



University
of Glasgow

Gullotta, A. (2021) “I feel, I know, I am immortal”: literary works in the newspapers of Soviet prisons and camps in the 1920s. *Russian Literature*, 120-21, pp. 145-171.

There may be differences between this version and the published version. You are advised to consult the publisher's version if you wish to cite from it.

<https://eprints.gla.ac.uk/183857/>

Deposited on: 11 April 2019

Enlighten – Research publications by members of the University of Glasgow
<https://eprints.gla.ac.uk>

**“I Feel, I Know, I am Immortal”:
Literary Works in the Newspapers of Soviet Prisons and Camps in the 1920s**

Abstract: The present article sheds new light on the newspapers and other publications of the Soviet prison camps in the 1920s and early 1930s. The first part is devoted to the reconstruction of the institutional dynamics that brought about the publication of newspapers, wall newspaper and other periodicals produced inside camps. The article then focuses specifically on a selection of literary works published by the inmates and on the importance of Soviet newspapers published in places of detention as a valid source for the study not only of the history of the Gulag, but also of its culture and literature.

Keywords: Gulag, Newspapers of Soviet Prisons and Camps, Gulag literature, Gulag Culture, Soviet Re-education Policies

Andrea Gullotta – University of Glasgow. School of Modern Languages and Cultures.
Hetherington Building Bute Gardens. G12 8RS

==

In 1926, Boris Emel'ianov (a pseudonym of the actor, playwright and writer Boris Glubokovskii) published this poem:

Вы видали
хвост у кометы,
Когда снежный
туман позади?
Вот такие же
яркие меты
На пахучей
сосновой груди.
Мало в звеньях
деревьев света,
Только ветер
вверху гудит,
Словно грусть
неуложенных клеток,
Разметать
собирается Див.
Да, зима —
не спокойное лето.
В ней тоска
похоренных годин,
Когда снег
неуемным следом
Заметает
церквей паради [sic].
Песня зим
много раз пропета,
Но порой
Соловки Ундин

Замечают
глаза поэта
Где-то в чащे,
в кустах,
впереди.
Я когда-то
у солнца заметил,
Солнца,
что разошлись позади.
Вот такие же яркие меты
Бсе на этой сосновой груди.ⁱ (Emel'ianov
1926: 3)

These lines would not be particularly noteworthy if not for the fact that they were published on the *Novye Solovki*, i.e. the most important *gazeta* (newspaper) published within the Solovki prison camp (*Solovetskii lager' osobogo naznacheniia*, known also by its acronym 'SLON'). Other than showing a clear reference to Russian modernism by the use of the *lesenka*, Emel'ianov's poem – with its mood, its cultural references, its hints at a spiritual dimension and its metaphors that make allusions to the experience of detention and death (see the reference to the *Div*, the Slavic deity that foretells catastrophes) – contradicts the usual paradigm about the publications of Soviet prisons and labour camps, seen mainly as a propaganda tool. While this is true for most of the publications issued after Stalin's leadership became stable, the same cannot be said about the many newspapers, wall newspapers (*stengazety*) and other periodicals published before it, where authors were often freer to express their feelings without the need to abide to state ideology.

The reasons why some publications behind bars in the USSR had a higher degree of freedom of expression than others published 'in freedom' are many and understudied. The phenomenon of the wall newspapers, newspapers and journals (*zhurnaly*) published within the Soviet prison and camps has so far been overall neglected, apart from a few works that have mainly focussed on the periodicals of the Stalinist construction sites, and particularly of the White Sea-Baltic Canal (for instance Ruder 1998 and Draskoczy 2014 – the latter focuses on the periodical press of the Belbaltlag, and in particular on the newspaper *Perekovka*). The only two comprehensive studies to date on the phenomenon of publications behind bars in the Soviet Union are Alla Gorcheva's pioneering work *Pressa GULaga (1918-1955)*, an historical-journalistic review based on archival material and published in 1996 (and in a second, updated version in 2009),ⁱⁱ and Felicitas Fischer von Weikersthal *Die 'inhaftierte' presse. Das Pressewesen sowjetischer Zwangsarbeitslager 1923-1937* (2011), which provides an extensive account of the cultural policies and of the history of the publications of Soviet labour camps, including a section on the journals of the Solovki prison camp and of the camps of the White Sea-Baltic Canal building sites (Fischer von Wiekersthal 2011: 177-

272). The impact of these two publications on academic research has been rather limited; this is surprising, considering the importance that periodical press had in the system of Soviet prison camps in the 1920s and later in the GULag,ⁱⁱⁱ and also the significance of the phenomenon for the cultural history of the camps. It is even more surprising to acknowledge the complete lack of attention towards the topic by literary scholar, taking into account the amount of literary works published in them, which have been totally ignored so far, even in the most notable studies devoted to Gulag literature (e.g. Toker 2000 and Jurgenson 2003).^{iv} The present article aims to propose a different view on the topic by focussing specifically on the camp newspapers of the 1920s, their importance for penitentiary institutions, prisoners and researchers today, and the literary works published in them. The camp newspapers offer the scholars a privileged point of the view for the study of the Gulag; they are invaluable sources for studying the *byt*, social dynamics and cultural milieu of the camps; they provide examples of some of the main strands of penitentiary policies both at a local and at a national level; and they also shed light on the biographies of people and on single events in the macro- and microhistory of the Gulag which would otherwise be impossible to reconstruct or interpret correctly. By the analysis of the genesis, functions and functioning of the newspapers from a double point of view – that of state power and that of the prisoners – the present article focuses on both the wider context in which the *lagernye gazety* were published and on the literary works which appeared in them to show the importance of working on these unique windows on the Soviet prisons and camps.

