



The Scale and Nature of Stalinist Repression and its Demographic Significance: On Comments by Keep and Conquest

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THIS JOURNAL HAS RECENTLY PUBLISHED two comments on my article¹ on the comparability and reliability of the archival data on the victims of Stalinism and the Soviet secret police.² The first comment, by John Keep,³ agreed on the importance of assessing the scale of Stalin's repression and did make some important points regarding the available data on this topic. Keep's comments deserve serious consideration and I will address them below. The second comment, by Robert Conquest,⁴ was very different. It did not add anything substantial concerning the question of the reliability of the archival data. It made no attempt to understand the main arguments of my article. Instead, the comment concentrated on quibbling over minor questions, reiteration of Conquest's earlier objections to my work,⁵ and arguments *ad hominem*. I will respond to Conquest's comment first.

On the comment by Conquest

The main point of my article was to show that there is no serious contradiction between the data on arrests and sentences and those on flows into and out of the different aspects of the penal system. I pointed out that the prisoners came into the system through two channels: the normal criminal sentencing system and the political sentencing system. I provided a detailed table of criminal convictions and sentences in Table A2.1, as well as the better known data concerning political sentences in Table A2.2. I also pointed out that the category of arrivals and departures in the camp system (the Zemskov data) was the result of an aggregation of data from individual camps and so is better understood as arrivals and departures from 'other camps'. This is similar to the accountancy procedures used in the tsarist penal system.⁶ When these two points are taken into consideration, it can be shown (pp. 325–329, Tables 2–4) that there are no substantial contradictions between these data sets. Conquest's claim that there is a contradiction is consequently groundless.

Conquest's comment only makes one specific reference to my main argument on the comparability of these data sets:

Meanwhile, let us note that Wheatcroft's interpretation of the Zemskov tables (better seen

in the original Russian version than in his redeployment of them) is contrary to the natural reading of its categories—and contradicts his own treatment of the 1937–38 figures (p. 1481).

It is difficult to treat this comment seriously. It is unclear what he means by claiming that my interpretation of the data is contrary to ‘the natural reading of the categories’. And it is not explained why he thinks that the contradiction remains.

Few scholars today would subscribe to the notion that there is such a thing as a ‘natural’ approach to the interpretation of historical events. Conquest’s use of the term ‘natural’ would appear to be an attempt to bolster his own position. If, however, we take a ‘natural’ reading of the data to be opposed to a specialist reading based on detailed historical knowledge of how the data were actually put together and how they related to tsarist-era practices of reporting penal movements,⁷ then I would have no objections to his describing my reading as ‘unnatural’.

Conquest does not elaborate upon how my specialist reading of these data ostensibly ‘contradicts my treatment of the 1937–38 figures’. I explained in some detail on pp. 325–329 how I think my readings of the two sets of data in fact support one another. I was delighted to read that Keep found my interpretation of these data useful and presumably satisfactory. As will be explained below, Keep has raised some justifiable queries about my earlier interpretation of the post-World War II prison and camp flow data, and I will address these queries directly below. I can see no basis, on the other hand, for considering seriously Conquest’s unsubstantiated claims on this, the main point of my argument.

Instead of addressing the main points of the argument, Conquest devotes most of his article to sniping at minor points and introducing a series of misleading or even inaccurate claims of what he alleges that I had said either in this article or apparently in private discussions with students.

It would prove to be a lengthy and tedious task to correct each of Conquest’s numerous misstatements of my position. The reader is advised to handle very carefully any claims that Conquest imputes to me. A typical example is provided by Conquest’s claim that ‘Wheatcroft now accepts that the Shvernik execution figures for 1937–38, even taken as correct, need to be augmented by some 50%’.⁸ Conquest gives no source for this statement, and it is unclear what he means by it. At any rate, I certainly do not agree that the Shvernik execution figures for 1937–38 need to be augmented by some 50%. Furthermore, I did not admit that the Shvernik report was false even for the period of 1939–40. I did argue that it was understandable that a report commissioned in 1956 to describe the level of repression experienced by the Soviet population might exclude repression carried out in newly annexed areas of the USSR. This does not so much represent the falseness of the data as reflect the need to take care when determining which areas were covered by the data.

When Conquest does eventually get around to discussing the data on the scale of repression (p. 1481) he reveals that he thinks that such estimates as those made by Alexander Weissberg and his colleagues still have some current validity, i.e. that they make some ‘contribution’ to our current understanding of the scale of the prison and camps population.⁹ Weissberg’s calculation was based on his estimates of the numbers on receipts issued to prisoners in his own prison in Kharkov between March

1937 and February 1939. After making a series of estimates aimed at establishing the feeder area of his prison, he estimated that 5.5% of the local population had been arrested between 1937 and 1939. If this proportion had applied to the entire Soviet Union it would have meant that roughly 9.4 million people had been arrested (i.e. $5.5\% \times 170$ million). By comparison with this figure, Conquest's own estimate of 7 million arrests seems quite reasonable. The data in the archives would indicate a maximum of about 3 million sentences (2.3 million excluding non-custodial sentences). These would comprise 1.4 million political sentences (see my Appendix Table A2.2) and 1.7 million criminal sentences of which 0.7 were to loss of freedom or death (see Appendix Table A2.1).

As I understand the situation neither Conquest nor I are arguing that either set of data is absolutely reliable. We would both agree in theory that no statistical source or estimate is perfect. But the devil is in the detail.

