Soviet Political Repression: Three 'Victim' Case Studies

Melanie Ilic
University of Gloucestershire
and
CREES, The University of Birmingham
milic@glos.ac.uk

and

Christopher Joyce
CREES, The University of Birmingham
sovseb@postmaster.co.uk

PERSA Working Paper No. 41

THE UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK
Department of Economics

Political Economy Research in Soviet Archives

Version: 18 February 2005

Available from www.warwick.ac.uk/go/persa.

Soviet Political Repression: Three 'Victim' Case Studies

Abstract:

This paper offers three 'victim studies' of political repression in the Soviet Union under Stalin. They form part of a more extensive study that examines the regional and sectoral dimensions of the purges in the 1930s.

Contents:

Remembering the Victims of Political Repression: the Purges in Mordoviya[1]

Melanie Ilič and Christopher Joyce

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, there has been a renewal of interest in historical research and a significant growth in publication about the purges, and Stalinist political repression more broadly, both in Russia and in the west. In recent years, the focus of some of this research has moved away from the 'high politics' of the Stalinist leadership in Moscow and the relationship between the central state authorities and regional party bosses.[2] Aided by the publication of extensive listings of the names of those caught up in the whirlwind of political repression in the 1930s in the various 'books of martyrs', we are now able to examine more closely the extent and impact of the terror in its various forms in different regions of the Soviet Union, and to offer a more detailed analysis of the social background of its victims.

Even here, though, published research has so far concentrated on what may be considered to have been the more important political and economic regions of the Soviet Union, most notably Moscow and Leningrad, where, from a western perspective, the terror was more easily observed. We remain comparatively less well informed about the extent and impact of political repression in other regions of the country.[3] This article seeks to redress this imbalance by offering a preliminary analysis of political repression in the Republic of Mordoviya.

Mordoviya ASSR:

Administrative Status: The republic of Mordoviya lies to the south-east of Moscow in the Central Volga Region. Its capital, Saransk, located in the eastern half of the republic, is approximately 500 kilometres from Moscow (642 kilometres by rail, 850 kilometres by road), roughly the same distance from the centre of power as Voronezh, Mogilev and Novgorod. Mordova *okrug*, as an administrative region, was created on

[1] This paper was prepared with the financial support of grant no. R 000239543 from the British Economic and Social Research Council.

[2] For recent publications on political repression and the purges, see, for example: J. Arch Getty and O. V. Naumov, *The Road to Terror: Stalin and the Self-Destruction of the Bolsheviks, 1932-1939* (Yale, 1999), which provides a useful collection of documents; B. McLoughlin and K. McDermott (eds), *Stalin's Terror: High Politics and Mass Repression in the Soviet Union* (Basingstoke, 2003), which includes sections on the politics or repression, the role of the NKVD and 'victim studies'; and S. Wheatcroft, 'Towards Explaining the Changing Levels of Stalinist Repression in the 1930s: Mass Killings', in S. Wheatcroft (ed.), *Challenging Traditional Views of Russian History* (Basingstoke, 2002) pp. 112-46; M. Yunge (Junge) and R. Binner, *Kak terror stal 'bol'shim': sekretnyi prikaz no. 00447 i tekhnologiya ego ispolneniya* (Moscow, 2003).

[3] Recent regional studies include: N. Baron, 'Production and Terror: the Operation of the Karelian Gulag, 1933-1939', *Cahiers du Monde russe*, no. 1, vol. 43, 2002, pp. 139-80; J. R. Harris, 'The Purging of Local Cliques in the Urals Region, 1936-7', in S. Fitzpatrick (ed.), *Stalinism: New Directions* (London, 2000) ch. 9; O. Hlevnjuk, 'Les mecanismes de la "Grande Terreur" des annees 1937-1938 au Turkmenistan', *Cahiers du Monde russe,* no. 1-2, vol. 39, 1998, pp. 197-208; R. T. Manning, 'The Great Purges in a Rural District: Belyi Raion Revisited', in J. A. Getty and R. T. Manning (eds), *Stalinist Terror: New Perspectives* (Cambridge, 1993).

16 July 1928 as part of the newly-established Sredne-Volzhskaya oblast' (Central Volga Region) and was intended to form the homeland for the Mordvin ethnic group.[4] As part of the trend for the creation of nationality-based administrative-territorial regions, which spread across the Soviet Union during the period from 1930 to 1934, the Mordova *okrug* was upgraded on 10 January 1930 to become the Mordovskaya avtonomnaya oblast' (Mordovian Autonomous Region).[5] The Mordova autonomous oblast' became the Mordovian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (MASSR) on 20 December 1934.[6]

Population profile: According to census data, the MASSR was an overwhelmingly rural autonomous republic, with less than seven per cent of its population living in urban areas even at the end of the 1930s.[7] The major ethnic groups in Mordoviya ASSR in the 1930s were Russians (60 per cent), Mordvins (34 per cent) and Tartars (4 per cent).[8]

The Gulag in Mordoviya: During the 1930s the Mordovian penal system was dominated by a single camp structure, Temlag, which was created in 1931. It remained an important camp until the dissolution of the Gulag network in 1960.[9] Temlag's population fluctuated between 15,000 and 30,000 inmates. It was spread across much of western Mordoviya, in particular Temnikovskii and Zubovo-

---

[4] This oblast' was an amalgamation of the following guberniya: Samara, Ul'yanovsk, Penza, Orenburg and part of Pravoberezh'ya Saratov. This new territory was subdivided into the following *okrugi*: Buguruslansk, Buzuluksk, Kuznetsk, Mordova, Orenburg, Penza, Samara and Syzransk (the latter was subsequently downgraded to a raion in the summer of 1930). A. P. Kopylov , *Istoriya industrializatsiya srednego povolzh'ya, 1926-1941gg.: dokumenty i materialy* (Kuibyshev, 1973) p. 8.

[5] M. S. Bukin, *Obrazovanie i razvitie mordovskoi avtonomnoi oblasti (1930-1934)* (Saransk, 1980) pp. 3, 7. The upgrading of the region was accompanied by some redistribution of territory. Several centres of population, which primarily contained ethnic Russians, were transferred to Ryazan' *okrug* (Moscow oblast'), Arzamsk *okrug* (Nizhegorod *krai*) and Penza *okrug*. In return, the Mordova autonomous oblast' was given parts of the Poretskoe and Alatyr' raiony (Chuvash ASSR), Ichkalovsk, Bolshe-Boldino, Teplo-Stansk and Naruksovsk raiony (Arzamas okrug – Nizhegorod krai). See L. G. Filatov, 'Nachalo massovogo kolkhoznogo dvizheniya i likvidatsiya kulachestva kak klassa', p. 166, in Yu. S. Kukushkin (ed.), *Istoriya sovetskogo krest'yanstva Mordovii. Ch. 1, 1917-1937* (Saransk, 1987) pp. 162-75.

[6] Filatov, 'Nachalo massovogo kolkhoznogo dvizheniya', p. 164. With this renaming of administrative regions, MASSR was now surrounded by Arzamas oblast' (to the north), Ul'yanovsk oblast' and Chuvash ASSR (to the east), Penza oblast' (to the south) and Ryazan' oblast' (to the west). *Bol'shaya sovetskaya entsikolpediya*, tom 28 (Moscow, 1954) p. 286 (hereafter BSE).

[7] *Vsesoyuznaya perepis' naseleniya 1939 goda: osnovnye itogi* (Moscow, 1992) p. 25 (hereafter 1939 Census).

[8] *Vsesoyuznaya perepis' naseleniya 1937g.: kratkie itogi* (Moscow, 1991) p. 90 (hereafter 1937 Census); and 1939 Census, p. 67. Small numbers of Ukrainians, Belorussians and 'other' ethnic groups are also recorded in the returns.

[9] In 1948, Temlag was reorganised. It became a Special Camp (Osoblag) and was renamed Dubrovlag. M. B. Smirnov, *Sistema ispravitel'no-trudovykh lagerei v SSSR, 1923-1960* (Moscow, 1998) pp. 478-9.

Polyanskii *raiony*. Pot'ma, the transit women's camp for wives and relatives of enemies of the Motherland, formed part of the Temlag network. Throughout the 1930s Temlag was an important supplier of firewood to Moscow, providing 30 per cent of all of the capital's firewood in 1934. Prisoners were also employed in various manufacturing and agricultural activities and were involved in the construction of the second track of the Ryazan'-Pot'ma railway and the Unzhe-Vetluzhskaya branch line.[10] A locally-administered camp system was established by the Mordovian NKVD in 1937, but the number of prisoners never exceeded 4050, and its activities were continually overshadowed by the presence of Temlag.[11]

The Mordoviya *Pamyat'*:

This 'victim study' of Mordoviya is based on *Pamyat': zhertvy politicheskikh repressii* (Saransk, 2000), from which we have taken the title of this study. The printed handbook was compiled from the data accumulated during the processes of rehabilitation conducted in Mordoviya from 1989 to 1999, and was edited by the then Procurator of the Republic of Mordoviya, P. E. Sen'kin. As part of the rehabilitation process in 1989-99, 8142 archived criminal files were opened for investigation, and 9310 individuals were rehabilitated by the procurator.[12] A number of other individuals listed in the Mordoviya *Pamyat'* had been rehabilitated earlier, bringing the total number of entries in the published volume to 9380. According to its summary table, the Mordoviya *Pamyat'* lists the names of 1177 individuals who were subject to the 'highest order of punishment', that is execution. Those who were executed, therefore, accounted for around 12.5 per cent of those subject to political repression in the Mordoviya region during the entire period covered by the volume (1918-62).[13]

In a few cases, Sen'kin points out, only the names of the individuals involved were evident and it proved impossible to reconstruct any details about their background or lives for the published volume. There are a number of other limitations to the data listed in the publication. Some individuals were arrested and released without charge on the same day.[14] Others (possibly through editorial oversight) are listed twice in the source for the same offence.[15] Some of the entries list two or more offences by one individual.[16] Not all of the entries provide the date of conviction. Occasionally, the *Pamyat'* includes the names of those arrested before Stalin came to power or after his death.[17]

---

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid., p. 535.

[12] For a preliminary analysis of the number of victims of political repression in Mordoviya by *raion*, sex, social status, organisation responsible for the repression, and sentence, see P. E. Sen'kin, *Pamyat': zhertvy politicheskikh repressii* (Saransk, 2000) p. 681.

[13] Sen'kin, *Pamyat'*, p. 681. Our totals differ slightly from those offered in the published source.

[14] See, for example, the entry for Boris Sergeevich Akaf'ev, p. 10.

[15] See, for example, the entries for Yakov Samsonovich Kuz'michev, p. 105.

[16] See, for example, the entries for Mariya Semenovna Grushevskaya and Yakov Konstantinovich Gubanov, p. 607. For cases such as these, two separate records were made in the database.

[17] See, for example, the entry for Aleksandr Pavlovich Chugunov, p. 673. In view of the nature of our selection criteria, all of the entries in this category included in the database for analysis are women and/or were executed.

Source content and limitations:
The Mordoviya *Pamyat'* details the following information in its fullest entries: name; date of birth (from which we are able to calculate age at the time of conviction); place of birth and residence; party membership; occupation (by which we are able to determine social status); marital status and number of children; date of conviction; organisation responsible for conducting the trial; statute of the criminal code under which the individual was charged; sentence; and date of rehabilitation.

Our study of political repression in Mordoviya ASSR has been undertaken partly in light of the earlier analysis conducted of the Leningrad region, which used the first two volumes of the *Leningradskii martirolog*.[18] It is important to note here, however, that the source bases for these two studies incorporate a number of differences. The listing for the Mordoviya region, because it covers a broader time span, offers significantly more detail about the general course of Soviet 'political repression', although it includes far fewer names. The multi-volume *Leningradskii martirolog* lists only those individuals who were actually executed at the height of the Yezhovshchina during the early months of the second wave of the Great Terror, that is during the period of the mass repressions from July 1937 to January 1938. The mass operations were not finally halted until November 1938. It is the period of the 'Great Terror' from 1936 to 1938 that we most often associate with political repression in the Soviet Union.

The Mordoviya *Pamyat'*, however, has a far more extensive coverage of political repression, allowing us to track the various waves of the purges in the Soviet Union from the Civil War, to the collectivisation drives of 1929-33 (largely those who were identified as kulaks), at the height of the 'Great Terror' in 1936-38, through the war years (including the persecution of 'bourgeois nationalists') and up to the death of Stalin in 1953. It includes the names not only of those who were executed, but also those who were subject to a range of other punishments, including imprisonment, exile and forced labour. A number of those listed in the source were released without charge. However, the Mordoviya *Pamyat'* is more limited in comparison with the *Leningradskii martirolog* because it does not note the nationality of individuals included in the listing. It is far less amenable, therefore, to an analysis of the impact of the various 'national operations' in Mordoviya ASSR. It also does not provide information that would allow us to determine the length of time between arrest and trial, or between trial and sentence, sentence and execution. In identifying Communist Party members, the *Pamyat'* provides no indication of the length of party membership. It does, however, offer some detail about the marital status and number of children of the victims.

Despite the presence of Temlag (a major Gulag camp) within the region, the Mordoviya *Pamyat'* does not contain any significant details of those arrested who were already serving a custodial sentence. Only four prisoners are listed. These are all women, three of whom were from corrective labour colonies run by the Mordovian NKVD, and the other was from Temlag. All four were arrested during 1941-42. The most obvious explanation for the omission of any prisoners from the listing, particularly during the 'Great Terror' period, is that victims from within the penal

[18] M. Ilič, 'The Great Terror in Leningrad: a Quantitative Analysis', *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 52 (2000), pp. 1515-34; reprinted in Wheatcroft, *Challenging Traditional Views*, pp. 147-70.

system may not have been included in the local targets and reports, but would more likely have been part of the numbers allocated to the centrally-controlled Gulag.[19]

Methodology:
For our study of the Mordoviya region, we have adopted a methodology similar to that used earlier in the analysis of the Great Terror in Leningrad. A database of 7396 entries was constructed (equal to approximately three quarters of all those included in the published listing), based on the following criteria for selection:

all of the entries for convictions taking place in the years from 1929 to 1933 (to cover the period of collectivisation and dekulakisation):
4244 records, including 183 executions and 542 women;
all of the entries for convictions taking place in the years 1937 and 1938 (to cover the height of the 'Great Terror' and the 'mass repressions'):
2441 records: including 773 executions and 221 women;
all those who were executed throughout the period covered by the source:
1188 records, including 79 women;
all of the female victims of political repression throughout the period covered by the source: 1271 records, including 79 executions.[20]

Our analysis of the Mordoviya *Pamyat'* in this paper is based on these four categories of data. Given the chronological focus of the first two categories, we pay only limited attention in this study, therefore, to the processes of political repression in Mordoviya that took place before Stalin came to power or during and after the Second World War.

1929-1933:
In this section we analyse the data available in the Mordoviya *Pamyat'* about the victims of political repression during the years of collectivisation and dekulakisation. The Central Volga region, which included Mordoviya, was considered to be one of the most important grain-producing districts in the Russian republic. However, by the late 1920s agricultural production in the region had still not returned to its pre-revolutionary levels of economic activity and Mordoviya was viewed as an under-developed region that lacked any substantial industrial base. Even within the broader regional context of low economic development, Mordoviya was considered to be a particularly backward area. It suffered from considerable rural over-population and the only industry that existed was based almost exclusively on agricultural materials and timber processing.[21]

Collectivisation and Dekulakisation in Mordoviya: In early 1930, the interwoven campaigns of collectivisation and dekulakisation swept across the Soviet Union.

[19] NKVD Order No. 00447 (1937) allocated a target to each region for the number of individuals to be repressed. The Order also included an allocation to the Gulag, which was not included in the regional totals.

[20] The summary table contained in the Mordoviya *Pamyat'* gives the total number of female victims of political repression as 1280. It is evident that a number of other unresolved discrepancies remain as part of this study arising from both the compilation of the original source and the construction of the database to support our analysis.

[21] See Filatov, 'Nachalo massovogo kolkhoznogo dvizheniya', p.163.

Throughout the 1930s, the pace of collectivisation in Mordoviya was consistantly lower than that achieved at both the national and regional levels.[22] The slow progress of collectivisation throughout the areas on the right bank of the Central Volga region, and particularly Mordoviya, has been attributed by Soviet historians to the backwards nature of the population, and the lack of a local working class and proletariat to encourage the peasants to move to the kolkhozy.[23] The slow rate of collectivisation in Mordoviya ensured that the level of peasant opposition was not as strong as elsewhere in the Central Volga region. As a result, Mordoviya avoided the worst excesses of the dekulakisation campaigns in the region. In February 1930, the Central Volga kraiispolkom (territorial soviet executive committee), in response to the SNK and TsIK USSR decree calling for the liquidation of the kulaks as a class (1 February 1930), issued a decree calling for the deportation (*vyselit'*) of 6000 peasant households from the region during the period from February to April 1930. The decree specified that 4470 households were to be chosen from the left bank of the Central Volga region and 1530 from the right bank, which included Mordoviya.[24]

In fact, according to our database, during these months only 65 individuals (including 7 women) were exiled from Mordoviya. However, an additional 632 people were arrested and imprisoned, of whom 600 received sentences of three or more years and would, therefore, have been transferred to labour camps throughout the Soviet Union.[25] Elsewhere in the Central Volga region it soon became apparent to the central Soviet authorities that local officials were implementing the dekulakisation campaign rather too vigorously.[26] In Mordoviya, however, many local Communist Party organisations denied that any kulaks lived in their region.[27] Despite the cautious nature of collectivisation and dekulakisation in Mordoviya, numerous officials and regions were singled out for criticism after the publication of Stalin's article entitled

---

[22] The pace of collectivisation in Mordoviya tended to lag behind the All-Union rate by eighteen months. In January 1937 the proportion of peasant households collectivised in Mordoviya was 80.4 per cent, a level that had been achieved across the Soviet Union by June 1935. See N. A. Ivnitskii, 'Kollektivizatsiya i raskulachivaniya v nachale 30-x godov', in Yu. N. Afanas'ev (ed.), *Sud'by Rossiiskogo krest'yanstva* (Moscow, 1996) pp. 265, 294, and G. S. Baevskii (ed.), *Kollektivizatsiya sel'skogo khozyaistvo v srednem povolzh'e (1927-1937): dokumenty i materialy* (Kuibyshev, 1970) pp. 478, 500, 557-8.

[23] Baevskii, *Kollektivizatsiya,* p. 508; Filatov, 'Nachalo massovogo kolkhoznogo dvizheniya', pp. 169-70. The only local proletariat within Mordoviya were the railway workers on the Moscow-Kazan' Railway line. In particular, workers at the railway junctions of Kovylkino, Krasnyi uzel and Ruzaevka were considered an important localised source of possible propagandists.

[24] Baevskii, *Kollektivizatsiya,* p. 14.

[25] The low level of dekulakisation in Mordoviya compared to the remainder of the Central Volga region is also apparent from another decree of the Central Volga kraikom (dated 20 January 1930) that called for the arrest of 3000 people by 5 February. See Ivnitskii, 'Kollektivizatsiya i raskulachivaniya', p. 284. According to our database, during this period only 26 people were arrested.

[26] Ivnitskii, 'Kollektivizatsiya i raskulachivaniya', p. 285.

[27] Filatov, 'Nachalo massovogo kolkhoznogo dvizheniya', p. 166. In Ruzaevskii raion they admitted to having some serednyaki (middle peasants), but nothing worse!

'Dizzy with Success' in *Pravda* on 2 March 1930, which brought about a temporary lull in the campaigns.[28]

From July 1930 to the end of the main collectivisation and dekulakisation period (that is, the end of 1933), the number of arrests listed in the Mordoviya *Pamyat'* remained consistently low with the exception of six non-contiguous months when the number of people arrested suddenly exceeded 100. For the whole of this period the distribution of arrests across Mordoviya remained fairly random, although Ichalkovskii raion appears to have been targeted in August and December 1931.[29] The high number of people sentenced in January 1931 was dominated by the work of the Troika, which over a period of two days (10 and11 January 1931) sentenced 307 people.[30]

Table 1
1929-1933: Summary of Dates of Sentencing

	1929	1930	1931	1932	1933
January	2	65	376	17	42
February	9	111	33	12	79
March	16	420	14	62	43
April	15	258	1	27	155
May	8	282	13	43	29
June	13	72	96	7	193
July	13	12	15	12	36
August	89	35	129	50	26
September	68	48	87	23	12
October	100	54	20	115	7
November	192	49	20	34	40
December	255	52	103	27	8
TOTAL	780	1458	907	429	670

Source: estimated from data in P. E. Sen'kin, *Pamyat': zhertvy politicheskikh repressii* (Saransk, 2000).

[28] The following *raiony* were singled out for straying from the party line: Torbeevo, Zubova Polyana and Kovylkino. Communist Party *raikom* secretaries were removed from their posts in the following areas: Atyashevo, Achadovo, Dubenki, Zubova Polyana, Romodanovo and Rybkino. See Filatov, 'Nachalo massovogo kolkhoznogo dvizheniya', pp. 174-5.

[29] In August 1931, 47 arrests were made in Ichkalovskii raion, and a further 80 arrests were made in December 1931.

[30] The total number of people sentenced in January 1931 was 376. Of the 307 sentenced by the Troika in this two-day period, 36 were exiled, 229 were imprisoned and 42 were executed. The only other extraordinary day for executions in this latter period of dekulakisation was 27 April 1933, when 133 people were sentenced by the Troika.

Analysis of the Database for 1929-33:
Our listing for the years 1929-33 includes a total of 4244 entries in this dataset. This is equivalent to almost 46 per cent of the entries in the printed source, and 57.4 per cent of our database.

Sex ratios: Most of those convicted in these years (3702 individuals) were men. The 542 women listed in this dataset constitute 12.8 per cent of the entries. The relatively high numbers and proportion of women convicted in these years in comparison with 1937-38 (see below) is probably best explained by women's well-documented resistance to the collectivisation campaigns, as well as the continued existence of a greater number of religious communities in the early years of the Stalinist regime.

