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## ON WARPED MOURNING AND OMISSIONS IN POST-SOVIET HISTORIOGRAPHY\*

“Conflating subject and object in a stereotypically Russian manner, Soviet repressions differed from Nazi German exterminations, in which the victims and perpetrators were distanced by crystal-clear constructions.”

Alexander Etkind. *Stories of the Undead in the Land of the Unburied* (2009). P. 631.

Closely paraphrased in:

- *Post-Soviet Hauntology: Cultural Memory of the Soviet Terror* (2009).
- *Warped Mourning* (2013).
- *Rabota goria i utekhi melankholii* (2013).

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Morally unambiguous narratives are common in contemporary Russian historiography, even at the expense of conceptual precision and historical fact. “The angle of view on history needs to be simple,” as Vladimir Medinsky, minister of culture and president of the Russian Military-History Society, stated in a 2013 interview. Textbooks, he suggests, should focus on monolithic facts – “it’s monolithic that we won the War. It’s monolithic that we carried out industrialization” – noting these operations’ human costs as “contested moments,” debated by historians.<sup>1</sup> Such monolithic historiography is also common among voices speaking in opposition to the official government line. As an example of the latter, this essay analyzes Alexander Etkind’s recent (2004–2014) cycle of publications – his book, *Warped Mourning* (Stanford, 2013) and seven articles, repeating parts of the book in English and Russian. I choose these texts as exemplary because their use of a Freudian framework clearly contradicts their unproblematic relationship to the past, leading them to perpetuate the very problem they name; and also because a decade of their repeating publication demonstrates how easily the ideology of post-Soviet memory debates can be mistaken for an analysis of the phenomenon itself.

Etkind’s main thesis is that the unburied, unmourned victims of “Soviet Terror” haunt present-day Russian cultural memory:

In Russia, a land where millions remain unburied, the repressed return as the undead. They do so in novels, films, and other forms of culture that reflect, shape, and possess people’s memory. The ghostly visions of Russian writers and filmmakers extend the work of mourning into those spaces that defeat more rational ways of understanding the past... [with their] melancholic dialectic of reenactment.<sup>2</sup>

This undead return is explained in a conceptual framework that is ostensibly Freudian, but one that fails to grasp the *mechanism* of Freudian melancholia. “Though Freud did not elucidate the overarching logic of his post-World War I works on repetition, mourning, and the uncanny,” writes Etkind, “it can be formulated in a few simple words. If the suffering is not remembered, it

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<sup>1</sup> Ostorozhno, istoriia! Ministr kul’tury Medinskii ob’iasnil “Nedele” kogo i za chto ne voz’mut v edinyi uchebnik istorii // REN TV. Nedelia s Mariannoi Maksimovskoi. 2013. June 22.

<sup>2</sup> Alexander Etkind. *Warped Mourning*. Palo Alto, 2013. Pp. 18 and 245. Also very closely paraphrased in Alexander Etkind. *Post-Soviet Hauntology: Cultural Memory of the Soviet Terror* // *Constellations*. 2009. Vol. 16. No. 1. Pp. 182-200. And in: Aleksandr Etkind. *Zheleznyi avgust, ili Pamiat’ dvoinogo naznacheniia* // *Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie*. 2012. No. 116. Pp. 337-358.

will be repeated. If the loss is not recognized, it threatens to return in strange though not entirely new forms, as the uncanny.”<sup>3</sup> But *why* is suffering not remembered? *What conditions* cause the loss of a loved object to not be recognized? While Freud writes that “melancholia contains something more than normal mourning. In melancholia the relation to the object is no simple one; it is complicated by the conflict due to ambivalence,”<sup>4</sup> this central question is missing from Etkind’s texts, in which cultural memory is haunted only by “Soviet victims,” rather than by an ambivalent relationship of present-day people to the past – both victim and perpetrator.

Etkind’s texts rule out an ambivalent relationship to the past precisely because that past was *itself* ambivalent: because, unlike “the Nazi Holocaust [that] exterminated the Other”<sup>5</sup> and “featured a crystal clear boundary between victims and perpetrators,”<sup>6</sup> “Soviet terror was suicidal” in nature,<sup>7</sup> with former perpetrators frequently becoming subsequent victims. Indeed, it is difficult to divide victims from perpetrators in public memories of Soviet political repressions (and one might also hesitate to draw such a “crystal clear” boundary in the case of Nazism). But this is not only because the Terror’s perpetrators became subsequent victims. It is also, and more importantly, because the recent past of most contemporary Russian families includes repressed, killed, or incarcerated relatives as well as other (sometimes the same) relatives who informed, collaborated, profited on others’ misfortune, or simply did nothing when others’ lives were unjustly destroyed. Admitting one’s relation to the latter, collaborating, relative is often unpleasant. And in Etkind’s texts “active members of the revolutionary movement” also figure as victims – but only in those cases in which they, too, were “imprisoned, with tragic results.”<sup>8</sup>

Besides Freud, Etkind’s texts incorporate other well-known philosophers – including Walter Benjamin, Edmund Burke, and Jacques Derrida – although in his reading, they all seem to say the same thing. “As far as I know,” he

<sup>3</sup> Etkind. *Warped Mourning*. P. 16.

<sup>4</sup> Sigmund Freud. *Mourning and Melancholia* // Idem. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*. London, 1957. P. 256.

<sup>5</sup> Etkind. *Warped Mourning*. P. 8, and Idem. *Rabota goria i utekhi melankholii* // *Neprikosnovennyi zapas*. 2013. No. 3. Pp. 209-220.

<sup>6</sup> Etkind. *Warped Mourning*. P. 7. Also very closely paraphrased in: Etkind. *Post-Soviet Hauntology*. P. 184 and in Idem. *Rabota goria i utekhi melankholii*, as well as in Idem. *Stories of the Undead in the Land of the Unburied: Magical Historicism in Contemporary Russian Fiction* // *Slavic Review*. 2009. Vol. 68. No. 3. Pp. 623-640.

<sup>7</sup> Etkind. *Warped Mourning*. P. 8; Idem. *Rabota goria*.