The detail in the archival series is fairly clear. I would argue that changes in administrative boundaries, particularly in 1939–41 and during World War II, would result in the exclusion of some regional categories, which in the case of Poland, Western Ukraine and the Baltic States would be significant. As far as other regions are concerned, however, the data seem to be as reliable as the internal penal records of other countries. The Weissberg data may have served a purpose at the time by indicating that large numbers were being arrested, i.e. hundreds of thousands of people. But I do not believe that they can be relied on to distinguish between 30 hundreds of thousands or 94 hundreds of thousands.

Conquest now appears to be backing away from detail, and I think that that is very wise of him. His claims now appear to boil down to the following: (1) that the Weissberg data and similar types of data make some contribution; and (2) that the archival data may in certain regards be incomplete.

Now, I do not fundamentally disagree with these basic points. I am prepared to accept that Weissberg made a contribution by pointing out that we were dealing with very large figures, i.e. tens of hundreds of thousands of people at the national level. And, as explained above and in my previous article, I agree that the archival data need to be treated very carefully and that in certain regards, especially concerning the regional coverage on formerly non-USSR territories, they may be incomplete.

What I do strongly disagree with is Conquest's apparent claim that the Weissberg figures and similar sources render a careful reading of the archival data superfluous, and his continued dismissing of the archival data as inherently false. This is an attitude that can only stifle future research in this area and should thus be opposed by the profession. I would like to repeat the words with which I began my previous article:

Are we going to progress in our level of understanding? Are we going to respond positively to the new circumstances in which large amounts of detailed archival materials are available? Are we going to critically assess the reliability of these data? Are we going to provide credible indicators of the Soviet experience that we can compare with other societies? Conquest's response to these questions is disappointing, but not totally unexpected.¹⁰

I would have been delighted if Conquest had surprised me by demonstrating his interest in these questions, but his comment indicates that he has not changed.

I do not think it is necessary to repeat the arguments that I have already made concerning most of Conquest's other points. Conquest continues to fail to understand the difference between necessary operating stocks and emergency reserves. There were no half million tons of reserve stocks in the USSR at the time of the famine. There were 1.9 million tons of operating stocks which were considered an insufficient amount to see the regime through the transition period before the new harvest came on stream—but there were no reserves.

It is regrettable that exchanges with Conquest degenerate into personal accusations. I stated in my article that in the past I had found his work on the 'casualty figures' to be useful. I have always argued that the official Soviet view on the scale of repression, and those who supported this view, were wrong, and that 'Conquest was correct to argue that the scale of violence was of demographic significance'. I am happy to acknowledge that his work in this area served a positive purpose in its time. But it became apparent a long time ago that Conquest's estimates of the exact size of the labour camps and the extent of mortality in the camps were excessive. For economic and demographic historians trying to make sense of how the Stalinist society worked, it was simply impossible to incorporate into their models of the Soviet economy and society the figure of 8 million in the camps in 1938 that Conquest was proposing. The specialist sociologists, demographers and economists whose work contradicted these large estimates as early as in the 1950s were Timoshenko, Lorimer, Redding, Bergson and Jasny. These are the scholars to whom I specifically referred in my article. Conquest is wrong to suggest that I was referring to people like Sir Bernard Pares or the Webbs. And although I would not be so 'intemperate' as to claim that their work was 'valueless', as does Conquest, I would certainly agree that non-specialists like the Webbs had little to contribute on this topic.

It is not my intention to join Conquest in the kind of arguments that he is making (and that he has made before) regarding the alleged intemperance, sectarianism, lack of capacity or humanity of those critics who challenge his views. And I do not intend to respond to his personal attacks on me. However, concerning his final point, I should note that no one can deny the existence of mass graves in the Soviet Union. What is in dispute is their scale and significance.

On the comments by Keep

I am in complete agreement with Keep on the need to avoid being mesmerised by statistics, and on the importance of the task of assessing the scale of Stalin's victims.¹¹ It is precisely to avoid being mesmerised by statistics that I have devoted considerable time to trying to understand how the Soviet statistical system operated. I am grateful to Keep for drawing attention to some confusion caused by some of my tables, and I will try to dispel that confusion. I am also grateful to him for drawing attention to an important point about the post-1948 detailed Gulag accounting data, and I will show in more detail what is happening there. At the same time, I do not agree with Keep's interpretation of these data, and I think that the comparative device that he uses is not only inappropriate but misleading.

Keep's suggestion that I was claiming to present 'the final or definitive' figures

indicates that he has misunderstood my position. I had tried to guard against such a misinterpretation by adding the phrase 'Not the last word' to the already lengthy title of my article. Clearly this is something that I must state even more explicitly. I also take issue with Keep's citation of Nicholas Werth's incautious reference to 'les vrais chiffres' as referring to my work. At the risk of excessive repetition, I must state once again that I make no claim to present the definitive last word on this issue.

Whether he intends it or not Keep's intervention will no doubt be interpreted as an attempt to support the continued acceptance of the much higher figures for the scale of the camps and repression that were proposed earlier by Conquest. When Keep states that these archival data 'should be regarded as provisional pending further independent investigation' it is unclear what figures he is actually proposing that we accept. Is he suggesting that the Conquest figures are in any way more reliable? This appears to be his suggestion.

I challenged the reliability of those higher figures over two decades ago, when it appeared to me that they were unjustifiable on the basis of our knowledge at the time. My disinclination to accept them has increased with the opening of the archives, and nothing that has recently been said by Conquest warrants any change in this. Nevertheless, my general attitude is that we should hold all evidence as provisional, and that we should be aware of the qualitative nature of reliability. We should also be prepared to adjust our position as new evidence comes to light. I do not believe in a pot of gold or a secret archive, which will suddenly reveal 'the truth'. I am trying to make the best of what evidence we presently have. And on the basis of that evidence, I think that the picture of the scale of the camps and mortality in the camps that emerges from these archival data is far more convincing than that which can be derived from the collection of subjective evaluations that have been patched together by Conquest and others in the past. There is little serious evidence to support the proposal that the subjective evaluations are more reliable than the secret accounting data.

The unsourced reference that Keep makes to '8 million index cards ... on Gulag inmates to 1940' held in the FSB archives raises many questions. Superficially, at least, it seems to imply an attempt to bolster Conquest's well-known claim that there were 8 million inmates in the Gulag in 1939. Keep must be aware of the ambiguities that surround these unknown sources. For example: Do the FSB files refer to all those who were held in the camps (ITL), the colonies (ITK), the exiles (Spets-Poselentsy), or even all citizens who spent a night in prison? And he must also be aware of the difference between a flow and a stock. So it is a little unclear what serious conclusions can be drawn from references to this dubious non-source.

Regarding the All-Union data on political convictions and sentences investigated by the security forces

Keep points out that my appendix Table A2.2 cites two local volumes on the killing operations, and he states that

it is not evident why only two recently published lists of victims, in Moscow and St Petersburg, should be singled out when more than a dozen such compilations have appeared in other parts of the country.

There is a slight confusion here, and I am largely responsible for this by not explaining the table more clearly.

My Table A2.2 was not an attempt to summarise or survey all the available local studies on political sentences to the camps and execution. Rather, it was an attempt to look at the national picture and the available national data. Some local studies provide some information on the national picture, as well as information on the local picture. And the two local sources that I referred to in this table contained such national information on executions by the security agencies.

The Moscow Memorial publication informs us that local *troiki* under the chairmanship of local plenipotentiary representatives of the OGPU sentenced 18 966 people to death in 1930 and 9170 in 1931, and that the later *troiki* of UNKVD had sentenced more than 400 000 people to be shot between August 1937 and November 1938.¹² The St Petersburg Memorial publication provides a description of the operations of the state security and extra-judicial organs in this period.¹³

I regret that the page numbers for the *Leningradskii Martirolog* source were omitted in the final published text, and I apologise for this complex table being less clear than it ought to be.

Keep is perfectly correct in stating that the local studies provide some very interesting information on how repression was carried out in specific localities. These sources are indeed well worthy of serious study, which I am carrying out elsewhere. I would like to mention in particular here the data for Tomsk *oblast'*, which will be presented more fully in the Appendix.

The Tomsk data have been published in a form that makes them readily comparable with the All-Union data. In the tables given in Appendix 2 below I compare the annual number of political arrests and executions in Tomsk with similar figures for the USSR as a whole.

One of the main problems associated with any set of regional data is the lack of clarity with regard to the exact regional boundaries in place at the time. In 1937 the area that was later to become Tomsk *oblast'* was part of the West Siberian *krai*, which had a population of 6.4 million. Since Novosibirsk, Kemerovo and Altai were also located within the West Siberian *krai*, the equivalent population of Tomsk *oblast'* would probably have been about 1.5 million or just under 1% of all the USSR. In 1927 its proportion would have been much less, probably only 0.5% of the total USSR population.

The data in Appendix Table A2.1 would indicate that the rate of arrests in Tomsk *oblast'* was generally much lower than for the rest of the USSR, apart from the years 1937 and 1938 when it more closely resembled the national averages. Tomsk execution rates tended to be proportionately higher in relation to USSR execution rates than did Tomsk arrest rates. Again, 1937 and 1938 stand out, with execution rates in 1937 probably almost twice the USSR average, but there were also higher than normal national execution rates in 1930 and 1934.

This makes eminently reasonable sense given what we now know about the mass campaigns during the Yezhovshchina. The mass 'anti-Soviet element' operations resulting from NKVD order 00447¹⁴ and the subsequent national operations¹⁵ do appear to have been planned on a national basis and so we would expect relatively normal distributions of arrests in 1937 and 1938 throughout all of the USSR. West

Siberian arrests and executions would have been especially high given the emphasis on executing criminals as part of the anti-Soviet element campaign. It is no surprise that in other years arrests in Tomsk were much lower than the national average.

Appendix Table A2.2 provides the monthly distribution of arrests, sentences and executions for Tomsk *oblast'* with an indication of the percentage of sentences which resulted in execution. Currently we have no equivalent All-Union figures with this detail.

Clearly we need to supplement these data with other regional studies, and this is something I am currently working on. I would welcome the assistance of Keep and others in tackling this enormous task.

Gulag annual accounts at the USSR level

I was delighted that Keep found my explanation of the 'hitherto mysterious question of the "transfers"' to be 'helpful'. But I am unclear whether this means that he agrees with me in therefore viewing Conquest's arguments concerning these transfers as invalid.

More important is the question that Keep raises as to 'why were there such great variations between "transfers in" and "transfers out" [of the camps], especially for the post-war years' in the detailed Gulag accounting data in Appendix Table A2.3. I agree with Keep that there is clearly something here that needs explanation.