*

The publication of newspapers, wall newspapers and other periodicals in Soviet Russia was a truly unique phenomenon, which bears no comparison to other countries in terms of support (both financial and ideological) by the state. The difference with the Tsarist regime is impressive: as N. Stogov (a pseudonym of Aleksandr Dobkin) wrote in his article ‘Tiuremnaia pechat’ 1921–1935 godov’, before the revolution the publication of press organs behind bars was scarce and not supported enough by the institutions (Stogov 1978: 527-530). The first prison newspaper ever published officially on the Russian soil was the 1905 St. Petersburg-based *Tiuremnaia gazeta*, which came out in a single issue. Stogov maintains that more than ten years passed before another publication could be produced behind bars in Tsarist Russia – it was the *Zerna*, published again in the former St. Petersburg (now Petrograd) as a supplement to the *Tiuremnyi vestnik*. The February Revolution interrupted the publication of *Zerna* after only four months.

While official prison press was clearly an episodic phenomenon, clandestine publications flourished in Tsarist Russia and abroad, especially among political prisoners.

Dozens of such clandestine publications were produced in places where the political prisoners were exiled. The use of newspapers and other publications by the revolutionary movements before the 1917 revolutions (both within and outside the Russian empire) is a known and thoroughly researched fact, as is the importance of the control over all publications exercised by the Soviet power after the October revolution, foreshadowed already in the fifth chapter of Lenin's *What is to be done*, entirely devoted to a 'plan for an all-Russian political newspaper', which he saw as a 'collective organiser' (Lenin 1963: 154–179). It is therefore not surprising that, once in power, the Bolsheviks decided to invest a consistent amount of energies and resources in the creation of a large amount of newspapers and other press organs published behind the bars.

After an initial period marked by the establishment of a limited number of prison publications,^v towards the end of the Civil War – and especially after 1922 – the amount of periodicals in Soviet prisons and prison camps grew dramatically. This was the result of a series of reforms within Soviet institutions and of a process of definition of policies within the penitentiary system (Fischer von Wickersthal 2011: 109–176).

In fact, during the period between the October Revolution and the end of the Civil War, the Soviet government restructured many times the two institutions related to the administration of prisons and camps, the "Narodnyi Komissariat Iustitsii" (NKIU) and the "Narodnyi Komissariat Vnutrennykh Del" (NKVD), which eventually started competing for the monopoly of the penitentiary system (Ivanova 2006: 144-146). During this period, the concept of "re-education through labour" (*trudovoe perevospitanie*) informed the policies of the penitentiary system ever since April 1918 (Dzhekobson-Smirnov 1998: 11). This was a fundamental concept because, while the Soviet prisons and camps were in reality places of death, punishment and torture, the official main objectives of the Soviet penitentiary system were two, one practical (i.e. to become financially autonomous) and one ideological (to "re-educate" the mass of prisoners through forced labour). In other words, the Soviet penitentiary system supposedly aimed to "teach" prisoners – comprised of allegedly anti-Soviet elements and "politically close" criminals^{vi} – to be "proper" Soviet citizens through labour. The central institutions in charge of the control of the penitentiary system (and a few camp and prison administrators) believed in re-education and committed themselves zealously to it.

The focus on re-education was made stronger after 1921, when some of the subsections of NKIU and NKVD originally devoted to the administration of labour camps (*lageria prinuditel'nyh rabot*) started to present in their name a reference to camps of "correction" through labour (*ispravitel'no-trudovie lageria*, Dzhekobson-Smirnov 1998: 13).^{vii} When the restructuring process finished in 1922 with the liquidation of NKIU into the

NKVD (Ivanova 2006: 146) and the creation of GUMZ (“Glavnoe Upravlenie Mestami Zakliucheniia”) as the main institution in charge of Soviet prisons and camps, re-education became one of the main topics in the exchanges between prison/camps and GUMZ an in the internal regulations of the newly founded institution. This had a strong impact on the production of periodicals in Soviet prisons and camps, as re-education was not only pursued through physical labour, but also through intellectual activities, including publishing activities. Newspapers in particular were highly recommended by the central institutions, as they would draw on everyday life within the camps, while journals and anthologies (*sborniki*) had the function of analysing in more depth some aspects of camp life and “showcasing” the best outputs of prisoners’ creativity.

It was after the creation of GUMZ that the production of newspapers and other periodicals became widespread. GUMZ made cultural re-education one of the priorities of its programme, as well as the liquidation of illiteracy (*likvidatsiia bezgramotnosti*, or *likbez*). For this reason, the institution made a consistent effort to write regulations and guidelines, to support the creation of cultural activities within the camps, and to supervise the operations of all places of detention. In so doing, they sponsored the creation of cultural-educational sections (*kul’turno-vospitatel’nye chasti*, or *kul’turno-prosvetitel’nye chasti*, known also as *kul’tprosvet*, or *KVCh*) within prisons and camps, which had the responsibility to take care of all re-educational activities within the camp.