<sup>8</sup> Etkind. *Warped Mourning*. P. 111.

writes, “Derrida and [Andrei] Siniavsky never met and never read one another, though they easily might have. Despite the fact that their experiences differ dramatically, their conclusions are similar: the living owe a debt to the dead, and this debt must be returned. Otherwise, the dead will continue to return to life in disguised forms.”<sup>9</sup> Indeed, most people assume that they owe a debt to their dead – this is why we have cemeteries. Far more interesting are cases in which people assume the opposite: that some ancestors are best left forgotten. While a Freudian reading could search for ambivalence in the mourner’s relationship to the lost object, the return of unpaid debts itself is a truism. Even Stalin expected it. The Stalin Museum in Gori (Georgia) opens with his prediction: “Man is not eternal. And I will die. How will people and history judge me? There were many mistakes, but weren’t there also achievements? They will, naturally, attribute the mistakes to me. They will pile garbage on my grave; but the day will come, and the wind of history will mercilessly scatter it.”

Strangely, Etkind’s work on “warped” public mourning is silent about Stalin’s thirty-year-long postmortem omission from Soviet historiography. Thus, while Etkind recalls the “first political experience of [his] life:” watching, in 1961, his father watch the televised announcement of Stalin’s body having been removed from the mausoleum,<sup>10</sup> he completely neglects to mention that five years previously Stalin’s name began to be removed from textbooks, names of cities and enterprises, and the National Anthem – which for twenty years was performed without words. In 1955 schoolbooks claimed that:

On March 5, 1953, the Soviet people and the workers of the entire world suffered a heavy irreparable loss. Lenin’s student and the successor of his work, the great Stalin, died in the seventy-fourth year of his life. The death of Stalin, who had given his entire life to serving

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid. P. 218.

<sup>10</sup> The removal of Stalin’s body was not, however, a “performative act of major importance” (Ibid. P. 38) – at least not a publicly performative one, and Etkind is unlikely to have “watch[ed his] father who was watching Stalin’s removal” (Ibid). Stalin’s body was removed the very night after the Twenty-Second Party Congress, with Red Square specifically closed to the public under the premise of parade preparations. The following day’s *Pravda* mentions the removal of Stalin’s body only on the last two pages. On page 5, in two short approving letters: “We, the railroad workers of Siberia, wholly approve the Congress’s resolution regarding the Mausoleum of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin. Lenin’s Mausoleum is sacred to our people, there cannot be within it a place for Stalin’s coffin.” And on page 6, in an approving letter from the French Communist Party, and a dry chronicle: “Fulfilling the resolution of the Twenty-Second Party Congress, the coffin with the body of I.V. Stalin is moved from the Mausoleum of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, to the Kremlin wall.”

the people, was the heaviest loss. The bright memory of Stalin will eternally live in the hearts of the workers of the world. After the death of Stalin, our people gathered ever tighter around the Communist party and the Soviet government.<sup>11</sup>

But the 1957 edition of the tenth-grade history textbook neglects to mention the death at all. Noting that the Twentieth Party Congress “condemned the cult of personality, which belittled the role of the party and the masses, disparaged the significance of the party’s collective leadership, and not uncommonly led to serious oversights in work”<sup>12</sup> – the textbook neglects to mention whose personality was the subject of that cult. Indeed, it mentions Stalin only twice: once as a supporter of Lenin’s 1917 decision to begin the armed October rebellion,<sup>13</sup> and once as the author of *The Foundations of Leninism*, a book that “played a significant role in the conceptual defeat of Trotskyism.”<sup>14</sup> Even in the history of World War II, it replaces Commander in Chief I. V. Stalin (*Verkhovnyi Glavnokomanduiushchii*) with an indefinite and nameless Chief Command (*Verkhvnoe Glavnokomandovanie*).<sup>15</sup> This gaping void on the pedestal of the “Great Leader” and the Soviet Union’s only Generalissimus appears in all Soviet textbooks after the 1956 Twentieth Party Congress.

These obvious facts about Stalin’s omission from late-Soviet public discourse would have been important to note in an analysis of cultural memory and mourning, but they would also have problematized Etkind’s unambiguous historiography. Instead, Etkind insists that “understanding the crimes of the past was the purpose of the Thaw [1956–1964], a time of exploration and mourning.”<sup>16</sup> He proposes instead that it was “during the long, dreadful Stagnation that followed (1964–1985) [that] the authorities resumed their attempts to escape from the memory of Stalinism.”<sup>17</sup> Indeed,

<sup>11</sup> Istoriiia SSSR. Kratkii kurs. Uchebnik dlia 4-go klassa / Ed. A. V. Shestakov. Moscow, 1955. Chapter “USSR after the War.”

<sup>12</sup> Istoriiia SSSR. Uchebnik dlia 10 klassa srednei shkoly. Part 3 / Ed. A. M. Pankratova. Moscow, 1957. P. 270.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. P. 96.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. P. 193.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. P. 236.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. P. 144. Also repeated in Alexander Etkind. Mourning the Soviet Victims in a Cosmopolitan Way: Hamlet from Kozintsev to Riazanov // *Studies in Russian & Soviet Cinema*. 2011. Vol. 5. No. 3. Pp. 398. And also repeated in: Aleksandr Etkind. Krivoie gore. Pryzhok cherez katastrofu: predel’noe napriazhenie voobrazheniia // [gefter.ru](http://gefter.ru). 10.07.2014. <http://gefter.ru/archive/1269> (last accessed October 20, 2014).

<sup>17</sup> Etkind. *Warped Mourning*. P. 37. Whereas history texts published between 1956 and 1964 mention that Stalin’s suspiciousness led to the cult of personality and the repressions of 1930s, those published after 1964 tend to avoid discussing both Stalin and the cult.

Etkind characterizes Khrushchev's Twentieth Party Congress speech "On the Cult of Personality and Its Consequences" as a willful confession: "There was nothing coercing Khrushchev to confess other than his own guilty memory of the terror and his fear of its reenactment. This autonomous, self-imposed character of Khrushchev's revelations makes them unique, even unprecedented in the history of the twentieth-century violence."<sup>18</sup>

Contrary to Etkind's depiction, however, the content of Khrushchev's speech does not include anything that could be understood to be a "confession." Describing Stalin's military failures, the forced migration of peoples, and several of the already overturned fabricated cases, Khrushchev presents his own involvement heroically, and calls party members to condemn and eradicate the cult of Stalin's personality<sup>19</sup> – but quietly.

We cannot let this matter get out of the party, especially not to the press. It is for this reason that we are considering it here at a closed Congress session. We should know the limits; we should not give ammunition to the enemy; we should not wash our dirty linen before their eyes.<sup>20</sup>

Spoken at a closed plenum session and classified, the speech was heard by the 1,400 delegates of the Congress and soon thereafter by employees at enterprises all over the Soviet Union, to whom it was read aloud at meetings that, by many accounts, left people stunned.<sup>21</sup> The legal and institutional

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Historical accounts from the 1970s and 1980s tend to elide even those aspects of the Terror that had been officially admitted previously – such as the repression of party members in the 1930s and the forced resettlement of people by national characteristic – and tend to be phrased in the verbose language that, during perestroika, would come to be seen as characteristic of "stagnation."