There does appear to be a significant discontinuity between the 1934–47 series and the 1948–53 series. In 1934–47 the camps were recorded as receiving most of their new inmates 'from other places of imprisonment', which I had taken to mean primarily 'from prisons'. But from 1948 there was a sudden sharp switch, with most of the transfers coming 'from [other] NKVD camps'. Keep suggests that this is explicable in terms of poor record keeping, and the general unreliability of the data. While I am grateful to Keep for pointing out the problem, I would propose a different explanation for this discrepancy.

A more detailed set of Gulag accounts for these years is given in Appendix 1. These figures cover both the main Gulag camps (ITL) division of Gulag, and the labour colonies with the colony camps that were associated with them (ITK).¹⁶ The earlier series, 1934 to 1947, contained the categories 'to' and 'from the camps of the NKVD (*iz lagerei NKVD*)', and 'to' and 'from other places of imprisonment (*iz drugikh mest zaklucheniya*)'. The later data used slightly different accounting terms. They use the categories of transfers 'to' and 'from prisons of newly sentenced [prisoners]' (*iz tyurem vnov' osuzhdennykh*), as well as transfers 'to' and 'from camps of UITLK/OITK',¹⁷ (*iz lagerei UITLK/OITK*).

In the earlier series the category of 'other places of imprisonment' probably included the colonies as well as the prisons, although they were much less significant in that period. The change in terminology after 1948 probably reflects a change in practice, as the colonies became more numerous and as pressure on the prisons mounted. It is clear from these figures that in the period 1948–53 only about 8–10% of newly sentenced prisoners were sent directly to the main camps. Most went to the colonies (or the camps attached to them) (OITK), and at some time within a year about half were transferred to the main camps (UITLK).

Penal theory recommends separating prisoners held on remand from prisoners who have been sentenced. If an appeal process were part of the judicial procedure, and if it had any meaning, it would make sense to delay the shipping out to distant areas of newly sentenced prisoners, until their initial appeals had been heard. We know that in February 1938 about 7.5% of all prison inmates were newly sentenced prisoners awaiting appeal (41 000 out of 545 000). But of the 262 000 prisoners charged under order 00447 who were tried by extra-judicial *troiki* none were allowed to appeal. Amongst the prisoners dealt with by judicial procedures, those in prisons who were classified as awaiting the appeal of their sentence (*kassatsionnykh*) represented more than 14.5% of prisoners.¹⁸ With the renewed increase in the scale of operations in the 1948–53 period it looks as though those newly sentenced prisoners who were awaiting appeal were initially transferred to colonies, rather than awaiting appeal results in prison. They were subsequently transferred to the camps only when and if their appeals were rejected.

It clearly made more sense economically to use the now developed colonies as staging posts to the main camps, rather than using the prisons for this purpose. This combined with the large numbers of prisoners appealing against their punishment, and a more regular way of hearing appeals, might explain the change in policy. Previously appellants remained in prison while awaiting the completion of the appeal mechanism. From 1948 they appear to have been transferred to the colonies, whence they were later transferred to the camps.

So, what at first appears as a discrepancy in the data can be shown to have a rational explanation based on changes in procedure and changes in accountancy terms. In any case, since these dramatic changes occurred in 1949, it is unlikely that they could be a reflection of massive distortions. Why should these distortions suddenly start in that year?

The reliability of Gulag statistics

Now let me turn to the idea of being ‘mesmerised by statistics’ and to that unfortunate statement that Gulag records are as reliable as ‘the average mafioso’s tax return’. This is a wonderfully picturesque image. The question is, however, does it really apply to the Gulag accounts?

Rather than discarding the image, I would propose adjusting the analogy somewhat. The mafiosi’s tax returns are a public attempt to conceal the nature of what the mafiosi are really doing. The mafiosi presumably have a secret set of accounts in which they record their obligations to each other. Part of the mythology of the mafiosi was that they were scrupulously accurate and zealous in keeping their internal records. Surely the secret Gulag reports are more like the mafiosi’s internal records than their tax returns. The tax returns were published in *Pravda*.

There is a difference between inflating output to simulate fulfilment of planning targets and not registering prison populations. Camp officials were made responsible for the prisoners that had been entrusted to them, and there was conscientious reporting of this. I stand by the statement made in my earlier article that ‘there is a satisfactory degree of reliability in accounting’.

Motivation: were the camp inmates 'slated for physical destruction'?

Finally, I would like to comment on another of Keep's statements, namely that

the Gulag administration was, after all, a criminal body which treated convicts as *rabsila*, as human flotsam slated for physical destruction.

While I agree that the Gulag administration acted in a way which we would call criminal, it does need to be pointed out that they did not consider themselves criminal and were not considered criminal by the Soviet authorities. It is in fact quite remarkable how much the facade of legality was maintained. There was not the degree of arbitrary killing that is presumed by Keep, at least in the inter-war period. As I argued in an earlier article in this journal, the Gulags were not death camps and should not be confused with Auschwitz¹⁹. I have read the Gulag reports from Berman to Yagoda requesting more food to keep their *rabsila* alive. Indisputably, they were criminal, and inhumane, but there was little random killing, and incidents of high mortality were often investigated with corrupt camp officials being punished.²⁰

Conclusions

Keep's comment raises some important questions concerning the consistency and comparability of the Gulag data. But on closer and more detailed examination these data can be shown to exhibit a higher level of consistency than we had expected. I hope that the more detailed data on these movements in Appendix Tables A1.1 and A1.2 will dispel the doubts that Keep expressed. I am grateful to Keep for pointing out the problem with the more simplified data.