The cultural activities varied from camp to camp. Most camps had a school for illiterate prisoners, especially young ones, while many had libraries and theatres run by the prisoners, and several had their own publications. All activities were controlled by camp administrators and guards, who had to abide by the directives coming from Moscow and who were considered directly responsible for any oversights.^{viii} In a document sent on 14 April 1924 to the administrators of prisons and camps in or around Moscow, the vice-Head of GUMZ Leonid Kornblit (1892–1958)^{ix} and the inspector for cultural and educational activities – who had the peculiar pseudonym “D’iablo” – asked them not only to control all activities, but also to check that the contents were suitable, specifying that Anti-Semitism was forbidden:

ГУМЗ ставит на вид Заведующим учебно-Воспитательными Частями, что ответственность за постановку в мес. зак. недопустимых зрелищ (ЭРОТИЧЕСКОГО, ПАРНАГРАФИЧЕСКОГО [sic] ИЛИ КОНТР-РЕВОЛЮЦИОННОГО ХАРАКТЕРА) возлагается всецело на ответственность Заведующих Уч-Вос. Ч. и Нач. мест зак. Ввиду этого Зав. Уч.-Вос Ч. должны особо тщательно составлять программы концертов и спектаклей и предварительно просматривать различного рода стихи, куплеты и т.д., предназначаемые к постановке, дабы не допускать в них каких-либо сальностей, антисемитских и подобных элементов.^x

In this period, there was clearly a concern in Moscow about the contents of theatre productions and overall cultural activities within the camps and prisons, to the extent that GUMZ appointed a commission for repertoires.^{xi} Two months later, on 17 June 1924, the Head of Gumz Evsei Shirvindt (1891-1958) and D’iablo sent all prisons and camps administrations the following message, which shows their increasing need to oversee cultural productions behind bars:

[...] зрелища вполне допустимые для граждан вообще, как, напр. киноленты изображающие авантюристические похождения, спектакли со сценами убийств, насилий, зрелища легкого жанра, комедии фарсового характера и т.д. СОВЕРШЕННО НЕДОПУСТИМЫ В МЕСТАХ ЗАКЛЮЧЕНИЯ, где зрелища являются одним из средств исправительного воздействия на преступников.^{xii}

The devotion of GUMZ to cultural re-education is testified by the amount of documents sent to all the places of detention throughout the USSR, followed by monthly and yearly reports, in which the successes of re-education were scrutinised, and further actions to reach the goals were decided. In order to write these reports, GUMZ requested camp commanders to send lists of activities pursued and the details of the prisoners involved. An idea of the level of details required is given by the information – recorded in the 1923 report – that the school opened in the camp located in the remote village of Mariinsk (Kemerovo region) had 255 students, 115 of which completely illiterate, 80 scarcely literate, and 60 literate.^{xiii}

Another such sign of the effort that GUMZ made for cultural re-education is in the meticulous guidelines drafted and redrafted every year to address different types of issues. The need to send instructions was fuelled by the diverse range of cultural activities pursued by each camp, which clearly disturbed the officers at the GUMZ headquarters and urged them to create patterns for all camps and prisons. Other than guidelines, GUMZ used to send also open threats and orders, as can be seen in another document, where they required administrators of the prisons in Moscow to control more strictly the cultural activities and to submit a request to GUMZ before each of them:

Начальникам московских мест заключения.

В целях установления правильного надзора за постановкой различных зрелищ в местах закл., ГУМЗ категорически ЗАПРЕЩАЕТ приступать к подготовке спектаклей, концертов и других зрелищ без предварительного разрешения ГУМЗа.^{xiv}

The GUMZ’s effort to unify the cultural productions within Soviet prisons and camps was not successful, as their quantity and quality depended mainly on two factors, i.e. the support from each camp commander, and finances. Ever since 1918 Moscow institutions

made it clear that, other than re-education, prisons and camps had to strive for economic independence from Moscow. However, this remained mere wishful thinking. Camps and prisons inundated the central authorities with requests for funding. For this reason, while Moscow kept on sending money, in 1926 camps and prisons were given the suggestion, and later the order, to make some earnings out of the cultural activities^{xv} – this was possible thanks to theatres and publications.

Theatre shows organised behind bars were often ticketed for both prisoners and other spectators (e.g. “free” workers of the camp), while newspapers and sometimes also journals were regularly sold within and outside the camps. Some of them were sold in the rest of the Soviet Union, and two of them – the *Sоловецкие Острова* and the Viatka-based *Za Zheleznoi Reshetkoi* – even abroad (Gorcheva 2009: 29-30). Moreover, most newspapers had advertisements from local enterprises and authorities, which – quite paradoxically – used publications issued in places of detention to push forward their activities on the outside.

Regardless of the efforts to increase funding through newspapers, all the revenues hardly made any publication activity economically self-sufficient. Still, the GUMZ kept sponsoring the creation of newspapers behind bars – whose production thrived throughout the Soviet Union in those years – because they considered them fundamental for many reasons. As showed by Fischer von Weikersthal, camp newspapers had different functions: they were an ideal means to organise camp activities, they were used to motivate the prisoners and also to manage communication in places of detention which were often rather big and densely populated (Fischer von Wiekersthal 2011: 313-348). Newspapers were also a space where the successes of the camp administration in terms of industrial production, ideological work and re-education could be recorded. Other than for the administrators, the *lagernye gazety* were fundamental for prisoners, as they were also the only place from which they would receive information about the outside world (apart from the few camps or prisons that could afford a radio), as testified by one prisoner, Boris Shiriaev.

“Но газету читали и даже покупали. [...] На Соловках же читали, прежде всего, очень краткую информацию о жизни в СССР и столь же краткий обзор международного положения. Это понятно. Никаких других газет не допускалось”^{xvi} (Shiriaev 1991: 135).

Most importantly, together with schools for illiterate prisoners, camp publications were considered the most important means of cultural re-education, able to engage a large number of prisoners. The instructions sent on 21 November 1924 to the cultural-educational sections of all camps and prisons of the USSR express this concept convincingly:

Культурно-просветительная комиссия под руководством Заведующего учебно-воспитательной частью может издавать журналы, сборники и т.п., к участию и сотрудничеству которых следует привлекать возможно более широкие массы заключенных.^{xvii}

Prisoners were in fact at the centre of any publication of Soviet prisons and camps. The quoted instructions mention journals and anthologies; however, the most important role for the recruitment of prisoners in cultural activities was played by newspapers and wall newspapers. Apart from very few exceptions, all newspapers published articles on the daily life in the camp, many of which were written by prisoners, who were called “lagkory” (*lagernye korrespondenty*, camp correspondents, a term modelled on the “rabkory”, or *rabocheie korresponenty*, the “workers’ correspondents” who would publish on official newspapers outside places of detention). They would also play a fundamental role in wall newspapers, which were produced in many places of detention thanks to their very small production cost. Wall newspapers were used mainly as organisers and motivators and were put in places where prisoners could read them with ease, e.g. in aisles or common facilities. The vast majority of the contributors to the *stengazety* were prisoners.^{xviii}

Newspapers had yet another function: together with journals, they offered a space for the prisoners’ creative works. The amount of literary works contained in the publications of Soviet prisons and camps is truly impressive. Some camps published even literary almanacs, while other periodicals were entirely devoted to the prisoners’ works, such as the handwritten first 1922 issue of the Ekaterinburg-based *Gолос заключенного. Literaturnyi sbornik zakliuchennykh Ekaterinburgskogo doma zakliucheniia*, which contained all literary works written by the prisoners, including one *skazanie* and four poems, one of which is a sonnet.^{xxix}

Even though literary works could be found mostly in journals, which could host longer works of prose – for instance, most of the No. 5-6 1925 issue of the monthly Samara-based journal *На смену кандалам* is comprised of poems and tales written by the prisoners^{xx} – a large amount of literary works (poems, tales and even literary parodies) were hosted by *gazety* and *stengazety* too, especially when they were directly linked to camp activities. Gorcheva mentions the case of the prison newspaper *Tiur’ma* where a ratio for the creativity of the prisoners was implemented: two third of the literary texts had to be on life in prison and one third about the revolution, which gave the possibility to “feel the new life”. Gorcheva quotes a poem published in the newspaper *Tiur’ma*, a “document of the era”, as she puts it:

Тюрьма – рассадник просвещения,
В ней человек сидит, не зверь.
К труду в нем жадное стремление,
Для знанья в ней открыта дверь.
Ну, словом, в нынешнее время

Тюрьма совсем не мертвый дом.^{xxi} (Gorcheva 2009: 29).

As the poem above testifies, literary texts published in these publications were often not of the highest aesthetic quality, as the authors were usually not professional authors – they were often composed by a series of quatrains with **basic rhymes, usually alternate**. Moreover, most of the texts published behind bars were ideological. They were proofs of re-education, in which prisoners praised the penitentiary system, often thanking it for showing the author the right way. In a poem published in the Gomel'-based *Golos zakliuchennogo*^{xxii} a prisoner has a dialogue with a butterfly, who tells him the following:

Посмотри, – мы дети воли,
Мы не ведаем тюрьмы.
Солнце встанет, – на свободе
С ним играем целы дни.

И смешно, ведь сам устроил
Ты решетки и тюрьму.
Совесть ложью успокоил
И разрушил красоту.^{xxiii} (Zh. 1925: 4)

Special attention was devoted to criminals and prostitutes who, despite being sentenced by Soviet tribunals, were considered “socially close elements” (*Sotsial’no blizkie elementy*), i.e. members of the lowest classes under Tsarism who were spoiled and exploited by the Tsarist regime and were therefore less condemnable than other prisoners sentenced for political reasons. Common criminals (*shpana*) were invited to publish tales and poems and were often at the centre of humoristic vignettes and tales.^{xxiv} The same issue of the Gomel'-based *Golos zakliuchennogo* hosts a poem by a thief:

Я – вор, меня так называют,
Призвание гадкое мое.
Меня кругом все презирают,
Проклятье [sic] шлют мне все свое.

Теперь привык я к унижениям,
Я сознаюсь, что виноват.
Неужель не будет сожаленья [sic]?
Я сам судьбе своей не рад.

[...]

Порой, свершая преступленье [sic],
Сожмется сердце болью вдруг,
И сразу чувствуя сожаленья [sic]
Проснется, – не подымешь рук.

Но мысль сверлит мозг воспаленный:
«А чем, несчастный, будешь жить?
Где ты найдешь приют, бездомный?

Кради скорей, голодным чтоб не быть!»

[...]

Так не бичуйте же сурово,
А научите, как мне быть,
Чтоб не творить мне впредь былого,
Нечестный путь чтоб позабыть.^{xxv} (Zakl. K. 1925: 5)

While most of the literary works published were ideologically committed, some poems show some ambiguity that might appear as instances of Aesopian language. The poem *Pesn' proshlogo*, published in the quoted issue of *Na smenu kandalam*, an issue entirely “ideological” in all contents published, may be an Aesopian poem. The poem seems to be in line with the other texts published in the same issue, recalling the songs of freedom sung in the past by the people exploited by the capital. However, the final stanza seems to have Aesopian overtones, as the text might imply either that the songs are still remembered, or that they are still needed, because the people is now under another yoke. The use of ellipsis seems to strengthen this hypothesis.

В тех песнях вся правда звучала,
О том как страдает народ –
Под гнетом, ярмом капитала
И песней он знал всех вперед.

Он звал их к борьбе за свободу,
Указывал светлый им путь,
Он пел и о том, что народу
Пора уже спины не гнуть.

[...]

Забыто теперь уж былое,
Здесь нет уж в помине его.
Здесь жизнь теперь уж иная,
Но песнь... песнь былая
В умах всех живет.^{xxvi} (Gradskii 1925: 12)

Not all texts published in the publications of Soviet prisons and camps were ideologically committed. Especially in the early 1920s, it was possible to find isolated instances of freedom of expression. This was possible because sometimes the censors of the publications, who were often the camp or prison guards, had oversights or, in some cases, were not themselves literate enough to understand fully what was going to be published. Georgii Rusakov's sonnet on the Tagan'ka prison is clearly not ideological, if not overtly critical of the Soviet penitentiary system, with a clear reference of prisons as deadly places:

Так вот она, Таганская тюрьма,

Отверженных угрюмая обитель!
Кто, кто воздвиг тебя? Живой строитель?
Иль породили Ненависть и Тьма?

Ты мучила глашатаев ума,
Которых гнал трусливенький [sic] правитель.
Бандит и вор - излюбленный твой житель
И ты воспитываешь их сама.

Ты обезценилась [sic] во дни террора,
Утратив обаяние позора,
И заперты в каменный конверт

Устраивают праздничный концерт...
Но страшен мне осенними ночами
Веселый гроб с живыми мертвцами!^{xxvii} (Rusakov 1921a: 22)

In other cases, the will of the main camp administrators, who approved the publication of less ideological texts, was decisive, as was the case in Viatka, where the director of the camp Iurii Bekhterev, an enthusiast of re-education, allowed his prisoners to publish ideologically-free texts, including love poems, such as the one below, which is inspired by the Valentin Krivich's poem which was used by Aleksandr Vertinskii for a song which became very popular in the 1920s (Vertinskii 1980: 186)^{xxviii}:

Наши встречи минутны, наши встречи случайны,
Но жду их, люблю их, а ты?
Никому не открою нашей маленькой тайны,
Нашей тайны под сводом тюрьмы.

Разве можно приказом запретить улыбаться?..
Нет!.. Улыбка, пробьется, светя.
Стоит нам увидаться, стоит нам повстречаться,
И я снова влюбился в тебя.^{xxix} (Dolgorkov 1924: 28)

These literary texts modelled on other famous texts are particularly interesting: suspended on the border between literary parody and pastiche, they substitute a few words from the original text to re-semanticise it and to “draw it” into the Gulag. Thus Vertinskii’s famous love song becomes a song about love in the camps, a love which needs to be hidden from authorities. Half smiling, half seriously, these texts often reveal some concealed tragedies behind laughter.

A case on its own is that of the publications of the Solovki prison camp.^{xxx} Established in 1923 and closed in 1939 in the wake of the outbreak of the Winter war, the Solovki camp was independent from GUMZ; it was entitled to the OGPU with the explicit request of realising an economically efficient system of exploitation of the prisoners’ forced labour.^{xxxi} The SLON was in all reality the “laboratory of the Gulag”, where the techniques which were eventually implemented throughout the Soviet Union under the supervision of the

GULag institution were shaped and tested. Its experimental status and the decisive intervention by Fedor Eikhmans (1897–1938), a prominent member of camp administration and future first Head of the GULag, allowed the cultural activities of the SLON to be truly unique in the panorama of Soviet prison/camp culture, while theoretically following the guidelines on re-education (Shiriaev 1991: 98; Eikhmans 1926: 38–40). The cultural productions of the camp were by far superior in quality than every other camp in the USSR, thanks also to the large number of intellectuals who were sent to the Solovki prison camp. Eikhmans shadowed the KVCh in the organisation of most of the cultural activities of the camp – including camp publications – and allowed the proliferation of ideologically free culture, conceding almost complete freedom of expression within one of the most dreadful Soviet camps. As a result, the publications of the camp included many texts which were free from ideology. The camp administration issued one newspaper, one journal, a series of scientific essays produced by the prisoners-run “Society of Ethnography” and dozens of wall newspapers – most of the work brigades had their own, and their titles were inspired by the work brigade’s main activity (e.g. the brick factory issued the *Krasnyi kirkich*). The main newspaper of the camp – the *Novye Solovki* – hosted dozens of literary texts, including poems and tales, and even humorous tales, such as those written by the talented Iurii Kazarnovskii, while the main journal of the camp – the *Solovetskie Ostrova*, defined by Shiriaev as the “freest journal in the USSR” (Shiriaev 1991: 135) – functioned mainly as a literary almanac in the years 1929-1930; it contained lyrical poems, love poems and even sometimes literary works that were critical to the Soviet state, as happened after the Solovki prisoners were informed of Sergei Esenin’s suicide and devoted several texts to him. Georgii Rusakov, who in the meantime had been sent to the Solovki, wrote by far the most daring:

Не сберегли кудрявого Сережу,
И он ушел в непредрешенный день...
Придет — да поздно! — к брошенному ложу
Печаль осиротевших деревень.^{xxxii} (Rusakov 1926: 73)

The *Novye Solovki* was one of the most interesting camp newspapers in the 1920s. It hosted a series of columns (e.g. the *Mezhdunarodnyi obzor*, by which prisoners were informed of the latest international news), reports by *lagkory*, ideological texts by camp administrators and even the results of sports activities held within the camp, reviews of camp theatre plays and advertisements from external enterprises.

Although Gorcheva sets the year 1927 as a watershed in her chronology of the publications of Soviet prisons and camps, archival documents suggest that the first

fundamental moment was the emergence of Glavlit on the scene. After an initial phase during which, as mentioned above, censorship was delegated to each single camp administration, Glavlit started showing interest in what was produced in places of detention. In late 1924 GUMZ requested all Soviet prisons and camps to send detailed information on all newspapers and journals,^{xxxiii} followed by a further request, in November 1925, to send one copy each of all publications produced behind bars.^{xxxiv} Considering that soon after (July 1926) Glavlit imposed a limit to the production of periodicals in Soviet prisons and camp – according to which each publication could only print 100 copies per issue – it is likely that the requests by GUMZ were triggered by Glavlit. In addition to that, in this period for the first time GUMZ requested that the Solovki camp administration – which was not subjected by GUMZ but, as written above, was run entirely by the OGPU – send their publications to them as all other camps had done before them, and probably asked for explanations for their contents, considering the detailed reply received by Eikhmans on the reasons behind the camp's concessions for prisoners.^{xxxv}

The Glavlit imposition on camp press led to the venomous reply by Iurii Bekhterev – who in the meanwhile had been promoted from his position as camp director in Viatka to the role of director of the cultural-re-educational section of GUMZ in Moscow – in defence of prison and camp publications.^{xxxvi} His request to remove the limitation imposed by Glavlit was rejected without further explanation.^{xxxvii} This moment marked an important change in the relationship between institutions over the control of prison and camp publications, and a clear departure from the path of re-education, which was clearly not seen any longer as a priority, or at least not in the perspective put forward by GUMZ up until 1926.^{xxxviii}

The tightening of control from Moscow over the cultural activities of places of detention was just the first step towards the progressive unification of the cultural outputs of the camps and prisons. As Stalinism took shape, publications, theatre shows, and other cultural activities within the camps became more and more ideologised, leaving no space to freedom of expression and becoming entirely propaganda means. In this period, more newspapers were produced in the camps: their literary production became monolithically ideological:

Не дрогнет плечо, не устанет рука,
победы добьемся упрямо,
и родина скажет нам издалека:
“Спасибо строителям Бама!”^{xxxix} (Kodzhak 1936: 1)

Although, as Gorcheva rightly points out, there is a difference between the publications of the camps related to the great building sites and publications of Soviet camps,

overall literary texts in the periodicals published behind bars in the USSR were to remain ideological until the death of Stalin.

As the present articles tried to make clear, the newspapers published within Soviet prisons and camps represent a key source to understand not only the history of Soviet repression and in particular of the Gulag, but also the culture and specifically the literature of the Gulag. While other publications such as journals and collected volumes bear a distinctive “showcasing” function, newspapers offer a more detailed recount of the activities and everyday life of the camps thanks to their nature of “organiser”. Sifting through the distortions created by propaganda needs, newspapers provide snapshots of the “zona” and reflect the “reality” of the period when they were produced; their development mirrors the development of the penitentiary and cultural policies of the Soviet state, as well as some of the tendencies that could be noticed in the “outside” world.

In fact, the 1920s represent a transitional period before the emergence of Stalinism. While most publications were fully committed to ideology and/or to the Party directives, debates and divergences of opinion were still possible to be found in the press. Similarly, in the places of detention newspapers offered different perspectives on the theme of re-education, creating sometimes the condition to a properly open debate within camp officials. The pages of the *Novye Solovki* are filled with discussions on the purposes of re-education and on the possibility given to members of the intelligentsia detained in the camp to be part of it (Tsvibelfish 1926: 1), while a text written by the editorial board of *Volzhskii izoliator* in defence of the debates hosted on the pages of the camp’s periodicals show how controversial could the different opinions be:

Не успели еще, как следует опериться наш журнал и газета, как сейчас потоки грязи полились на всех сотрудников – вплоть до угроз и пасквилей; отчасти, конечно несовершенство издания и неудовлетворительность самого дела повинны в том, что многое есть погрешностей в материале. [...] “Дымовка” здесь не пройдет. Наши сотрудники не взирают на эти выступления и с большей, час от часу, энергией, развивают свою деятельность. Конечно, Учвоспитчасть примет все меры к ограничению их от всяких “и злы и скверны”. Прошла пора – темноты, нет цепей сковывающих мысль, долой склону, – нужно больше стремления, больше желания к завоеванию счастья. Дорога к нему открыта. Крест на “дымовку”.^{xl} (Volodin 1925: 5)

The progressive “Stalinization” of the country eventually resulted in the Stalinization of the places of detention and of their publications, which became the mouthpiece of the successes of the re-forging of individuals. This passage is descripted clearly by Nikolai Antsiferov, former prisoner of the Solovki prison camp and of the Belbaltlag, and former

contributor to the publications of both camps, who specifically hints at the different use of camp journals in the pre-Stalin period and of camp newspapers under Stalin:

В первые же дни новой жизни я попал на собрание лагерников в клуб. Там с программной речью выступал начальник лагерей Коган — крепкий, коренастый человек, производивший впечатление добродушного. Он призывал нас к напряженной работе для искупления своих вин перед советским государством. Сообщил, что своим трудом мы сократим сроки, приобретем право частной переписки, улучшим бытовые условия, питание и завоюем себе право включиться в трудовую семью вольных советских граждан, на равных правах со всеми вольными. Основная мысль его речи: вашего прошлого уже не существует. Нас интересует теперь ваше будущее, и оно в ваших руках. Данные обещания были выполнены. Действительно, теперь лагерь совсем не походил на СЛОН (Соловецкий лагерь особого назначения). Там издавался беспартийный журнал «Соловецкие острова» с большой чайкой на обложке. Заключенные писали романтические повести из средних веков, элегии, в которых слышалась тоска души по воле, по семье. Теперь выходила газета «Перековка». Это нас, каэров, перековывали в советских граждан. Это уже была типичная, выдержанная советская газета, идеологически перевоспитывавшая заключенных, посвященная в значительной степени строительству канала. По материалам такой газеты можно было бы написать роман типа «Далеко от Москвы» Ажаева. В конце своего пребывания на Медвежьей горе я поместил в «Перековке» статью об истории проектов соединения Белого моря с Балтийским. Редакция мою статью озаглавила «Год, победивший века». ^{xli} (Antsiferov 1992: 375–376).

The same capacity to mirror the events of the outside world can be found in the literary works published in the newspapers and other periodicals of Soviet prisons and camps. The 1920s saw the increase of state control (and repression) over literature as well as the creation of spaces of dialogue with non-ideological productions, such as those by the “poputchiki”. Towards the end of the 1920s and then in the early 1930s, Soviet literature became increasingly ideologised, being eventually fully committed to Socialist realism. The literary works published within the Soviet prisons and camps are a clear mirror of these developments. While a significant part of the literary production was ideological, there was some space left to ideologically-free literary texts and to other elements which testify resilience or an attempt to fight cultural resistance – I here refer not only to the few texts that were critical of the Soviet state, but to some stylistic features of the texts which show a clear link to pre-revolutionary Russian literature, for example the use of typical literary forms of the Silver Age, such as sonnets and crowns of sonnets, or the reference to some literary images related to Symbolism.^{xlii} Such elements were to disappear for good from the pages of camp newspapers in the 1930s. The experience of the above mentioned Iurii Kazarnovskii is emblematic of this shift. The main protagonist of the humoristic columns of the *Novye Solovki* and of literary parodies on the journal *Solovetskie Ostrova* in the years 1929–1930, his humour gift was toned down in the newspapers of the Belomorkanal, only to leave space to ideologically-committed poetry in his later works.^{xliii} Instances of cultural resistance at the

level of both contents and form remained active in the clandestine poems composed orally by prisoners during detention in the camps throughout the existence of the Gulag (Taganov 1998: 80–87).

Kazarnovskii's case, as well as that of many other authors of camp publications, shows that the processes described by E. Dobrenko in *The Making of the State Writer* (1999) and by Jochen Hellbeck's *Revolution on My Mind* (2006) were active also within the camps, and that the authors underwent not only camp censorship, but also self-censorship as well as attempts at identifying with the directives of the state – this process has been thoroughly analysed by Julie Draskoczy in regards to the newspapers of the Belomorkanal. The prison and camp newspapers of the 1920s show how these processes started before the advent of Stalinism, and how the publications of Soviet prisons and camps, as well as their literary outputs, are not merely propaganda tools created in isolation from the outside world, but more a reflection of the tensions, trends and core questions of Soviet culture and literature on the outside. They also show instances of cultural resistance, as Georgii Rusakov's provocative poem, which contains a strong vindication of the immortality of the poet as opposed to the repression he is undergoing in prison:

Да я умру. Но в тихом птичьем свисте,
в осеннем золоте уже опавших листьев,
и в изумрудных всходах ячменя —
Я буду жить! И, мыслю той пленя,
Покой души загадочно инертен:
Я чувствую — я знаю — я бессмертен.^{xliv} (Rusakov 1921b: 75)

The very fact that such texts were published behind bars calls for a reconsideration of the role, contents and function of the publications of Soviet places of detention.

LITERATURE

Antsiferov, Nikolai

1992 *Iz dum o bylom: Vospominaniia*. Moskva.

Dobrenko, Evgenii

1999 *Formovka sovetskogo pisatelia: sotsial'nye i esteticheskie istoki sovetskoi literaturnoi kul'tury*. Sankt-Peterburg.

Dolgorukov, Evg.

1924 ‘Nashi vstrechi.’ *Za zheleznoi reshetkoi. Zhurnal zakliuchennykh viatskago ispravtruddoma*, No. 1, 28.

Dolzhanskaia, Liia

2012 *Ekaterina Pavlovna Peshkova. Biografiia*. Moskva.

Draskoczy, Julie S.

2014 *Belomor: criminality and creativity in Stalin's Gulag*. Brighton, MA.

Dzhekobson, Maikl (Jakobson, Michael) and Smirnov, Mikhail

1998 ‘Sistema mest zakliucheniia v RSFSR i SSSR. 1917–1930’. *Sistema ispravitel'no-trudovykh lagerei v SSSR, 1923-1960*. Ed. M. Smirnov. Moskva, 10-24.

Eikhmans, Fedor

1926 ‘K voprosu o lagernoi obshchestvennosti’. *Solovetskie Ostrova*, No. 4-5, 38-40.

Emel'ianov, Boris

1926 ‘Vy vidali khvost u komety’. *Novye Solovki*, No. 50, 3.

Fischer von Weikershtal, Felicitas

2011 *Die “inhaftierte” Presse. Das Pressewesen sowjetischer Zwangsarbeitslager 1923-1937*. Weisbaden.

Galmarini, Maria Cristina

2012 ‘Defending the Rights of Gulag Prisoners: The Story of the Political Red Cross, 1918-38.’ *The Russian Review*, No. 71, 6-29.

Gardzonio (Garzonio), Stefano

2010 ‘“Russkii shanson” mezhdu traditsiei i novatorstvom: zhanr, istoriia, tematika.’ *Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie*, No. 101, 149-165.

Gorcheva, Alla

1996 *Pressa GULaga (1918-1955)*. Moskva.

2009 *Pressa GULaga. Spiski E.P. Peshkovoii*. Moskva.

Gradskii

1925 ‘Pesn’ proshlogo’. *Na smenu kandalam*, No. 5-6, 7-8, 12.

Gullotta, Andrea

2018 *Intellectual Life and Literature at Solovki 1923-1930. The Paris of the Northern Concentration Camps*. Cambridge.

- Hellbeck, Jochen
 2006 *Revolution on My Mind: Writing a Diary under Stalin*. Cambridge, Mass.
- Ivanova, Galina
 2006 *Istoriia GULAGa. 1918-1958. Sotsial'no-ekonomicheskii i politiko-pravovoi aspekty*.
 Moskva.
- Jurgenson, Luba
 2003 *L'expérience concentrationnaire est-elle indicible?: essai*. Monaco
- Kazarnovskii, Iurii
 1932 ‘O Grishke, Belmorstroe i karmane prirody’. *Moria soedinim! Stikhi i pesni na Belmorstroe*. No Ed. Medvezh’ia Gora
 1936 *Stikhi*. Moskva.
- Kemetskii, Vladimir
 1930 ‘Prekrasnoi neznakomke (stikhi)’. *Solovetskie Ostrova*, No. 4, 28.
- Kodzhak, N.
 1936 ‘Spasibo’. *Stroitel’ BAMA. Organ KVO Upravleniya Bamlaga OGPU (NKVD)*, No. 48, 1.
- Lenin, Vladimir
 1963 *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii, tom VI*. Moskva.
- Paperno, Irina
 2009 *Stories of the Soviet experience: memoirs, diaries, dreams*. Ithaca.
- Pieralli, Claudia
 2013 ‘The Poetry of Soviet Political Prisoners (1921-1939): an historical-typological framework’. *Contributi italiani al congresso internazionale degli slavisti*. Ed. A. Alberto, M. Garzaniti, M. Perotto, B. Sulpasso. Firenze, 387-412.
 2017 ‘K voprosu izuchenii lagernykh stikhov: osobennosti poezii solovetskikh uznikov’. *Vospominaniia solovetskikh uznikov 1923-1939 gg. Tom 5*. Ed. V. Umniagin. Solovki, 32-43.
- Ruder, Cynthia A.
 1998 *Making history for Stalin: the story of the Belomor Canal*. Gainesville.
- