Solzhenitsyn makes some comparisons between the Soviet and czarist prisons and work camps, and also with regard to libraries. These comparisons generally show how much stricter and more inhuman

the Soviet institutions were.[15] To Solzhenitsyn's data we can add the recollections of a Finnish political prisoner who served time in St. Petersburg's Shpalernaya shortly before the Revolution:

> Once a week we were allowed to borrow three books from the prison library. They did not let us go to the library; we just marked our choice in a catalog and the books were delivered. The library was apparently fairly large, even though most of the books were old, dating from the period of Alexander II. During the thirteen months of my imprisonment I came to read a lot, especially philosophical and philological literature. I became familiar, among others, with the rudiments of the Persian, Turkish, and Japanese languages.[16]

What was changed and what remained as it was in prison librarianship when Russia was transformed into Soviet Russia is discussed below.

Books and Culture in Prisons

It was the intent of Soviet penal theorists that different levels of compulsory labor sentences, "educative" or "corrective" work, should abolish prisons in the traditional meaning of the word, but many prisoners were still compelled to languish in prisons of interrogation or isolation. Different institutions were regarded as parts of one single system. Stelmakh, for instance, in his article, does not make any distinction between traditional prisons (in the Soviet terminology *domzak*) and corrective labor camps. In reality the practices and conditions in traditional prisons and corrective labor camps were so dissimilar that in this article they are described separately.

During the mass arrests the cells of prisons of interrogation (or DPZ, Houses of Preliminary Detention) were severely overcrowded; there could be five or even ten times more prisoners than the cells were designed to hold.[17] Sleeping in daytime was forbidden, even after an all-night interrogation. Time had to be passed somehow, in discussions or fabricating small practical things (like buttons, chessmen, etc.) from the soft insides of bread. Niemi(-Nuorteva) tells of an improvised cell school with letters made of bread and of astonishing theatrical performances in her cell in the Shpalernaya prison in Leningrad in 1937. In Cell Nr. 75 of the Moscow Butyrki prison, in June 1946, an exceptionally well-qualified group of men had gathered. A newcomer, Solzhenitsyn, "was approached by a man who was middle-aged, broad-shouldered yet very skinny, with a slightly aquiline nose: 'Professor Timofeyev-Ressovsky, president of the Scientific and Technical Society of Cell 75. Our society assembles every day after the

morning bread ration, next to the left window. Perhaps you could deliver a scientific report to us? What precisely might it be?' "

Solzhenitsyn made a report on the first atom bomb. He had recently held in his hands for a short time a copy of the Smyth Report (the official report on the first atom bomb), which had been brought from outside.[18] It therefore seems that the prisoners themselves in a more or less clandestine manner maintained activities that according to the Soviet penal theory should have been organized or at least tolerated by the authorities.

In some prisons the inmates did not have the right to correspondence, and everywhere it was limited (once or twice a month or so). If prisoners wanted to jot down their thoughts, they were compelled to turn the notes in to the prison office.[19] Eugenia Ginzburg and her cell mate were allowed to fill two notebooks. Every month they had to hand over the notebooks to the censor, who did not return them.[20] The prisoners preferred to erase their writings with the ever useful breadcrumbs rather than let the censor read them.

The availability of books varied somewhat from prison to prison or was dependent on the phase of the interrogation process. Usually the suspect had no right to read or to possess newspapers or books. The availability of reading material might also be dependent on the permission of the interrogator.[21]

During the interrogation the detainees were kept ignorant of the current news from the outside; they therefore seldom got hold of newspapers except as toilet tissue: one tried to guess political news from bits of *Pravda* and *Izvestia*.[22] According to Ginzburg, the prisoners of the Yaroslavl isolator were allowed to subscribe to a local newspaper, the *Northern Worker*, but this seldom contained interesting news. Solzhenitsyn recounts how sometimes pages "from the once progressive *Granat Encyclopedia*" or pieces of political classics were handed out as toilet paper: "Visits to the toilet thus became a means of acquiring knowledge."[23] Most often, however, really fresh news was obtained from new prisoners.

An organized library service seems nevertheless to have been quite common, at least in larger prisons. Parvilahti relates:

> There was one good side to the Lubyanka compared with Le Fort: we could get something to read—naturally not newspapers or anything of current interest; only books from the prison library. The distribution of books was uncertain and sporadic, and they were just as likely to be political propaganda as fiction or history. Once I was lucky enough to get hold of the second volume of a German edition of Shakespeare's collected plays in a deluxe binding. This and many

other of the books I saw there had come from one of the old aristocratic homes that had been "socialized."[24]

Solzhenitsyn says that "the Lubyanka library was the prison's principal ornament"; it was "well-stocked," "unique." He depicts the prison librarian as a blonde spinster of a horsy build, who did everything possible to make herself ugly[25]—a typical caricature of a female librarian. Both Parvilahti and Solzhenitsyn deduced that the Lubyanka library had been assembled from confiscated private libraries. The fly-leaves of the books were often adorned with beautifully embellished dedications or coats of arms.

According to Stelmakh, the size of the prison libraries varied from two to ten thousand volumes. Taganka prison in Moscow had as many as 12,000 volumes and Kresty in Leningrad had 7,000.[26] Although it was the authorities' firm intent to increase the proportion of political and productive-technical literature, it was fiction that the prisoners demanded most constantly. Efforts to steer readers (workers) away from fiction toward more purposeful technical or political literature were made even in the free libraries, but they appear to have had little impact on the taste of readers. Stelmakh presents a survey conducted in 1931 among the readers of an institution in Leningrad, according to which half of the books read over a period of seven months were fiction. The authorities thought that the suitable proportion of fiction in the collection would be approximately 25 to 30 percent.[27]

The most paradoxical feature of the prison libraries was that they were not as thoroughly expurgated as other Soviet libraries, whose stock was sifted over and over again.[28] First they were purged of czarist and bourgeois literature; later, when high officials of the Communist party were liquidated, books written by them were removed and even pages in encyclopedias containing articles about them were changed (e.g., an article about Beria was replaced by another about the Bering Straits).

For some reason the Lubyanka library and libraries of other prisons were more or less exempt from the expurgations. This may have resulted from a shortage of labor or from pure negligence: it was not likely that the prisoners would regain their freedom and spread the news of forbidden books. "State Security . . . forgot to dig in its own bosom," says Solzhenitsyn. Thus in Lubyanka one could read Zamyatin, Pilnyak, Panteleimon Romanov, and Merezhkovsky.[29] Parvilahti tells about the "political isolator" of Vladimir: "It is worth mentioning as a peculiarity that the expurgations in the library were not so carefully done as in other libraries. I once chanced on a Russian book in which I could read (in the year 1949!) Trotsky's and Bukharin's speeches. Even this book had been 'cleaned up,' however—photographs of fallen and liquidated Soviet celebrities, together

with their speeches, had been cut out."[30] There were even books in foreign languages in the prison libraries.[31]

Instructions and Practices

It is apparent that there were regulations for library use covering the whole network of prisons. They were contained in the printed regulations, a copy of which hung on the wall of each and every cell.[32] At least formally, each republic of the Soviet Union had its own regulations. There were also more extensive instructions for prison authorities on how to organize prison librarianship. Stelmakh refers in his article to two texts instructing the prison authorities of the Russian Federation. In 1932 the Chief Administration of Corrective Labor Camps (acronym at the time GUITU) together with the People's Commissariat of Education (Narkompros) gave instructions on how to organize the management and stocking of libraries in corrective labor institutions (*O poriadke rukovodstva i komplektovania bibliotek v ITU*), and elsewhere Stelmakh refers to an instruction named *Bibliotechnaia instruktsia ITU RSFSR 1932 g.*[33] These instructions have not been available to me. They may even be one and the same text.

The fact that the Narkompros was party to giving the instructions resulted apparently from a decree by the Council of People's Commissars on the centralization of library affairs in the Russian Federation (given in 1929). This decree had authorized a central library commission to deal with library instructions for all the branches of administration.[34] In spite of efforts to achieve uniformity, there seems to have been quite a lot of local variance.

Ginzburg describes in detail the instructions that hung on the wall in her cell in the Voronkov prison of Yaroslavl. The document was signed "Head of Prison Administration (State Security Organization), Major Weinstock" and countersigned "Approved: Commissar-General for State Security, Yezhov." Both names were covered later, when the men were liquidated; finally there was only "Chief Prison Administration." The regulations had twenty-two paragraphs, stating what the prisoners' duties and rights were and what was forbidden: prisoners are "allowed to take exercise in the prison yard, the period to be fixed by the prison governor, and to borrow two books from the library every ten days." It was forbidden to make marks in the library books or to communicate with prisoners in other cells by tapping messages on the walls. Penalties for infringing the rules were withdrawal of the privileges of exercise, correspondence, use of the library and prison store, confinement in a punishment cell, and, finally, a court trial.[35]

All sources agree that books were changed every ten days.[36] In Lu-

byanka the inmates presented their wishes verbally to the librarian, who sometimes would fulfill prisoners' orders "miraculously," but at times brought anything haphazardly.[37] In the Vladimir and Yaroslavl prisons a complete catalog was delivered to the cell:[38]

> One day, the flap-window opened suddenly and a sort of folder was thrust through it, looking rather like a class register. It was held by a tow-headed warder we knew as Yaroslavsky, and in whom for once kindness seemed to prevail over routine severity. With a broad smile he pronounced the magic word "catalogue!" . . . this really was the catalogue, and a good one at that. The library was a large one, with an excellent choice of books.[39]

In Yaroslavl books were ordered by marking the numbers of the books desired on a piece of paper. According to Solzhenitsyn's source, in Vladimir the prisoner could with the aid of the catalog order books for a whole year ahead.[40] In Yaroslavl the prisoners got two books per head, whereas in Lubyanka, Solzhenitsyn says, the prison staff brought "exactly as many books as there were people in the cell: the cells with the largest number of prisoners were the best off." Björkelund again got three books for ten days in the internal prison of State Security in Leningrad (Voinov Street).[41]

Returned books were examined minutely: "in case we had left pinpricks or dots underneath certain letters—for there was such a method of clandestine intramural communication—or [in case] we had underlined passages we liked with a fingernail." If such things were found—or if it was alleged they had been found—a penalty followed: deprivation of books for three months or punishment-cell regime for the whole cell. In Yaroslavl Ginzburg and her cell mate were deprived of newspapers because they were accused of marking books with their fingernails.[42]

The conditions for reading were often bad. It was dim in the cells even in the daytime, for the windows were covered by "muzzles" (solid wooden screens), so that the prisoners could not see out or communicate with the outer world. On the other hand, a bright electric light might be left on all night and this, of course, disturbed the inmates' sleep.[43] Eugenia Ginzburg's and her cell mate's eyes began to suffer as a result of reading in the dark cell. When there were somewhat less officious jailers on duty, the inmates turned night into day and vice versa. During the day the prisoners sat with the books in front of them and pretended to be reading, but were actually sleeping.

> At night, however, when the cell was filled with dazzling electric light, we contrived to hold the book under the blanket and thus read till nearly dawn. Of course our eyes still suffered, from the awkward

> posture and from lack of sleep, but it was better than before, and for a long time we managed to fool the guards. Occasionally, however, the flap-window opened and we were admonished in these terms: "Number 1, wake up Number 2 and tell her not to hide her face."[44]

The time spent in the DPZ (House for Preliminary Detention) or possibly in the isolator was for the prisoner in most cases only an intermediate stage in his or her passage toward camp life. Interrogations might recur many times during the imprisonment, and on those occasions the prisoner had already experienced camp life and was able to appreciate features of the prison that were—relatively—more pleasant than in the camps. The library seems to have been one of the qualities of the prison that made a difference. The general in charge of the prison for interrogation even tried to convince Björkelund that "in prison you are much better off than in a camp—you don't have to work, the accommodation is more comfortable, and besides there's a library in the prison."[45] Solzhenitsyn describes the feelings of the prisoners in Lubyanka, when they were waiting to see whether the librarian would bring books or whether they would be refused because of some markings found in the returned books: "It would be very sad to have to do without books during the best and brightest of our prison months, before we were tossed into the pit of camp. Indeed, we were not only afraid: we actually trembled, just as we had in youth after sending a love letter, while we waited for an answer. Will it come or not? And what will it say?"[46]

The central scene of Solzhenitsyn's novel *The First Circle* is a special prison, a research institution in Moscow, for which prisoners with a scientific background were selected from the camps. At the end of the novel a prisoner, Nerzhin, who is to be sent back to camp for insubordination, as one of his last tasks before being transported returns an armful of books to the library of the special prison; some of the books have even been obtained as interloans from free libraries.[47] By returning the books the prisoner once again loses all contacts with liberty.

Cultural Activity in Camps

Library services in prisons for interrogation and isolation were still in practice individual: they were directed toward one prisoner at a time, possibly aimed at keeping each inmate quietly in his or her cell. It was different in the camps. The nature of cultural activity allowed and recommended in the camps was first of all collective. Individual reading was not so much encouraged, because it was not easy to monitor. All this came from the original idea behind the corrective labor camps: collective labor and collective spare time interests educate criminals and transform them

"into worthwhile, fully useful, active, and conscientious builders of socialism."[48] Correctiveness was emphasized as the conclusive distinction between the penal institutions of the Soviet state and the bourgeois prisons.

As a practical tool for education there was in each camp a Culture and Education Section (acronym KVCh); in the 1920s it was called the Political and Education Section (PVCh). Its chief was a lieutenant or a second lieutenant in the forces of the Ministry of Security, who, according to Solzhenitsyn, had the authority of an assistant to the camp commandant.[49] The chief of the KVCh picked his "instructors" from among the prisoners; there should be one instructor to every 250 prisoners.

Only prisoners from "strata close to the proletariat," in practice common criminals, were suitable to be instructors. Responsible (and thus light) jobs should, according to the class theory, be reserved for the "socially close," who still might be corrected. This principle was also written in the law regulating the corrective labor institutions.[50]

Political prisoners, thus "elements alien to the proletariat," who had been sentenced according to the 58th Article of the Soviet Criminal Code, could only occasionally be placed in responsible jobs. In the "special camps" established after 1948 the overwhelming majority of prisoners were political; thus they too had to be given special duties. Boris Björkelund, for example, worked as a "cultural organizer" (*kultorg*) in one of the camp divisions of Ozerlag camp, even though he was temporarily discharged, because it was not considered proper for a foreigner to hold such an important post.[51]

The instructors were freed from the "general work" or heavy norm-bound work (such as tree felling, mining, building, etc.), where most of the prisoners toiled. The tasks of the instructors included, among other things, reading educative articles in newspapers and books to the prisoners. They accompanied the prisoners to work in the morning; they inspected the kitchen (and were well fed); and they maintained surveillance on the prisoners' mood and reported on it. In addition to instructors an *active* for the KVCh was recruited. Members of the *active* took part in the activities of the section. They were, however, not exempted from the general work, but might receive some extra food rations when they had a performance (theater, choir, etc.).[52] Stelmakh mentions a special activists' group of the KVCh around the library helping in book propaganda and advising readers.[53]

The golden age of the Cultural and Education Sections, when the organization described above was really working, was, according to Solzhenitsyn, in the 1930s. The real breakthrough of the corrective labor camp system, after the laboratory phase of Solovetsky, was the construction of the White Sea–Baltic Sea canal or the Stalin Canal, which crowned the first *piatiletka* (1928–1932). The canal was not built in secrecy, but was a

great propaganda venture glorifying corrective labor. To stimulate the canal builders, agit-brigades circulated on the building sites performing inspiring songs and sketches; bands played marches. Artists painted posters and slogans, "camp correspondents" (*lagkor*) edited handwritten wall papers and also published printed newspapers in large editions.[54] The progress of work could be followed on great graphic diagrams.[55]

Cultural activities in camps were not a separate phenomenon, but directly connected to a cultural campaign put into effect everywhere in Soviet society. It was called the Cultural Revolution and its aim was to expedite achievement of the objectives of the first five-year plan, the industrialization of the country and collectivization of agriculture. Among Communist youth, in particular, there was tremendous excitement; they were living through a "time of heroic enthusiasm" as it is depicted in Niemi(-Nuorteva)'s book:

> The grandiose objects of the first "piatiletka," which were said to transform that backward peasant country into a sovereign, self-supporting state, made us young people enthusiastic as settlers, pushing into the wilderness, living in a hut made of spruce twigs, lacking everything, dreaming of a cottage made of mighty logs and of undulating cornfields. We did not worry, though our soups tasted of dishwater and "cow food" alternated with varnish tea—we were building the future. Every factory that was put into operation was our factory, every canal that was built was ours. We thought that we were very rich, each and every one of us. And the future, the future seemed to be marked out as unfolding stairs, all was clear for a hundred years ahead. Surely we had grounds for our optimism![56]

Agit-brigades visited building sites dressed in blue working blouses performing "improvised plays mainly in verse about every event that occurred on the building site—a 'living newspaper.' They were normally rhythmical performances, mass recitation and song. . . ."[57] In the camps "theatricals with politically relevant themes" were adapted for their content to suit the circumstances, as parodied by Solzhenitsyn: "For example: the servicing of the Red Calendar! Or the living newspaper! Or propaganda mock trials! Or oratorios on the theme of the September Plenum of the Central Committee in 1930! Or a musical skit, 'The March of the Articles of the Criminal Code' (Article 58 was a lame Baba-Yaga)!"[58]

Forms of collective cultural activity received the firmest support from the leaders of the camp: the more prisoners engaged in a choir, the better. The chief of the Cultural and Education Section had to have something to report to his superiors. There were also norms on the cultural front. Many camps had a whole theater company composed of professional actors who

happened to become camp inmates, a "serf theater," as Solzhenitsyn puts it.[59] Besides his job as an artist in the fifth camp division of the Inta camp, Björkelund got involved in the management of "theatrical activities, which were quite extensive in proportion to the population of the camp." There were actors as well as circus artists and opera singers, an orchestra, and a ballet company.[60] Even though the performers were preferably gathered from among the professionals, there still were plenty of efforts on an amateur basis. There was a special collection of plays published for theatrical activities in the camps. Its volumes were inscribed "For Use Only inside Gulag!" Solzhenitsyn scornfully assumes that the stupidest and least talented writers had deposited their most loathsome and rubbishy plays there.[61]

Visual arts were a collective art form, too, for their products, posters, slogans, and scenes could be enjoyed by the masses. The artists were very popular in the camps: they even got a separate room. They were exempted from the general work, and they would paint big copies of postcards for the jailers, who paid in cash or arranged other benefits. Sometimes it was even possible to sell paintings outside the camp. In special camps, which were a degree stricter than the ordinary labor camps, the artist had to paint and touch up the numbers on the clothes of prisoners—in principle the prisoners should have been addressed by number, not by name.[62] According to Björkelund the KVChs of the special camps were abolished for a while but were reinstated in November 1952.[63]

Private reading was a little suspect, especially in special camps, yet it was not entirely suppressed. Writing as a hobby was closely watched: all notes had to be given to the camp office.[64]

The Red Corner

The Culture and Education Section was an organizational unit, but physically the cultural and propaganda activities were located in "red corners," multipurpose rooms serving as club, library, and reading room. There were red corners both on free working sites and in work camps. Immediately after the Revolution the red corners were used to spread propaganda and to teach people to read. In the northern areas peopled by nomads, the equivalent of red corners were "red tents";[65] elsewhere there were "red yurts," "red tea houses," "red caravans," "red sleighs," and so forth.[66] In urban and working-class settings the equivalent of the red corner on a larger scale was the "house of culture," which housed a reading room, a library, a theater, and other facilities.

Immediately after the Revolution, the plan of N. K. Krupskaya, the eminent ideologist of Soviet librarianship, was implemented, and the first net-

work of reading huts (*izby-chital'ni*) was rapidly set up in rural areas. The reading huts, whose function was the same as red corners, included a reading room, a notice board, and a small library. They served as clubs and places where literacy was taught; other cultural and educational activities also took place there. The progress of the reading huts did not always go the way Krupskaya had hoped, due to lack of money and personnel. In 1935 she bemoaned that the reading huts had been transformed "into places where villagers play checkers, the balalaika; where one drops in to chat with one's friends."[67]

There are still further instances of parallel development in Soviet librarianship that should be borne in mind, when trying to place the labor camp libraries in their historical context. The libraries of the Red Army, which began to flourish during the Civil War, became to a great extent a pattern for the later development of librarianship. Newspapers were read aloud there and close contact with the men was maintained in other ways.[68] Libraries in the Red Army were tools of adult education and propaganda. After the Civil War cultural workers of the Red Army poured into civilian adult education, bringing with them the methods that had worked so well among the soldiers. Krupskaya, however, had another idea of adult education and complained that "the whole thing became shallow and routine, and popular initiative was stifled."[69] The libraries of trade union branches were also important in the development of Soviet libraries as a whole. Krupskaya tried to integrate these into the rest of the library network, but with little success.

Krupskaya's conception of librarianship was based on the principle of *partiinost':* "the notion that the interests of the Communist Party should have decisive priority in the formulation of policies" (Raymond's definition). Krupskaya, however, included an effort toward multifaceted self-education of the citizen (naturally, in the spirit of communism). This brought her onto a collision course with the advocates of Stalin's policy, who demanded that libraries should be straightforward tools of political campaigning. The Stalinist type of librarianship meant an even more thorough expurgation from libraries of literature that did not conform to the current party line. Libraries should be fashioned into a weapon for the proletariat in the class struggle. The purges were extended even to librarians, even though no one dared to touch Krupskaya, Lenin's widow.[70] The difference between Krupskaya's thoughts and those of the Stalinists, however, is only relative.

The red corners were an important institution in ideological education and societal control. A place for a red corner was usually reserved in the large barracks (50–100 persons) of big building sites.[71] Perhaps the red corner may be taken as an equivalent of the old icon corner.

Evidently the red corners were regarded as an efficient propaganda de-

vice, for they were used in Estonia, when the country was under sovietization. Ants Oras was the secretary of the Estonian Pen Club, when, in 1940, it was suppressed along with many other societies. To compensate, red corners were set up everywhere. Their equipment seems to have been standardized, although, of course, it was richer and more elegant than in the camps:

> The University [of Tartu] had one on the premises of the former Estonian Academy of Sciences. It was a gorgeous establishment, tastefully furnished and richly provided with carpets, paintings, first-rate wireless sets, billiards, card and chess tables. The bookcases, however, displayed only Bolshevik literature. Large portraits of Lenin and Stalin . . . dominated the scene. A hand-written "wall gazette"—an obligatory feature in those days—appealed to us for Bolshevik vigilance and discipline. The quickly improvised "Anti-Religious League" had a special blackboard for its announcements.[72]

The red corners in camps were implemented along the same lines, but naturally the educational and control aspect was more dominant. Apparently it would have been ideal if every barrack had its own red corner,[73] but in practice there was only one complete red corner in each camp or camp division. In many memoirs, there is no mention of a red corner, but only of a club; Solzhenitsyn uses mostly the acronym KVCh. Stelmakh speaks only of libraries without mentioning the red corner.

A Highly Prized Job

The jobs in the Culture and Education Section were greatly desired among the prisoners, because in them one was safe from the exhausting "general work." Usually prisoners sentenced for nonpolitical crimes (criminals) got these jobs, because they were socially close to the proletariat. Solzhenitsyn describes those jobs as "trusty's cozy spots" reserved for those who "sponge on the Culture and Education Section."[74] Taisto Huuskonen, who spent three years in a camp during the late 1940s, includes in the elite of the camp "brigadiers" (foremen), stock-keepers, laundry managers, master tailors, shoemakers, and the librarian: "They kept apart from the other prisoners, they even lived in a separate barrack. In their spare time this aristocracy strolled in the alleys of the camp, smoked good cigarettes, and discussed their important affairs."[75] According to Solzhenitsyn, the librarian's post in the KVCh was "a golden job," possible only if the prisoner sold his soul to the "godfather," that is, served as

an informer to the chief of the political section of the camp.[76] Informers were a great danger in the KVCh, where they were always eavesdropping on prisoners in the deceptively "free" atmosphere.[77] Particularly in the 1950s prisoners might kill a person suspected of being an informer. Solzhenitsyn relates an incident in which a librarian of the camp's KVCh was stabbed as an informer.[78]

Despite the informers and lack of spare time, the KVCh was one of the really few bright spots in the camp life. Solzhenitsyn calls it "the sooty flame of the KVCh," which in spite of its insignificance attracts inmates:

> These visits to the KVCh brought the soul a mite of refreshment in imperceptible and unobvious ways. Even though those who stopped by were altogether the same sort of hungry zeks as the ones who stayed sitting on their brigade multiple bunks, here they didn't talk about rations, nor of portions of cereal, nor about norms. People here didn't talk about the things that made up camp life, and therein lay a protest of the heart and some relaxation for the mind. Here they talked about some kind of fabulous past which just could not have existed for these gray, famished, bedraggled people. . . .
>
> It was as if someone, when an evil spirit was raging, had drawn on the ground a weakly gleaming and foggily flickering circle—and it was just about to go out, but as long as it hadn't you could at least imagine that within that circle, for those half-hours, you were not in the power of the evil force.
>
> Yes, and then, too, someone would sometimes be plucking at a guitar. Someone would be softly singing—a song that was not at all the kind permitted on the stage. And something would stir within you: Life . . . exists! It exists! And, looking happily around you, you, too, would want to express something to someone.[79]

Collections in the Camp Libraries

There are not many data in the memoirs about the size and content of the collections in camp libraries. A selective catalog existed for the czarist prison libraries,[80] but I am not aware of an equivalent in the Soviet era. As is evident from the above quotation from Solzhenitsyn, library services were not really one of the most important issues of the KVCh. The size and quality of the collection were compatible with that fact. When he took up the post of cultural organizer in the KVCh of the 43rd camp division of the Ozerlag camp—the camps were often huge, with tens of camp divisions—Björkelund received "50-odd books and brochures."[81] Normally there were hundreds or thousands of prisoners in each camp divi-

sion, which means that with that kind of collection the supply of literature was virtually nonexistent. Under the most horrible circumstances (e.g., in Kolyma or Vorkuta), there were evidently no books at all. Just after a narrow escape from starvation, Eugenia Ginzburg got to read a schoolbook from a criminal, but there is no mention of a library. Aino Kuusinen was in Vorkuta and says nothing about libraries. After being removed to Potma (in Mordva) into a kind of convalescent home, she gives a cry of delight: "We even had a library at our disposal!"[82]

Camps were self-supporting, which meant that the maintenance (guards, food, accommodations, etc.) of the camp was to be paid for by the work of the prisoners. It follows that, in principle, the camps should have paid for their library's acquisitions. In the 5th camp division of the Ozerlag in 1952, a charge was collected from the pay due to prisoners "to cover food, accommodation, light, entertainment, books, and clothes."[83] Central events in Solzhenitsyn's *The First Circle* take place in a "special prison" of Mavrino on the outskirts of Moscow, a technological research establishment employing highly qualified political prisoners. A novel cannot be considered a reliable source of historical facts, but even so it gives a vivid picture of a library for the prisoners and how it was set up:

> The prisoners could, it was true, make use of the prison library. But the Mavrino administration had no funds to buy books or bookshelves. All that happened was that Rubin [a prisoner] was nominated prison librarian . . . , and one day he was given a medley of a hundred-odd tattered volumes in which books like Turgenev's *Mumu*, Stasov's *Letter*, and Mommsen's *History of Rome* were all mixed together, and was ordered to circulate them among the prisoners.[84]

Stelmakh names Chekhov, Gogol, Gorky, and Korolenko as the most popular classic writers and Furmanov, Sholokhov, Fadeev, Serafimovich, Lavrenev, and Novikov-Priboi as the most popular Soviet authors.[85] It is safe to assume that there was a fair amount of political literature or politically biased fiction by trusted authors (such as Demyan Bedny) in the collection.

An impression of the red corners' choice of material comes through in narrated incidents, when the library gave concrete help to prisoners. Parvilahti relates how he prepared for an attempted escape in Potma's Temnikovsky camp: "From the case of an old pocket-watch I produced a fairly accurate compass, and in the camp's 'Red corner' during the winter I had studied the literature dealing with agriculture and forestry and from the statistical maps in these pamphlets, as well as from various schoolbooks, I had managed to piece together an approximate map of the district."[86]

Solzhenitsyn again relates how "the committed escaper" Georgi P.

Tenno prepared for an escape. He looked through all material in the KVCh and planned escape routes with the help of a rather poor map of Kazakhstan "which the godfather had carelessly left around." On another occasion Tenno prepared an escape by reading the local newspaper, "trying to memorize the names of districts, state farms, collective farms, farm chairmen, Party secretaries, shock workers of all kinds."[87]

In an ordinary corrective labor camp a prisoner was entitled to some books of his or her own, but, in the even more severe special camps (not to be confused with special prisons), an urge for control and self-subsistence taken to its limits sometimes led to the confiscation of prisoners' own books:

> In Spassk they took away books belonging to a prisoner on admission. In our camp we were allowed to keep one or two at first, but one day a wise decree was issued: all books belonging to prisoners must be registered with the Culture and Education Section, where the words "Steplag, Camp Division No. _____" would be stamped on the title page. Henceforward all unstamped books would be confiscated as illegal, while stamped books would be considered the property of the library, not that of their former owners.[88]

Apparently, nonpolitical prisoners had a legal right to subscribe to newspapers published in the Soviet Union. After making a complaint to a higher authority, Huuskonen was granted permission to subscribe to a newspaper. The letter of reply actually assured him that other prisoners also had the right to do so.[89] It is true he was in a camp intended only for those serving sentences of less than three years. Conditions were therefore easier than in real camps. Those who had been sentenced under the political 58th article had few rights, although practice seems to have varied even here. Ginzburg states that the Kolyma prisoners had no access to recent newspapers. The instructors of the KVCh might read aloud extracts from newspapers half a year old, or some particularly favorably disposed official might produce "some scraps of information from recent newspapers." It is ironic that Stelmakh makes a case of the czarist practice, according to which the prisoners were only allowed to read newspapers of the preceding year.[90] Later, in the late 1940s and 1950s, it seems that even camps with political prisoners received recent newspapers.

Besides transmitting news, newspapers had another important function:

> "Kultorg" even took care of the distribution of newspapers. He distributed the newspapers received by the camp to the barracks, and after they had been read, they were at his disposal. He gave them as payment for different sorts of services at the Culture and Ed-

> ucation Section, and even gave them to the best work teams. For those unacquainted with the fact, it must be pointed out that in the Soviet Union the material of newspapers was used to roll *makhorka* cigarettes and since the camp was short of everything, newspapers had real value.[91]

According to N. N. Krasnov, a prisoner might get a year-old newspaper to roll cigarettes, but care had to be taken not to roll a picture of Stalin into the cigarette. This was difficult since there were so many of those in the paper.[92] The prisoners' cigarette paper hunt reached, as Solzhenitsyn recalls, even the library: "what the camp library had was Gorky and even then pages had been torn out to roll smokes."[93] Furthermore, he says that at its stalest the function of the KVCh was reduced to "bind[ing] newspapers in a file and hid[ing] them from the zeks so they couldn't use them for cigarette paper."[94] Even Stelmakh admits with resignation the acts of vandalism committed against the collections of libraries.[95]

Oral Literature

Books and libraries naturally are not the only manifestations of literary culture. The common criminals, who were often in the majority in the corrective labor camps, were not greatly interested in reading and literature. However, this does not mean that they did not need fiction. They craved oral story-telling. Without exception, all of the memoirists have interesting things to say about this—for example, Ginzburg:

> The real criminals were in the minority in our ward and behaved much better than on the *Dzhurma* [a ship used to transport prisoners to Kolyma]. The atmosphere of the place put them in a sentimental mood, and in the evenings they would tell us their life stories, claiming that their father was a judge or a general, as the case might be, and telling tall tales of romance and crime; they revealed a certain poverty of imagination. They kept asking us either to "tell them a story of some book or other" or to recite Yesenin's poems.[96]

Mrs. Ginzburg was well suited for this kind of activity: she was well versed in literature, both prose and poetry, and, judging from her memoirs, she appears to have been partly living in the worlds of the books she had read: she always had a parallel from a poem, novel, or play in store for each person and event.

The ordinary criminals usually terrorized the political prisoners without the guards interfering. Murderers and thieves were deliberately placed

with political prisoners. For different reasons some political prisoners might get on good terms with the criminals. They had at all costs to maintain good relations, so that other political prisoners would be spared harassment. Niemi(-Nuorteva) tells of a man who, on a month-long transport from one camp to another, was stuck with ten other political prisoners in the company of criminals:

> Right from the start the criminals had taken a hostile attitude. By chance my acquaintance had come to recite the contents of a movie, after which he discovered he had won the favor of his dangerous fellow travelers. He was therefore compelled to keep on describing movies like Scheherazade in the Arabian Nights. Thus he bought goodwill for the whole group of political prisoners.
>
> —Of these films I had really seen only three. I suffer from an absolute horror of movies, but I think I now could try the work of a script writer, smiled the narrator.[97]

From A. I. Vyshinsky (ed.), Ot tiurem k vospitatel'nym uchrezhdeniam *(Moscow, 1934); unnumbered page between 160 and 161. The text reads: "Bielorussian Soviet Socialist Republic. A factory–work colony in Minsk. The reading library for those deprived of freedom."* (Courtesy Helsinki University Library, Slavonic Library)

The Meaning of Books and Libraries

The obsessive efforts to saturate fiction with the spirit of politically biased socialist realism led to a decay in the creative culture of the Soviet Union. Solzhenitsyn thinks that it was the prose that suffered most: "From

the thirties on, everything that is called our prose is merely the foam from a lake which has vanished underground. It is foam and not prose because it detached itself from everything that was fundamental in those decades. The best of the writers suppressed the best within themselves and turned their back on truth—and only that way did they and their books survive."[98] Those who did not submit went to camps or died on the front.

The attempt to lower the proportion of fiction in the collections of libraries in favor of political and productive-technological literature was part of this decay of creativity. It was an ill-directed effort to hasten the industrialization of the Soviet Union. As noted earlier, this attempt had little effect on the tastes of readers. When contemporary writers were not interesting enough, the importance of national classics and foreign translations increased. Yet in the long run the diminishing supply of artistic literature had its harmful effects. It has been argued, and indeed by Soviet scholars, that the lack of artistic literature was reflected "in the aesthetic education of workers, on the formation of their feelings of beauty, of their tastes, and this was not so harmless as it seemed to certain cultural personnel at that time." If the appreciation of beauty does not develop, there will be damage to the particular individual but possibly even more to those people with whom he or she has to interact.[99]

Ordinary citizens and inmates of the camps dealt with this problem in their own way. Literature and the arts as preservers of the will to live, the criminals' hunger for oral fiction, and the widespread mythology of the prisoners are all features that tell us something very profound about the era of Stalinism.

It has been said that the influence of the Culture and Education Sections was negligible, but that their existence was evidence that the aim of the forced labor camps was not "the annihilation of the enemies of the régime, as in Nazi Germany, but their conversion to the new religion."[100] All do not agree with this last point, however. The original object of camp libraries—political education—was not realized, because for millions of prisoners it had no meaning. Individual prisoners were sometimes able to benefit from the libraries. Prison libraries seem to have been more useful than those of the camps, because they were better stocked and the prisoners had time to read, whereas in camps libraries were poor and prisoners had very little time or energy to read.

Under circumstances where the supply of literature, news, and any other positive impulses was accidental, many passing rumors and persistent myths emerged among the prisoner population. According to a false tradition among the prisoners, Fanny (Fanya or even Dora) Kaplan, who attempted to murder Lenin in 1918, was not executed right away as was officially announced, but her sentence was commuted to life imprisonment. Even the prison libraries are intertwined in this myth. "There were

even many witnesses to be found who had been with her on prisoner transports or had received books from the Butyrki Prison library from her," says Solzhenitsyn. Björkelund, who was languishing in Butyrki in 1945, mentions the well-stocked library of the prison, "which at one time had been taken care of by Dora Kaplan, who had tried to murder Lenin." He does not even present any doubts, which shows that the story was recounted to him as true. Solzhenitsyn asks "why the [prisoners] needed this nonsensical myth?" And he suggests an answer: "Only as an extreme case of inordinate magnanimity in which they wanted to believe. They then in their mind's eye could apply it to themselves."[101] When you cannot believe in justice, you can at least dream of magnanimity. Perhaps a prisoner had a similar unexpected feeling of happiness, when he or she in the endless misery of a prison or a camp received a book, an open door in a closed world.

Notes

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I have, for the convenience of readers, inserted translations of Finnish titles in brackets; this does not necessarily mean that the items have been published in English translation, unless specified.

1. V. Nabokov, *Glory* [1931–1932], English translation by Dmitri Nabokov in collaboration with V. Nabokov (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1971), p. 140; in Russian: V. Nabokov, *Podvig* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1974), p. 162.

2. Examples from other hells: Kornelia Richter, "Bibliotheksarbeit im Ghetto Theresienstadt," *Zentralblatt für Bibliothekswesen* 102 (1988): 97–103; Torsten Seela, "Der Katalog der Häftlinge-Bücherei des KZ Buchenwald," *Zentralblatt für Bibliothekswesen* 102 (1988): 104–107; Marja Keskitalo, "Yleissivistystä vai sätkäpaperia? Vankileirikirjastot 1918" [General Enlightenment or Cigarette Paper? Libraries in Prison Camps after the Finnish Civil War in 1918], *Kirjastotiede ja informatiikka* 5 (1986): 63–70.

3. GULAG = Glavnoe Upravlenie LAGerei [Chief Administration of Corrective Labor Camps].

4. Aleksandr I. Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago, 1918–1956: An Experiment in Literary Investigation* [Russian original: *Arkhipelag Gulag, 1918–1956*]: vol. 1, translated from the Russian by Thomas P. Whitney (New York: Harper and Row, 1973) [*Gulag* 1]; vol. 2, translated from the Russian by Thomas P. Whitney (New York: Harper and Row, 1975) [*Gulag* 2]; vol. 3, translated from the Russian by Harry Willetts (New York: Harper and Row, 1979) [*Gulag* 3].

5. E.g., Robert Conquest, *Kolyma: The Arctic Death Camps* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 165 (refers to the experiences of Varlaam Shalamov), and Eugenia Ginzburg, *Journey into the Whirlwind* [Russian original: *Krutoj Marshrut*], translated by Paul Stevenson and Max Hayward (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1967), pp. 198–199, 221.

6. Irja Niemi [pseudonym of Kerttu Nuorteva], *Neuvostokasvatti: Neuvostoliiton*

ääripiirteitä minä-muotoon kuvattuina [Born and Raised with the Soviets: Contours of the Soviet Union Described in the First Person Singular] (Helsinki: Suomen kirja, 1944). On Kerttu Nuorteva's activity in Finland, see the biography of her father: Auvo Kostiainen, *Santeri Nuorteva: Kansainvälinen kommunisti* [Santeri Nuorteva: An International Communist] (Helsinki: Otava, 1983). After the war Kerttu Nuorteva was given an additional ten-year camp sentence in the Soviet Union.

7. Unto Parvilahti, *Berijan tarhat: Havaintoja ja muistikuvia Neuvostoliitosta vuosilta 1945–1954* (Helsinki: Otava, 1957), published in England as *Beria's Gardens: Ten Years' Captivity in Russia and Siberia*, translated from the Finnish by Alan Blair (London: Hutchinson, 1959): references are to the English edition; Boris Björkelund, *Stalinille menetetyt vuoteni: Elämäni vaiheet 1945–1955* [The Years I Lost to Stalin: Events of My Life, 1945–1955] (Porvoo: WSOY, 1966).

8. It has been estimated that at any time during the years 1929–1953 there were approximately 8.8 million prisoners and that forced labor and the collectivization of agriculture caused over 20 million deaths (see Steven Rosenfielde, "Incriminating Evidence: Excess Deaths and Forced Labour under Stalin: A Final Reply to Critics," *Soviet Studies* 39 [1987]: 292–313). Because there were millions of prisoners—Solzhenitsyn compares their number to the population of a small country, say Greece or Sweden—one would be inclined to think that the prisoners served their sentence where they were first put. The authorities did not, however, allow the prisoners to spend their entire term in one camp; they were transported from one place to another seemingly at random but according to a plan. Whenever they met, the prisoners asked news of the people they knew; it is almost certain that after a while they found some common acquaintances (*Gulag* 1, pp. 595–597).

It is still quite a surprise to find that both Solzhenitsyn and Parvilahti, who apparently did not meet each other, name the same person, a major-general of the Air Force, whose name Solzhenitsyn writes as Belyayev and Parvilahti as Belayev. Solzhenitsyn met him in the Kaluga Gates camp in Moscow. What was striking in Belyayev was his haughtiness and his contempt of the camp food; every day his wife brought him private food rations (*Gulag* 2, pp. 268–273). Solzhenitsyn lost touch with Belyayev: "He was sent to Potma. There were no thermos jugs with homemade soup there. . . . And half a year later we heard rumours that he had sunk very low in Potma, that he was distributing gruel so as to get a sip now and then" (*Gulag* 2, p. 286). It was in Potma in early spring of 1946 that Parvilahti met Belyayev/Belayev, but his situation was not at all as bad as Solzhenitsyn had heard: "Within a few days he had also fixed up a good job for himself. He was made camp sanitary inspector. . . . This work took him an hour a day at the outside and in other respects too he lived very well on the parcels he got from his family" (Parvilahti, *Berijan tarhat*, p. 101).

9. *Ot tiurem k vospitatel'nym uchrezhdeniam*, ed. A. I. Vyshinsky (Moscow: Sovetskoe Zakonodatel'stvo, 1934), pp. 162–172.

10. D. Stelmakh, "Bibliotechnaia rabota v ispravitel'no-trudovyh uchrezhdeniah SSR," in *Ot tiurem k vospitatel'nym uchrezhdeniam*, pp. 162–172.

11. Ibid., pp. 162–163.

12. Ibid., pp. 163–164; Stelmakh refers to "Bibliotechnaia instruktsia ITU RSFSR 1932 g."

13. Ibid., p. 164.

14. Ibid.

15. E.g., *Gulag* 1, pp. 456–459. On the political prisoners' opportunities to read and write in czarist times, see also Franco Venturi, *Roots of Revolution: A History*

of the Populist and Socialist Movements in Nineteenth Century Russia (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1960), p. 178, 264, 291, 387, 501.

16. Väinö F. Lindén, *Shpalernajasta talvisotaan: Sotilaslääkäri muistelee* [From Shpalernaya to the Winter War: Memoirs of an Army Surgeon] (Helsinki: Tammi, 1972), p. 52.

17. E.g., Niemi, *Neuvostokasvatti*, pp. 358–359: at its worst 107 inmates in a cell made for 12 persons.

18. *Gulag* 1, p. 598.

19. Ibid., p. 483.

20. Ginzburg, *Journey*, p. 233.

21. Ibid., p. 96; Niemi, *Neuvostokasvatti*, pp. 162, 210, 278; Björkelund, *Stalinille menetetyt vuoteni*, p. 173.

22. Ginzburg, *Journey*, p. 232; also Niemi, *Neuvostokasvatti*, p. 255: bits of newspaper from a waste box.

23. Ginzburg, *Journey*, pp. 212–213; *Gulag* 1, p. 204.

24. Parvilahti, *Berijan tarhat*, p. 42. Lubyanka and Le Fort or Lefortova are both in Moscow. Björkelund tells that with the permission of the interrogator he got something to read even in Le Fort (Björkelund, *Stalinille menetetyt vuoteni*, p. 209).

25. *Gulag* 1, pp. 159, 214.

26. Stelmakh, "Bibliotechnaia rabota," pp. 164, 166.

27. John Barber, "Working-Class Culture and Political Culture in the 1930's," in *The Culture of the Stalin Period*, ed. Hans Günther, pp. 3–14 (London: Macmillan, 1990), p. 8; Stelmakh, "Bibliotechnaia rabota," pp. 166, 167, 170, 172.

28. Paradoxically, the same applies to the library of the Buchenwald Concentration Camp; see Seela, "Der Katalog," p. 106.

29. *Gulag* 1, pp. 215–216.

30. Parvilahti, *Berijan tarhat*, p. 137.

31. Yaroslavl: Ginzburg, *Journey*, p. 205; Butyrki: Ginzburg, *Journey*, p. 152; Vladimir: Parvilahti, *Berijan tarhat*, p. 159, *Gulag* 1, p. 483; Lubyanka: Parvilahti, *Berijan tarhat*, p. 42.

32. E.g., *Gulag* 1, p. 203.

33. Stelmakh, "Bibliotechnaia rabota," pp. 164, 168.

34. O. S. Tshubarian, *Yleinen kirjastotiede* [General Library Science; translated into Finnish from the Russian original: *Obshchee bibliotekovedenie* by Riitta Siunala and Maria Wiman] (Helsinki: Suomen kirjastoseura, 1979), p. 451.

35. Ginzburg, *Journey*, pp. 200–201.

36. E.g., *Gulag* 1, pp. 214, 484; Parvilahti, *Berijan tarhat*, p. 137.

37. *Gulag* 1, p. 215.

38. For Vladimir, see ibid., p. 353.

39. Ginzburg, *Journey*, p. 204.

40. *Gulag* 1, p. 483.

41. Ibid., p. 215; Björkelund, *Stalinille menetetyt vuoteni*, p. 203.

42. *Gulag* 1, p. 215; Ginzburg, *Journey*, p. 252.

43. E.g., in Vladimir: *Gulag* 1, p. 480.

44. Ginzburg, *Journey*, pp. 207–208.

45. Björkelund, *Stalinille menetetyt vuoteni*, p. 201.

46. *Gulag* 1, p. 215.

47. A. Solzhenitsyn, *The First Circle* [Russian original: *V pervom krugu*], translated from the Russian by Max Hayward, Manya Harari, and Michael Glenny (London: Collins Harvill, 1988), pp. 567–568. While he worked as a mathemati-

cian in a special prison, Solzhenitsyn was also librarian there and transmitted interloans, e.g., from the Lenin Library (*Gulag* 2, p. 479).

48. *Gulag* 2, p. 104. Solzhenitsyn is citing Averbakh's work *Ot prestuplenia k trudu* [From Crime to Work].

49. Jacques Rossi, *Spravochnik po GULagu* (London: London Overseas Publications, 1987), pp. 152–153; *Gulag* 2, p. 469.

50. The decree is summarized in *Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Forced Labour*, suppl. 13 of the 16th Session of the Econ. and Soc. Council & no. 36 in the Studies and Reports (New Series) of the ILO (Geneva: UN Ecosoc E/AC.36/L.1–3, 1953), pp. 85–86.

51. Björkelund, *Stalinille menetetyt vuoteni*, pp. 309–313, 319–326.

52. *Gulag* 2, p. 469.

53. Stelmakh, "Bibliotechnaia rabota," p. 168.

54. Cf. *rabkor* (worker correspondent), *sel'kor* (peasant correspondent), and *voenkor* (soldier correspondent): see p. 197 in Katerina Clark, "Little Heroes and Big Deeds: Literature Responds to the First Five-Year Plan," in *Cultural Revolution in Russia 1928–1931*, ed. P. Fitzpatrick, pp. 189–206 (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1978).

55. On the golden age of cultural activities in camps, see *Gulag* 2, pp. 469–475; on the construction of the White Sea–Baltic Sea Canal, see *Gulag* 2, pp. 80–100.

56. Niemi, *Neuvostokasvatti*, p. 71.

57. Ibid., p. 90.

58. *Gulag* 2, p. 471.

59. Ibid., p. 497.

60. Björkelund, *Stalinille menetetyt vuoteni*, p. 222.

61. *Gulag* 2, p. 494.

62. On artists, see *Gulag* 2, pp. 486–487, 3, pp. 66–67; Björkelund, *Stalinille menetetyt vuoteni*, pp. 124–126, 130–131, 222, 229.

63. Björkelund, *Stalinille menetetyt vuoteni*, p. 289.

64. On difficulties of writing, see *Gulag* 3, pp. 98–108.

65. E. P. Ponomareva, "Library Services for the Peoples of the Far North of the USSR," *UNESCO Journal of Information Science, Librarianship and Archives* 1 (1979): 252–255.

66. See, e.g., *Kulturno-prosvetitel'naia rabota v SSSR*, ed. T. A. Remizova (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 1974), pp. 88–89.

67. Boris Raymond, *Krupskaia and Soviet Librarianship, 1917–1939* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1979), pp. 54–56, 84–85, 144.

68. Ibid., pp. 56–58.

69. Krupskaya, cited in Sheila Fitzpatrick, "The Civil War as a Formative Experience," in *Bolshevik Culture: Experiment and Order in the Russian Revolution*, ed. A. Gleason, P. Kenez, and R. Stites (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), pp. 57–76. Fitzpatrick's reference is to *Sovetskaia Pedagogika* 1961 (no. 11): 144–145.

70. Raymond, *Krupskaia*, pp. 2, 123–131; on purges, see also Barber, "Working-Class Culture," p. 7.

71. Auvo Kostiainen, *Loikkarit: Suuren lamakauden laiton siirtolaisuus Neuvostoliittoon* [The Defectors: The Illegal Emigration to the Soviet Union during the Great Depression] (Helsinki: Otava, 1987), pp. 144, 148.

72. Ants Oras, *Baltic Eclipse* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1948), pp. 91–92.

73. Allusions: Niemi, *Neuvostokasvatti*, p. 318; *Gulag* 2, p. 471.

74. *Gulag* 3, pp. 69, 99.

75. Taisto Huuskonen, *Laps Suomen* [The Child of Finland] (Porvoo: WSOY, 1979), p. 95.
76. *Gulag* 2, p. 348.
77. Ibid., p. 484.
78. *Gulag* 3, p. 277. Even Björkelund mentions the threat to the life of an informer: Björkelund, *Stalinille menetetyt vuoteni*, p. 131.
79. *Gulag* 2, pp. 483–484.
80. Stelmakh, "Bibliotechnaia rabota," p. 162.
81. Björkelund, *Stalinille menetetyt vuoteni*, p. 310.
82. Ginzburg, *Journey*, p. 416; Aino Kuusinen, *Der Gott stürzt seine Engel* (Vienna: Fritz Molden, 1972), p. 288.
83. Björkelund, *Stalinille menetetyt vuoteni*, p. 307.
84. Solzhenitsyn, *The First Circle*, p. 295.
85. Stelmakh, "Bibliotechnaia rabota," p. 170. Stelmakh makes no distinction between prison and camp libraries.
86. Parvilahti, *Berijan tarhat*, p. 130.
87. *Gulag* 3, pp. 141, 149.
88. Ibid., p. 66.
89. Huuskonen, *Laps Suomen*, pp. 108–109.
90. Eugenia Ginzburg, *Within the Whirlwind* (London: Collins and Harvill Press, 1981), pp. 24–25; Stelmakh, "Bibliotechnaia rabota," p. 163.
91. Björkelund, *Stalinille menetetyt vuoteni*, p. 321.
92. N. N. Krasnov, *The Hidden Russia: My Ten Years as a Slave Laborer* (New York: Henry Holt, 1960), p. 190.
93. *Gulag* 2, p. 494.
94. Ibid., p. 477.
95. Stelmakh, "Bibliotechnaia rabota," p. 171.
96. Ginzburg, *Journey*, pp. 364–365.
97. Niemi, *Neuvostokasvatti*, p. 313.
98. *Gulag* 2, p. 489.
99. Barber, "Working-Class Culture," p. 8; his reference is to V. P. Butorin and P. F. Marchenko, "Biblioteki zapadnoi Sibirii v period stroitel'stva sotsializma i prosveshchenie rabochikh (1920–1937 gg.)," in *Rabochii klass Sibirii v period stroitel'stva sotsializma (Materialy k 'Istorii rabochego klassa Sibirii')* (Novosibirsk, 1975), p. 158.
100. S. Swianiewicz, *Forced Labour and Economic Development: An Enquiry into the Experience of Soviet Industrialization* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 18.
101. *Gulag* 2, p. 525; Björkelund, *Stalinille menetetyt vuoteni*, p. 27.