Elsewhere in his comments Keep has made some statements and comparisons which I think are less useful, and which I think might cause confusion rather than improve our understanding of the problem, and I have pointed out my reasons for thinking this. Finally, Keep's suggestion that we should look more carefully at the regional archival data which are now appearing is a very good one, and is in line with some of the other work that I am currently engaged in. I present a sample of such work in Appendix 2 and would like to dedicate it to Keep with the hope that he and others might contribute to a harmonious collaborative investigation of such materials.

Concerning the comment by Conquest, there is little to say, other than to point out that he has not provided any serious arguments to challenge my main argument that he has misunderstood the nature of the archival data on arrests and imprisonment. Contrary to his claims, these data can be shown to be comparable and undoubtedly more reliable than the subjective indicators that he still champions.

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¹ S. G. Wheatcroft, 'Victims of Stalinism and the Soviet Secret Police: The Comparability and Reliability of Archival Data—Not the Last Word', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 51, 2, 1999, pp. 315–345.

² I am grateful to Julie Elkner, Robert Horvath, Chips Sowerwine and Peter McPhee for their advice in making this reply more clear and more diplomatic than it otherwise would have been. I alone am responsible for any inaccuracies and excesses that may remain.

³ John Keep, 'Wheatcroft and Stalin's Victims: Comments', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 51, 6, 1999, pp. 1089–1092.

⁴ Robert Conquest, 'Comment on Wheatcroft', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 51, 8, 1999, pp. 1479–1483.

⁵ Robert Conquest, 'Victims of Stalinism: A Comment', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 49, 7, 1997, pp. 1317–1319.

⁶ See note 9 below

⁷ In the pursuit of my studies I found it appropriate to acquire a specialist understanding of pre-revolutionary penal statistics. My first serious work in this area based on a detailed analysis of the statistics in the annual report of the Tsarist Central Prison Administration appears as a paper, 'The Tsarist Prison System in the perspective of the Stalinist and Other Prison Systems', presented to the International Conference on 'Colonial Places, Convict Spaces: Penal Transportation in Global Context, c. 1600–1940', University of Leicester, 9–10 December 1999.

⁸ Conquest, 'Comment ...', p. 1480.

⁹ 'Although this was rough, and not necessarily representative, it was obviously legitimate, by far the best that could be done at the time—and still contributory' (Conquest, p. 1481). I do not disagree that this estimate had some interest in the 1940s. But I fail to understand what contribution it can make to today's knowledge of the scale of the prison and camp population.

¹⁰ Wheatcroft, p. 315.

¹¹ Keep, p. 1091.

¹² *Rasstrel'nye Spiski*, Vyp. 2, *Vagan'kovskoe kladbishche, 1926–1936* (Moscow, Memorial, 1995), pp. 281–282.

¹³ *Leningradskii Martirolog, 1937–1938*, vol. 1, August–September 1937 (St Petersburg, 1995), pp. 33–38.

¹⁴ These were the operations initiated by Stalin's telegram to all *oblast'*, *krai* and national republican Communist Party secretaries on 2 July 1937 and subsequent NKVD operational order 00447 of 30 July 1937. Information about these operations, the establishment and operation of local regional *troiki* with extra-judicial powers of execution, was first described in a set of materials that were released by the Presidential Administration from the Presidential and Security Archives in 1992 to assist in the prosecution of the Communist Party of the USSR. Several important extracts from these materials were published in the Soviet press at the time. The most useful collection of materials appeared in *Trud*, 4 June 1992 and *Moskovskie Novosti*, 21 June 1992. Some of these materials have been microfilmed and made available as *Fond 89-The Soviet Communist Party on Trial* (Chadwyck-Healey, 1997). Curiously, some of the most important documents appear to have been left out of that collection and are only available in the above-mentioned Soviet newspapers.

¹⁵ For a description of the largest of these, 'the Polish Operations' NKVD order 00485, see N. V. Petrov & A. B. Roginsky, "'Pol'skaya operatsiya" NKVD 1937–1938gg.', in *Repressii protiv polyakov i pol'skikh grazhdan* (Moscow, 1997), pp. 22–43.

¹⁶ These data were compiled by A. N. Dugin in his unpublished draft A. N. Dugin, *Neizvestnyi Gulag (Dokumenty i fakty)*, Moscow, 1992, documents 36, 41, 43, 47, 52 and 55. A slightly different version of Document 52 covering data for 1950 had earlier been published in A. Dugin & A. Malugin, 'Gulag ...', *Soyuz*, 1990, 26, p. 13. I am grateful to Edwin Bacon for making these materials available to me.

¹⁷ *UITLK: Upravlenie Ispravitel'no-Trudovogo Lagerya i kolonii; OITK: Otdel Ispravitel'no-Trudovykh Kolonii*. For a description of the territorial administrative structure of these agencies see the Memorial handbook: *Sistema Ispravitel'no-Trudovykh Lagerei v SSSR. 193–1960: Spravochnik* (Moscow, 1998), pp. 526–527.

¹⁸ GARF, F.9414, op. 1s, d.1138, 1.21.

¹⁹ S.G. Wheatcroft, 'The Scale and Nature of German and Soviet Repression and Mass Killings, 1930–1945', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 48, 8, 1996, pp. 1319–1353.