Age: The date of birth is available for 4221 entries of this dataset. The ages of those sentenced ranged between 15 and 81 years. The mean age for both men and women taken together was 45.8 years. Over two thirds (69 per cent) of those included in this dataset were over 40 years of age. 15.6 per cent (657 individuals) were over 60 years of age.

Marital Status: Data are available on the marital status of 3092 of the entries in this dataset. 86.6 per cent of all those convicted were married. A considerable difference between the sexes is notable in terms of the marital status of those convicted. Nearly 94 per cent of men were married (or are noted in the database as married because they had children), and just under six per cent were listed in the source as single. However, only one third (32.5 per cent) of the women who were convicted were married (or are presumed married), and almost two thirds (61.9 per cent) were single. 20 women (of the 360 for whom data on marital status are available) were listed as widows. This is equivalent of 5.6 per cent of all of the women who were arrested in this period, whereas only 0.4 per cent of men are recorded as widowers. Marriage and motherhood appear to have offered women as substantial degree of protection in these years. 2221 individuals in this dataset are listed as parents. Three of the women are listed as single parents. Five widows and two widowers were also parents, with a total of 13 children between them.

Number of Children: The arrests made during this period had considerable further repercussions. A total of 7628 children were directly affected by the arrest of at least one of their parents. Some may have been affected by the arrest of both.

Residency: According to the data available on residency, arrests were made throughout Mordoviya. However, the highest single proportion of convictions (8.7 per cent) was of those listed as *inogorodnie* (non-permanent residents). These were people who had come to Mordoviya from outside of the republic. The regional capital, Saransk, was home to only 1.6 per cent of the victims. Political repression in Mordoviya in the years 1929 to 1933 was an overwhelmingly rural phenomenon.

Communist Party membership: In this dataset, only four people are listed as being members of the Communist Party. These were all male students of between 20 and 25 years of age. They were all sentenced on the same day (10 January 1931) under Article 58-11 of the criminal code, used against those who were charged with being members of counter-revolutionary organisations. All of them were imprisoned, with sentences ranging from one to eight years.

Social Status: Data on social status is not available for 347 entries of this dataset. Of the 3897 individuals for whom data are available, 3386 were men and 511 were women. Taken as a whole, almost three quarters (73.95 per cent) of those convicted were recorded in the printed source as being independent peasants. By contrast, only 2.62 per cent were recorded as collective farmers. The second largest social group (11.6 per cent) were former or active religious personnel. This pattern

was reflected amongst the women, but in different proportions. Most of the women who were convicted were either listed as independent peasants (59.1 per cent) or as religious personnel (22.9 per cent). Just over one in ten of the women arrested was in white-collar employment, with the majority of these of these (45 individuals) listed in the source as 'housewife'.

Table 2
1929-33: Summary of Social Status of Purge Victims

Occupation code:	Social status	1929-33 no.	Dataset %	Adjusted no.	% of 3897
0	No entry in source	347	8.18		
1	blue-collar	137	3.23	137	3.52
2	white-collar	231	5.44	231	5.93
3	kolkhoz peasantry	102	2.40	102	2.62
4	cooperative kustar	16	0.38	16	0.41
5	Non-cooperative kustar	18	0.42	18	0.46
6	independent peasantry	2882	67.91	2882	73.95
[7] including:	Miscellaneous	[509]	[11.99]	[509]	[13.06]
7a	temporarily unemployed	39	0.92	39	1.00
7b	religious personnel	452	10.65	452	11.60
7c	military personnel	9	0.21	9	0.23
7d	prisoner, exile, deserter	0	0	0	0
7e	pensioner	1	0.02	1	0.03
7f	student	8	0.19	8	0.21
8	'unemployed' in source	2	0.05	2	0.05
Total		4244	100.00	3897	100.00

Source: estimated from data in P. E. Sen'kin, *Pamyat': zhertvy politicheskikh repressii* (Saransk, 2000).

Sentencing: Data are available on the sentencing body for 4177 entries in this dataset. The vast majority of those convicted in these years were sentenced by All-Union bodies, external to the region. The 'troika' was responsible for 70.15 per cent of all convictions from 1929 to 1933. The Mordovian judiciary was responsible for only 7.8 per cent of cases. The OGPU collegium sentenced 9.67 per cent and the Osoboe Soveshchanie 12.4 per cent of the cases listed.

A wide range of statutes was used to sentence those listed in the published source. No data on the statute used in the conviction is available for 50 of the entries in this dataset. The vast majority of cases (95.2 per cent) included some section of Article 58, which was used against those charged with counter-revolutionary activities. Only 199 entries do not include any section of Article 58.

Most cases resulted in the removal of the accused from their locality. Despite the apparent emphasis on exile during the dekulakisation campaigns, only 17.8 per cent of those sentenced were relocated to special settlements, of whom approximately one half were sent to Severnyi krai. The majority of individuals (72.3 per cent) received custodial sentences. 62.6 per cent of all of those who were sentenced in these years had to serve more than three years' imprisonment, which usually entailed incarceration in a corrective-labour camp anywhere in the Soviet Union. The longest

custodial sentence imposed was for 12 years. Sentences of ten or more years were given to 341 people. Not all cases resulted in imprisonment, however, and various other punishments were applied. 269 individuals were released without sentence. Of all those freed, 98 individuals had originally been given a custodial sentence, but were deemed to have already served their time in the period spent between arrest and sentencing.[31]

Capital sentences were handed down to 183 (4.3 per cent) people, of whom six were women. In addition, one person died in custody. The ages of those sentenced to execution ranged from 23 to 74 years, but the vast majority of people (85.2 per cent) were aged over 40. 24 per cent of those sentenced to execution were over 60 years of age.

The largest social group amongst those who were executed in the period from 1929 to 1933, as might be expected, was that of the independent peasantry, who constituted almost 68 per cent of the victims. For this group, though, the proportion of executions was slightly lower than the proportion of independent farmers amongst all of those who were arrested. In contrast, those classified as white-collar workers (nearly seven per cent) and religious personnel (20.75 per cent) were executed in significantly greater proportions than their weighting amongst the total number of those arrested.

Relatively few of these capital sentences were applied by either the OGPU (9.34 per cent of all death sentences) or the Mordovian judiciary (8.24 per cent). The Troika was responsible for the vast majority (81.87 per cent) of all executions. The pattern of capital convictions in Mordoviya in the years from 1929 to 1933 closely matches a national trend that peaked in the first half of 1930 and returned to pre-1930 levels in early 1931.[32]

Table 3
1929-33: Summary of Sentences

SENTENCE	No.	% of 4232
No data	12	
Died in custody	1	0.02
Executed	183	4.3
Imprisoned	3060	72.3
Corrective / forced labour	50	1.2
Exile	754	17.8
Restricted residency rights	8	0.2
Public reprimand	2	0.04
Fined	2	0.04
Released	172	4.1
TOTAL	4244	100

Source: estimated from data in P. E. Sen'kin, *Pamyat': zhertvy politicheskikh repressii* (Saransk, 2000).

[31] These 98 are included within the 3060 listed as receiving custodial sentences.

[32] S. G. Wheatcroft, 'Towards Explaining the Changing Levels of Stalinist Repression in the 1930s: Mass Killings', in S. G. Wheatcroft (ed.), *Challenging Traditional Views of Russian History* (Basingstoke, 2002) p. 116.

1934–1936:
During the so-called 'three good years' from 1934 to 1936, the rate of economic development in the Mordoviya autonomous republic consistently fell below both national and regional levels. Numerous industrial construction projects were initiated, but they were primarily for the expansion of secondary industries dedicated to the processing of local raw materials. Although agriculture remained the bedrock of the MASSR economy, both the local and regional authorities struggled to implement the Soviet 'modernisation' model of collectivisation. Regular calls were made by the Central Volga Communist Party district committee to increase the rate of collectivisation and to improve the quality and breadth of mass-agitation work, particularly amongst those peasants who continued to operate outside of the collective and state farm systems. Such demands were not helped by the steady decline in the number of Communist Party members both in the republic and across the Soviet Union, which was only halted in 1939.[33] Collectivisation was particularly slow in those areas populated by Moksha Mordvins, whereas the rate of collectivisation amongst Erzya Mordvins was only slightly below the regional average.[34]

Table 4
Ethnic Variations in Rates of Collectivisation in MASSR
(percentage of households collectivised)

	1 Jan 1935	1 Jan 1936	1 Jan 1937
Russian	72	79	85
Tatar	54	72	93.4
Mordvin	59	71	75
(inc. Moksha	*48*	*65*	*71.6*
Erzya)	*70*	*77*	*80.8*
MASSR Total	66.4	79.8	82.0
USSR Total	83.2	90.5	93.0

(USSR figures are for 1 June)

Source: G. S. Baevskii (ed.), *Kollektivizatsiya sel'skogo khozyaistvo v srednem povolzh'e (1927-1937): dokumenty i materialy* (Kuibyshev, 1970) pp. 557-8.

According to a report by the Mordovian Communist Party provincial committee, the low level of collectivisation amongst the Moksha Mordvins was a direct result of the under-representation of this particular ethnic group in local party organisations. Whilst Erzya Mordvins constituted 17.8 per cent of the MASSR population, they accounted for 20.3 per cent of the membership of local party organisations. The

[33] In 1933 there were 10,627 Communist Party members in Mordoviya. By 1938 this figure had fallen to 6,217. This decline of 41.5 per cent in Party membership in Mordoviya was actually lower than the national rate of decline of 46 per cent for the same period. See *Mordovskaya partiinaya organizattsiya v dokumentakh i tsifrakh (1918-1972gg.)* (Saransk, 1975) p. 125, and D. Thorniley, *The Rise and Fall of the Soviet Rural Communist Party, 1927-1939* (London, 1988) p. 200.

[34] The Mordvin ethnic group was mainly concentrated in the border raiony in the north-east (local inhabitants known as Mordva-erzya) and the south-west (inhabited by the Mordva-moksha). BSE, p. 288.

Moksha Mordvins, on the other hand, constituted 18.5 per cent of the population, and yet only 9.1 per cent of local party members came from this group.[35] Other reasons proposed by Communist Party organisations for the low level of collectivisation in the MASSR included the success of peasants in non-agricultural speculative activities (such as the hiring-out of labour and horsepower, trading, the collection of firewood, etc.) and the continued high levels of productivity and profitability on private agricultural land. The presence of strong religious groups was also identified as a reason for the limited impact of Soviet propaganda in the region.[36]

1937-1938:

In this section we analyse the data available in the Mordoviya *Pamyat'* about the victims of political repression at the height of the Great Terror. These two years alone account for 26 per cent of all of the convictions listed in the Mordoviya *Pamyat'*, and 33 per cent of our database. 65 per cent of all executions in MASSR took place in these two years. The data for 1937-38 allow us to identify the waves of mass repression in Mordoviya and to offer an insight into the social composition of its victims. Preliminary data from the suppressed (6 January) 1937 census record a total population for Mordoviya ASSR of 1,192,012 (541,892 men and 650,120 women).[37] The total population recorded in the official 1939 census return was 1,188,004.[38] Between the returns of the unofficial 1937 census and the official 1939 census, therefore, there was a loss of population in the Mordoviya ASSR of 4008 people, which is equivalent to approximately 0.3 per cent of the local population. Not all of this population change is attributed to the outcomes of the purges.

A Politburo *zapros* (request) of 10 July 1937 stipulated the execution of 1250 individuals (930 former kulaks and 320 criminals) and the exile of 2263 individuals (1883 former kulaks and 380 criminals) in Mordoviya, giving a total of 3513 people. According to the 'limits' set out in the now infamous operational Order no. 00447 of 30 July 1937 against 'anti-Soviet elements', in the Mordoviya ASSR there were to be, in the first category, 300 executions, and, in the second category, a further 1500 convictions of between eight and ten years' imprisonment, giving a total of 1800 individuals.[39] These figures were subsequently added to by the 'limits' assigned to Mordoviya ASSR by the various national operations: including 229 executions and 29 imprisonments as a result of the 'Polish' Operation (Order no. 00485),[40] and 114 executions and 24 imprisonments as a result of the 'German' Operation (Order no. 00439).[41]

---

[35] Baevskii (1970) p. 558.

[36] Baevskii (1970) pp. 559-61.

[37] 1937 Census, pp. 42-43.

[38] 1939 Census, p. 25.

[39] M. Yunge (Junge) and R. Binner, *Kak terror stal 'bol'shim* (Moscow, 2003) p. 125.

[40] N. Petrov and A. Roginskii, 'The "Polish Operation" of the NKVD, 1937-8', in McLoughlin and McDermott, *Stalin's Terror*, p. 168.

[41] H. Schafranek and N. Musienko, 'The Fictitious "Hitler-Jugend" Conspiracy of the Moscow NKVD', in McLoughlin and McDermott, *Stalin's Terror*, p. 210.

Table 5
Summary of 'Limits' in Mordoviya ASSR

	First category (executions)	Second category (arrests)	TOTAL
30 July 1937	300	1500	1800
Polish operation	229	29	258
German operation	114	24	138
Total	643	1553	**2196**

Sources: M. Yunge (Junge) and C. Binner, *Kak terror stal 'bol'shim'* (Moscow, 2003) p. 125; B. McLoughlin and K. McDermott (eds), *Stalin's Terror* (London, 2003) pp. 168, 210.

The section relating to 1937-38 of our database has 2441 entries, including 773 executions. The number of cases recorded in the Mordoviya *Pamyat'*, then, closely approximates the targets set by the authorities in 1937-38. We have made a number of adjustments to the data in the course of our analysis. Of the 2441 arrests, 49 individuals were released without charge, either immediately or in subsequent months or years, because no case could be made against them. The actual number of long-standing convictions in 1937-38, therefore, was 2392. For a further 30 entries the source makes no mention of the sentence imposed, and so we have no way of telling if these people were imprisoned, executed or released, and we have shaped our analysis accordingly. In such cases, the distinction between *arrest* and *conviction* is important, but this information is not recorded in the printed source. Seven individuals are recorded as having died whilst in custody and, for the sake of analysis, we have included these along with those who were executed.

Sex ratios: it now goes without saying that the victims of political repression in the Soviet Union under Stalin – those arrested during the various waves of the purges and those imprisoned in the labour camps – were overwhelmingly male. In Mordoviya ASSR, 91 per cent of those arrested in 1937-38 were men, and men were an even higher proportion – over 96 per cent – of those who were executed in these years. Men had more active and visible public roles, they were more likely to occupy leadership roles or hold positions of responsibility, they were more likely to be taken seriously if they voiced their opposition to the regime and it was regarded as more subversive when they did so.

Age: the ages of those arrested in Mordoviya in 1937-38 ranged from 17 years to 96 years. 23 (0.94 per cent) of the victims were under 20 years old, and eight (0.3 per cent) were over 80 years old. The average age of the victims was 45.78 years.[42] Making adjustments to the data to discount the youngest age groups, analysis of the database for this cohort shows that the purges in Mordoviya targeted a disproportionate number of the local population who were over 40 years of age.

[42] The 1939 Census, table 7, provides a detailed breakdown by age cohorts of local populations.

Table 6
1937-38: Summary of Age Distribution

AGE	no. in db	% in db	% in 1939 Census	Adjusted	for 20-60+	cohort
under 20	23	0.94	49.6			
20-29	222	9.11	15.4	222	9.20	30.46
30-39	557	22.87	13.3	557	23.08	26.32
40-49	641	26.31	8.0	641	26.56	15.93
50-59	622	25.53	6.7	622	25.78	13.34
60+	371	15.23	7.0	371	15.38	13.95
Total	2436	99.99	100	2413	100.00	100.00

Sources: Vsesoyuznaya perepis' naseleniya 1939 goda: osnovnye itogi (Moscow, 1992) p. 32; estimated from data in P. E. Sen'kin, *Pamyat': zhertvy politicheskikh repressii* (Saransk, 2000).

Marital status: no data were provided on the marital status of 550 (497 men and 53 women) of those arrested in 1937-38. Of the remaining 1891, 1664 (1575 men and 89 women) (88 per cent) were listed as married (or were listed as having children, and so have been included in our analysis as 'married?'). 207 (133 men and 74 women) (11 per cent) were listed as single, 19 (16 men and 3 women) as widowed and 1 woman as divorced. Looking more closely at these figures, it is clear that marriage offered seemingly less protection against arrest for men than it did for women. 91.3 per cent of the men arrested were married, but the equivalent figure for women was only 53.3 per cent. On the other hand, therefore, being single was far more 'risky' for a woman than it was for a man. 44.3 per cent of the women who were arrested were single, but only 7.7 per cent of the men were listed as unmarried.

Number of children: 1391 individuals included in our database entries are listed as parents, and 4108 children were affected by the arrest of at least one of their parents. The average number of children per victim was, therefore, just under 3.0. Whilst many victims had relatively small families, one person is listed as the father of 12 children, and there are two families with 10 children and seven with nine recorded in the data.

Residency: Mordoviya ASSR had a very low level of urbanisation, even by the time of the All-Union census in January 1939, which recorded around 26 per cent of the Soviet population as living in urban areas. According to the census returns, of the less than 1.2 million population of the Mordoviya ASSR, only approximately 84,000 (seven per cent) lived in urban areas, and just under half of these (40,900) were in the regional capital, Saransk.[43] All districts of the Mordoviya ASSR felt the impact of political repression in 1937-38. Saransk, which was home to less than 3.5 per cent of the local population, was home to 7 per cent (171) of the victims. The largest number of victims by classification outlined in the *Pamyat'*, however, were those listed as *inogorodnie* (211 individuals: 202 men and 9 women) (8.64 per cent). Many of Mordoviya's districts were home to religious communities, which themselves became targets of political repression, particularly in the early months of the mass operations from August to October 1937.

[43] *Mordovskaya ASSR za gody Sovetskoi vlasti (v tsifrakh): statisticheskii sbornik* (Saransk, 1967) p. 50.

Communist Party membership: Membership of the Communist Party in Mordoviya ASSR stood at 7203 on 1 January 1937 and 8199 on 1 January 1939.[44] Less than 0.7 per cent of the republic's total population were party members. In our database for the years 1937-38, 140 entries (135 men and 5 women) are listed as members of the Communist Party, or its youth section, the Komsomol. Party members, therefore, comprised around 5.7 per cent of all those arrested in these two years. A significant number of these (23 individuals), however, were released without charge, or had already been rehabilitated by the end of 1940. This reduces the proportion of Communist Party members with long standing convictions to 4.9 per cent. Of the 117 Communist Party members who were convicted, 54 were executed and two died in custody.

Many of the Mordoviya Communist Party functionaries were convicted, mostly to execution, on or around 23 May 1938. For example, Andrei Yakovlevich Kozikov (b. 1893), chair of Sovnarkom MASSR, was sentenced to execution on 23 May 1938. In republican level government bodies, arrests were also made in the People's Commissariat of Agriculture and the People's Commissariat of Finance. In party organisations, the first secretary of the Mordoviya *obkom* (provincial party committee), Mikhail Dmitrievich Prusakov (b. 1896), was sentenced to execution on 23 May 1938. The secretaries of a number of Communist Party regional committees in the MASSR were also arrested and executed. Many of these individuals were subsequently rehabilitated under Khrushchev.

Social status: There are no entries for 368 records in this section of the database. Making adjustments for this, and based on the categories used in the 1939 Census for social classification of the population, the analysis of the Mordoviya dataset for 1937-38 indicates that around one quarter of all of the victims of the purges in these years were employed in white-collar occupations. Kolkhoz farmers (22.24 per cent) and independent peasants (22.82 per cent) together constituted a further 45 per cent of the victims. Almost ten per cent of the convictions were handed down to former or serving religious personnel.

[44] *Mordovskaya partiinaya organizatsiya v dokumentakh i tsifrakh (1918-1972gg.)* (Saransk, 1975) p. 125. Communist Party membership in 1938 fell to 6217.

Table 7
1937-38: Summary of Social Status of Purge Victims

Occupation code:	Social status	1937-38 no.	Dataset %	Adjusted no.	% of 2073
0	No entry in source	368	15.08		
1	blue-collar	304	12.45	304	14.66
2	white-collar	540	22.12	540	26.05
3	Kolkhoz peasantry	461	18.89	461	22.24
4	cooperative kustar	18	0.74	18	0.87
5	non-cooperative kustar	9	0.37	9	0.43
6	independent peasantry	473	19.38	473	22.82
[7] including:	Miscellaneous	[268]	[10.98]	[268]	[12.93]
7a	temporarily unemployed	39	1.60	39	1.88
7b	religious personnel	194	7.95	194	9.36
7c	Military personnel	11	0.45	11	0.53
7d	Prisoner, exile, deserter	0	0.00	0	0.00
7e	pensioner	2	0.08	2	0.10
7f	Student	15	0.61	15	0.72
8	‘unemployed’ in source	7	0.29	7	0.34
Total		2441	100.00	2073	100.00

Source: estimated from data in P. E. Sen’kin, *Pamyat’: zhertvy politicheskikh repressii* (Saransk, 2000).

Table 8
1937-38: Summary of Dates of Sentencing

1937		1938	
		January	49
		February	74
		March	87
		April	51
		May	200
January-June	123	June	44
July	37	July	48
August	246	August	21
September	174	September	27
October	588	October	51
November	269	November	25
December	313	December	14

Source: estimated from data in P. E. Sen’kin, *Pamyat’: zhertvy politicheskikh repressii* (Saransk, 2000).

Sentencing data: This dataset records convictions taking place in the years 1937 and 1938, at the height of the Great Terror. 123 arrests were made in the first half of 1937. Thereafter, the peak periods for convictions were the months from August to December 1937 and May 1938.

Details of the sentence are available for 2411 entries in the 1937-38 dataset. Almost two thirds (65 per cent) of those convicted were given custodial sentences (ranging between 6 months and 15 years). 773 individuals (32 per cent) were sentenced to execution; a further 7 died in custody. The remainder were exiled, given some form of probation or released without charge.