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. P. 34.

<sup>19</sup> Etkind is also mistaken when he writes that "Khrushchev coined two operational concepts: "unjustified repressions" to embrace mass arrests, tortures, and deportations, and the "cult of personality," to describe the accompanying ideological practices" (Ibid. P. 35). Actually, the term "cult of personality" was used already at the July 1953 Party Plenum that denounced Beria – and publicized days later, in a front-page *Pravda* article of July 10, 1953. And Khrushchev's term "unjustified repressions" was quite specific about which arrests, tortures, and deportations it embraced. The "Cult of Personality" speech, for example, specifically justifies Lenin's application of the "most severe measures" to the revolution's class enemies.

<sup>20</sup> Nikita S. Khrushchev. *The Crimes of the Stalin Era*, special report to the 20th congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. New York, 1956. P. 64.

<sup>21</sup> For a study of the speech's dissemination and reception, see Susan Schattenberg. "Democracy" or "Despotism": How the Secret Speech Was Translated into Everyday Life // Polly Jones (Ed.). *The Dilemmas of De-Stalinization: Negotiating Cultural and Social* 370

reforms restructuring the Stalinist system, however, had begun several years before Khrushchev's speech, and were noticed even by foreign observers. "A fairly comprehensive amnesty was decreed," writes Isaac Deutscher, in an article published in 1953:

The frame-up of the Kremlin doctors was declared null and void. The inquisitorial methods of the political police were bluntly condemned. The rule of law was proclaimed. Strong emphasis was placed on the constitutional rights of the citizen, newspapers asked almost openly for the abolition of censorship and official control. ... [T]he government ordered a revision of the targets of the current economic plans. Consumer industries were to raise their output. ... A new spirit made itself felt in the conduct of foreign affairs.<sup>22</sup>

The amnesty noted by Deutscher released 1,200,000 prisoners, roughly 47 percent of the incarcerated population.<sup>23</sup> It was initiated by Lavrentiy Beria, the post-1938 minister of internal affairs, who also initiated the overturning of the Doctors' Affair and the institutional restructuring of the GULAG's enterprises.<sup>24</sup> Likely, Beria forwarded these resolutions as a play in the Kremlin struggle for power – which he lost several months later, when his colleagues condemned him to execution on accusation of espionage. Beria's July 1953 arrest was reported on the first page of *Pravda*;<sup>25</sup> the *Great Soviet Encyclopedia* issued revisions, instructing subscribers to cut out and replace Beria's entry;<sup>26</sup> and two years later, in 1956, Khrushchev's Twentieth Party Congress speech blamed the political repressions on

[Stalin's] unbelievable suspicion [which] was cleverly taken advantage of by the abject provocateur and vile enemy, Beria, who had murdered

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Change in the Khrushchev Era. New York, 2006. Pp. 64–79. For memoir accounts, see Anatolii Vershik. *Piat' desiat let nazad v marte* // *Zvezda*. 2006. No. 3, and Rada Adzhubei. *Reshaiushchii shag byl sdelan* // A. I. Volkov, M. G. Pugacheva, S. F. Iarmoliuk (Eds.). *Pressa v obshchestve (1959–2000): Otsenki zhurnalistov i sotsiologov*. Moscow, 2000.

<sup>22</sup> Isaac Deutscher. *The Beria Affair* // *International Journal*. 1953. Vol. 8. No. 4. Pp. 227–239.

<sup>23</sup> Whereas on January 1, 1953, the number of prisoners detained in correctional-labor camps and colonies was 2,472,247, on January 1, 1954, the number was 1,325,003, or 53.6 percent (*GULAG: Glavnoe upravlenie lagerei. 1918–1960* / Ed. A. N. Iakovlev; comp. A. I. Kokurin, N. V. Petrov. Moscow, 2000. P. 435).

<sup>24</sup> For a good collection of documents, see *GULAG: Glavnoe upravlenie lagerei. 1918–1960*, and Lavrentii Beriia. 1953. *Stenogramma iit'ul'skogo plenuma TsK KPSS i drugie dokumenty* / Ed. A. N. Iakovlev; comp. V. Naumov, Iu. Sigachev. Moscow, 1999.

<sup>25</sup> *Informatsionnoe soobshchenie o plenume Tsentral'nogo Komiteta Kommunisticheskoi partii Sovetskogo Soiuz* // *Pravda*. 1953. No. 12759. July 10. P. 1.

<sup>26</sup> See Lavrentii Beriia. P. 5.

thousands of Communists and loyal Soviet people... As we have now proven, it had been precisely Beria who had “suggested” to Stalin the fabrication by him and by his confidants of materials in the form of declarations and anonymous letters, and in the form of various rumors and talks.<sup>27</sup>

Etkind neglects to mention Beria’s execution at all – although he notes that Khrushchev “enjoyed the supreme luxury of dying in his own bed – a luxury that, in his case, was well earned.”<sup>28</sup> This omission of Stalin and Beria’s postmortem exclusion from historiography is compounded by a refusal to analyze the Soviet Union in terms of economic and punitive institutions. Thus, Etkind recognizes that “in 1953, there were 166 labor camps in the Soviet Union, plus a large number of other penitentiary institutions, from prisons to special settlements. Many millions served time in these institutions. Almost all of them were released between 1954 and 1956.”<sup>29</sup> Etkind can nevertheless insist that Khrushchev “started the de-Stalinization process” in 1956,<sup>30</sup> because he argues that the forced labor system is best not analyzed in institutional terms: “The gulag’s primary function,” he writes, “was to destroy the convicts’ language and their world.”<sup>31</sup> “Practicing senseless violence that eludes any functional interpretation, the Soviet system effectively reduced humans to working animals.”<sup>32</sup>

But a violence reducing people to working animals is not functionally senseless. And while Etkind supports his claim by noting that “economic productivity in the labor camps was about 50 percent of the average level achieved by free labor in the same industries,”<sup>33</sup> the question of whether free labor *would not have been* more effective than forced labor is different from whether or not the latter was developed and regarded as an economic institution, ineffective as it may have been. From historical studies of archival documents we know that forced labor was seen as a solution to labor shortage from the late 1920s, especially in areas such as the far north that were rich in resources but unpopulated and difficult to inhabit. Thus, James Harris shows that the 1929 de-kulakization and collectivization directives were used by regional leaders not only to crush peasant resistance but also to funnel former kulaks

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<sup>27</sup> Khrushchev. *The Crimes of the Stalin Era*. P. 46.

<sup>28</sup> Etkind. *Warped Mourning*. P. 35.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.* P. 35.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.* P. 34.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.* P. 28.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.* P. 242.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.* P. 28.

into forestry labor camps.<sup>34</sup> And thus, the June 1929, the Politburo resolution “On the Use of Prison Labor” increased the size of extant labor camps and ordered new ones built in mineral-rich regions, like the gold-bearing area around Magadan. In his study of the latter, David Nordlander notes:

[F]rom 1932 to 1934, Dal’stroi increased its mining totals from 511 to 5,515 kilograms of pure gold, ... [presaging the] monumental amounts of this precious metal that the state trust would reap in later years. Such returns proved significant for Stalin’s economic program overall, since international gold sales became one of the instrumental means of raising foreign exchange to pay for the Soviet industrialization effort. Financial incentives gave impetus to Dal’stroi’s birth and evolution, a motive force that would not be matched until political considerations came into play during the Great Purges in the late 1930s.<sup>35</sup>

While prisoners constructed industrial infrastructure and extracted natural resources throughout the Stalin era, the distinction between free and forced labor became increasingly tenuous after 1940, when job changing and absenteeism became criminal offenses. Between 1940 and 1952, for example, 3,891,655 people were convicted of unauthorized job changing, and 10,904,020 were convicted of absenteeism, the latter infraction punished by up to six months corrective labor with a 25 percent loss of pay.<sup>36</sup> In *Soviet Workers in Late-Stalinism*, Donald Filtzer estimates that, between camp prisoners, internal exiles, and prisoners of war, the Ministry of Internal Affairs had jurisdiction over roughly 20 percent of the total 1947 industrial labor force. He also notes that “this figure did not alter appreciably even as the USSR gradually repatriated prisoners of war back to Germany and Japan: it merely replaced them with camp prisoners, especially in the key sectors of coal mining and metallurgy.”<sup>37</sup> And when, in 1953, the gulag was factually disbanded through a series of resolutions – to release nearly half the prisoners, cancel twenty-two major forced-labor projects, and distribute jurisdiction over the gulag’s industries

<sup>34</sup> James Harris. *The Growth of the Gulag: Forced Labor in the Urals Region, 1929–31* // *Russian Review*. 1997. Vol. 56. No. 2. Pp. 265-80.

<sup>35</sup> David Nordlander. *Origins of a Gulag Capital: Magadan and Stalinist Control in the Early 1930s* // *Slavic Review*. 1998. Vol. 57. No. 4. Pp. 808-809.

<sup>36</sup> Donald Filtzer. *Soviet Workers and Late Stalinism: Labour and the Restoration of the Stalinist System after World War II*. Cambridge, 2002. Pp. 163. See also: Andrei Sokolov. *Forced Labor in Soviet Industry: The End of the 1930s to the mid-1950s* // Paul Gregory and Valery Lazarev (Eds.). *The Economics of Forced Labor: The Soviet Gulag*. Stanford, 2003.

<sup>37</sup> Filtzer. *Soviet Workers and Late Stalinism*. P. 23.

between various ministries – Beria, who forwarded these resolutions, also justified them on economic grounds.<sup>38</sup>

Together, the 1953 amnesty, the end of compulsory labor conscription, and the 1956 decriminalization of job changing “had a radical effect on the economy,” writes Filtzer. “For the first time since forced de-kulakization, Soviet industry and construction had to rely solely on free labour power; and for the first time since June 1940, they could not rely on the courts to deter workers from quitting.”<sup>39</sup> Consequently, late-Soviet workers came to be held at their jobs by social welfare, including substantial pension benefits for employment continuity, as well as material and social benefits distributed to workers by their employing enterprises. The “plant was not really a ‘business’,” writes Kotkin, describing the end of the late-Soviet era, “it was an industrial welfare agency.”<sup>40</sup> Dissent was also predominantly regulated in the late-Soviet period not by the courts but, as V. A. Kozlov et al. write in their study of declassified political cases, by employment institutions and the “so-called Soviet public: the party, komsomol, and union organizations.”<sup>41</sup> Refusing, however, to see the system of forced labor in terms of institutions, Etkind conflates different historical periods into a generalized “Soviet terror,” and conflates political prisoners with the gulag’s prisoners in general. This conflation prevents him from analyzing how dissent was policed – and how people were victimized – in the late-Soviet period by civic social pressure. The latter ranged from the work collective’s reprimand, to being voted out of the party, fired, or banned from working certain jobs. The demoralizing practice often involved former colleagues’ public and clandestine denunciations. Alexander Etkind should know this because it concerns the history of his family, which he makes central to his texts. But here again is another omission.

Writing about his uncle, Efim Etkind, whose father was arrested in 1930, and who welcomed Tatiana Gnedich when she was released from the camps in 1956, Alexander Etkind neglects to mention how Efim himself suffered for

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<sup>38</sup> In March 1953, Beria proposes these changes in letters addressed to the Council of Ministers, and his resolutions are accepted the same day. These declassified archival documents have been published in: GULAG: Glavnoe upravlenie lagerei. Pp. 786-791.

<sup>39</sup> Donald Filtzer. *From Mobilized to Free Labour* // Polly Jones (Ed.). *The Dilemmas of De-Stalinization: Negotiating Cultural and Social Change in the Khrushchev Era*. New York, 2006. P. 159.

<sup>40</sup> Stephen Kotkin. *Steeltown, USSR: Soviet Society in the Gorbachev Era*. Berkeley, 1991. P. 18.

<sup>41</sup> Kramola: Inakomyslie v SSSR pri Khrushcheve i Brezhneve. 1953–1982 gg. Rassekrechennyye dokumenty Verkhovnogo suda i Prokuratury SSSR / Comp. V. A. Kozlov, O. V. Edel’man, E. Iu. Zavadskaia. Ed. V. A. Kozlov, S. V. Mironenko. Moscow, 2005. P. 34.

dissent at the hands of Soviet civil society. Efim Etkind refers to the ordeal as his “civic execution”; under the accusation of propagating Solzhenitsyn’s *GULAG Archipelago*, he was dismissed from the institute at which he worked for twenty-three years, stripped of his academic titles, and expelled from the Union of Writers. His dismissal, however, was not carried out in any of the ways Alexander Etkind notes “victims of the Soviet regime” to have suffered at the hand of the “the criminal state.”<sup>42</sup> Efim Etkind was neither convicted of a crime nor even formally charged. His house was never searched, and the supposed manuscript was never found. Instead, he writes, the police had “preferred to act through the professors and writers. Neither the professors nor the writers, however, either demanded or obtained any proof – they simply took the word of the police investigators.” Efim Etkind’s former colleagues – who unanimously denounced him by anonymous vote, and thereby enacted this nonjudicial punishment “by means of ‘public opinion,’”<sup>43</sup> – are they the “criminal state”<sup>44</sup> or “intellectuals, the conscience of the nation?”<sup>45</sup> “‘We’ and ‘they,’” writes Efim Etkind, “How much easier is it to live with such clear distinctions! And how hard to live in an undifferentiated and unclear society where there are so many of ‘them’ among ‘us’ and so many of ‘us’ among ‘them.’”<sup>46</sup> He points out that the late-Soviet social structure involved in the Communist Party’s quid pro quo all people who

want to get on with their lives and not remain idle bystanders. Are they to be blamed for this? Doctors treat patients, composers compose music, journalists write articles, teachers teach children, and engineers carry out the Plan. They are conscientious people trying to do their job as honestly as possible. ... One may condemn their docility and even be indignant about it, but millions and millions of similar acts of docility make up a reality which cannot be ignored and which is at one

<sup>42</sup> Etkind writes: “victims of the Soviet regime also suffered in many other institutions of the criminal state: during the arrest when the state came into their homes, searched their belongings, and separated them from their families; in investigative prisons, where the state applied the most inhuman (and illegal, under that state’s own laws) methods of torture; in various forms of ‘administrative exile’ and ‘special resettlement’ that broke up families and dictated where people must live, often forcing them to move to isolated and remote locations where conditions were so harsh as to be life-threatening; in grand-scale social experiments such as collectivization and forced industrialization, with famine and urban poverty as their results; and also in other institutions of disciplinary power such as psychiatric hospitals, orphanages, and, last but not least, the Soviet army, with its universal draft and endemic brutality” (Etkind. *Warped Mourning*. P. 9).

<sup>43</sup> Efim Etkind. *Notes of a Non-Conspirator*. Oxford, 1978. Pp. 80-81.

<sup>44</sup> Etkind. *Warped Mourning*. P. 9.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.* P. 243.

<sup>46</sup> Etkind. *Notes of a Non-Conspirator*. P. 7.

and the same time a tragedy and crime. The Party is an all-powerful church – were heretics ever very common?<sup>47</sup>

Stripped of his titles and dismissed from the institute, Efim Etkind was forced into emigration.

Insisting that the post-Soviet present is haunted by unmourned “Soviet victims,” rather than by historical omissions, and lacking concrete institutional analysis that could have shed light on the logics of social and discursive control, Etkind resorts to vague naturalistic metaphors to explain public commemoration. He theorizes that cultural memory can be “hard” or “soft.” Hard memory is literally hard: erected in monuments. And soft memory “consists primarily of texts (including literary, historical, and other narratives).” The two are interdependent – because “monuments without inscriptions are mute, while texts without monuments are ephemeral [*sic!*]<sup>48</sup> – but “hard memory is usually the responsibility of the state, while soft memory is the domain of society.”<sup>49</sup> Etkind describes the process of such hard-memory formation in terms of natural law, comparing “monuments to crystals that settle in a solution provided that this solution is strong and stable. . . . High social consensus encourages the proliferation of monuments . . . [while a lack of consensus makes] cultural memory hot and liquid rather than cool and crystallized.” Contemporary Russian memory, he notes, “barely approaches the minimal conditions of crystallization.”<sup>50</sup> Therefore, because consensus has not been reached, “crystallizations of memory, monuments [that] keep the uncanny where it belongs, in the grave” are not erected by the state, causing “the dead [to] return as the undead. The innocent victims turn into uncanny monsters.”<sup>51</sup>

It is not clear, however, what constitutes a monument. Are state-issued textbooks “hard” or “soft”? Are the names of cities? Citing Mikhail Yampolsky, Etkind writes that “a monument creates a mystical zone in which time stops its flow, as in a snapshot, and space is transfigured from its neutral, dispersed condition into one that radically focuses on the monument.” He then amends this theory by proposing the existence of textual monuments:

An exciting example of the textual monument stands out in the middle of Khrushchev’s memoir. He remembers how at the peak of the Stalingrad battle, he could not find the headquarters of one of the armies that took part in encircling the enemy. It was a dark night near

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Etkind. *Warped Mourning*. P. 177.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid. P. 193.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid. P. 176.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid. P. 211.

the frontline, and Khrushchev and his entourage lost their way. Rockets illuminated the terrain but they saw only three dead bodies on the ground, two naked German soldiers and a gray horse.

Analyzing this “textual monument,” Etkind once again turns to psychoanalysis: “contrasting with the lively flow of Khrushchev’s memoir, this expressionist scene concentrates the tension and anxiety of an organizer of the Stalingrad triumph. Static and repetitive, it embodies the death wish at the center of the life-affirming victory.”<sup>52</sup>

It is not obvious why the book’s mention of Stalingrad ignores the battle’s two million Soviet, German, and civilian casualties in favor of a “life-affirming victory” – and a dead gray horse described in Khrushchev’s memoir. Certainly such historiography does not easily comport with Freudian psychoanalysis, in which relationships are often ambivalent, and concealment unintentional. While Etkind sees the manifestation of “warped” mourning in a prevalence of undead characters in post-Soviet literature and media, I would instead suggest that it manifests in popular post-Soviet historiography itself: in the latter’s tendency to “monolithically” depict the past, overlooking facts, events, and entire eras. Indeed, the persistent omission from Etkind’s texts of lives – and of facts – that do not unproblematically fit the definition of victimhood as well as the texts’ refusal to engage in institutional analysis make them exemplary of a recognizable aspect of perestroika-era historiographic ideology, which was initiated by Gorbachev’s 1986 glasnost policy and continues to have repercussions today.

Glasnost encouraged public discussion of social and economic shortfalls, and of certain previously omitted historical facts – especially those concerning Stalinism – and perestroika reformers, many of whom had begun their political careers under Khrushchev, often presented the policy as a continuation of Khrushchev’s Thaw. “The anti-Stalinist movement born under Khrushchev eventually grew,” Stephen Cohen and Katrina vanden Heuvel summarize the sentiment of their interviewees in the editors’ introduction to the 1989 *Voices of Glasnost*, “after many years of bitter political defeat and agony, into the perestroika movement led by Gorbachev in the 1980s.”<sup>53</sup> Like Etkind’s texts, the texts of perestroika reformers present Khrushchev as a well-meaning but imperfect reformer who had initiated de-Stalinization. “Khrushchev was politically brave,” notes Fyodor Burlatsky – the *Literaturnaya Gazeta* perestroika-era editor, one of Khrushchev’s speechwriters and

<sup>52</sup> Ibid. Pp. 180-181.

<sup>53</sup> Stephen F. Cohen and Katrina vanden Heuvel. *Voices of Glasnost: Interviews with Gorbachev’s Reformers*. New York, 1989. P. 19.

authors of the “Moral Codex of the Builders of Communism” – “sometimes desperately so. He was the only political leader at the time brave enough to give that speech against Stalin at the Twentieth Party Congress in 1956. It was one of the rare moments in history when a political leader risked his personal position, even his life, for the sake of what was right.”<sup>54</sup> And, while Etkind’s narrative of there having been “nothing coercing Khrushchev to confess other than his own guilty memory of the terror and his fear of its reenactment”<sup>55</sup> is factually incorrect, it does closely repeat Khrushchev’s own depiction of the events, as it is recalled by perestroika-era memoirs, such as Burlatsky’s 1988 essay “After Stalin: Notes about the Political Thaw.”<sup>56</sup>

The “rehabilitation of history” was an important theme in perestroika-era publications – from literary journal and newspaper articles, to theatrical productions and film – but this rehabilitation tended to skip over Stalin’s thirty-year-long omission from public mention. The situation is well illustrated by the 1987 hit film *Repentance*, in which a local party boss – Stalinesque, but with Beria’s pince-nez and Hitler’s mustache – dies and is buried by his 1980’s nomenklatura family, only to be repeatedly dug up by an intellectual lady whose mother and father fell victim to the party boss’s political repressions. The film’s narrative thus effaces the temporal gap between the repressions, which are set in the 1930s, and the death of the party boss in the 1980s: a temporal gap during which, presumably, that Stalinisque party boss was carefully omitted from historiography, while people “got on with their lives.” Perestroika-era media discussions tended to concentrate on those epochs – and those aspects – of Soviet history in which speakers were not personally implicated. This is true even of voices speaking against the era’s public reevaluation of history. In a 1991 interview, for example, the “conservative” politburo member Yegor Ligachev, explains:

Under Stalin, all history was portrayed as it was in his *Short Course*, as successes, victories and no defeats. And if anyone spoke about defeat, it could only be Stalin, and God forbid, no one else could. But sometime in 1987, suddenly people started saying our history was terrible. But I made the point that the attempt to show people that everything in our history was terrible is an attempt to weaken our people, to deprive it of its historical memory, and it is a way of showing that the socialist choice was mistaken.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid. P. 181.

<sup>55</sup> Etkind. *Warped Mourning*. P. 34.

<sup>56</sup> Fedor Burlatskii. *Posle Stalina: Zametki o politikeskoi otpepli* // *Novyi Mir*. 1988. No. 10. Pp. 153-197.

<sup>57</sup> Katrina vanden Heuvel. *Comrade Ligachev Tells His Side* // *The Nation*. 1991. Vol. 253. No. 19. Dec 2. Pp. 704-708.

Thus, skipping directly from Stalin's *Short Course* (published from 1938 to 1953, and formally repudiated by Khrushchev in 1956) to the year 1987, Ligachev's statement also omits the entire late-Soviet period. And – debating whether or not “everything in our history was terrible” – it also replaces analysis of historical events by their moral evaluation.

This tendency to skip over the historiographic omission of Stalin and to focus instead on a moral evaluation of history allowed speakers to denounce the “Soviet” system in general terms, without analyzing how they had themselves perpetuated it. A good example of this can be found in the autobiographical works of Ligachev's widely recognized “liberal” counterpart, Alexander Yakovlev. Yakovlev was a Central Committee instructor in the Department of Schools from 1953 to 1956, and the acting head of the Central Committee Propaganda Department from 1965 to 1972. Appointed politburo member and minister of propaganda during perestroika, Yakovlev helped to declassify and publish many important collections of archival documents and wrote several books denouncing the Soviet system. His 1992 book *The Fate of Marxism in Russia*, written between 1987 and 1990, opens with the concern that the party's “Stalinist wing” is getting stronger, and aims to understand how the country could have been seized by Marxism for seven decades:

Why were the masses seized by utopia, why did history not wish to find an alternative to violence, except for more of the same violence? Why are people so weak and helpless? Why were the ideas of social justice and freedom trampled so crudely, inhumanely, and ruthlessly? Why did the destruction of the peasantry and bloody repressions of one's own people become socially acceptable, along with ecological barbarism and the destruction of material and spiritual symbols of the past, which led to oblivion, the formation of a special cast of Party-state rulers, the imposition of a state religion – a religion of struggle, violence, and intolerance – and shameless parasitism on people's eternal hopes for a better life in a better future?<sup>58</sup>

But Yakovlev does not explain why he himself was complicit – for example, in controlling the media as head of the national Propaganda Department. At no time did he see people harassed for speaking against the Party line, and do nothing, from his authoritative political posts, to stop it? The most he says is that, in his time at the Propaganda Department in Moscow “strict ideological control remained, but the ideological terror ended.”<sup>59</sup>

<sup>58</sup> Alexander Yakovlev. *The Fate of Marxism in Russia*. New Haven, 1993. P. 4.

<sup>59</sup> Aleksandr Iakovlev. *Omut Pamiati*. Moscow, 2000. P. 142.

Robert Legvold's 1994 review of *The Fate of Marxism in Russia* phrases the situation aptly: "Oh, how he must have infuriated his more conservative colleagues on the Politburo! Yakovlev, the liberal spirit in Gorbachev's inner circle, says things about Marxism, Bolshevism and the Soviet experience more scathing than any of Solzhenitsyn's or Sakharov's condemnations."<sup>60</sup> (Although one ought to note that, while Solzhenitsyn spent eight years in the camps and while Sakharov spent six years in internal exile, Yakovlev's "exile" was as ambassador to Canada.<sup>61</sup>) "From a man as intellectual and self-critical as Yakovlev," Legvold continues, "the reader hungers for insights into how he could have believed so long; when, why and by what turns he ceased to believe; and how his evolution compared with others, including Gorbachev's. These are not in the book."<sup>62</sup>

The discursive tendency – supported by the replacement of one historiographic omission with another – to morally evaluate the past without analyzing one's own role in forming it, made "Stalinism" into such a broad term that it could incorporate the entire Soviet epoch. Perestroika-era texts thus often used the term "administer-command" to describe the Soviet planned economy as it existed from early Stalinism to late Gorbachev; analyzed, however, not in terms of economic, judicial, and welfare institutions, but in terms of how this "Stalinist administer-command system" negatively affected "mentality." In a representative 1988 article for example, Len Karpinsky, political commentator for Moscow News, writes that

impediments to perestroika [stem from] ... one branching systemic root, identified as Stalinism ... embodied in the administrative-command system of control. ...

One of Stalinism's grievous crimes was the implantation of a slave mentality into people's lives. People's complete dependence on prescriptions from "above," the yoke of countless "prohibitions" at every step formed a stable social experience. ... [B]y the mid 1980s, the administrative-command system was not only a bare "skeleton," standing above an individual and forcing itself upon him ... it uncer-

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<sup>60</sup> Robert Legvold. *The Fate of Marxism in Russia* // Capsule Review, 1994. <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/49604/robert-legvold/the-fate-of-marxism-in-russia> (last accessed January 14, 2015).

<sup>61</sup> The term "exile" is used widely by Yakovlev's biographers. For example, Thomas Remington notes in his introduction to *The Fate of Marxism in Russia* that Yakovlev was "removed from his post" as acting head of the Communist Party's Central Committee's Propaganda Department, "and exiled to Canada as Soviet ambassador" (Yakovlev. *The Fate of Marxism in Russia*. P. ix.)

<sup>62</sup> Legvold. *The Fate of Marxism in Russia*.

emoniously took up residence within us: inhabited our minds, took control of our souls, settled into the sacred “I” of our personalities.<sup>63</sup>

This tendency to denounce the mentality produced by the administer-command system also figures in the texts of Gorbachev’s advisers. Academician Abel Aganbeyan, for example, the primary economic adviser, laments that “stagnation and apathy ... [have] led to the loss of interest in their work among part of the population and reinforced negative attitudes toward public property.” Denouncing “such anti-social processes as speculation, bribery, ... the use of one’s position for personal ends” and the “tendency to hoard and be greedy,”<sup>64</sup> Aganbeyan does not analyze why and how people are hoarding, speculating, or using their employment positions for personal ends. He suggests, rather, that perestroika reforms would overcome these ills with scientific technological progress, and by

reinforcing ... discipline and order and [increasing] responsibility; strengthening people’s interest in the result of their work; their qualifications and education. Through better attitudes to work, enthusiasm and creativity, better organization and management and appropriate technology.<sup>65</sup>

Advocating for enthusiasm, creativity, and responsibility, perestroika reformers’ texts tended to criticize the system in subjective terms, and to suggest that Soviet social welfare policies were not only economically inefficient but also stifling and morally degrading. This discursive denouncement of “Stalinist administer-command methods” had several practical effects – one was to free speakers from personal responsibility for the morally ambivalent aspects of the recent past; another was to publicly justify the perestroika-era economic deregulatory reforms, which were written without much understanding of either market logics or the social mechanisms by which the late-Soviet planned economy actually functioned. These economic reforms – hinging on the 1987 law On Enterprises and the 1988 law On Cooperatives – allowed profit to be made directly on the discrepancy between the state-set prices and their international market counterparts, and allowed state enterprises to form distributive monopolies, breaking the established supply chains and effectively undermining the planned economy.

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<sup>63</sup> Len Karpinskii. *Pochemu stalinizm ne skhodit so stseny? // Iu. Afanas’ev (Ed.). Inogo ne dano: Sud’by perestroiki. Vgliadyvaias’ v proshloe. Vozvrashchenie k budushchemu.* Moscow, 1988. Pp. 648-650.

<sup>64</sup> Abel Gezevich Aganbegyan. *The Challenge: Economics of Perestroika.* London, 1988. P. 17.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.* P. 12.

Etkind is right to notice the obvious – that historical facts omitted from public discourse tend to be unearthed in “haunting” ways. An obvious example is Stalin, who, having been omitted throughout the late-Soviet era, was denounced during perestroika and associated with the “administer-command system,” and has subsequently been returned to public discussions as a symbol of national strength – countered, often, to perestroika’s bankrupting reforms. As Etkind reminds us, Stalin was voted the “Name of Russia” in 2008.<sup>66</sup> Indeed, popular Russian historiography can be said to be “warped” – in the sense of being based on persistent omissions – and Etkind’s texts are themselves exemplary of this problem; perpetuating the historiographic ideology of perestroika, they help contribute to the “liberal” position of contemporary Russian historiography debates. With its obvious omissions and misreadings, this “liberal” position gives cause to its opposing “patriotic” position, which depicts Russian/Soviet history as that of a strong state pitted against foreign foes – who are sometimes said to have infiltrated as the “liberal” Fifth Column. “Soviet history through the eyes of a contemporary liberal,” writes Nikolai Starikov,

is a collection of stamps, myths, and stupidities that tend to be repeated by the semi-defenders of human rights and the proponents of “human values” ... this nonsense liberals seriously write into history textbooks, from where it enters our young people’s heads. The problem is that nearly ALL contemporary Russian textbooks are written with foreign grants. With the corresponding content. And our liberals don’t cease telling us: “in the West they told the truth about history long ago. And Russia should follow this example.”<sup>67</sup>

Starikov – a well-known blogger, author, and conservative think-tank member – is not alone in this value judgment. Similar sentiment is employed in explaining the need for a single (nationwide) history textbook, which the Russian Historical Society and the Russian Academy of Sciences began developing in 2013, following presidential suggestion. Those involved in the project explain that such a textbook is needed because Russian history is frequently warped and improperly commemorated – often at the fault of foreign powers. “I’m not a historian,” says Vladimir Fortov, president of the Russian Academy of Sciences,

although I love the activity very much. I happen to need to travel abroad often. And I’m always amazed when I visit some university where, for

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<sup>66</sup> Etkind. *Warped Mourning*. P. 210.

<sup>67</sup> *Istoriia Rossii – liberal’nyi variant* // <http://nstarikov.ru/blog/11901> (last accessed January 14, 2015).

example, some historical landmarks are listed, but the launch of the Earth's first artificial satellite is missing. The first cosmonaut is missing. The first atomic power station is missing. It's simply silenced.<sup>68</sup>

Both the "patriotic" and the "liberal" positions of the historiography debates see history "monolithically," omitting the facts that would problematize easy identification with heroes and victims. In so doing, they split the past – and consequently also the present – into a heroic and victimized "us" and a villainous "them." With the "patriotic" position, the split distinguishes the Russian state from foreign agents, whether the latter are the Fascist invaders of World War II or, as Starikov suggests, the agents of a "Fifth Column" instilling "stamps, myths, and stupidities" into "our young people's heads." This position finds institutional support: even the Military Doctrine lists "actions of informational influence on the population, foremost on the country's young citizens, with the goal of disrupting historical, spiritual, and patriotic traditions in the domain of Homeland defense" among the main internal military threats.<sup>69</sup> Likewise, writing from the "liberal" position, Etkind's unproblematic division of the past into "Soviet victims" and the "criminal state," divides the present into those who are the victims of that history and those who must take responsibility for it. "While the state is led by former KGB officers who are no more interested in apologizing for the past than they are in fair elections in the present," writes Etkind, "the struggling civil society and the intrepid reading public are possessed by the unquiet ghosts of the Soviet era."<sup>70</sup> Other "liberal" authors push the division even further, to the point of assuming Putin to be a foreign invader: "You know," the Moscow journalist Olga Romanova comments on Putin's 2012 candidature and election in the journal *Afisha*, "that you [Putin] are an occupant, you brought a greedy and insolent horde with you. Into a country that to you is foreign, neither native nor interesting to you, giving the world only black smelly muck. Which also, by the way, belongs to us – not to you."<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Stenogramma zasedaniia soveta rossiiskogo istoricheskogo obshchestva. October 30, 2013 // <http://rushistory.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Совет-Российского-исторического-общества-30.10.13-стенограмма.pdf> (last accessed January 14, 2015).

<sup>69</sup> Voennaia doktrina Rossiiskoi Federatsii, Punkt II.13.v // <http://news.kremlin.ru/media/events/files/41d527556bec8deb3530.pdf> (last accessed January 14, 2015).

<sup>70</sup> Etkind. *Warped Mourning*. P. 211. Repeated in: Etkind. *Stories of the Undead*. P. 633. And also very closely paraphrased in: Etkind. *Post-Soviet Hauntology*. P. 182.

<sup>71</sup> *Grazhdanskie Manifesty* // *Afisha.ru*. 2012. May 18. <http://goo.gl/UM118f> (last accessed October 20, 2014).

This social division between victims and executioners, between the “struggling civil society” and the “greedy and insolent horde” is what, according to Etkind, makes commemorating the history of political repressions so difficult. In a 2004 article, he gives the example of a Moscow monument to Dzerzhinsky, which was replaced by a stone from the Solovetsky labor camp in 1991: “It is so difficult to make a choice between the two Moscow monuments, to the executioner or to his victims, because it actually means making a choice between vastly different historical genealogies and political identities.”<sup>72</sup> Nevertheless, in *Warped Mourning* he sees hope for the future, because “the passionate speeches at the rallies in Moscow and St. Petersburg at the end of 2011 attacked Putin and his regime rather than Soviet traditions and institutions.” (It would have indeed been surprising to see Soviet institutions passionately attacked two decades after the USSR collapsed.) “Even when the enormous crowd in the center of Moscow chanted, ‘We Won’t Forget! We Won’t Forgive!’” Etkind continues, “they referred to the crimes of Putinism and not the crimes of Stalinism.”<sup>73</sup>

Etkind’s texts offer the reader an easy solution: to associate him- or herself with the right side of history, and relegate the responsibility for “haunting” to the unapologetic former officers of the KGB. But this is not an analysis of “warped” public mourning – only a manifestation of contemporary Russian ideology, which continues burying the past’s problematic aspects, spinning new cycles of morally unambiguous historiography. By way of conclusion, I would like to counter this ideology with a selection from Sergei Dovlatov’s *Zona* (1982):

We endlessly rail against Comrade Stalin – and, of course, with reason. All the same, I would like to ask – who wrote four million denunciations at the time of the Stalinist terror? (This number appeared in closed Party documents.) Dzerzhinsky? Yezhov? Abakumov and Yagoda?

Nothing of the kind. They were written by simple Soviet people. Does this imply that Russians are a nation of informers? Not in the least. It’s simply that the tendencies of the historical moment were being manifested.

... Man is to man – how shall I put it best? – a *tabula rasa*. To put it another way – anything you please, depending on the conjunction of circumstances.

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<sup>72</sup> Alexander Etkind. *Hard and Soft in Cultural Memory: Political Mourning in Russia and Germany* // Grey Room. 2004. No. 16. P. 48.

<sup>73</sup> Etkind. *Warped Mourning*. P. 248.

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For this reason, may God give us steadfastness and courage and, even better – circumstances of time and place that are disposed to the good.<sup>74</sup>

## SUMMARY

This essay critiques Alexander Etkind's series of "warped mourning" texts, which analyze the consequences of repressed histories while themselves neglecting important historical facts, such as the forced oblivion of Stalin in the post-1956 public discourse. Conspicuous factual omissions allow Etkind's texts to denounce the Soviet "criminal state" from a position of noncomplicity, perpetuating a popular perestroika-era streamlined historiographic narrative that today is countered by "patriotic" historiography equally unproblematically uniting the Russian people and nation against imagined foreign aggression. The two positions are counterparts, this essay argues, united by a morally unambiguous relationship to the past and by the omission of "excessive" factual details that could complicate such an unproblematic identification.

## РЕЗЮМЕ

Статья критикует серию публикаций Александра Эткинда, посвященных проблематике "скомканного горя," в которых анализируются присутствие политических репрессий в общественной памяти. В этих работах Эткинд игнорирует ряд исторических фактов, принципиальных для подобного анализа (например, превращение Сталина в "фигуру умолчания" после XX съезда КПСС). Тем самым автор продолжает традицию популярной историографии перестройки, сформулировавшей стратегию публичного осуждения советского режима без необходимости обсуждения вопроса о личной причастности к его злодеяниям. Данная статья подчеркивает недопустимость избирательного подхода к истории, так как именно на исторических пробелах возникло новое влиятельное заблуждение. Одномерной перестроечной историографии, игнорировавшей смысловые пробелы и неувязки, сегодня противопоставляется новая "патриотическая" идеология, объединяющая нацию против "внешнего врага," как в настоящем времени, так и в оценках прошлого.

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<sup>74</sup> Sergei Dovlatov. *The Zone: A Prison Camp Guard's Story*. Berkeley, 2011. Pp. 79, 80.

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