²⁰ Incidentally this is also the view of some of the earliest of the camp literature. See F. Beck & W. Godin, *Russian Purge and the Extraction of Confession* (London, Hurst & Blackett, 1951), p. 70. 'Those who were aware of the atrocities in Nazi prisons and camps or had themselves experienced them ... were bound to admit that there were no instances in Russian prisons of the arbitrary cruelty and systematic sadism so characteristic of Nazi methods' (p. 70). I would not go so far as these two eye-witnesses in saying that there were no instances, but there were certainly fewer.

Appendix 1. Gulag Camp and Colony Accounting data for 1948-1953

TABLE A1.1

TRANSFERS TO AND FROM CAMPS AND COLONIES IN THE GULAG SYSTEM, 1948-1953

	1947	1948	1949	1950	1951	1952	1953	1954
(i) All Gulag								
[Prisoners at beginning of year]	1 721 543	2 199 535	2 356 685	2 561 351	2 540 760	2 509 788	2 472 247	1 116 111
[growth]		477 992	157 150	204 666	-20 591	-30 972	-37 541	-1 356 136
Arrivals during year			2 033 591	1 818 081	1 746 314	1 771 976	1 420 494	
from prisons (newly sentenced)		1 490 959	1 010 123	800 335	636 756	596 080	457 734	
from [other] camps [and colonies]			686 522	681 398	748 235	692 678	572 469	
recaptured runaways			2 618	3 395	1 641	1 173	496	
mistakenly removed from list			1 176	2 653	2 442			
transit			333 152	330 300	357 060	482 045	389 054	
residual			0	0	180	0	741	
Departures during year		1 012 967	1 828 925	1 838 672	1 777 106	1 809 517	2 542 344	
liberated			678 405	727 547	613 414	601 899	1 587 052	
died			29 706	24 686	23 666	20 851	10 129	
runaways			4 842	3 532	2 817	1 466	933	
to camps			721 011	698 865	731 331	672 614	543 520	
to prisons			59 458	48 890	44 178	36 241	19 879	
mistakenly added to list			3 613	3 568	319			
transit			331 890	331 584	361 361	467 446	380 831	
residual			0	0	20	9000	0	
Net arrivals			204 666	-20 591	-30 792	-37 541	-1 121 850	cf given
Prisoners listed at end of year	2 199 535	2 356 685	2 561 351	2 540 760	2 509 788	2 472 247	1 116 111	-234 286

TABLE A1.1
CONTINUED

	1947	1948	1949	1950	1951	1952	1953	1954
<i>(ii) Camps</i>								
[Prisoners at beginning of year]								
[growth]							excl osob	
Arrivals during year	1 216 361		1 416 300	1 543 382	1 713 614	1 729 092	1 729 092	672 070
from prisons (newly sentenced)	655 822		636 051	715 022	170 082	15 478	15 478	- 1 057 022
from [other] camps [and colonies]	88 235		71 339	55 291	715 022	644 091	410 322	
recaptured runaways	564 800		561 660	657 557	20 176	16 853	393 054	
mistakenly removed from list	1733		1723	1341	623 001	909	415	
transit	980		1147	400	400			
residual	74		182	433	5	0	0	
Departures during year	0		0	0	0	0	0	
liberated	455 883		508 969	544 790	628 613	1 233 058	1 233 058	
died	178 449		216 210	254 269	345 958	937 352	937 352	
runaways	15 739		14 703	15 587	13 906	5825	5825	
to camps	2583		2577	2318	1265	758	758	
mistakenly added to list	239 762		258 269	250 836	249 320	278 240	278 240	
transit	16 344		16 882	21 485	17 686	8934	8934	
residual	2908		229	273	578	1949	1949	
Net arrivals	98		104	22	- 100	0	0	
Prisoners listed at end of year	0		- 5	0	0	0	0	cf given
	199 939		127 082	170 232	170 232	15 478	- 822 736	- 234 286
	1 416 300	1 414 547	1 543 382	1 713 614	1 713 614	1 729 092	672 070	
<i>(iii) Colonies</i>								
[Prisoners at beginning of year]								
[growth]								
Arrivals during year	1 140 324		1 145 051	997 378	796 174	743 155	743 155	441 041
from prisons (newly sentenced)	377 769		4727	- 147 673	- 201 204	- 53 019	- 53 019	- 302 114
from [other] camps [and colonies]	921 888		1 182 030	1 031 112	1 127 885	1 010 172	1 010 172	
recaptured runaways	121 722		728 996	581 465	575 904	440 881	440 881	
mistakenly removed from list	855		119 738	90 678	69 677	179 414	179 414	
transit	196		1672	300	264	81	81	
residual	333 078		1506	2042	356 627	482 040	389 795	
	30		330 118	0	0	0	0	1

	1948	1949	1950	1951	1952	1953	1954
Departures during year							
liberated		1 373 042	1 329 703	1 232 316	1 180 904	1 309 286	
died		499 956	511 337	359 165	255 941	649 700	
runaways		13 966	9983	8079	7045	4304	
to camps		2259	955	499	201	175	
to prisons		481 250	440 601	480 495	423 294	265 280	
mistakenly added to list		43 114	32 008	22 693	18 555	10 945	
transit		705	3339	46			
residual		331 792	331 480	361 339	475 868	378 882	
		0	0	0	0	0	
Net arrivals		4727	- 147 673	- 201 204	- 53 019	- 299 114	cf given - 3000
Prisoners listed at end of year	2 095 716	1 145 051	997 378	796 174	743 155	441 041	
	doc.:36	doc.:41	doc.:43	doc.:47	doc.:52	doc.:55	

Sources: A. N. Dugin, *Neizvestnyĭ Gulag (Dokumenty i fakty)*, Moscow, 1992, documents 36, 41, 43, 47, 52 and 55.

Notes: Gulag (camp and colony) accounting data have been compiled directly from the Dugin documents. Each report of the population movement in the Gulag camps and colonies was accompanied by a list number in the camps at the end of the year. Rather confusingly this was placed at the top of the list of transfers. In Table A1.1 I have placed the given end of year listing at the bottom of each transfer list. Immediately above the given end of year listing I have added a row (net arrivals) which is simply arrivals during the year less departures during the year. At the top I have added the end of years listing of prisoners from the previous year which I have labelled 'Prisoners at beginning of year'. Immediately below this row I have added another row, 'Annual growth', which is computed from the previous row.

There are two discrepancies in the series: (i) The net arrivals in 1951 numbered - 30 792, while the annual growth in prisoners listed was 30 972. The difference is 180, and this is likely to be a copy error. (ii) The net arrivals in 1953 numbered - 1 121 850, which is 234 286 higher than the annual growth in prisoners from the listed numbers, which was - 1 356 136. However, in this case the explanation of the difference is quite clear. The 1953 listing clearly states that it is exclusive of prisoners in the 'special' camps (*bez ostlagov*). The number of prisoners in the nine 'special camps' is reported to have increased from 168 997 on 1 January 1951 to 244 128 on 1 January 1952 (see Dugin documents 44 and 50). Consequently the overall decline in camp population is compatible with the closing down of the special camps and the transfer of the population of the special camps to the normal camps. They appear to have been included in the arrivals from (other) camps figures, but not in the departures to (other) camps. It is currently unclear what the categories 'Mistakenly added to (or subtracted from) list' or the residual item refers to.

TABLE A1.2
 TRANSFERS TO AND FROM CAMPS AND COLONIES IN THE GULAG SYSTEM, 1948-53: SUMMARY

	31 December 1948	31 December 1949	31 December 1950	31 December 1951	31 December 1952	31 December 1953
(i) All						
Prisoners recorded at beginning of year	2 199 535	2 561 351	2 540 760	2 509 788	2 472 247	1 116,111
Prisoners calculated at end of year	2 561 351	2 540 760	2 509 968	2 472 247	1 350 397	
Prisoners calculated at mid year	2 459 018	2 551 056	2 525 364	2 491 018	1 911 322	
Loss by next year	0	0	180	0	234 286	
Net from prisons	950 665	751 445	592 578	559 839	437 855	
Net from camps	- 34 489	- 17 467	16 904	20 064	28 949	
Net from runaways	- 2 224	- 137	- 1 176	- 293	- 437	
Net from transit	1 262	- 1 284	- 4 301	14 599	8 223	
Liberated as %	27.6%	28.5%	24.3%	24.2%	83.0%	
Died min per 1000	12.1	9.7	9.4	8.4	5.3	
Died min + per 1000	13.0	9.7	9.8	8.5	5.5	
(ii) Camps						
Prisoners recorded at beginning of year	1 216 361	1 416 300	1 543 382	1 713 614	1 729 092	672 070
Prisoners calculated at end of year	1 416 300	1 543 382	1 713 614	1 729 092	906 356	
Prisoners calculated at mid year	1 316 331	1 479 841	1 628 498	1 721 353	1 317 724	
Loss by next year	0	0	0	0	234 286	
Net from prisons	71 891	54 457	33 806	2 490	7 919	
Net from camps	325 038	303 391	406 721	373 681	114 814	
Net from runaways	- 850	- 854	- 977	- 356	- 343	
Net from transit	- 24	78	411	- 573	- 1 949	
Liberated as %	13.6%	14.6%	15.6%	20.1%	71.1%	
Died min per 1000	12.0	9.9	9.6	8.1	4.4	
Died min + per 1000	12.6	10.5	10.2	8.3	4.7	

	31 December 1948	31 December 1949	31 December 1950	31 December 1951	31 December 1952	31 December 1953
(iii) Colonies						
Prisoners recorded at beginning of year	1 140 324	1 145 051	997 378	796 174	743 155	441 041
Prisoners calculated at end of year	1 145 051	997 378	796 174	743 155	444 041	
Prisoners calculated at mid year	1 142 688	1 071 215	896 776	769 665	593 598	
Loss by next year	0	0	0	0	3 000	
Net from prisons	878 774	696 988	558 772	557 349	429 936	
Net from camps	- 359 528	- 320 863	- 389 817	- 353 617	- 85 866	
Net from runaways	- 1 404	717	- 199	63	- 94	
Net from transit	1 286	- 1 362	- 4 712	6 172	10 913	
Liberated as %	43.8%	47.7%	40.1%	33.3%	109.5%	
Died min per 1000	12.2	9.3	9.0	9.2	7.3	
Died min + per 1000	13.5		9.2		7.4	

Notes: This table is an attempt to rework the data to look at the net flows and to calculate the minimal mortality rate (based on direct listings of deaths) with a more maximal variant which implies that all of those registered as run away who were not recaptured were shot. This is certainly an extreme assumption. I have not included other losses in transit or in the net flows between camps and prison in these years, because many of these were positive, i.e. gains rather than losses.

Appendix 2: Local Arrest, Sentence and Execution Data for Tomsk oblast', 1927-1953 in comparison with the All-Union Data

TABLE A2.1

DYNAMIC OF ARRESTS, SENTENCES AND EXECUTIONS INSTIGATED BY THE SECURITY AGENCIES IN TOMSK OBLAST' AND THE USSR, 1927-1953, ANNUAL FIGURES

	(a) Arrests			(b) Sentences			(c) Executions			(d) Executions as % of Sentences		
	Tomsk	All USSR	Tomsk as % of USSR	Tomsk	All USSR	Tomsk as % of USSR	Tomsk	All USSR	Tomsk as % of USSR	Tomsk	All USSR	Tomsk as % of USSR
1927	19	76 983	0.02	4	26 036	0	2 363	0	0.0	0.0	9.1	0.0
1928	27	112 803	0.02	13	33 757	0	869	0	0.0	0.0	2.6	0.0
1929	55	162 726	0.03	21	56 220	3	2 109	3	0.14	14.3	3.8	0.14
1930	612	331 554	0.18	477	208 069	270	20 201	20 201	1.34	56.6	9.7	1.34
1931	519	479 065	0.11	367	180 696	30	10 651	10 651	0.28	8.2	5.9	0.28
1932	368	410 433	0.09	182	141 919	3	2 728	3	0.11	1.6	1.9	0.11
1933	644	505 256	0.13	594	239 664	17	2 154	2 154	0.79	2.9	0.9	0.79
1934	205	205 173	0.10	157	78 999	26	2 056	2 056	1.26	16.6	2.6	1.26
1935	366	193 083	0.19	283	267 076	2	1 229	1 229	0.16	0.7	0.5	0.16
1936	376	131 168	0.29	199	274 670	1	1 118	1 118	0.09	0.5	0.4	0.09
1937	9483	936 750	1.01	8787	790 665	6667	353 074	353 074	1.89	75.9	44.7	1.89
1938	3858	638 509	0.60	3897	554 258	3474	328 618	328 618	1.06	89.1	59.3	1.06
1939	81	63 889	0.11	110	63 889	0	2 552	0	0.0	0.0	4.0	0.0
1940	168	71 806	0.13	113	71 806	0	1 649	0	0.0	0.0	2.3	0.0
1941	427	75 411	0.25	225	75 411	38	8 001	8 001	0.47	16.9	10.6	0.47
1942	507	124 406	0.21	421	124 406	40	23 278	23 278	0.17	9.5	18.7	0.17
1943	331	78 441	0.25	425	78 441	2	3 579	3 579	0.06	0.5	4.6	0.06
1944	237	75 109	0.27	279	75 109	0	3 029	3 029	0.0	0.0	4.0	0.0
1945	221	123 248	0.19	191	123 248	0	4 252	4 252	0.0	0.0	3.4	0.0
1946	221	123 294	0.21	216	123 294	0	2 896	2 896	0.0	0.0	2.3	0.0
1947	95	78 810	0.12	122	78 810	0	1 105	1 105	0.0	0.0	1.4	0.0
1948	56	23 269	0.05	65	23 269	0	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1949	44	25 125	0.05	57	25 125	0	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1950	81	60 641	0.06	56	60 641	0	475	475	0.0	0.0	0.8	0.0
1951	76	54 775	0.06	76	54 775	0	1 609	1 609	0.0	0.0	2.9	0.0
1952	51	28 800	0.05	52	28 800	0	1 612	1 612	0.0	0.0	5.6	0.0
1953	80			92		0						

Sources: Tomsk oblast': Yu. V. Kuperta (ed.), *Repressii kak eto bylo* (Zap. Sib v kontse 20-ki-nach. 50-ki-godov) (Tomsk, 1995), pp. 99, 126-127. USSR: S.G. Wheatcroft, 'Victims of Stalinism and the Soviet Secret Police: The Comparability and Reliability of the Archival Data—Not the Last Word', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 51, 2, 1999, Table A2.2, p. 338.

TABLE A2.2

THE DYNAMIC OF ARRESTS, SENTENCES AND EXECUTIONS INSTIGATED BY THE SECURITY AGENCIES IN TOMSK OBLAST', 1937-1938, MONTHLY FIGURES

	(a) Arrests	(b) Sentences	(c) Executions	(d) Sentences as % of arrests	(e) Executions as % of sentences
1937					
January	28	19	1	67.9	5.3
February	28	27	4	96.4	14.8
March	29	28	5	96.6	17.9
April	110	66	33	60.0	50.0
May	64	6	0	9.4	0.0
June	276	16	6	5.8	37.5
July	1557	158	137	10.1	86.7
August	1227	1154	955	94.1	82.8
September	1089	1583	1191	145.4	75.2
October	1926	1772	1287	92.0	72.6
November	1395	1494	768	107.1	51.4
December	1754	2464	2280	140.5	92.5
1938					
January	508	642	592	126.4	92.2
February	1672	470	456	28.1	97.0
March	412	833	796	202.2	95.6
April	109	955	928	876.1	97.2
May	80	29	10	36.3	34.5
June	370	84	62	22.7	73.8
July	99	79	34	79.8	43.0
August	16	35	24	218.8	68.6
September	551	12	7	2.2	58.3
October	18	622	500	3455.6	80.4
November	19	87	59	457.9	67.8
December	4	49	6	1225.0	12.2

Source: Tomsk oblast': Yu. V. Kuperta (ed.), *Repressii kak eto bylo* (*Zap. Sib v kontse 20-kh-nach. 50-kh godov*) (Tomsk, 1995), pp. 99, 126-127.