Table 9
1937-38: Summary of Sentences

SENTENCE	1937-38 db		Adjusted	
	No.	%	No.	%
no data	30	1.23		
Died in custody	7	0.29	7	0.29
Executed	773	31.67	773	32.06
Exile	12	0.49	12	0.50
Imprisonment	1566	64.15	1566	64.95
Probation	5	0.20	5	0.21
Released	48	1.97	48	1.99
Total	2441	100.00	2411	100.00

Source: estimated from data in P. E. Sen'kin, *Pamyat': zhertvy politicheskikh repressii* (Saransk, 2000).

The majority of cases during 1937-38 (62.6 per cent) were tried by the NKVD troika, which was responsible for sentencing 577 individuals to execution. This is equivalent to almost three quarters of all capital sentences issued in these years. The *osoboe soveshchanie* was responsible for issuing a further 16 per cent of capital sentences. The supreme courts of Mordoviya and the USSR (*verkhovnyi sud MASSR; verkhovnyi sud SSSR*) tried almost 20 per cent of cases, sentencing most of the accused to imprisonment, and 24 individuals to execution. The Military Collegia and military tribunals tried only a small proportion of cases, but were responsible for issuing 33 death sentences, which was equivalent to over half of all of their cases and over four per cent of all executions. The *osoboe soveshchanie* tried almost ten per cent of cases.

Table 10
1937-38: Summary of Selected Cases by Prosecuting Body and Sentence

	Execution	% of 773	Prison	% of 1566	other	Sub-total	% of 2441
Osoboe soveshchanie	123	15.91	101	6.45	17	241	9.87
MASSR/USSR supreme court	24	3.10	458	29.25	4	486	19.91
NKVD troika	577	74.64	927	59.20	24	1528	62.20
Military collegium / tribunal	33	4.27	31	1.98		64	2.62
Total	757	97.93	1517	96.87	45	2319	95.00

Source: estimated from data in P. E. Sen'kin, *Pamyat': zhertvy politicheskikh repressii* (Saransk, 2000).

Executions in Mordoviya ASSR, 1918–1951:

In this section we analyse the data available in the Mordoviya *Pamyat'* on the victims of political repression who were executed during the period from 1918 to 1951. According to the entries listed in this dataset, a total of 1188 people are known to have been executed in Mordoviya throughout the period covered by the printed source.[45] These executions span the entire period covered by the study, but the majority of cases fall into three distinct sub-periods: firstly, 1929-1933 – during the collectivisation and dekulakisation campaigns, which accounted for 15.4 per cent of all executions; secondly, 1937-1938 – the years of the 'Great Terror', which accounted for the vast majority, 65 per cent, of all executions; and, thirdly, 1941-1943 – the early years of the Second World War, which accounted for 16 per cent of all executions.

[45] The summary table in the printed source records 1177 executions.

Table 11
Summary of Executions in MASSR, 1918-51

	Men	% men	Women	% women	TOTAL
1918	25	100			25
1919	10	100			10
1929	37	100			37
1930	90	96.8	3	3.2	93
1931	47	94	3	6	50
1932	3	100			3
1933					
1934	2	100			2
1935					
1936	1	100			1
1937	526	94.9	28	5.1	554
1938	218	99.5	1	0.5	219
1939					
1940					
1941	96	85.7	16	14.3	112
1942	49	66.2	25	33.8	74
1943	1	25	3	75	4
1951	2	100			2
No data	2	100			2
TOTAL	1109	93.3	79	6.7	1188

Source: estimated from data in P. E. Sen'kin, *Pamyat': zhertvy politicheskikh repressii* (Saransk, 2000).

The overwhelming majority (93.3 per cent) of all execution victims were men. The proportion of women who were executed increased significantly during the Second World War. Taking men and women together, where data are available for 1172 entries, the mean average age was 48 years. 18.8 per cent were over 60 years of age. Almost 90 per cent of execution victims for whom the appropriate data are available were married (including those presumed married). 1850 children were affected by the execution of at least one of their parents.

The impact of political repression was felt throughout Mordoviya. Almost one fifth of those who were executed had a residency listing of *inogorodnie*. Seven per cent were from the regional capital, Saransk. 4.7 per cent of those convicted to execution were, or had been, members of the Communist Party. Those who were executed came from a variety of backgrounds. The largest single grouping was that of the independent peasantry, who constituted 32.24 per cent of execution victims for whom data are available. Likewise, white-collar workers constituted 25.8 per cent and

religious personnel 14.1 per cent of those executed.[46] The execution of citizens in Mordoviya was overwhelmingly conducting by All-Union bodies. Less than five per cent of individuals were condemned by either the Mordovian courts or revolutionary tribunals. The statute most commonly used against the execution victims, often in combination with other charges, was Article 58-10 of the criminal code.

Table 12
Summary Social Profile of those Executed in Mordoviya[47]

	1918-19	1929-32	1937-38	1941-43	1934-36, 1951, unknown
Number of people executed:	35	183	773	190	7
per cent male	*100*	*96.7*	*96.3*	*76.8*	*100*
per cent female	*0*	*3.3*	*3.7*	*23.2*	*0*
Number of Party members:	0	0	55	2	0
Social status of victims: largest category		6	2	1	
per cent		*67.92*	*32.1*	*28.4*	
2nd largest social status:		7b	6	6	
per cent		*20.75*	*24.73*	*20.3*	
Age of youngest	21	23	20	20	19
Age of oldest	76	74	86	71	52
Mean age	44.2	51	48.6	44	33.8
married (inc. presumed married) (*per cent*)		*96.4*	*89.6*	*79.2*	*28.6*
Children directly Affected by execution	8	383	1232	222	5
Property confiscated	0	8	68	7	2

Source: estimated from data in P. E. Sen'kin, *Pamyat': zhertvy politicheskikh repressii* (Saransk, 2000).

Each of the execution waves listed above had its own specific identity. Information on the early Civil War period remains sketchy in the printed source, but it is apparent that those executed in these years were convicted either for direct participation in anti-Bolshevik movements or for their former employment in the tsarist police service. Political repression during the years of collectivisation and dekulakisation was aimed overwhelmingly at the rural peasant population. Rural areas demonstrated the strongest adherence to traditional religious beliefs, and many surviving religious communities were located outside of the urban centres. The persecution of religious personnel is directly reflected in the statistics.

[46] These proportions are possibly underrepresented. No information of social status is provided in the source for 23.2 per cent of the total number of execution victims.

[47] The calculations in this table are adjusted to take into account only those entries where data are available.

A change in the social profile of those who were sentenced to execution took place during the period of the Great Terror, when white-collar workers and Communist Party members increasingly became the targets of political repression. Almost one third of those executed in 1937-38 were white-collar workers. However, the proportion of independent peasants (24.7 per cent), *kolkhoz* peasants (13.8 per cent) and religious personnel (13.8 per cent) amongst those who were executed in 1937 and 1938 remained high.

The relative lack of information for 1918-19 is repeated during the confusion of the early years of the Second World War (particularly 1941-43), when the social background of 60 per cent of those who were executed is not detailed in the printed source. The increase in the proportion of women amongst those who were executed in these years most probably reflects the fact that many men had already left the region for the frontline. It is also interesting to note that an increasing number of single people were targeted in these years.

In addition to receiving the death sentence, 85 people (7.1 per cent) also had their property confiscated, mainly during the period of the Great Terror. Of these, one quarter were Communist Party members, most of whom had occupied positions of responsibility within the republic.

Women in Mordoviya:

The total number of women listed in our database of the Mordoviya *Pamyat'* is 1271. This is equivalent to just under 14 per cent of all of the entries listed in the printed source, and just over 17 per cent of the total number of entries contained in our database.

The female victims of political repression in Mordoviya ranged in age from 17 to 75 years old, with an average age of just over 43 years. From the records available for 823 entries in this dataset, only around a half of the female victims of political repression in Mordoviya in the entire period covered by the source were married (or are presumed to have been married because they had children). Just over 43 per cent are listed as 'single' (*ne zamuzhem*). One woman is listed as divorced (*razvedena*), and a further 55 as 'widow' (*vdova*). 366 women are listed as having children, and 954 children were affected by the arrest of their mother.[48] Five of the women, with ten children between them, are listed as 'single' mothers. Almost 14 per cent are listed in this dataset as *inogordnie*, and only four per cent were residents of Saransk. Over ten per cent were from Zubovo-Polyanskii *raion*. Seven of the women, none of whom were executed, are listed as members of the Communist Party.

Data are available on the social status of 985 women. The largest number of arrests – 472 (47.9 per cent) - was made amongst women listed as independent peasants (*krest'yanka edinolichnitsa*), most likely women who had evaded the drives towards the collectivisation of agriculture in the 1930s. In contrast, collective farm peasants (that is, those recorded in the printed source as *kolkhoznitsa*) constituted 9.1 per cent of the arrests. This data perhaps reflects the slow rate of collectivisation in the republic. Other significant groups subject to arrest included religious personnel (15.7 per cent) and, amongst white-collar workers, those individuals who were listed in the Mordoviya *Pamyat'* as 'housewife' (*domokhozyaika*) (9.1 per cent).

No date of conviction is available for seven of the entries in this part of the database. A further eleven women were convicted after Stalin's death in March 1953. Only one woman, Anis'ya Andreevna Eroshkina, was arrested before 1929, and this was for her involvement in counter-revolutionary activities, for which she was

[48] The number of children per mother ranged up to eight.

sentenced to two years' imprisonment. There were, therefore, 1253 arrests of women in Mordoviya during the period from 1929 to 1952. Of the chronological periods of particular interest to our study, 43.22 per cent of the arrests took place during the years of collectivisation and dekulakisation, and a further 17.62 per cent of arrests took place during the two years of the 'Great Terror'. The war years, from 1941 to 1945, account for 28.71 per cent of the entries in this dataset. The majority of women (72.07 per cent) were given sentences of imprisonment, and a further 15.08 per cent were given sentences involving exile. 6.3 per cent of cases resulted in executions. Almost five per cent of women were released, either without charge (because of insufficient evidence, for example) or because they had already served their time during the investigation.

A total of 79 women were sentenced to execution. 44 of these convictions were made during the war years (1941-45). Data on the social status of women who were executed is available in only 37 cases. Of these, over 45 per cent (17 in total) were independent peasants. In contrast, only one *kolkhoznitsa* was executed. Almost 19 per cent of the women who were executed were religious personnel, and just over 16 per cent were white-collar workers.

Table 13
Women: Summary of Social Status, including Execution Victims

Occupation code:	Social status	All women	% of 985	including Executions	% of 37
0	No entry in source	[286]		[42]	
1	blue-collar	53	5.4	3	8.1
2	white-collar	171	17.4	6	16.2
3	kolkhoz peasantry	90	9.1	1	2.7
4	cooperative kustar				
5	non-cooperative kustar	1	0.1		
6	independent peasantry	472	47.9	17	45.9
[7] including:	Miscellaneous	[198]		[10]	
7a	temporarily unemployed	25	2.5		
7b	religious personnel	155	15.7	7	18.9
7c	military personnel				
7d	prisoner, exile, deserter	6	0.6	3	8.1
7e	Pensioner	1	0.1		
7f	Student	2	0.2		
8	'unemployed' in source	9	0.9		
Total		985	100.0	37	100.0

Source: estimated from data in P. E. Sen'kin, *Pamyat': zhertvy politicheskikh repressii* (Saransk, 2000).

The vast majority of women arrested in Mordoviya were charged, often in combination with another statute, under a section of Article 58, particularly 58-10, of the criminal code. Only 106 women (out of 1241 cases where we have the appropriate information) were not. The charge of 'family member' (ChSIR: *chlen semei izmennikov rodiny*) or 'blood relative' of an 'enemy of the Motherland' was used in 44 cases. Only five of these charges were made during the period of the Great Terror,

when this particular 'crime' was introduced to the statute books. Most of the ChSIR charges were levelled against women during the Second World War. During the Great Terror, seven women were charged specifically with 'counter-revolutionary activities', and one of these was sentenced to execution.

Conclusions:

The data presented in this paper provide preliminary evidence of how the purges operated on a regional level in the Soviet Union under Stalin. By moving the focus of 'victim studies' away from the major industrial centres, we are able to see how the processes of political repression operated in a relatively underdeveloped region of the country, especially one in which the progress of collectivisation appears to have been comparatively slow. It is not possible at this stage to gauge the extent to which the development of the local economy was disrupted by the processes and outcomes of the terror in Mordoviya, but the purges must certainly have caused a considerable amount of upheaval, especially in the republic's agricultural regions.

Unfortunately, the printed source from which the data for analysis in this paper were taken does not provide any detail of the nationality of the victims of political repression. We are unable, therefore, to examine the impact of the various 'national operations' in the MASSR. Neither are we able to draw any conclusions about the impact in Mordoviya of one of the identified motivations behind the Great Terror, namely the perceived threat of the potential emergence of a 'fifth column' in the years immediately preceding the Second World War.[49] We are, however, able to say a little more about the purges as an exercise in social cleansing.[50] Two of the targeted social groups for political repression in Mordoviya were the independent peasantry and religious personnel, both of which represented the 'old regime' in the face of Soviet attempts to impose a new social order. Economically inactive social groups, such as housewives, also appear to have been disproportionately targeted. In addition, the older age groups, especially those in the over 40 years of age cohort, were disproportionately victims of political repression. Many of these individuals were in their seventies and eighties and were more likely, we may assume, to have been less economically productive and more socially dependent.

A further point is worthy of mention here. Although our analysis of the data in the Mordoviya *Pamyat'* has not specifically focused on an examination of the waves of political repression that took place after the years of the Great Terror, it is clear from the available evidence that the processes of arrest, conviction and execution carried on into the 1940s, and were particularly noticeable in the early years of the Second World War. Certainly this was not unique to the MASSR, but it is a process that, with further investigation, may offer new insight into the full course of Soviet political repression under Stalin.

---

[49] For more on the 'fifth column' as motivation, see O. Khlevnyuk, 'The Objectives of the Great Terror, 1937-38', in J. Cooper, M. Perrie and E. A. Rees (eds), *Soviet History, 1917-53* (London, 1995); and for its impact in Leningrad, see Ilic, 'The Great Terror in Leningrad'.

[50] This line of investigation has been traced in D. 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*, nos. 1-2, vol. 39, 1998, pp. 119-48; and D. R. Shearer, 'Social Disorder, Mass Repression and the NKVD during the 1930s', *Cahiers du Monde russe*, nos. 2-4, vol. 42, 2001, pp. 505-34, reprinted in McLoughlin and McDermott, *Stalin's Terror*. For the impact of 'social cleansing' in Leningrad, see Ilic, 'The Great Terror in Leningrad'.

Recycled Victims: the Great Terror in the Komi ASSR[1]

Christopher Joyce

For several decades western historiography on the Great Terror tended to focus on the elite from the major cities of Moscow and Leningrad. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the opening up of the state archives it has become increasingly possible to view how the Great Terror unfolded across the remainder of the country. Various regional studies on the terror have provided a more complete picture of how the regions implemented and reacted to central policies.[2] In recent years detailed information has appeared on the actual victims of the Soviet system, creating the opportunity of studying the impact of the Great Terror at its very lowest level. Following on from the statistical analysis of Great Terror victims in Leningrad, this article on the Komi Republic examines the social background of the victims of the repressions and attempts to highlight some of the main demographic characteristics of the purge victims.[3]

The Komi Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR):

The territory of the current Komi Republic and its predecessor, the Komi ASSR, is largely based on those areas historically occupied by the Komi ethnic group, which are mainly located on the Russian plain in the north-western region of the Russian Federation (RSFSR).[4] To the north and west is Arkhangel'sk oblast', to the east Tyumen' oblast' and to the south and south-east Perm' (Molotov) and Kirov oblasti.[5] The region is split in half by the Timanskii mountain range, which runs from the north-west to the south-east. Between these highlands and the Urals to the east lie the Pechora lowlands, which are dominated by the mighty Pechora river and its many tributaries. The combination of a harsh, continental climate, poor drainage and permafrost ensures that much of the region is covered by tundra and taiga.[6] The Komi republic contains a wealth of natural resources which are largely responsible for the development of the region during the twentieth century. Much of the area is covered by forests of economic importance, and deposits of minerals (coal, oil, iron,

[1] This paper was prepared with the financial support of grant no. R 000239543 from the British Economic and Social Research Council.

[2] J. R. Harris, 'The Purging of Local Cliques in the Urals Region, 1936-7', in S. Fitzpatrick (ed.), *Stalinism: New Directions* (London, 2000) ch. 9; R. T. Manning, 'The Great Purges in a Rural District: Belyi Raion Revisited', in J. A. Getty and R. T. Manning (eds), *Stalinist Terror: New Perspectives* (Cambridge, 1993).

[3] M. Ilic, 'The Great Terror: Leningrad – A Quantitative Analysis', in S. G. Wheatcroft (ed.), *Challenging Traditional Views of Russian History* (Basingstoke, 2002) pp. 147-70.

[4] The Komi people (also know as zyryan during the tsarist era) can also be found in small enclaves in north-west Siberia and the Kola peninsular. Their native language is close to the komi-permyak and udmurt languages and all three belong to the Perm' branch of Finno-Ugric languages. See *Bol'shaya Sovetskaya Entsiklopediya (BSE)*, tom 22 (Moscow, 1953) p. 138. Other Finno-Ugric languages include Karelian, Estonian and Mordovian.

[5] *BSE*, p.140.

[6] *BSE*, pp. 140–1. Together with its tributaries the Usa and Izhma, the Pechora river is the largest river in northern Europe.

manganese ore, non-ferrous metals, asphalt, gypsum, phosphorous etc.) are scattered across the region.[7]

Administrative History:

Tsarist Era

The Komi people and their territory have had integral links with ethnic Russians since the fourteenth century when the area was absorbed into the Moscow principality.[8] Throughout the tsarist era the area remained at the periphery of the empire and was relatively untouched by any industrial development. The lack of any road or rail network in the region and the reliance on seasonal river routes minimised external links, and these factors meant that the local population engaged primarily in subsistence farming. Pockets of ethnic Russians were found in the major settlements and along the rivers Usa and Pechora, whilst the majority of Komis lived in rural areas.[9]

Soviet Era

During the early years of the Bolshevik regime, much of the local propaganda and Party work was led by ethnic Russians, as had been the case during the 1905 revolution. The first Bolshevik organisation was created in June 1918 in Ust'-Sysol'sk (the present day capital, Syktyvkar), soon followed by Party cells across the area. In August 1918, as part of the Allied intervention, British and American forces landed in northern Russia, seizing Arkhangel'sk and advancing towards Pechora and the rest of Komi. Some Bolshevik leaders were killed by the Allies but by September 1918 the advance of the Anglo-American forces had come to a standstill and the troops were eventually withdrawn.[10]

As the Russian Civil War drew to a close the Bolshevik government began to create ethnic-based administrative units as their manifesto had promised. On 22 August 1921 the Komi Autonomous Oblast' (Komi AO) was created within the RSFSR with its capital located in Ust'-Sysol'sk (Syktyvkar).[11] The autonomous nature of the Komi oblast' was fiercely guarded by the Komi leadership and intelligentsia. Attempts to downgrade the status of the oblast' during its inclusion in the Severnyi krai in 1929 were prevented by local opposition.[12] In February 1936, in recognition of the anticipated wide-scale development of northern Komi, the raiony Ust'-Usinskii, Izhemskii and Ust'-Tsilemskii were amalgamated to create the Pechorskii okrug.[13] In December 1936, in response to the proclamation of the new

---

[7] *BSE*, p. 141.

[8] *BSE*, p. 141.

[9] *BSE*, pp. 139-40.

[10] Some notable Bolsheviks either died in combat or were executed during the allied advance, including G. Khatanzeiskii, the founder of the Bolshevik cell in Pechora, and V. F. Batmanov, the chairman of the Ust'-Tsilemskii uispolkom. See *BSE*, pp. 143-4.

[11] *BSE*, p. 144. With the creation of Komi AO all *uezdy* and *volosti* within the region were abolished and replaced with 12 *raiony*: Ust'-Tsilemskii, Ust'-Usinskii, Troitsko-Pechorskii, Udorskii, Ust'-Vymskii, Storozhevskii, Syktyvdinskii, Ust'-Kulomskii, Priluzskii, Letskii, Sysol'skii. See N. A. Morozov, 'Istrebitel'no-trudovye gody', in *Pokayanie – Martirolog*, tom 1 (Syktyvkar, 1998), p. 26.

[12] In 1929 the Komi AO was included within the Severnyi krai, along with Arkhangel'sk and Vologda oblasti.

[13] Morozov, 'Istrebitel'no-trudovye gody', p. 27.

Soviet Constitution, the status of Komi within the RSFSR was upgraded to become the Komi Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (Komi ASSR).[14] However, it was not until July and August 1938 (20 months later) that the Komi authorities began to establish the appropriate organisations for an autonomous republic, namely a Supreme Soviet, Supreme Court, Sovnarkom and so on. The slow development of these symbols of nominal Komi autonomy was a direct result of the terror that enveloped the region from late 1936 to the end of 1938.[15]

Economic Development:
The disruption of the revolution and civil war in the Komi Republic was short-lived and economic activity had returned to pre-war levels by 1925. This rapid recovery was solely due to the original low levels of industrial development within the region. Small-scale mining of oil, iron and salt had operated within the republic since the eighteenth century but the remote nature of the region and the virtual absence of any transport network had prevented any industrial expansion.[16] However, the vast wealth of natural resources within the region was irresistible to the Soviet authorities and plans soon developed for the assimilation of Komi into the national economy. During the first five-year plan initial workings were begun in the Ukhta oil fields (1930) and the Pechora coal basin (1931) as well as establishing a stable agricultural base and the essential support structures for the development of a localised civil society.[17] These initial developments inspired the authorities to propose adventurous plans for the further industrial exploitation of the region. The second five-year plan envisaged the development of a fuel-energy base in the north-eastern European section of the USSR, which would be dominated by the Pechora coal basin and a new industrial and transport network.[18]

The fulfilment of these grand development plans required considerable labour resources which this remote region lacked. As a result, the republic was heavily reliant on the labour provided by the Gulag, which had been present in the region since the OGPU Ukhtinskaya expedition and the establishment of the Northern Camps of Special Significance (SEVLON) in 1929.[19]

---

[14] *BSE*, tom 22, p. 140.

[15] I. L. Zherebtsov (ed.), *Svyaz' vremen* (Syktyvkar, 2000) p. 402.

[16] *BSE*, tom 22, pp. 142, 144.

[17] The first Machine-Tractor Station in Komi was opened in 1931. In 1932 a pedagogical institute was opened in Syktyvkar and this was the first higher education establishment in Komi. *BSE*, tom 22, p. 144.

[18] The remote nature of the Pechora basin created difficulties in controlling events from the Komi capital Syktyvkar. As a result, on 2 February 1936, the Pechorskii *okrug* was created to facilitate local decision-making. O. I. Azarov, 'Nemedlenno arestovat'', in *Pokayanie – Martirolog*, tom 1 (Syktyvkar, 1998) p. 513.

[19] The first Gulag foray into Komi was the Ukhtinskaya expedition which was sent from the Solovetskii camp on 6 July 1929 to investigate oil deposits in the Ust'-Ukhtinskii raion. SEVLON, which was one of the first camps organised as a result of the SNK USSR decree (11 July 1929) that called for the use of prison labour to colonise and develop remote areas of the USSR, was spread across Komi and Arkhangel'sk oblasti. See M. B. Smirnov, *Sistema ispravitel'no-trudovykh lagerei v SSSR 1923-1960* (Moscow, 1998) pp. 379, 497.

GULAG:
The increase in the Komi population from 215,600 in 1926 to 318,900 in 1939 can largely be attributed to the growth of the Gulag in the region.[20] During this period thousands of special settlers and Gulag prisoners were dispatched to Komi to meet the considerable labour demands required by the NKVD construction and timber departments. Table 1 shows the considerable growth in the penal population within the Komi republic during the 1930s. Those listed as settlers include a large number of women and children who were deported to the area as family units. The number of settlers within Komi remained fairly stable throughout the 1930s with the exception of 1932 when the Soviet campaigns of collectivisation and dekulakisation led to a large influx of settlers to the region. The Gulag population also remained fairly stable during the first half of the 1930s but the onset of the Great Terror led to an explosion in the number of Gulag prisoners, which was accompanied by a corresponding expansion in the number of camps within the region.

Table 1
Gulag Prisoners and Special Settlers in Komi[21]

Date	Number of settlers	Number of Gulag inmates
23 October 1930	18971	--
January 1932	39184	*9012
June 1933	24932	*20886
1 September 1934	20166	*22612
1 January 1935	--	20730
1 January 1936	--	21750
1 January 1937	--	31035
1 January 1938	17798	73729
1 July 1938	20172	--
1 October 1938	--	106390
1 January 1939	18968	112550
1 January 1940	18941	95825

*annual average figures

Sources:
Settlers: 1930-34: G. F. Dobronozhenko and L. S. Shabalova, ‘Likvidatsiya kulachestva i deportatsiya krest’yan v severnyi krai’, in *Pokayanie – Martirolog*, tom 4 (Syktyvkar, 1998) pp. 54-6.
1938-40: V. N. Zemskov, *Spetsposelentsy v SSSR 1930-60* (Moscow, 2003) pp. 33, 40-1, 50.
Gulag: M. B. Smirnov, *Sistema ispravitel’no-trudovykh lagerei v SSSR 1923-1960* (Moscow, 1998) pp. 314, 498; A. I. Kokurin and N. V. Petrov, *Gulag 1917-1960* (Moscow, 2000) p. 415 (doc 91).

[20] *BSE*, tom 22, p. 140.
[21] The Gulag figures from 1935–37 are for Ukhtpechlag. 1938 data are for the camps Ukhtpechlag and Lokchimlag; the numbers for 1939–40 are the combined totals of Lokchimlag, Sevzheldorlag, Ust’vymlag, Vorkutlag and Ukhto-Izhemlag.

The main camp in Komi was Ukhtpechlag, which engaged in timber felling, railway construction and various types of mining across the republic. By 1938 the number of prisoners and the spatial dislocation of the camp had created an unwieldy administrative system. To simplify the organisation, Ukhtpechlag was divided into four new camps: Sevzheldorlag (railway construction), Ust'vymlag (timber cutting), Vorkutlag (coal mining) and Ukhto-Izhemlag (radium, asphalt, oil and gas mining). In addition, a new timber camp, Lokchimlag, had been established in 1937.[22] The creation of these new camps was accompanied by a significant increase in their combined penal population, from 73,729 prisoners on 1 January 1938 (7.4 per cent of the total Soviet Gulag camp population) to 106,390 on 1 October 1938 (8.5 per cent of the total Soviet Gulag camp population).[23]

Gulag labour was responsible for the construction of all of the major railway lines in Komi that linked the new developing regional industrial areas, most of which were controlled by the NKVD. This explains why the main railway line in Komi, from Kotlas to Vorkuta, bypasses the capital Syktyvkar, which is only served by a branch line because this town was not influential enough to alter the NKVD's development plans.

Repression in Komi before 1937:

The Komi region had been a centre for political exiles since the early nineteenth century. Under tsarism this area had been selected as a destination for political exiles, including Polish rebels, Narodniki and various socialists, so that by 1909 there were approximately 1800 exiles in the area.[24]

This tradition of accommodating politically-hostile citizens in the region continued into the Soviet collectivisation and dekulakisation campaigns of the late 1920s and early 1930s, when the Komi oblast' began to receive considerable numbers of exiled peasants and Gulag prisoners from across the Soviet Union.[25] By importing these groups into the region the authorities were attempting to isolate any anti-Soviet sentiment from the remainder of the population as well as providing a much-needed boost to the local labour force. However, by concentrating supposedly politically-hostile individuals in a specific area, the Soviet authorities were not only providing fertile ground for further anti-Soviet agitation, but were also creating an easily accessible source of political targets. This group, having already been branded 'counter-revolutionaries', could produce credible victims for any future terror campaign. Once an individual had officially been branded as anti-Soviet it was

---

[22] N. A. Morozov, *Gulag v Komi krai, 1929-1956*, Avtoreferat dissertatsii (Ekaterinburg, 2000) p. 35.

[23] January 1938 figures for Lokchimlag and Ukhtpechlag. See Smirnov, *Sistema ispravitel'no-trudovykh lagerei*, pp. 314, 498. October 1938 figures for Lokchimlag, Sevzheldorlag, Ust'vymlag, Vorkutlag and Ukhto-Izhemlag. A. I. Kokurin, N. V. Petrov, *Gulag 1917-1960*, (Moscow, 2000) p. 415 (doc 91). Percentages calculated from Kokurin and Petrov, *Gulag* and J. A. Getty, G. T. Rittersporn and V N Zemskov, 'Victims of the Soviet Penal System in the Pre-war Years: a first approach on the basis of archival evidence', *American Historical Review*, vol. 98, 1993, pp. 1048-9.

[24] These exiles were spread across Komi and surrounding areas in the Vologda and Arkhangel'sk oblasti. See Morozov, 'Istrebitel'no-trudovye gody', p. 15.

[25] On 1 January 1931 the main camp in the region, SEVLON, held 49,176 prisoners. See Smirnov, *Sistema ispravitel'no-trudovykh lagerei*, p. 379. In late 1932 Komi AO contained 50,274 exiles and special settlers. See Morozov, 'Istrebitel'no-trudovye gody', p. 18.

increasingly likely, should the authorities require any victims for a future political campaign, that these individuals would be targeted and implicated in either real or fictitious criminal activities.

Throughout the period from 1930 to1936 various political campaigns targeted specific groups in the Komi AO. The first, the 'Union of Peasants' (*Soyuz krest'yan*) affair, did contain some politically active remnants of the Socialist Revolutionary party, whose membership in the region had actually increased as a direct result of collectivisation and dekulakisation and the destruction of the local clergy, which had particularly enraged the female peasantry. By late 1932 the 'movement' had been totally crushed. Thirty-five people were sentenced to imprisonment or further exile and seven died during interrogation.[26] Emboldened by their success against the 'Union of Peasants', OGPU then completely fabricated the 'Peasant Liberation Union' (*Soyuz osvobozhdeniya krest'yan*), which mainly targeted local hospital workers, leading to the arrest of 100 individuals in April 1933.[27]

Having publicly targeted the peasant population, attention turned to the local intelligentsia, particularly those associated with the development of Komi national identity. This attack was linked to a nationwide campaign against the 'Finnish Peoples' Liberation Union' (*Soyuz osvobozhdeniya finskikh narodnostei – SOFIN*), which focused on the Finno-Ugric nationalities in the Soviet Union and any links they may have had with similar ethnic groups in Finland, Estonia and Hungary. The SOFIN case lasted from 1931 to 1933 and had a significant impact on the nascent indigenous intelligentsia of the Komi, Udmurtian, Mordovian, Marii El and Karelian republics.[28] Several years later, another anti-intelligentsia campaign was launched leading to the closure of the Komi Scientific-Research Institute, the removal of fifteen teachers and the arrest of numerous students from the recently opened Pedagogical Institute in Syktyvkar, and the dismissal of teachers across the region who had any past convictions or associations with religious bodies. As a result, approximately 70 teachers (five per cent of the total number in Komi) were removed from their posts during the academic years from 1935 to 1937.[29] At the same time the Komi NKVD began mass arrests of ethnic German exiles. These labour settlers were accused of creating a counter-revolutionary group and having links with foreign anti-Soviet organisations, including the 'Society for Assistance to the Hungry in the USSR' (*Obshchestvo pomoshchi golodayushchim v SSSR*), to whom they had supposedly sent letters and a petition detailing the dire living conditions of special settlers in the Komi AO.[30]

---

[26] The leader of the Union of Peasants, M. V. Lebedinskii, had been a prominent Socialist Revolutionary leader. Other members of the Union, which was based in the Ust'-Kulomskii raion, included a bishop (S. S. Bekh) and a former tsarist colonel (N. N. Ossovskii). Morozov, 'Istrebitel'no-trudovye gody', p. 39.

[27] Morozov, 'Istrebitel'no-trudovye gody', p. 40.

[28] Morozov, 'Istrebitel'no-trudovye gody', p. 41.

[29] Morozov, 'Istrebitel'no-trudovye gody', p. 44. This anti-intelligentsia campaign was launched after a speech by Kontorin, the Severnyi krai Party secretary, on 17 March 1935, when he reported on the work of the NKVD in rooting-out nationalist-chauvinistic groups in Komi during 1926-35. See N. A. Morozov and O. I. Azarov, 'Khronika politicheskikh repressii v Komi krae, 1918-1960', in *Pokayanie – Martirolog*, tom 3 (Syktyvkar, 2000) pp. 92-3.

[30] Morozov and Azarov, 'Khronika politicheskikh repressii', pp. 91-2, 95. The main areas targeted during April to May 1935 were Ust'-Vymskii, Sysol'skii, Priluzhskii and Ust'-Kulomskii *raiony*. Other groups of settlers supposedly linked to

With this great range of campaigns and target groups it was inevitable that certain Party members would also be implicated. As a result of these OGPU and NKVD investigations and the national 'verification' (*proverka*) of Party documents, several influential Party members in the Komi AO had their membership rescinded and were removed from their posts.[31]

In June 1936 the head of the Komi NKVD, I. Ya. Vlasov, was promoted to the All-Union NKVD administration and until the end of the year the local NKVD was run by his former deputy, F. A. Andreev. On 27 December 1936, Dem'yan Grigor'evich Kovalev, a Party member since 1918, was appointed head of the Komi NKVD, a post he held and used ruthlessly throughout the period of the Great Terror.[32]

The Great Terror in the Komi ASSR (1937-38):

By the time of the onset of the Great Terror the NKVD had officers in influential positions in a range of Komi government and Party organisations. In addition to these positions of influence, the NKVD also had direct control over vast swathes of Komi territory and the population.

In July 1938 the Komi republic was home to 20,172 special settlers, who were gradually being reintegrated back into mainstream Soviet society but continued to be supervised by the Komi NKVD.[33] The Gulag camps in the republic contained 106,390 prisoners (1 October 1938) and were directly controlled by the central NKVD authorities in Moscow.[34] The all-pervasive nature of the NKVD in Komi intensified throughout the Great Terror period as the purges disorientated all other government and Party bodies.

When the status of Komi was upgraded from autonomous oblast' (AO) to autonomous republic (ASSR) in December 1936 it took twenty months for the new republic to establish the relevant government bodies. The local NKVD, however, wasted little time relinquishing its status as an administration of the NKVD of the Komi autonomous oblast' (UNKVD Komi AO). On 1 July 1937, just one month before Yezhov launched the first arrests of the mass operations, the All-Union NKVD issued Order No. 00377a, which upgraded the Komi branch to the level of an

---

foreign powers were 'exposed' throughout the period. In January 1936, eleven settlers from Sol' (Syktyvkarskii *raion*), who had been exiled from the border regions of Belorussia in 1935, were arrested for counter-revolutionary, fascist agitation, spying for Latvia and preparing to escape.

[31] Those excluded from the Party included: chairman of the Komi obispolkom (Koyushev), two secretaries of the Komi Komsomol obkom (Omelin and Zabolotskii), director of the Komi pedagogical institute (Shulepov) and a member of the bureau of the Komi obkom (Kustyshev). See Morozov and Azarov, 'Khronika politicheskikh repressii', pp. 94, 97.

[32] N. V. Petrov and K. V. Skorkin, *Kto rukovodil NKVD, 1934-1941: Spravochnik*, (Moscow, 1999) pp. 91-2, 131, 237-8. On 28 January 1939 Kovalev was replaced as head of the Komi NKVD by M. I. Zhuravlev and in April 1939 he was appointed head of the Third department (security) of the camp Volgolag.

[33] V. N. Zemskov, *Spetsposelentsy v SSSR, 1930-1960*, (Moscow, 2003) p. 33. In 1930-31 a special OGPU *komendatura* was created to supervise the exiles and settlers who were located in the following raiony: Priluzhskii, Ust'-Kulomskii, Storozhevskii, Sysol'skii, Koigorodskii, Ust'-Vymskii, Troitsko-Pechorskii and Ukhtinskii. A special settlers department was also later created within the Komi NKVD. See Morozov, 'Istrebitel'no-trudovye gody', p. 26.

[34] Kokurin and Petrov, *Gulag 1917-1960*, p. 415 (doc 91).

autonomous republic (NKVD Komi ASSR).[35] This promotion further reduced any supervisory capacity of the Komi Party over local NKVD operations.[36] The independence of the Party was also weakened by the presence of Kovalev, the Komi NKVD chief, in the Komi Supreme Soviet and the obkom bureau.[37]

The Purge Process:

On 2 July 1937, just one day after the creation of the NKVD Komi ASSR, the Politburo issued decision No. P51/94 'On anti-Soviet elements', which heralded the start of the mass operations.[38] Local NKVD departments supplied information on former kulaks and criminals in their territory, which the central authorities then collated and, in response, issued NKVD Order No. 00447, 'On operations to repress former kulaks, criminals and other anti-Soviet elements'. According to Junge and Binner, this order was unique in that the central authorities issued specific numbers for those to be executed and imprisoned in each region, whereas 'normal' procedure was to allow the local authorities to submit lists that would then be approved by the central authorities.[39]

Certain regions, which contained large numbers of former kulaks, criminals and anti-Soviet elements, were allocated huge numbers:

Table 2

Arrest 'Limits' in Komi ASSR and other selected regions

Region	First Category (execution)	Second Category (imprisonment)	Total
Komi ASSR	100	300	400
Far-Eastern krai	2000	4000	6000
Western-Siberian krai	5000	12000	17000
Sverdlovsk oblast'	4000	6000	10000
Gor'kii oblast'	1000	3500	4500
Karelia ASSR	300	700	1000
Mordoviya ASSR	300	1500	1800
Udmurtiya ASSR	200	500	700

Source: A. I. Kokurin and N. V. Petrov, *Gulag 1917-1960* (Moscow, 2000) pp. 98-9 (doc 25).

Despite housing significant numbers of those targeted in Order No. 00447 (that is former kulaks, criminals and anti-Soviet elements), the Komi republic was set a relatively low target. Junge and Binner suggest that the considerable regional

[35] Memorial' disc: entry for Komi. The Komi NKVD was subordinated to the Severnyi krai NKVD, headed by R. I. Austrin. See O. I. Azarov, 'S mechom, serpom i molotom', in *Pokayanie – Martirolog*, tom 1 (Syktyvkar, 1998), p. 526.

[36] Azarov, 'S mechom, serpom i molotom', p. 675.

[37] Zherebtsov, *Svyaz' vremen*, p. 367.

[38] M. Yunge (Junge) and R. Binner, *Kak terror stal 'bol'shim'*, (Moscow, 2003) p. 17.

[39] Yunge and Binner, *Kak terror*, p. 90.

differences set out in Order No. 00447 largely reflected individual circumstances in each area, taking into account the proximity of international borders, ethnic groups, the rebellious nature of the local population and so on.[40] The Komi Republic, as an ethnic-based unit containing large numbers of those branded 'anti-Soviet', ought to have featured more prominently. However, the Komi ethnic group was relatively small and spread across a vast region that was distant from any international borders. As a result the local population would not have been considered a threat to Soviet power. As for the large numbers of settlers and prisoners, these individuals had already been moved from their native areas to a new, challenging region and were, theoretically, already under the control of the NKVD.

Order No. 00447 specified that the operation was to begin on 4 August 1937 and was to be completed within four months, finishing a few days before the elections to the USSR Supreme Soviet on 12 December 1937. The order also listed three individuals from each region who were to form the 'troika' that would ultimately determine who received custodial or capital sentences. In most regions the troika consisted of a local senior NKVD figure, the local First Party Secretary and the local chief procurator.[41] According to Order No. 00447, the troika for the Komi republic was to include D. G. Kovalev (head of Komi NKVD), A. A. Semichev (First Secretary of the Komi obkom) and Litin.[42] However, no trace of Litin in a position of responsibility has been found and it must be presumed that this is a typographical error and the name ought to be A. P. Lipin, chairman of the Komi obispolkom. The absence of a representative from the local procuracy was soon rectified after the intervention of the local Party. The Komi obkom wrote to Moscow asking for an additional person to serve on the troika to overcome the delays that were being created by the considerable distances that had to be covered in this large republic. The Politburo replied on 21 August 1937 appointing the Komi procurator, I. A. Fedchenko, to the Komi troika.[43]

Relations between certain troika (chetvyorka) members were quite obviously strained. During the third extraordinary plenum of the Komi obkom (1–2 November 1937) the Komi NKVD chief, Kovalev, issued a report highlighting the low number of anti-soviet elements who had been exposed in the republic.[44] On 3 November the Komi obkom removed Semichev, Fedchenko and Lipin from the troika and replaced them with A. P Kulinskii (Third Secretary of the Komi obkom) and K. C. Shchebenev (head of the militsiya administration, Komi ASSR). Both of these replacements were themselves removed from the troika sometime in December 1937.[45] The introduction

---

[40] Yunge and Binner, *Kak terror,* pp. 234-5.

[41] Yunge and Binner, *Kak terror,* p. 19.

[42] V. N. Khaustov, V. P. Naumov and N. S. Plotnikova, *Lubyanka: Stalin i GUGB NKVD 1937-1938* (Moscow, 2004) p. 279 (doc 151).

[43] Khaustov et al., *Lubyanka,* p. 649.

[44] This plenum had been organised in response to a call by the Central Committee to discuss the question 'on the unsatisfactory work of oblast' party organisation in the fulfilment of comrade Stalin's instructions for the unmasking and rooting out of enemies'. See V. D. Zakharov, 'Politicheskie repressi 30-kh godov v otnoshenii rukovodstva partiinikh i sovetskikh organov Komi avtonomnoi oblasti', in *Politicheskie repressii v Rossii: XX vek (Materialy regional'noi nauchnoi konferentsii, Syktyvkar, 7-8 dekabrya 2000)* (Syktyvkar, 2001) p. 31.

[45] Morozov and Azarov, 'Khronika politicheskikh repressii', p. 108. It is unclear who replaced Kulinskii and Shchebenev on the troika although I. V. Ryazanov (First

of new members to Kovalev's troika had a significant impact on the number of people arrested. Although most of those arrested in December were detained after the supposed deadline (5 December) listed in Order No. 00447 for the completion of the mass operations, the wave of repression instigated by this measure was completed by the end of the month and the number of arrests fell sharply. Additional localised campaigns continued throughout 1938 and were usually linked to cases and individuals already detained.

The Great Terror drew to a close in November 1938 when the Politburo issued a decree 'On arrests, the procurial inspectorate and investigations', which claimed that serious mistakes had been made by the NKVD. This was soon followed by the removal of Yezhov from his post as People's Commissar for Internal Affairs, which marked a definite end to this period of mass terror.[46]

Target Groups in Komi ASSR during the Great Terror (1937-38):

The main public campaign in Komi that predated Order No. 00447 was that of the 'Sacred Squad' (*Svyashchennaya druzhina*) in February 1937. In an attempt to reduce the influence of the numerous religious personnel who had been exiled to the region over the previous decade, the NKVD arrested a group of thirteen priests led by Bishop Ryashchentsev. All were accused of counter-revolutionary activities and of working for the Germans. They were subsequently executed in September 1937.[47]

Once Order No. 00447 was issued, the Komi NKVD began the task of arresting the specified number of victims, most of whom were eventually accused of participating in a 'bourgeois-nationalist organisation'. Using pre-prepared lists of groups to be targeted, the NKVD then selected individuals from each group until they felt that had implicated a sufficient number of people. Specific groups included the 'Society for the Study of Komi' (*Obshchestvo izucheniya Komi kraya*) and other historians, members of the Komi ASSR Union of Writers and a whole swathe of economic specialists and leaders who were to become scapegoats for any plan under-fulfilment.[48] Numerous medical and pedagogical workers were arrested, leading to a severe shortage of qualified, professional staff across the region. In the Pechora okrug in 1937, out of 288 doctors and teachers, only 24 had any higher education.[49] As a result of the purges the Komi republic faced a long-term shortage of between 150 and 200 teachers.[50]

Secretary, Komi obkom from June 1938) is listed as a member from mid-1938. See Zherebtsov, *Svyaz' vremen*, p. 394.

[46] Khaustov et al., *Lubyanka*, pp. 607-11 (docs 362, 363). The Politburo decree was implemented by NKVD order No. 00762, 26 November 1938, and signed by the new NarkomVD, L. Beria, who had only been appointed the day before. Ibid. pp. 612-17.

[47] Morozov, 'Istrebitel'no-trudovye gody', pp. 45-6.

[48] Morozov, 'Istrebitel'no-trudovye gody', p. 47. In November 1937 the agricultural leaders in Letskii raion were all accused of wrecking. The head was executed, his deputy received a 15-year sentence and the senior livestock specialist received a 25-year sentence. In December 1937 the head of construction, the head of freight, a mechanic, an engineer and an accountant at the oil processing factory in Chib'yu (Ukhta) were all executed for wrecking. See Morozov and Azarov, 'Khronika politicheskikh repressii', pp. 109-10.

[49] Azarov, 'S mechom, serpom i molotom', p. 526.

[50] Morozov, 'Istrebitel'no-trudovye gody', p. 45.

Although the pace of the terror subsided in 1938 in comparison to the previous year, various groups continued to be targeted. In the summer of 1938 the NKVD revealed that wrecking activities had been discovered in the Komi timber industry, which was of major importance to the republic's economy. In June 1938 the Komi procurator, Fedchenko, led a show-trial of a whole range of Komi timber workers, which further implicated various high-ranking Komi officials, including Semichev, the former First Party Secretary of the Komi obkom.[51]

The Party:
The Great Terror removed virtually the entire upper echelon of the Komi Communist Party leadership. During 1937 and 1938 the following Party leaders were removed from their jobs and many were subsequently arrested:[52]

- four secretaries of the Komi obkom (including A. A. Semichev, First Party Secretary from 1932-37)
- seven former heads of departments of the Komi obkom
- 25 secretaries of the 12 raikomy and one gorkom
- six chairmen of the oblispolkom (covering the period 1921-37, with the exception of V. I. Sorvachev who left the area in 1924).
- 20 chairmen of raiispolkomy
- leaders of Party committees from Syktyvkar, Izhma and Ust'-Vymskii
- chairman of Syktyvkar gorispolkom

The impotence of the local Party organisation was demonstrated by the case of M. V. Lapin, the Second Party Secretary of the Komi obkom. He was accused of bourgeois-nationalist activities, which were investigated by the obkom in late January 1938 and found to be groundless. However, several days later he was arrested by the NKVD and within a week the obkom was compelled to remove him from his post and expel him from the Party.[53] Unlike Lapin, many of the high-ranking Party members arrested during the Great Terror were not sentenced for several years.[54] Having avoided being sentenced during the frenzy of the Great Terror, a few were later released due to 'insufficient evidence', whilst the remainder were spared execution and instead were sentenced to varying terms of imprisonment.[55]

---

[51] The 'Komiles' (Komi timber industry) show-trial was held in Syktyvkar on 16-19 June 1938, just ten days after the arrest of Semichev, who had been relieved from his post as First Party secretary in November 1937. Despite his arrest and loss of job Semichev did not lose his Party membership until 10 August 1938. See Morozov and Azarov, 'Khronika politicheskikh repressii', p. 116; and Zherebtsov, *Svyaz' vremen*, p. 395.

[52] Zakharov, 'Politicheskie repressi 30-kh godov', p. 32, Zherebtsov, *Svyaz' vremen*, p. 347.

[53] Zakharov, 'Politicheskie repressi 30-kh godov', p. 30. Lapin was sentenced to 25 years in a camp but he died in a camp hospital in 1944. In 1956 he was posthumously rehabilitated and only had his Party membership restored in 1988. See Zherebtsov, *Svyaz' vremen*, p. 358.

[54] For example: Lipin (chairman of the Komi ispolkom), Murashov (First Party secretary, Komi obkom), Bulyshev (Second Party secretary, Komi obkom). See Zherebtsov, *Svyaz' vremen*, pp. 399, 401.

[55] V. I. Trenev (chairman of Pechora okrispolkom) was arrested in July 1937 and sat in prison under investigation until 1939 when the RSFSR Supreme Court dropped

In the Pechora okrug, which mainly contained NKVD enterprises and camps, non-security personnel (in particular the Party) were severely purged. In 1937, 68 per cent of the staff in the region's raiispolkomy, sel'sovety, okrispolkom and otdely were replaced. Of the 11 members of the Presidium of the Pechora okrispolkom elected in November 1936, seven were repressed. The four who avoided arrest were the head of the okrug NKVD (Kazantsev), the deputy head of the NKVD Ukhtpechlag (Zakar'yan), First Party secretary of the okruzhkom (Yarasov) and the new chairman of the okrispolkom (Doronin), who had all played an integral role in the purge process in their region.[56]

The sheer number of replacement personnel who were required to fill the numerous vacancies in the Party apparatus led to the recruitment of young, inexperienced and usually poorly-educated individuals. The 'cadre famine' (*kadrovoi golod*) within the Party, which was particularly noted in the Pechora okrug, was a significant factor in the decision of the January 1938 Party plenum to begin the individual rehabilitation of those who had been repressed.[57]

Gulag:
In addition to allocating specific numbers to be sentenced in each region, NKVD Order No. 00447 also called for the execution of 10,000 Gulag prisoners. Since the Komi ASSR contained approximately seven per cent of the total Gulag population of the Soviet Union it was inevitable that a significant number of those prisoners to be executed would come from Ukhtpechlag. Many of those Gulag prisoners eventually executed had actually been re-arrested several months before the launch of Order No. 00447. From October 1936 to February 1937 so-called 'Trotskyite' prisoners in Ukhtpechlag went on strike calling for the separation of political prisoners from criminals, an eight-hour working day and standard food norms.[58] The strike ended and those involved were arrested by troiki from Arkhangel'sk and Komi oblasti. The central authorities dispatched State Security Lieutenant E. I. Kashketin to Vorkuta to purge all those involved in the strike movement. Throughout September and October 1937 Kashketin arrested and sentenced thousands of prisoners and by the end of 1938 it is estimated that he had executed more than 2700 political prisoners.[59] However, it is not clear whether any of the Kashketin executions are represented in the Komi data or the 10,000 figure listed in Order No. 00447 since his instructions to destroy all opposition in Ukhtpechlag were actually issued in a separate NKVD order (No. 00409). Frolovich, a senior inspector from the Third otdel of Ukhtpechlag, claimed that the Arkhangel'sk NKVD sentenced 2631 people to death under the same NKVD

---

his case. However, he was not readmitted to the Party until 1950 since he was considered 'politically unsteady'. See Azarov, 'S mechom, serpom i molotom', p. 521; and Zherebtsov, *Svyaz' vremen,* p. 403.

[56] Azarov, 'S mechom, serpom i molotom', p. 522.

[57] Azarov, 'S mechom, serpom i molotom', p. 527. Moves to rehabilitate Komi Party members began in July 1938 after the appointment of I. D. Ryazanov as the First Party secretary of the Komi obkom. See Morozov and Azarov, 'Khronika politicheskikh repressii', p. 117.

[58] Zherebtsov, *Svyaz' vremen*, p. 394.

[59] On 1 March 1938, 173 prisoners were executed near the old brick factory in Vorkuta. Many others were executed close to Ukhtarka lagpunkt. See Morozov, 'Istrebitel'no-trudovye gody', p. 50. These executions became infamous in Gulag legends and are mentioned by Solzhenitysn in the second volume of *The Gulag Archipelago* (London, 1975) pp. 386-90.

Order (00409) but this does not include any sentenced by Komi or All-Union bodies.[60]

The excessive zeal of Kashketin was eventually halted after complaints from other NKVD staff. In January 1939 Kashketin was arrested for abuse of power, falsification of cases and the torture of prisoners. On 8 March 1940 he was sentenced to death by the Military Collegium of the USSR Supreme Soviet and was executed the following day. The head of Ukhtpechlag, Ya. M. Moroz, who had held this post since 1931, was also implicated in the Kashketin executions and was subsequently arrested and executed.[61] The majority of Ukhtpechlag staff arrested during this period, however, were removed from their posts not for excessive behaviour towards the prisoners but for failing to fulfil planned economic targets.[62]

The Great Terror - The Komi Database:

Source

On 18 October 1991 the Russian Federation passed the law 'On the rehabilitation of victims of political repression', which led to the publication of numerous regional *knigi pamyati* (Books of Remembrance). On 13 October 1997 a decree issued by the head of the Komi Republic authorised the publication of *Pokayanie* (Repentance), which is a series of volumes listing all those repressed in the Komi Republic during the Soviet era.[63]

The data used in this paper are taken from the Komi *martirolog* (martyrology): volumes one and two of *Pokayanie*, published in Syktyvkar in 1998 and 1999 respectively.[64] A database was created from these two volumes covering those who were repressed in the Komi republic from 1920 to 1981. There are a total of 7979 cases, of which a dataset of 1668 (20.9 per cent) is from the years 1937-38.

---

[60] The Frolovich information was dated 21 July 1938 and, therefore, excludes any other executions for the remainder of the Great Terror. V. M. Poleshchikov, 'Massovyi terror v GULAGe', in *Pokayanie – Martirolog*, tom 1 (Syktyvkar, 1998) p. 536. The possibility of additional arrests and sentences of Gulag prisoners by a range of official bodies is also raised by the fact that during 1937 approximately 5000 inmates escaped from Ukhtpechlag. Roughly 4000 were recaptured and charged under article 82 or, occasionally, 58-14 of the criminal code. Morozov and Azarov, 'Khronika politicheskikh repressii', p. 101. However, such large numbers of prisoners being sentenced under these articles is not apparent in the Komi database. This could be because the sentences were issued by internal camp courts or that since escape from a camp was considered an actual crime such cases were not rehabilitated in the 1990s and, therefore, not included in the Komi *Martirolog*.

[61] Poleshchikov, 'Massovyi terror v GULAGe', pp. 539-41.

[62] The most prominent staff members to be arrested for plan underfulfilment were Zhukov (head of Ust'-Vym'–Chib'yu railway construction), Ratkovskii (head of timber-cutting for the construction department) and Dubrovo (head of prisoners resources). Morozov and Azarov, 'Khronika politicheskikh repressii', p. 110.

[63] Morozov, 'Istrebitel'no-trudovye gody', p. 4.

[64] For convenience purposes the data was downloaded from the following website which contains a complete listing of all those individuals in volumes one and two: http://www.memo.ru/memory/komi/index.htm

It is recommended that researchers use this resource rather than the CD-ROM *Zhertvy politicheskogo terrora v SSSR* (Moscow, 2002), issued by the organisation Memorial', which only contains those listed in volume one of *Pokayanie*.

It is worth noting that in the Komi Republic the 'Great Terror' of 1937-38 does not mark the high point of arrests and sentences in the region. Arrests in 1941 exceeded those of 1937, whilst those of 1942 almost equalled the peak 'Great Terror' year. With regard to sentencing, each year in the period from 1941 to 1943 saw a greater number of sentences than was the case in either 1937 or 1938. The wide-scale purge in Komi ASSR during the early years of the war was undoubtedly linked to attempts to crush any suspected fifth-column activities and was also in response to a prisoner uprising in Vorkutlag in January 1942.[65]

The difference between the two periods, and one that could be used to justify the continued use of the term 'Great Terror' is that more people were sentenced to execution in 1937-38. However, the number of capital sentences of those repressed during 1941-42 (928 cases) is only one hundred less than those issued in 1937-38 (1032 cases). It is possible that during the confusion and urgency of the war that a considerable number of individuals were executed without any form of official documentation and, therefore, this period may well have been as destructive to the inhabitants of Komi as the years of the 'Great Terror'.

With a few minor exceptions, the 1668 individuals selected for this study of the 'Great Terror' in the Komi republic were all arrested during the years 1937 and 1938.[66] Although these parameters do not coincide exactly with the specific dates of the mass operations, the use of two complete years will facilitate comparisons with other regions where the precise periods of large-scale arrests and sentencing vary. In relation to NKVD Order No. 00447 this database contains 140 people arrested before 31 July 1937 and 26 people arrested after the directive calling the purge to a halt (Politburo decree 16–17 November 1938). However, it is impossible to ascertain which cases were directly related to any mainstream campaign and which were simply the result of local NKVD initiatives or whims.

The Komi *martirolog* contains the following data for each case, although there are frequent omissions from individual entries: Name; Year of birth; Nationality; Place of Birth; Place of Residence; Occupation; Date of Arrest; Date of Sentence; Sentencing Body; Section of the Criminal Code under which charged; Punishment, including length of imprisonment and/or deprivation of civil rights; Any further information, such as dates of further arrests, rehabilitation, death etc. From the data available it is possible to calculate the number of days between arrest and sentence, age at arrest and various other date-related criteria.

Sex:
The dataset for 1937-38 contains records for 1553 men and 115 women. The proportion of male victims during the Great Terror in the Komi republic is disproportionately high in relation to their sex ratio in the local population. Across the Soviet Union men formed the vast majority of victims during 1937-38. In the Komi ASSR, the large number of Gulag prisoners, who were mostly male, further served to increase the proportion of men amongst the victims.

---

[65] S. Kuz'min and R. Gil'yazutdinov, 'Gulag v gody voiny', *Prestuplenie i nakazanie*, no. 6, 1998, p. 30.

[66] The 1668 cases do not include approximately 35 individuals who were sentenced during this period but were arrested before 1937. 20 cases that lacked arrest dates but were sentenced during the period (including one Gulag prisoner, who was never arrested but simply sentenced immediately) are included.

Table 3
Proportion of Men and Women amongst the Local Population and Purge Victims

Komi ASSR	men (%)	women (%)
1926 census	45.6	54.4
1939 census	48.6	51.4
1937-38 victims	93.1	6.9

Sources: Vsyesoyuznaya perepis' naseleniya 1939 goda: osnovnye itogi Rossiya (St Petersburg, 1999) p. 22; estimated from data in *Pokayanie – Martirolog*, tom 1 and 2 (Syktyvkar, 1998, 1999).

Occupation:
Of the 1668 records for the Great Terror period the dataset contains occupation details for 1643 individuals (98.5 per cent). Using this available data it is clear that, for each sex, there is little difference between the occupations of those targeted with the exception of the peasantry. Female peasants were particularly hostile to any anti-religious campaigns and as a result were more likely to be arrested during such operations.

Table 4
Occupation of Great Terror Victims in Komi ASSR[67]

Occupation code	Social status	Number of men	% of men	Number of women	% of women
7d	prisoners (including exiles and special settlers)	978	64.0	65	57.0
2	white-collar workers	178	11.6	11	9.6
6	independent peasants	88	5.8	14	12.3
1	manual labourers	157	10.3	8	7.0

Source: Estimated from data in *Pokayanie – Martirolog*, tom 1 and 2 (Syktyvkar, 1998, 1999).

When results from the 1937-38 dataset are compared to those from the entire Komi database (1920-81), it is apparent that male white-collar workers were more likely to have been arrested during the Great Terror (7.9 per cent for the whole period as compared to 11.6 per cent for 1937-38), whilst peasants were a high-risk group amongst female victims (12.2 per cent during 1937-38 as compared with 6.5 per cent for whole period).

Age:
In the dataset there are only 4 individuals for whom it was not possible to calculate their age at the time of sentence. Of the remainder the age range of victims spanned from 17 to 78 for men and 18 to 65 for women.

[67] The percentages within this table do not include those 25 individuals for whom there is no occupation data.

The age distribution amongst the Komi population is virtually identical to that of the entire RSFSR and, therefore, any comparisons of the purge victims with the local population will also have a wider significance.[68] The proportion of the Komi adult population in the age range 30-49 years is significantly less than the purge victims, suggesting that those targeted, having spent their formative years sometime between the turbulent years of 1903 and 1923, may have engaged in some activity that the authorities could interpret as an anti-Soviet act.

Table 5
Age Breakdown of Komi Population and Purge Victims

For entire Komi ASSR[69] 1939	as % of adult pop. KASSR	Age	% of all Victims	men as % of all victims	as % of Men	Actual number of men	as % of women	Actual number of women
36.7	--	Under 14	--	--	--	--	--	--
8.6	13.6	14-19	1.3	47.6	0.6	10	9.6	11
17.9	28.3	20-29	14.2	85.2	13.0	202	30.4	35
14.1	22.3	30-39	34.3	96.3	35.5	551	18.3	21
8.7	13.7	40-49	27.3	94.7	27.8	431	20.9	24
6.8	10.7	50-59	13.0	94.0	13.1	204	11.3	13
7.2	11.4	60-69	8.2	92.0	8.1	126	9.6	11
}	}	70-79	1.5	100.0	1.6	25	0.0	0
}	}	80-89	0.0	0.0	0.0	0	0.0	0
		unknown	0.2	0.0	0.3	4	0.0	0
		TOTAL	100	100	100	1553	100	115

Sources: *Vsyesoyuznaya perepis' naseleniya 1939 goda: osnovnye itogi Rossiya* (St Petersburg, 1999) p. 31; estimated from data in *Pokayanie – Martirolog*, tom 1 and 2 (Syktyvkar, 1998, 1999).

Amongst men, the most common age range for victims of the Great Terror was from 30 to 39 years, whereas the largest proportion of female victims came from the 20–29 years age range. It is worth noting that virtually all of the female victims from the 20-29 years age group were already prisoners held at Ukhtpechlag. Women from this age group in mainstream Soviet society were less likely to hold high positions of responsibility and, as a result, were less likely to be targeted during the Great Terror period. The greater proportion of younger women has a noticeable impact on the mean age of each sex. The mean age of male victims was 41.5 years compared to the female average of 36.4 years. The difference in mean ages between the sexes matches the data for Leningrad, but shows a marked difference from a similar rural region - Mordoviya ASSR - where the mean ages were identical.[70]

[68] For details of RSFSR age distribution, see *Vsyesoyuznaya perepis' naseleniya 1939 goda: osnovnye itogi Rossiya* (St Petersburg, 1999) p. 30.

[69] For Komi ASSR the range 14-19 only includes 15-19 year olds. The data for 60-69 actually includes all those aged over 60.

[70] The overall predominance of men within the dataset ensures that the mean age for all the Great Terror victims at 41.1 years is virtually identical to the male only

When compared to the entire database (1920-1981), the age ranges 30-49 years and 60-69 years are over-represented during the Great Terror, whilst there is a significant under-representation of the 14-29 years age group.

Nationality:
The vast majority of those repressed in Komi during the Great Terror were from the main Soviet nationality groups: Russian, Ukrainian and Belorussian. Unsurprisingly, due to the perceived growing international threat, a large proportion of Germans and Poles were included, as well as Komis and Jews, many of whom were likely to have held important local government and Party positions.

Table 6
Nationality Breakdown of Komi Population and Purge Victims

Nationalities in Komi ASSR	1937-38 Purge victims		1939 Komi ASSR census	
	%	Actual	%	Actual
Russian	42.03	701	22.01	70226
Komi	22.96	383	72.51	231301
Ukrainian	8.93	149	1.88	6010
Jewish	8.57	143	--	--
Belorussian	4.32	72	1.04	3323
German	2.94	49	--	--
Poles	2.64	44	--	--
Armenian	1.14	19	--	--
Finn	0.96	16	--	--
Georgian	0.78	13	--	--
Korean	0.54	9	--	--
Latvian	0.48	8	--	--
Estonian	0.48	8	--	--
Lithuanian	0.42	7	--	--
others*	2.81	47	2.55	8136
Total		1668		318996

* includes five individuals who lacked any information concerning nationality.

Source: *Vsyesoyuznaya perepis' naseleniya 1939 goda: osnovnye itogi Rossiya* (St Petersburg, 1999) p. 50; estimated from data in *Pokayanie – Martirolog*, tom 1 and 2 (Syktyvkar, 1998, 1999).

Although Komis comprised almost three quarters of the local population, they totalled less than one quarter of those arrested. This can largely be attributed to the fact that the majority of victims were Gulag prisoners who came from outside the region, as did many of the leading government and Party personnel in the republic who were eventually purged. However, the proportion of Komis arrested during the entire period covered by the database (1920-81) is approximately five per cent lower than in

---

figure. For an analysis of Great Terror victims in Leningrad, see Ilic, 'The Great Terror: Leningrad', pp. 147-70.

1937-38, demonstrating that the Great Terror did have an increased impact on Komis as a group.

Sentencing:
Virtually all of those arrested during the years 1937 and 1938 were either imprisoned (37.9 per cent) or executed (61.2 per cent).[71] For the entire database these figures are almost reversed, with 27.1 per cent being executed and 69.1 per cent being imprisoned.[72] These proportions for the Great Terror period only apply to male victims; the division for women was evenly split between imprisonment and execution in Komi ASSR, demonstrating that women were less likely to be executed. Sentencing during the Great Terror years of 1937-38 was concentrated in August, September, December 1937 and January 1938. These months also experienced the highest number of capital sentences.

No victim was ever released during the Great Terror and only ten individuals in the entire database had their cases dropped. In comparison, 48 people were released in Mordoviya ASSR during 1937-38. The absence of any releases may be partly due to the fact that many of those arrested in Komi were prisoners in the Gulag and therefore were already considered to be guilty.

An interesting, yet unexplained, phenomenon that appeared from the dataset for 1937-38 was the death during interrogations of twelve people, including a group of seven prisoners from Vorkutlag, all of whom were arrested on 28 or 29 April 1938. The group, aged between 30 and 49 years, included a Jew, a Ukrainian and five Russians and all were born in different parts of the country. Only three other people were arrested on the same day: one Gulag prisoner from Vorkutlag and two civilians – a caretaker and an accountant. As yet there is no indication for why this group, who were all arrested at the same time from the same camp, all died during interrogation.

Over 91 per cent of those sentenced in 1937-38 were charged under article 58 of the criminal code, which dealt with counter-revolutionary activities. The most frequently used sections of this article during the Great Terror were numbers 6 (espionage), 10 (anti-Soviet agitation) and 11 (preparation and/or execution of counter-revolutionary acts), all of which could be interpreted with considerable flexibility in order to implicate any individual.

During the Great Terror, the NKVD troiki (All-Union, Komi and Arkhangel'sk oblasti) were responsible for issuing virtually all of the capital sentences for residents of Komi. Only a handful of capital sentences were issued by other bodies: seven by the USSR Supreme Court; two by the Komi Supreme Court; three by Red Army Military Tribunals; and 15 by USSR *Osoboe Soveshchanie*.

Imprisonment sentences were mainly issued by Komi organisations (Komi Supreme Court and its branches within each camp, Komi NKVD troika, regional Komi courts). The main All-Union body to imprison a sizeable number of Komi residents was the *Osoboe Soveshchanie* (50 cases).

The process of 'justice' during the Great Terror was quicker than the average for the entire period 1920-81. This was a direct result of central orders to ensure that victims were found and sentenced as quickly as possible.

---

[71] Only four cases lacked any information on sentencing. These percentages do not include the four unknown individuals.

[72] Other sentences included exile, non-custodial force labour and administrative punishments. These percentages do not include 27 individuals for whom there was no information about sentencing.

Table 7
Number of Days between Arrest and Sentence:

Number of days	*(approximate equivalent)*	1937-38		1920-81	
		Actual number of cases	% of known sentences (1631 cases)	Actual number of cases	% of known sentences (7652 cases)
> 30	*1 month*	609	37.3	1387	18.1
30-49	*1 month – 7 weeks*	274	16.8	1055	13.8
50-59	*7 weeks – 2 months*	65	4.0	387	5.0
60-89	*2- 3 months*	144	8.8	1223	16.0
90-149	*3-5 months*	191	11.7	1452	19.0
150-349	*5 –12 months*	251	15.4	1696	22.2
350+	*1+ year*	97	5.9	452	5.9

The 1937-38 dataset has 37 cases with incomplete data for arrest and / or sentence dates, whilst the entire database (1920-81) has 327 such cases.
Source: Estimated from data in *Pokayanie – Martirolog,* tom 1 and 2 (Syktyvkar, 1998, 1999).

In 1937-38 it took only one month for approximately 37 per cent of all those arrested to be sentenced. In comparison, for the entire database of 1920-81, it took up to two months to sentence the same proportion of cases. Two-thirds of all those arrested during the terror would have been sentenced within three months, whereas the average length of time between arrest and sentence for the 1920-81 period was just under five months.

Executions and Imprisonments:
The majority of capital sentences were issued in August, September, December 1937 and January 1938. Such peak months for capital sentences are not mirrored in custodial sentences. Peak months for custodial sentences were September 1937 and July 1938. Whilst the September peak fell within one of the main purge periods the reasons for an upsurge in July are less clear. Of the 57 people given custodial sentences during July, 30 were white-collar workers holding various positions of responsibility across the republic. It is quite possible that, although they were all arrested on different dates, they were somehow implicated in one case and sentenced en masse.

Table 8
Age Breakdown of those Executed or Imprisoned

KOMI POPULATION		Age	PURGE VICTIMS			
For entire Komi ASSR[73] 1939 (%)	as % of adult pop. KASSR		Executed 1937-38 (%)	Imprisoned 1937-38 (%)	Executed 1920-81 (%)	Imprisoned 1920-81 (%)
36.7	--	Under 14	--	--	--	--
8.6	13.6	14-19	1.0	1.7	1.3	3.2
17.9	28.3	20-29	13.9	14.7	20.5	30.1
14.1	22.3	30-39	36.5	30.3	31.4	28.5
8.7	13.7	40-49	27.4	27.3	26.2	21.7
6.8	10.7	50-59	12.9	13.3	13.5	11.3
7.2	11.4	60-69	6.7	10.6	5.8	3.2
}	}	70-79	1.3	1.9	0.6	0.3
}	}	80-89	0	0	0.0	0.0
		Unknown	0.3	0.2	0.6	1.6

Source: *Vsyesoyuznaya perepis' naseleniya 1939 goda: osnovnye itogi Rossiya* (St Petersburg, 1999) p. 32; estimated from data in *Pokayanie – Martirolog*, tom 1 and 2 (Syktyvkar, 1998, 1999).

The difference in the age distribution between those executed and those imprisoned during the Great Terror is not great, suggesting that age played little or no role in determining the eventual sentence for an individual. The difference in the 30-39 years age range could largely be attributed to the fact that this age group would have reached adulthood in the early days of the Soviet regime and were likely to have become involved in either pro- or anti-Bolshevik activities. Those against the Bolsheviks were likely to have already been arrested and therefore found in the Gulag. Those pro-Bolshevik individuals had reached an age where many would have held responsible positions within the Party, Government or society. All these groups were considered important targets and as a result were more likely to receive a capital sentence.

For executions, the main victims during the Great Terror were those aged 30-49, whereas for the entire database (1920-81) the proportion of the 20-29 years age group increases significantly. The 30-49 age range is also the largest group amongst custodial sentences during the Great Terror and is significantly over-represented when compared with similar groups amongst the Komi adult population. However, when the proportions for the entire period of 1920-81 are considered, those within the age range 20-29 form the largest contingent. This is more consistent with normal crime statistics where the majority of offenders tend to be younger.

[73] For Komi ASSR the range 14-19 only includes 15-19 year olds. The data for 60-69 actually includes all those aged over 60.

Table 9
Main occupations of those either Executed or Imprisoned[74]

Occupation code	Occupation	Executed		Imprisoned	
		Actual number	%	Actual number	%
1	manual labourer	58	5.7	107	17.4
2	white-collar worker	30	3.0	155	25.2
5	kolkhoz worker	2	0.2	54	8.8
6	independent peasant	33	3.3	69	11.2
7b	religious personnel	33	3.3	11	1.8
7d	prisoner / settler	837	82.9	194	31.5

Source: Estimated from data in *Pokayanie – Martirolog*, tom 1 and 2 (Syktyvkar, 1998, 1999).

Amongst those executed, the overwhelming majority were Gulag prisoners. Since many had already received long custodial sentences the range of harsher punishments available to the authorities was limited. As a result, many of the prisoners who were rearrested were subsequently executed. In contrast, those arrested from amongst the free population experienced a considerably lower rate of execution. However, execution was not an inevitable consequence of arrest for Gulag prisoners as many received additional sentences of imprisonment. Whilst prisoners and white-collar workers feature highly amongst those imprisoned, the noticeable proportion of manual labourers and peasants demonstrates that the Great Terror affected a broad range of Soviet society.

[74] Of those executed there were eight individuals whose occupation was not known and of those imprisoned sixteen lacked any employment data.

Table 10
Length of Time between Arrest and Sentence – proportion of cases

Number of days	*(approximate equivalent)*	1937-38 (25 cases unknown)		1920-81 (7652 cases)	
		% imprisoned (617 cases)	% executed (1007 cases)	% imprisoned (5496 cases)	% executed (2156 cases)
> 30	*1 month*	15.2	51.1	12.9	32.5
30-49	*1 month – 7 weeks*	7.1	22.8	12.3	18.4
50-59	*7 weeks – 2 months*	3.7	4.2	5.2	4.9
60-89	*2- 3 months*	11.7	7.1	17.4	12.7
90-149	*3-5 months*	19.1	7.0	20.5	14.0
150-349	*5 –12 months*	30.0	6.5	24.9	13.7
350+	*1+ year*	13.1	1.2	6.8	3.8

Percentages were calculated only from those cases with both arrest and sentence data and who were known to have been sentenced to either imprisonment of execution. This resulted in 25 cases being exempted for the 1937-38 period and 327 for the 1920-81 period.
Source: Estimated from data in *Pokayanie – Martirolog*, tom 1 and 2 (Syktyvkar, 1998, 1999).

During the Great Terror the turnover of those eventually sentenced to execution was relatively quick, with half of all eventual execution cases being sentenced within a month. In comparison, half of all the eventual imprisonment sentences for the same period took up to 140 days.

When compared to the entire database it is apparent that capital sentences were issued more quickly during the Great Terror than for the 1920-81 period. However, custodial sentences were delivered with greater speed for the 1920-81 period than during the Great Terror, which, perhaps, was the result of the greater emphasis on capital punishments during 1937-38.

Table 11
Length of Imprisonments

Length of Sentence	% of sentence lengths	
	1937-38 (631 cases)	1920-81 (5496 cases)
Unknown	0	0.1
up to 1 year	0	0.3
1 to 3 years	0.5	0.7
3 to 5 years	9.7	9.1
5 to 10 years	38.4	38.2
10 to 15 years	49.8	48.1
15 to 20 years	0.9	0.3
20 to 25 years	0.8	2.2
pre-trial	0	0.7
psychiatric detention	0	0.04
wartime detention	0	0.1

Source: Estimated from data in *Pokayanie – Martirolog,* tom 1 and 2 (Syktyvkar, 1998, 1999).

The lengths of custodial sentences issued during the Great Terror are very similar to those for the entire data indicating that there was no greater chance of receiving a longer term of imprisonment during the Great Terror than at any other time during 1920-81. The slight increase for terms of 20 to 25 years is due to the introduction of longer sentences in the post-war period.

Conclusions – The Recycling of Victims:
The analysis of the purge data for the Komi ASSR (in particular, age, sex, nationality, and occupation) confirms the traditional view of those targeted during the Great Terror. Victims tended to be male, middle aged and of Russian, Ukrainian and local (in this case, Komi) nationality. The one factor altering this standard impression for the Komi republic was the presence of a vast camp system from which the NKVD could freely choose its victims with few repercussions and limited interference. Strangely, the majority of victims were already part of the penal system, isolated from Soviet society and ought, therefore, to have posed little threat to the nation as a whole. Yet the authorities still chose to arrest significant numbers of prisoners, many of whom were executed. This explains the high proportion (61 per cent) of capital sentences in the Komi republic. By comparison only 31.7 per cent of victims in the Mordoviya ASSR received capital sentences during the same period. These figures tend to suggest that once an individual had been branded as anti-Soviet there would always remain some element of doubt over their loyalty to the Soviet regime. As a result, these people, who had already been the victims of arbitrary Soviet power, stood a considerable chance of once again being targeted by the state as it recycled its victims to satisfy any national campaign. Eventually, some victims reached the end of their recycling potential with fatal consequences, but it was always possible for the authorities to find new additions to the pool of potential targets.

The Forgotten Five Per Cent: Women, Political Repression and the Purges[1]

Melanie Ilič

In her study of *Daughters of Revolution,* Barbara Clements, writing in the early 1990s, correctly pointed out that:

> As yet there are no systematic studies of how the political persecutions of the Stalin years affected women as a distinct group, but it appears that this Terror was primarily a slaughter of men by men, in which women became involved largely by their proximity to men swept up in it.[2]

Over a decade later, the first part of this declaration still remains the case. Since 1991 there has been much interest in investigating the mechanics of, and the motivations behind, the 'Great Terror', but we are only now coming to a more detailed study of its victims. We also have available a considerable amount of literature concerning women and the Gulag, arising from both detailed archival investigation into the Soviet forced labour system and oral history projects amongst survivors of the camp network.[3] Yet our knowledge of women's direct experiences of the Great Terror, and of the broader waves of political repression under Stalin, remains extremely sketchy. This paper aims to fill the gap in the literature and historiography of Soviet political repression and the purges by offering an examination of the evidence currently available. This paper also examines a sample of evidence to test the commonly held assumption that the female victims of the purges were predominantly the wives and other relatives of men who were arrested and executed. Particular reference is made to the social and demographic profiles of women who were executed during the years of the Great Terror in 1937 and 1938.

The Impact of the Purges:

The various waves of political repression in the 1930s and 1940s, and particularly the Great Terror of 1936-38, had repercussions not only for those who were arrested, but also indirectly, and often with serious consequences, for those left behind. A limited amount of evidence is available for how the arrest of men had an impact on their wives and families during the years of the Great Terror. In material terms, households were deprived of an important source of income; immediate family members, and

[1] I am particularly grateful to Mary Buckley and Elizabeth White for their helpful comments on this paper. This paper was prepared with the financial support of grant no. R 000239543 from the British Economic and Research Council.

[2] B. E. Clements, *Daughters of Revolution: a History of Women in the USSR* (Illinois, 1994) p. 77.

[33] For a useful introduction to women's experiences of the Gulag that cites some of the archival sources and memoir literature, see E. Mason, 'Women in the Gulag in the 1930s', in M. Ilič, *Women in the Stalin Era* (Basingstoke, 1999) pp. 131-50. See also S. Vilensky (ed.), *Till My Tale is Told: Women's Memoirs of the Gulag* (Bloomington, Indiana, 1999); V. Shapovalov (ed. and trans.), *Remembering the Darkness: Women in Soviet Prisons* (Oxford, 2001); and the extracts contained in S. Fitzpatrick and Yu. Slezkine (eds), *In the Shadow of Revolution: Life Stories of Russian Women from 1917 to the Second World War* (Princeton, 2000).

other more distant relatives, could lose their jobs and even their homes. Yelena Dmitrievna Stasova's letter to the Party Control Commission, dated 9 November 1937, included in Getty and Naumov's recent collection of documents on *The Road to Terror* (document 174), provides a glimpse of such economic hardships:

> With the arrest of the men, we have naturally ceased to issue stipends to their families, and they remain without any funds. For this reason, we have recommended that local chapters of our organization help these wives find work. But when they began helping them to find work, the local soviet organizations told them that the International Organization for Rendering Assistance to Fighters for the Revolution (MOPR) had no business getting involved.
>
> I would like to request your instructions as to whether the chapters of our organization should be involved in helping the wives of political émigrés under arrest find work.[4]

Stasova (1873-1966) was herself an Old Bolshevik who had joined the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (RSDLP) on its foundation in 1898. She had been imprisoned and exiled before the revolution because of her involvement in underground activities. From October 1917 she was a loyal supporter of the Soviet regime.[5] In 1934 she was involved in the establishment of the World Committee of Women Against War and Fascism.[6] In 1936, however, she fell under suspicion, charged with Trotskyite associations. She was investigated by the NKVD on a number of occasions, but managed to extricate herself from the charges. With the arrest and imprisonment of close friends and colleagues around her, she withdrew from her role as head of MOPR in 1938 to take up a less politically sensitive post.[7] Her secretary, Elizaveta Sheveleva, however, was arrested and sent to the camps.

High Profile Wives:

In addition to the hardships suffered by the families left behind, women were also the direct victims of the purges. The belief that the women who were caught up in the various waves of political repression were mostly the female relatives of men who were persecuted arises largely from what we have known for some time about the high profile cases of the various leadership elites and Stalin's 'inner circle' in the 1930s. The lives of the high-ranking men who were purged and executed during the Great Terror have often been recalled in Soviet histories; the arrests and deaths of

---

[4] J. Arch Getty and O. V. Naumov, *The Road to Terror: Stalin and the Self-Destruction of the Bolsheviks, 1932-1939* (London, 1999), pp. 485-6, citing RTsKhIDNI [now RGASPI], f. 356, op. 2, d. 30, ll. 1-3, 5.

[5] For details of Stasova's early career, see V. I. Berezhkov and S. V. Pekhtereva, *Zhenshchiny-chekistki* (Moscow, 2003) pp.67-100. Stasova was known in the party as Comrade Absolute. In a row with Krupskaya, Stalin once threatened to name Stasova as Lenin's official widow.

[6] For more on Stasova's career under Stalin and her involvement in the Comintern from 1935 to 1943, see her entry in *Biographical Dictionary of the Comintern* (Stanford, 1986).

[7] For more on Stasova's unpaid work as head of MOPR from 1928 to 1938, her own fate during the purges and reminiscences of political repression under Stalin, see B. E. Clements, *Bolshevik Women* (Cambridge, 1997).

their wives have so far received little attention. In his study of the 'Great Terror', Conquest pointed out that Stalin 'had no objection to killing or imprisoning women – in fact 'wife' is mentioned as a normal category for execution'.[8] We also now know that a special order was published at the height of the terror setting out the conditions for the repression of the wives and children of 'traitors of the Motherland'. It is evident that the wives, along with other close female relatives, of many Soviet political and military leaders, as well as leading cultural figures and renowned revolutionaries, lost their party cards, were exiled, arrested and sent to the camps in the 1930s. Many survived their ordeal, but many others did not; they were executed, died during their incarceration or committed suicide.

In addition, women were the victims of repression independently from their husband and their familial connections. Medvedev has noted that,

> The NKVD and Stalin made no distinction between men and women. Hundreds of thousands of women who had worked for the Party, trade unions, government, and Komsomol, in scientific institutions, the educational system and publishing houses, were arrested and subjected to the same tortures as the men.[9]

On the treatment of purge victims, more recently, Rayfield has pointed out that, 'Women Trotskyists shared exile with male Trotskyists, and the wives of Stalin's real or imaginary political opponents were subjected to measures only a degree or two milder than were their husbands, unless they had renounced or divorced them'.[10]

For many of the more prestigious female victims of the terror, the purges were a drawn out process, and some approached their fate with a level of inevitability. They had already witnessed the arrest of their husband, other family members, friends and colleagues; they may already themselves have fallen under suspicion and been denied party membership. The very fear of arrest imposed a kind of terror in itself.

Many of these 'politicals' (that is, those who were not specifically identified as criminal elements) were detained in prison – in the Lubyanka, Lefortovo or Butyrka prisons in Moscow, for example[11] – before being sent into internal exile, sometimes travelling freely and openly to their chosen destinations. After arrest, either in their usual place of residence or in exile, they were often again held in prison for the duration of their interrogation.[12] After sentencing, they were taken to transit camps (such as the one in Sverdlovsk or Potma; transit prisons also existed, such as the ones in Mariinsk and Saratov), transported directly to the Gulag (with an initial sentence of a period between five and eight years), or executed. In the labour camps,

---

[8] R. Conquest, *The Great Terror: Stalin's Purge of the Thirties* (London, 1971) p. 120.

[9] R. Medvedev, *Let History Judge: the Origins and Consequences of Stalinism* (London, 1976) p. 201, n. 9.

[10] D. Rayfield, *Stalin and his Hangmen: an Authoritative Portrait of a Tyrant and those who Served him* (London, 2004) p. 257.

[11] The Lefortovo military prison was rumoured to be a site of 'horrifying tortures'. See Anna Larina, *This I Cannot Forget: the Memoirs of Nikolai Bukharin's Widow* (London, 1993) p. 245.

[12] On rare occasions the NKVD investigating officer was female. Medvedev notes the example of Sonya Ya. Ul'yanova, who was 'unprincipled, cruel'. See *Let History Judge*, pp. 218, 285.

interrogations continued and sentences could be increased (to anything up to a maximum of 25 years). Any children remaining behind were left in the care of relatives or friends, or they were sent to NKVD-run children's homes.

A special transit camp, Potma, was set up in Mordoviya in 1937 to accommodate the wives and female relatives of 'enemies of the Motherland'. Conquest notes that 'Two former wives of Tukhachevsky's, together with Feldman's wife, are reported in a special "Wives and Mistresses" section of Potmalag – a camp area strict as to discipline, but comparatively mild as to living conditions'. He estimated that the camp housed around seven thousand women before it was broken up.[13] Women were rumoured to have been treated here in accordance with the political importance of their husband (or relative). One of its inmates has described in her memoirs her impressions of arrival at the camp:

> Women from Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev, Minsk and other cities were put in the first barrack, to the left of the gates. In the second barrack, which was parallel to the first, they put only Georgian women. To the right of the gates were two more barracks. One was occupied by women from other cities, and in the second one was a kitchen and a big canteen.[14]

She estimates that there were 'about five thousand women at the camp', and these included 'many doctors, actresses, singers, and even ballerinas'.[15] The women's section of the camp was broken up around 1940 and the inmates were dispersed to other camps.

We know already of the arrests of the wives and female relatives of some of the leading party members and government personnel during the Great Terror and during the broader course of political repression under Stalin. One of the more notable amongst these is the case of Vyacheslav Mikhailovich Molotov's wife, Polina Semyonovna Zhemchuzhina (1897-1970). Zhemchuzhina first fell under suspicion in 1939, but was not charged at that time. She faced interrogation from 1948 and was finally arrested on 21 January 1949, sent to prison and then to the Gulag, supposedly for her connections with the Soviet Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee.[16] Zhemchuzhina was released, following a heart-rending plea from Molotov after Stalin's death, in 1953. Having willingly separated from her husband when she first fell under suspicion in order to save her family, Zhemchuzhina (according to one account) initially refused to reconcile with Molotov after her return from the camps on the grounds that he had not fought strongly enough against her imprisonment. Molotov, a key political figure throughout the Stalin period, in interviews conducted by Chuev in 1986 that formed the basis of his memoirs, was unrepentant. He claimed that it had been necessary to arrest the wives and families of those who were repressed in order

[13] Conquest, *Great Terror*, pp. 310, 461.

[14] See the extract from Liudmila Ivanovna Granovskaia's memoirs in Shapovalov, *Remembering the Darkness*, p. 247.

[15] Shapovalov, *Remembering the Darkness*, p. 247. Granovskaia notes incidents of mental breakdown and suicide attempts in the camp.

[16] Medvedev notes that, in the late 1940s, 'Almost all members of the Jewish Antifascist Committee were arrested, and most were shot. (Academician Lena Shtern was exiled'. See *Let History Judge*, p. 484.

to isolate them from the rest of society and to prevent them from spreading complaints and negative attitudes.[17]

Despite the fact that Zhemchuzhina was arrested a decade after the height of the Great Terror, in examples such as this, Medvedev has argued that,

> The careful calculation in Stalin's crimes is also apparent in those cases where he arrested the wife or some other close relative of a leader, but kept the leader in his important job and continued to meet him both officially and socially.[18]

He cites the further examples of the arrest of the wives of the Soviet president, Mikhail Ivanovich Kalinin, Finnish journalist and Comintern activist, Otto Vilhelm Kuusinen (1881-1964), defence ministry operative, Andrei Vasil'evich Khrulev (b. 1892), and Stalin's personal secretary, Aleksandr Nikolaevich Poskrebyshev, whilst their husbands remained at liberty, as well as the arrest of Anastas I. Mikoyan's two sons and Grigorii (Sergo) K. Ordzhonikidze's brother.

Yekaterina Ivanovna Kalinina (1882-1960) was arrested on 25 October 1938. She was released shortly before her husband's death in 1946, but was then subsequently exiled from Moscow. Aino Andreyevna Kuusinen (1886-1970), also a Comintern official, was arrested on 1 January 1938 whilst her husband remained at liberty. She was sentenced to eight years' imprisonment, which she spent at Vorkuta until her release in December 1946. She was subsequently re-arrested, and spent five years in Potma until her release in 1955. She later published her reminiscences of life in the Soviet Union.[19] Bronislava Poskrebysheva, of Polish-Jewish origin and a sister of Trotsky's daughter-in-law, was executed. When Poskrebyshev protested against Bronislava's arrest, Stalin offered to find him 'another wife'. Poskrebyshev, himself, was not dismissed by Stalin until February 1953.

For those female party activists, like Zhemchuzhina, sometimes arrested independently of their marriage and family connections, Clements has noted that 'middle-class origins, a career in the economic sector and an arrested husband' were a 'dangerous combination'.[20] She also points out that 'some wives may have been arrested chiefly to keep them quiet'.[21] As noted above, Zhemchuzhina's husband was never arrested, but she had been one of the last people to speak with Stalin's wife before her suicide in 1932. She played an important role in Soviet perfume production, and was a highly placed official in the food industries commissariats in the later 1930s. She became People's Commissar for the Fish Industry for a short period in 1939, and was elected as a candidate member of the Central Committee.[22]

---

[17] On the case of Zhemchuzhina, see L. Vasilieva, *Kremlin Wives* (London, 1994) ch. 10; for Molotov's memoirs, see F. Chuev, *Sto sorok besed s Molotovym* (Moscow, 1986); and for Molotov's own role in the purges, see D. H. Watson, *Molotov: a Biography* (forthcoming).

[18] Medvedev, *Let History Judge*, p. 309.

[19] A. Kuusinen, *Before and After Stalin: a Personal Account of Soviet Russia from the 1920s to the 1960s* (London, 1974).

[20] Clements, *Bolshevik Women*, p. 285.

[21] Clements, *Bolshevik Women*, p. 281.

[22] For more on Zhemchuzhina's arrest and involvement with the Jewish Antifascist Committee, see J. Rubinstein and V. P. Naumov (eds), *Stalin's Secret Pogrom: the Postwar Inquisition of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee* (London, 2001).

Rayfield points out that, after the revolution, it was a common practice that, 'Wives of leading revolutionaries were placed in inconspicuous but crucial government and party posts'; yet by the 1930s, Rayfield claims rather simplistically that 'Stalin removed women from power as assiduously as he dismissed Jews'.[23] Clements cites the further example of Anna V. Reiman, a trade union activist after the revolution, who was herself denounced as an 'enemy of the people' in 1936, and successfully appealed her expulsion from the Communist Party. However, after the arrest of her husband, Alexander Putyn, she was again expelled from the party, arrested and sent to the camps, this time as a 'wife of an enemy of the people'. She was released in 1946 and rehabilitated in 1955.[24]

The wives and female relatives of other leading party figures were in many other ways less fortunate. Nikolai Ivanovich Bukharin's third wife, Anna Mikhailovna Larina, was separated from her infant son, Yury, when she was exiled and arrested in 1937. On her detention in June 1937, Larina was given a choice of five places to live (Aktyubinsk, Akmolinsk, Astrakhan, Semipalatinsk and Orenburg). She was exiled to Astrakhan, where she was subsequently arrested on 20 September 1937. She was sentenced in 1938, initially to 15 years imprisonment. She was released from the camps in 1945, but after that remained in exile until her rehabilitation. She did not see her son again until 1956. Anna Larina's mother, Yelena Grigoryevna, was arrested in January 1938. Larina's memoirs detail the meetings she had with other wives and relatives during her own long years of exile and internment.[25]

The families of Stalin's first wife (Yekaterina Svanidze, m. 1905, d. 1909) and his second wife (Nadezhda Sergeyevna Alliliyueva, m. 1918, d. 1932)[26] were not spared.[27] Yekaterina's sister-in-law, Maria Svanidze, was arrested; Nadezhda's older sister, Anna Sergeyevna Redens (Allilyueva), and sister-in-law, Zhenya Allilyueva, were arrested sometime after her suicide in 1932. Anna Larina notes that Anna Sergeyevna Redens 'returned from exile half-mad'.[28] In the case of his own children, a woman rumoured to be Stalin's illegitimate daughter, Praskovya (Pasha) Georgievna Mikhailovskaya, was rounded up and sent to the camps in the 1930s.[29] Stalin's daughter-in-law, Yulia Mel'tser, a Jew and mother of Stalin's first grandchild,

---

[23] Rayfield, *Stalin and his Hangmen*, pp. 90, 257.

[24] Clements, *Bolshevik Women*, p. 285.

[25] For the memoirs of Bukharin's wife, originally published in Russian during the years of *glasnost'* under Gorbachev, see Larina, *This I Cannot Forget*.

[26] Stalin and Nadezhda did not officially register their relationship until some time after they started to live together; she committed suicide by shooting herself in 1932. The doctors who signed the report on her death were later executed.

[27] Medvedev argues that the claim put forward by Svetlana Alliluyeva (the daughter of Stalin and Nadezhda Allilyueva) that Beriya was responsible for the arrest of her family members was 'a deliberate lie'. See Medvedev, *Let History Judge*, p. 197.

[28] Larina, *This I cannot Forget*, p. 299. Anna Sergeyevna's husband, Stanislav Redens, was a senior official in the Moscow secret police in the early 1930s. He was responsible for much of the political repression in Moscow during the Great Terror and for the decimation of the party and government leadership in Kazakhstan in 1937. He as subsequently arrested and shot.

[29] Rayfield, *Stalin and his Hangmen*, pp. 13, 459, citing B. S. Ilizarov, *Tainaya zhizn' Stalina* (Moscow, 2002) pp. 284-6.

was imprisoned for two years from October 1941 after his son, Yakov, had been captured (and later shot) by the Germans.

Lenin's widow, Nadezhda Konstantinova Krupskaya (1869-1939), and his two surviving sisters, Anna Il'inichna Ul'yanova-Elizarova (1864-1935) and Mariya Il'inichna Ul'yanova (1878-1937), however, weathered the storm; all three appear to have died of natural causes. Indeed, Krupskaya and Mariya Il'inichna are reported to have petitioned Stalin directly on several occasions about the arrest of their colleagues, but were mostly rebuffed. Lenin's personal secretary, Lidya A. Fotieva, also survived unharmed.

Conquest points out that 'there are many other cases of Old Bolshevik women surviving'.[30] A number of leading *Bolshevichki* – such as the surviving former heads of the Communist Party's Women's Department, the *Zhenotdel*,[31] Klavdiya Ivanovna Nikolaeva (1893-1944)[32] and Aleksandra Vasil'evna Artyukhina (1889-1969), and a number of its staffers, including Lyudmila Nikolaevna Stal' (1872-1939) - seem to have survived the round up of Old Bolsheviks that took place in the 1930s. Even the Soviet Union's best-known 'Bolshevik feminist', Aleksandra Mikhailovna Kollontai, herself feared arrest in 1937 and 1938. Like many others in her position, she was kept under surveillance in her diplomatic post as Soviet ambassador to Sweden, but survived the purges to die a natural death in 1952. There are many examples also of the politically active wives of victims of the Great Terror surviving the round-up of family members. For example, when the People's Commissar for Justice from 1936, Nikolai V. Krylenko, was arrested and executed in 1938, his wife, Yelena Rozmirovich, continued in her post in the party archives. Central Control Commission functionary E. Yaroslavsky's wife, Klavdia Kirsanova (1888-1945), rector of the Leninist School of the Comintern, also escaped arrest, despite falling under suspicion and being dismissed from her job in 1936.[33]

Other *Bolshevichki*, however, did suffer. For example, Ol'ga Vladimirovna Pilatskaya (1884-1937) joined the RSDLP in 1904. She worked in Moscow after revolution as a Cheka operative, and then moved to the Ukraine in 1922, where she headed the Ukrainian *Zhenotdel* from 1926 to 1930. She was arrested in 1937. Polish-born Ruzia Yosifovna Chernyak (b. 1900; née Todorskaya) joined the Bolsheviks in 1917 and conducted political work in the Red Army after the revolution. She was arrested in 1937, and died in prison.

The Arrest of Family Members:

The practice of arresting relatives because of their association with individuals engaged in counter-revolutionary activities was not specific to the Stalin era, but measures were introduced in the 1930s that formalised this process. Female relatives had fallen victim to the various rounds of arrest and persecution that took place against counter-revolutionaries, political oppositionists and the so-called *kulaks* (rich peasants) during the Civil War of 1918-20, the various non-Bolshevik activists during the 1920s, and in the years of collectivisation and dekulakisation from the late 1920s.

---

[30] Conquest, *Great Terror*, p. 120.

[31] Sofia Nikolaevna Smidovich (b. 1872) died in 1934.

[32] Nikolaeva was one of only two women (with Krupskaya) to sit as full members on the 1934 Central Committee. She was also on the 1939 Central Committee, despite the fact that she was, according to Conquest, *Great Terror*, p. 121, 'an ex-Zinovievite'.

[33] See her entry in *Biographical Dictionary of the Comintern*.

Many of those arrested during the early years of Soviet rule were forced into internal exile, labour colonies and resettlement camps. This practice continued into the late 1930s and early 1940s with the forcible uprooting and resettlement of various national and ethnic groups in the immediate pre-war period – partly in connection with the annexation of the Baltic States - and in the early years of the Second World War.

The formal criminalisation of 'members of the family of traitors of the Motherland' was first introduced on 8 June 1934 against the relatives of serving military personnel who had fled abroad. Family members remaining in the Soviet Union could be detained in the labour camps for a period of time between five or ten years, or sent into exile in Siberia for 5 years.[34] Commenting on the application of these regulations, Medvedev has argued,

> Both in letter and in spirit the law applied to the families of people who were beyond the reach of the courts because they had fled abroad. Even in such cases it was unjust to punish not the traitor himself but his relatives, most of whom were quite innocent.[35]

The pressure on otherwise innocent family members was increased in the wake of the assassination of the Leningrad party boss, Sergei Mironovich Kirov, on 1 December 1934. Thousands of people (or, using Soviet parlance, 'former people' – members of the aristocracy, clergy and the bourgeoisie, for example) were expelled from Leningrad in the aftermath of the murder.[36] Junge and Binner state that 11,702 Leningrad residents were expelled between 28 February and 27 March 1935.[37]

The pressure on family members increased even further with the staging of the show trials from 1936. Medvedev, in identifying 'Other Causes of Mass Repression', argues that, 'Another reason the repression of 1936-38 became so massive was the practice of arresting relatives of "enemies", especially wives, grown children, and often brothers, sisters, and parents'.[38]

It is now evident that by May 1937, after the second show trial, plans were being put in place to extend the scope of the terror. Our knowledge of these events is enhanced by recently released documents from the Russian Presidential and FSB (security services) archives. According to one of these recently published documents, a 'top secret' memorandum of 22 May 1937, signed by Yezhov, estimated that more than four thousand individuals, who had previously been expelled from the Communist Party for their involvement in 'Trotskyist-Zinovievite activities' or participation in 'anti-Soviet activities', were still living in Moscow. There were also 2,500 family members of people who had been 'repressed' for their involvement in 'Trotskyist-Zinovievite, terrorist and espionage activities' still resident in the city. Amongst these there were more than 300 individuals who had earlier been employed in party and government organisations, or in the economic and trade union apparat, who, having lost their jobs, were now suspected of having connections with 'anti-Soviet elements' and in involvement in activities against the party. A similar pattern

---

[34] Memorial, *Uznitsy 'ALZhIRa': spisok zhenshchin-zaklyuchennykh Akmolinskogo i drugikh otdelenii Karlaga* (Moscow, 2003) p. 7.

[35] Medvedev, *Let History Judge*, p. 342.

[36] Memorial, *Uznitsy 'ALZhIRa'*, p. 7.

[37] For details, see M. Yunge [Junge] and R. Binner, *Kak terror stal 'bol'shim': sekretnyi prikaz No. 00447 i tekhnologiya ego ispolneniya* (Moscow, 2003) p. 186.

[38] Medvedev, *Let History Judge*, p. 341.

was identified for other organisations in the running of the national economy and educational and cultural institutions. Moscow was also experiencing the 'uninterrupted inflow' of people expelled from other towns. Of the four thousand 'Trotskyists and Zinovievites' living in Moscow, around 1,150 were not in paid employment. It was feared that these people, and those in other cities, constituted the basis for enemy activities against the state.[39]

On 23 May 1937 the Politburo introduced a decree that ordered the expulsion from Moscow, Leningrad and Kiev of all those who had been excluded from the Communist Party because of their associations with opposition groupings, and expression of hostile opinions and disseminating them in the press. Under the terms of this decree, family members of 'Trotskyists, Zinovievites, Rightists, former Democratic Centralists (*detsistov*), and members of other anti-Soviet terrorist and espionage organisations' could be tried and sentenced to five or more years of loss of freedom and sent to an alternative place of residence. Consideration was also being given to their designated place of exile.[40] A Politburo decree of 8 June 1937 'on the exile of family members of Trotskists and rightists' ordered the transfer of exiles from the Azov-Black Sea *krai* to 'one of the regions (*raion*) of Kazakhstan'.[41]

Within a matter of days, by 15 June 1937 Yezhov had drawn up another instruction ordering the exile of those expelled from the ranks of the Communist Party, along with their families, from six cities: the three named in the May decree, plus Rostov, Taganrog and Sochi. The designated places of exile were in Central Asia, Bashkiriya, Krasnoyarskii *krai*, and the Northern, Kirov, Orenburg, Omsk and Chelyabinsk regions. In most instances, the new place of residence was to be determined by the NKVD. Once the decision was made, families were given five days to pack up their things and to make their own way to the new place of residence. The period from 25 June to 25 July 1937 was indicated for the implementation of this instruction, and action was taken exclusively against those who had been expelled from the Communist Party.[42] On 19 June 1937, Stalin ordered the immediate expulsion from Moscow of the wives of the following 'convicted leaders': Tukhachevskii, Kork, Uborevich, Yakir (from Kiev), Gamarnik, Rudzutak, Eideman, Fel'dman, Magalif, Yagoda, Lifshits, Radek and Bukharin.[43]

It is evident from the above that the period from May to July 1937 was crucial in the build up to the period of 'mass repression'. The Politburo decree 'on anti-Soviet

---

[39] 'Spetssoobshchenie N. I. Yezhova I. V. Stalinu "ob isklyuchennykh iz VKP(b) trotskistakh i pravykh, prozhivayushchikh v Moskve"', in *Lubyanka: Stalin i glavnoe upravlenie gosbezopasnosti NKVD 1937-1938* (comps V. N. Khaustov, V. P. Naumov and N. S. Plotnikova) (Moscow, 2004) p. 186, citing Arkhiv Prezidenta Rossiiskoi Federatsii (APRF), f. 3, op. 24, d. 305, ll. 56-7.

[40] Memorial, *Uznitsy 'ALZhIRa',* p. 8, citing Rossiiski Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Sotsial'no-Politicheskii Istorii (RGASPI), f. 17, op. 162, d. 21, l. 45.

[41] *Lubyanka*, p. 216, citing APRF, f. 3, op. 24, d. 306, l. 170.

[42] Memorial, *'Uznitsy ALZhIRa'*, p. 8, citing Rossiski Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Noveishei Istorii (RGANI), f. 6, op. 13, d. 3, ll. 45-51.

[43] 'Zapiska I. V. Stalina "o vysylke zhen osuzhdennykh rukovoditelei"', *Lubyanka*, p. 226, citing APRF, f. 3, op. 24, d. 309, ll. 131-131ob. In her memoirs, p. 57, Anna Larina dates her exile from Moscow as 11 June 1937, which she indicates was also the time of the trial and execution of the military command.

elements' was introduced on 2 July.[44] The now infamous 'kulak order', Order No. 00447 'on the punishment of former kulaks, criminals and other anti-Soviet elements', dated 30 July 1937, became operational from 5 August.[45] The 'kulak order' stated that, as a rule, family members of those convicted under its terms were not to be subject to arrest. The exceptions to this were families deemed capable of anti-Soviet activity, who were to be sent to the Gulag or to labour colonies; the families of those subject to execution under the terms of the Order, living in border regions, were to be relocated to the interior regions; the families of those executed under the terms of the Order, living in Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev, Tbilisi, Baku, Rostov-on-Don, Taganrog and the districts of Sochi, Gagry and Sukhumi, were to be relocated to regions of their choice, except near the borders. The families of all of those subject to execution or confinement were to be registered and placed under systematic surveillance. Over the next year and a half, hundreds of thousands of people were arrested, and many of these were sentenced to execution.

Order No. 00486 'On the Repression of Wives':

Recent research on the purges, and particularly the period of the 'mass repressions' (July 1937 to November 1938), has revealed that specific campaigns were directed against selected sections of society, although their impact was almost certainly wider than that intended by the original legislation. In comparison with the 'kulak order' and the various nationalities campaigns initiated during the period of mass repression,[46] however, Order No. 00486 'On the Repression of Wives of Enemies and Traitors of the Motherland, of Members of Right-Trotskyist Espionage-Sabotage Organisations Sentenced by the Military Collegia and by Military Tribunals' has received very little attention.[47] Even Getty and Naumov's detailed documentary study of *The Road to Terror* makes no direct mention of this particular order. Given the paucity of literature on Order No. 00486, it is worth examining the background to it and its terms in some detail.

Having secured the exile of wives from the major cities, the Politburo and the NKVD turned their attention to what to do with them. On 5 July 1937, the Politburo issued a decree recommending the implementation of measures proposed by the NKVD to confine the wives of convicted enemies of the motherland, and members of rightist-Trotskyist espionage-sabotage organisations, to the labour camps for a period of between five and eight years. The decree recommended the establishment of

---

[44] For subsequent amendments and additions, see Getty and Naumov, *Road to Terror*, pp. 470-1 (3 July 1937); and *Lubyanka*, p. 239, citing APRF, f. 3, op. 58, d. 212, l. 33, provides details of article 145 of the 5 July 1937 decree, and article 187 of the 9 July 1937 decree 'On Anti-Soviet Elements', concerning the establishment of regional *troikas*.

[45] The text of the 'kulak order' was published in *Trud* on 4 June 1992. For the most detailed study to date, see Yunge and Binner, *Kak terror stal 'bol'shim'*. For a full English language translation of the Order, see also Getty and Naumov, *Road to Terror*, pp. 473-9.

[46] For a useful study, see B. McLoughlin and K. McDermott (eds), *Stalin's Terror: High Politics and Mass Repression in the Soviet Union* (Basingstoke, 2003).

[47] The text of Order No. 00486 was first published in Memorial-Aspekt, no. 2/3, 1993. See also *Sbornik zakonadatel'nykh i normativnykh aktov o repressiyakh i reabilitatsii zhertv politicheskikh repressii* (Kursk, 1999) pp. 430-7; and *Pamyat': zhertvy politicheskikh repressii* (Saransk, 2000) pp. 699-710.

special labour camps for this purpose in the Narymskii *krai* and Turgaiskii *raion* of Kazakhstan. The NKVD was to take measures to imprison the wives and to house their children.[48]

Operational Order No. 00486, dated 15 August 1937, required the 'repression' of the wives of 'enemies of the motherland', who had been arrested since 1 August 1936 (under the terms set out in the title of the Order). The Order required the investigating bodies to compile a dossier on family relatives, which was to include information on the head of the family (usually the individual who had already been put on trial), his wife and children over 15 years of age, and also his parents. The information was to be forwarded to the republican level NKVD, and to leading NKVD personnel at *krai* and *oblast'* level, who were then to sanction the arrest and interrogation.

The Order applied to both legal and common-law wives. It applied also to divorced wives, who had associations with the counter-revolutionary activities of their former husband; who had helped him in evading arrest; and who knew of his counter-revolutionary activities, but failed to report him to the authorities. The Order for arrest was not to be applied to wives who were pregnant or breastfeeding; who were seriously ill, or had a contagious disease; or who were of an advanced age. These women were to give an undertaking that they would not change their place of residence, and they were to remain under close observation. The Order for arrest also did not apply to wives who had denounced their husband and reported him to the authorities, leading to the investigation and subsequent arrest of the husband.

Simultaneously with the arrest, a search was to be made of the place of residence and the removal was sanctioned of the following objects: weapons; ammunition; explosive and chemical substances; military equipment; copying equipment; counter-revolutionary literature; correspondence; foreign currency; precious metals in the form of ingots, coins and pieces; personal documents; and financial documentation. All personal possessions on the individual at the time of the arrest (with the exception of necessary linens, outer and underwear, shoes and other essentials carried with them) were to be confiscated. Their living quarters were to be sealed. If underage children, parents or other family members remained at the place of residence, then essential personal property (furniture, etc.) could be left behind for their use.

After the interrogation was completed, the wife was to be transported to a place of detention (prison).[49] The case was then handed over to the *Osoboe Soveshchanie* (Special Commission) of the NKVD SSSR. For those not sentenced by the *Osoboe Soveshchanie*, the case was forwarded to the NKVD of the Far East and Krasnoyarsk *krai*, and Western Siberian *oblast'*, who were to inform the family by telegram of the outcome of their investigations and to provide details of the wife's place of detention (labour camp). According to this Order, wives could be classified as 'socially harmful' elements and were subject to detention for between five and eight years. The *Osoboe Soveshchanie* was to report on the numbers of arrests to the higher NKVD agencies, and case files were to be stored in the NKVD archives. The women were to be detained in specialist labour camps for the 'wives of enemies of the

[48] 'Postanovlenie Politburo TsK VKP(b) "vopros NKVD"', *Lubyanka*, pp. 238-9, citing APRF, f. 3, op. 58, d. 174, l. 107. See also Shapovalov, *Remembering the Darkness*, p. 240-41.

[49] The Order also gave details of what was to happen to children over 15 years of age who were subject to arrest.

motherland' (*zhen 'izmennikov rodiny': ZhIR*). The Order specifically named the Temnikovskii correctional labour camp, but other camps were also used.[50] Those wives who were investigated but not arrested because of incapacity, etc., were to be arrested and sent to the camps immediately on recovery. Similar regulations were applied to nursing mothers and elderly women. The process of arrests put in place by Order No. 00486 was due to be completed by 25 October 1937. The order was signed by Yezhov in his capacity as head of the NKVD.

The terms of Order No. 00486 were subsequently applied also to the various nationalities campaigns in the early period of the mass repressions. Petrov and Roginskii's recent study of the 'Polish Operation' demonstrates that the application of Order No. 00486 placed excessive pressure on the NKVD, the labour camps and colonies, and the children's homes. They argue that 'the flood of new prisoners … turned out to be far greater than expected, prison space was scarce and the orphanages of the secret police were also overcrowded'.[51] According to this study, faced with such pressure, Yezhov was forced to cancel the Order on 21 November 1937, directing instead all further detainees to exile rather than the camps.

From 22 November 1937 it does seem to be the case that the NKVD authorities were trying to keep closer tabs on the numbers of wives and children arrested under Order No. 00486 and the various national operations. **[**On this date, Yezhov's deputy, Mikhail P. Frinovskii, sent out a telegram saying that the original terms of Order No. 00486 should be extended only to the families of those tried by the Military Collegium of the Supreme Soviet. The arrest of wives of those repressed under the Polish, *Kharbintsy* (Harbin re-emigrants) and Romanian operations were to be discontinued. In future, these wives were to be resettled. The telegram called for

---

[50] Many of the specialist women's camps, for wives of enemies of the Motherland, were shortlived.

Akmolinsk (ALZhIR) – part of the forced labour network in Karaganda (Karlag) – 'barracks for three to four hundred people. Up to eight thousand women were jammed into the camp.' See Medvedev, *Let History Judge*, p. 341, citing B. D'iakov, *Povest' o perezhitom* (Moscow, 1966) pp. 180-1; another account suggests that 'At the end of the 1930s, there were about two thousand women prisoners in this camp'. See Shapovalov, *Remembering the Darkness*, p. 223.

Elgen, the women's disciplinary camp in the Kolyma area;

Kolyma, 'where tens of thousands of women did construction and agricultural labor', Medvedev, *Let History Judge*, p. 342. On Kolyma, see also, R. Conquest, *Kolyma: the Arctic Death Camps* (Oxford, 1979);

Magadan;

Potma women's camp was part of the Temlag network in Mordoviya. The statute is probably referring to this camp. Conquest, p. 461, states that some of the women originally sent to Potma were said to have been amnestied in 1945, after they had been dispersed to labour camps in other areas of the country in the early 1940s;

Tomsk – 'The Tomsk Camp for Family Members of Traitors to the Motherland was founded in December 1937 at Tomsk Transit Prison (Siblag). There were about twenty-five hundred prisoners in the camp. … The disbanding of the camp began in the summer of 1939 and was completed by October'. See Shapovalov, *Remembering the Darkness*, p. 238.

Yaya, part of the Siblag network, was also used to imprison women.

[51] N. Petrov and A. Roginskii, 'The "Polish Operation" of the NKVD, 1937-8', in McLoughlin and McDermott (eds), *Stalin's Terror*, p. 158.

statistical data to be forwarded on the numbers of women and children involved in these operations.[52]

The information was soon forthcoming. On 28 November 1937, S[tanislav] F. Redens reported on behalf of the Moscow *oblast'* that 540 women had been arrested: 320 in connection with convictions by the Military Collegium, and 220 in connection with the Polish and Harbin operations. A total of 389 of these had been convicted: 264 and 125 respectively. In addition, 151 wives were being held in prisons, and a further 910 wives were to be exiled from Moscow in connection with the various listed national operations.[53]

A 'top secret' memorandum to Frinovskii dated 1 December 1937 noted that 454 wives had been arrested in Chelyabinsk *oblast'*. Of these, 41 had been tried and convicted. The investigations in a further 333 cases had been completed and forwarded to the *osoboe soveshchanie*, and 80 cases remained under investigation. 190 wives were being detained at their place of residence: 7 had been tried and convicted; investigations were completed and forwarded to the *osoboe soveshchanie* in 40 cases; and 143 remained under investigation. 242 wives of those tried by the Military Collegia and military tribunals were liable for arrest, and there were a further 500 wives of Harbin deserters in the region.[54]

From Kiev, Leplevskii reported in another top secret memorandum to Frinovskii dated 1 December 1937 that 1479 wives of those convicted by the Military Collegium for 'Right-Trotskyist' activities and military conspiracy were being kept under surveillance. A further 4493 wives of those arrested under the Polish, German, Romanian and Harbin operations were also being kept under surveillance; 4151 children had been taken away from them and in most cases placed in children's homes. 12,349 wives (and 18,951 children) had already been subject to resettlement.[55]

Lavrushin reported on behalf of Gor'kii *oblast'* on 2 December 1937. Here, a total of 102 wives had been arrested in connection with the various national operations: 47 Poles, 28 *Kharbintsy*, and 13 Germans; plus a number of women being detained at their place of residence: 6 Poles, 7 *Kharbintsy*, and 1 German. A further 146 women had been repressed as wives of enemies of the Motherland, members of right-Trotskyist organisations, or had been arrested along with their husband and were awaiting the outcome of investigations.[56] In a statement to Yezhov, dated 11 December 1937, Dmitriev noted the arrest and investigation of 822 wives of those repressed as enemies of the Motherland in the Sverdlovsk *oblast'*.[57]

---

[52] N. Vert (Werth) and S. V. Mironenko (eds), *Istoriya stalinskogo Gulaga: konets 1920-x – pervaya polovina 1950-x godov. Sobranie dokumentov v 7-mi tomakh: tom 1 Massovye repressii v SSSR* (Moscow, 2004), citing TsA FSB RF, f. 3, op. 4, d. 588, l. 22.

[53] Vert and Mironenko (eds), *Istoriya stalinskogo Gulaga,* citing TsA FSB RF, f. 3, op. 4, d. 588, ll. 44-5.

[54] Vert and Mironenko (eds), *Istoriya stalinskogo Gulaga,* citing TsA FSB RF, f. 3, op. 4, d. 588, l. 43.

[55] Vert and Mironenko (eds), *Istoriya stalinskogo Gulaga,* citing TsA FSB RF, f. 3, op. 4, d. 588, l. 49.

[56] Vert and Mironenko (eds), *Istoriya stalinskogo Gulaga,* citing TsA FSB RF, f. 3, op. 4, d. 588, l. 38.

[57] Vert and Mironenko (eds), *Istoriya stalinskogo Gulaga,* citing TsA FSB RF, f. 3, op. 4, d. 121, ll. 312-14.

In Ivanovo, Radzivilovskii reported that a total of 102 wives had been arrested under Order No. 00486 by 9 January 1938. A further 37 cases were awaiting a decision, where the wife had not yet been arrested, but had given an undertaking not to change address. In addition, 17 cases were liable to arrest, some coming from other areas of the country. 65 wives had been arrested under the Polish, Harbin and German operations (along with 58 children and 13 non-working family members). 47 children had been returned to their mothers. This memorandum specifically noted that no 'errors' or 'excesses' had been reported in this region.[58]**]**

By the early autumn of 1938 the mass operations were beginning to wind down, and they were halted altogether at the end of November. An informational memorandum to Stalin, dated 15 October 1938, noted that more than 18,000 wives had been arrested under the terms of Order No. 00486 since its introduction in August 1937. More than 3000 of these were from Moscow, and around 1500 were from Leningrad. The memorandum recommended the downscaling of the operation.[59]

Formal amendments to Order No. 00486 were introduced on 17 October 1938. Order No. 00689 'on the 1937 operational order of the NKVD SSSR "on the system of arrest of wives of enemies of the Motherland as Right-Trotskyist spies"' was signed by Yezhov and Beria.[60] Henceforth, not all wives of those tried as enemies of the people were to be arrested, but only those who were, themselves, directly involved in counter-revolutionary work alongside their husband, or assisted him in this. For future arrests, the NKVD was required to have available details of the wife's anti-Soviet sentiments and opinions, and that these should be of such a nature to deem her as a 'politically questionable' or 'socially harmful' element.

The NKVD was to 'take all necessary measures' to improve its intelligence on the wife's (and other family members') opinions and behaviour, recruiting the wives of other accused and arrested 'enemies of the people' to provide this aid in the provision of such information. Parents, friends, work colleagues, neighbours and other acquaintances (at their place of work, or in their housing complex) were also to be used to provide intelligence. In the first instance, the wives of the 'most, active and malicious enemies of the people, traitors to the Motherland and Right-Trotskyist spies' were to be cultivated for this work. The appropriate organ of the NKVD was to make decisions about the arrest and repression of wives based on this intelligence, the degree to which the wife was involved in her husband's counter-revolutionary activities, how long they had been living together, and so on. The requirement to arrest the wife of a suspected enemy of the people at the same time as her husband, as set down in point 36 of Order No. 00486, was revoked and the terms of the revised Order were now to be applied. Other procedures set out in the original Order, however, were to remain unchanged.

It is not yet known exactly how many women were arrested, interrogated and imprisoned under the terms of Order No. 00486 – as noted earlier, an estimate of 18,000 was made in October 1938 - or to which camps or places of exile they were sent; it is not yet known how many were executed. We do not know either how many

---

[58] Vert and Mironenko (eds), *Istoriya stalinskogo Gulaga,* citing TsA FSB RF, f. 3, op. 4, d. 588, l. 25.

[59] 'Spetssoobshchenie N. I. Yezhova i L. P. Beriya I. V. Stalinu "ob arestakh zhen 'izmennikov rodiny'"', *Lubyanka*, p. 563, citing APRF, f. 3, op. 24, d. 366, ll. 78-9.

[60] See *Sbornik zakonadatel'nykh i normativnykh aktov*, pp. 437-8; and *Pamyat'*, pp. 713-14. Both cite as the original source, TsOA MB RF, f. 66, op. 1 (data not given for delo or list).

women were similarly treated under the terms of other decrees and orders. A recent publication by Memorial lists 7259 women who were sent to the Akmolinsk women's labour camp at Karaganda, mostly in the period 1938-40.[61]

Database analysis:
It is evident from the eyewitness testimonies available to us that the forced labour camps were overcrowded with the 'wives' (ZhIR) and 'family members' (ChSIR) of 'enemies of the people' by the late 1930s and in the 1940s. The vast majority of those who survived the Stalin years had been released by the 1950s, and most were subsequently rehabilitated. Official estimates place the total number of people (men and women) who were executed in the period from 1921 to 1939 at 747,772. Of these, 681,692 executions took place in the two years of 1937 and 1938 alone.[62] Executions continued into the 1940s. A more detailed and nuanced analysis of the available data on the female victims of the Great Terror is now warranted.

Of particular interest to this study are the ordinary women who were arrested and executed under the full spectrum of charges employed by the authorities during the Great Terror, and particularly during the months of the mass operations. The shift in interest from the mechanics of the terror to the profile of its victims, as well as the economic and social impact of political repression, now makes a more detailed analysis of 'women and the purges' possible. This study is aided by the many regional listings of purge victims that have been published in Russia and the former Soviet republics since 1991. The analysis provided in this section is based on evidence of arrests, trials and executions drawn from the following regions: Alma-Ata; Bashkirostan; Khanty-Mansiiskii Autonomous Oblast'; Komi; Leningrad; Mordoviya; Moscow; Tyumen'; Ul'yanovsk; and Voronezh.

My preliminary study of the impact of the Great Terror in Leningrad provided an insight in to the numbers and social categories of women who were executed in the city and region in the early phase of mass repression (mostly October and November 1937).[63] From datasets constructed for this study from the first two volumes of *Leningradskii martirolog*, I pointed out that, 'Very few women were victims of the purges. From the larger dataset under analysis here it seems that less than 4 per cent of those executed were women'. Rayfield also points out that '95 per cent of those sentenced to the camps or to death for counter-revolutionary activity were men', and, on the basis of estimates taken from 47,000 cases detailed in the 'Leningrad Martyrology', '95 per cent of those shot were men'.[64] If my preliminary estimates are taken as giving a rough proximity of between three and a half and four and a half per cent of all executions, this would mean that somewhere between around 24,000 and 30,000 women were shot in the years of the Great Terror. A calculation of five per cent gives a total of approximately 34,000. Who were all of these women?

As part of the earlier Leningrad study, I also advised that,

[61] Memorial, *Uznitsy 'ALZhIRa'*.

[62] Getty and Naumov, *Road to Terror*, p. 588, citing GARF, f. 9401, op. 1, d. 4157, ll. 201-5.

[63] M. Ilič, 'The Great Terror in Leningrad: a Quantitative Analysis', *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 52, no. 8, 2000, pp. 1515-34; and reprinted in S. G. Wheatcroft (ed.), *Challenging Traditional Views of Russian History* (Basingstoke, 2002) pp. 147-70.

[64] Rayfield, *Stalin and his Hangmen*, pp. 257, 302.

> …by far the largest single 'occupational' category of women who fell victims of the terror were former or active religious personnel, mostly nuns but also a few individuals who were recorded as church elders and psalm readers. These tended to be older women who did not work and, presumably, had no family or maternal responsibilities.[65]

It is not clear from the majority of the regional listings of the victims of political repression if the women who were executed during the years of the Great Terror were arrested under Order No. 00486; it is probable, given their social profile, that many were not. The evidence to suggest that many of the women who were executed during the period of mass repression were *not* the 'wives of enemies of the Motherland' can be summarised as follows: they were disproportionately single; some were already in detention for their own political affiliations; many others had connections to former and surviving religious organisations or communities.

Marital Status: few of the regional listings record the individual's marital status, but where data are available - as in the case of Mordoviya, for example - a far higher proportion than would generally be expected are recorded as 'single'; a few others are listed as 'widow'. Marriage and motherhood do appear to have offered at least some degree of protection to ordinary women during the purges.

Political Affiliation: from the limited amount of data available relating to political affiliation, it is highly probable that some of the women who were executed suffered this fate because of their own party connections, not those of their husband. Many wives did opt to follow their husband into exile; other female political oppositionists married whilst in exile. Communist Party - full and candidate - members, as well as members of the Jewish Social Democratic organisation, the Bund, and the party's youth section, the Komsomol, were amongst the victims of the purges, especially during the years of the Great Terror.

The most well-known opposition groups recorded in the listings are the former Socialist Revolutionaries (SRs, both Left and Right), most of whom had already been placed on trial and exiled in the 1920s, the Mensheviks and its youth organisation, Georgian Communists, and former 'Trotskyites'. Other smaller and less well-known opposition groupings are also listed in the sources. These include Dashnaks (members of the Armenian nationalist party) and 'anarchists'. A trial of former Mensheviks was held in March 1931. A further round-up of the Left SRs took place in February 1937 (see the case noted below), before the introduction of Order No. 00486. Many of the surviving political oppositionists were executed after the outbreak of war in 1941. Rayfield notes that, 'From Oriol prison, reserved for prominent political prisoners … 154 were taken into the forests and shot. They included an unusual number of women, among them Trotsky's sister Olga Kameneva and the legendary Social Revolutionary Mariia Spiridonova'.[66] The Socialist Revolutionary activist Ye. Olitskaya has left an

---

[65] See the sections in the relevant publications relating to 'sex ratios' and 'women'.

[66] Rayfield, *Stalin and his Hangmen*, p. 388. Mariya Aleksandrovna Spiridonova (b. 1884) was executed on 5 September 1941. For an account of Spiridonova's early life and political career, first published before her death, see I. Steinberg, *Spiridonova: Revolutionary Terrorist* (New York, 1971 [orig. 1935]). Spiridonova has received some attention more recently in the Russian historiography. See V. M. Lavrov, *Mariya Spiridonova: terroristka i zhertva terrora* (Moscow, 1996), and T. Kravchenko, *Vozlyublennaya terrora* (Moscow, 1998).

account of her imprisonment experiences.[67] The Menshevik organiser Eva Broido, arrested on her return to the Soviet Union in 1927/28, is also believed to have been executed in (June?) 1941.[68]

There is very limited information on political affiliation available in the sources of data used for the analysis in this paper, but it is worth citing a few examples here. Sof'ya Arkad'evna Bogoyavlenskaya-Lunina (b. 1892) was already living in exile, as a former member of the Left SRs, at the time of her arrest in Khanty-Mansiisk on 8 February 1937. She was tried on 5 August 1937, and executed five days later.[69] Likewise, Yelena Mikhailovna Gendel'man (b. 1910) was also already living in exile, because of her membership of the Menshevik youth organisation, at the time of her arrest in Tobol'sk on 8 February 1937. She was sentenced on 5 August 1937 and executed two days later.[70] Anna Aronovna Sangorodetskaya (b. 1894) was living in exile, as a 'member of an anarchist party', at the time of her arrest on 21 March 1937. She was also tried on 5 August 1937, and was executed on 12 August 1937.[71]

Religious Associations: a significant proportion of the women who were executed have an occupational listing in our databases as serving or former religious personnel. These women are listed as nuns (*monashka; monakhinya*), Mothers Superior (*igumen'ya*),[72] church attendants *(prisluzhnitsa tserkvi*), churchwardens (*tserkovnyi starosta*) and psalm readers (*psalomshchitsa*). Others are listed more simply as members of secret religious sects or cults (*skrytnitsa-sektantka; sluzhitel'nitsa kul'ta*).[73] Some were simply listed as former church members (*byv. chlen tserkov*). Some former nuns have a secondary listing as 'housewife' (see below). It may be assumed from this data that many of these women were unmarried. On a very few isolated occasions a woman was listed as the wife of a priest (*popad'ya*).[74]

---

[67] Ye. Olitskaya, *Moi vospominaniya* (Frankfurt, 1971) 2 vols.

[68] See Vera Broido's introduction to her mother's memoirs: Eva Broido, *Memoirs of a Revolutionary* (Oxford, 1967) pp. xi-xii.

[69] *Kniga rasstrelyannikh: martirolog pogibshikh ot ruki NKVD v gody bol'shogo terrora (Tyumenskaya oblast') tom 2* (Tyumen', 1999) p. 72.

[70] *Kniga rasstrelyannikh, tom 2*, p. 224. The source also has entries for Il'ya Mikhailovich Gendel'man (b. 1904), who was a member of the Mensheviks, and Fanni L'vovna Gendel'man (b. 1884). Both were arrested, sentenced and executed on the same days as Yelena Mikhailovna.

[71] *Kniga rasstrelyannikh, tom 2*, pp. 356-7.

[72] See the entry for Yekaterina Mikhailovna Vyatchenina (b. 1878) in Tyumen', who was executed on 14 December 1937, in *Kniga rasstrelyannikh, tom 2*, p. 222.

[73] These are particularly noted in the listing for Komi. For more on the purges in Komi, see ch. ?.

[74] See the entries for Klavdiya Aleksandrovna Burtseva (b. 1877), who was executed on 15 March 1938, and Lidiya Pavlovna Zaborovskaya (b. 1889), who was executed on 24 March 1938, in *Kniga rasstrelyannikh: martirolog pogibshikh ot ruki NKVD v gody bol'shogo terrora (Tyumenskaya oblast') tom 1* (Tyumen', 1999) p. 315, and *Kniga rasstrelyannikh, tom 2*, p. 244. There are five Zaborovskayas in total listed in the source. The others, all born between 1872 and 1892, are listed as former nuns *(byv. monakhinya*), with a secondary listing as 'housewife' (*domokhozyaika*). They were all executed on 10 November 1937.

In examining the social status of the female victims of Soviet political repression more closely, it seems that many women fell into what could be considered to be economically non-productive groups. These included not only religious personnel (as noted above), but also housewives (*domokhozyaika*) and those who were recorded in the data as 'not working' (*ne rabotala; nerabotayushchaya*) or in some other way were identified as 'unemployed' (*bez opredelennykh zanyatii*). Other, we may assume, economically-dependent groups occasionally found in the listings are pensioners (*pensionerka*) and invalids (*invalid*).

Another determinant of the level of economic contribution could be an individual's age. Of seven women executed in Voronezh in 1937 and 1938, only two were under 50 years of age, and one of these was 48. The eldest was 71 years old. The mean age for these seven women was 57 years. This pattern was followed in other areas of the country. Where sampled, for Moscow and Leningrad, the average age of women who were executed in major urban areas appears to have been lower. Even in the metropolitan centres, though, a significant number of women who were executed fall into the '60 years plus' age cohort. The ages of many of the women who were executed ranged into the seventies, and on rare occasions the eighties.

In regions that were used as places of exile and incarceration - such as Komi and Tyumen' - exiles (*ssyl'naya*), special settlers (*spetposelenka*), labour camp inmates (*trudposelenka*) and prisoners (*zaklyuchennaya*) often appear in the listings. We may assume that many of these women made no or only a limited contribution to the local economy. These were also people who had already obviously fallen foul of the Soviet system. Women also placed themselves outside the propagated norms of Soviet social and economic behaviour by continuing to farm their own land independently of the *kolkhozy* and *sovkhozy*. Women independent peasants (*krest'yanka edinolichnitsa*) were particular targets of political repression.

This paper has brought to the attention of scholars of the purges the experiences of many of the female victims of political repression in the Soviet Union under Stalin, particularly in the 1930s. It has outlined the processes by which 'wives' and other female family members came to be arrested during the period of the mass operations in 1937 and 1938 (and later) by offering a detailed study of the background to the introduction of specific decrees aiming to do just that. In this respect, the foundations for mass repression can be traced back as early as 1934, and its impact was certainly being felt after November 1938. The charges of ZhIR and ChSIR were still being used against women arrested in the early years of the Second World War. The paper has also provided a detailed outline of the content and terms of Order No. 00486.

In addition, there is a good deal of evidence to suggest that many of the female victims of 'Stalin's terror' were not, in fact, the wives, or other family members, of men who were purged, as has been widely supposed up to now. Most of the 'ordinary' women who were arrested and executed can be identified as individuals who in one way or another did not correspond with the new Soviet way of life in the 1930s, through their own religious or political affiliations, or through their failure to contribute in some way to the socialist economy, for example. It is mainly these women that history has forgotten.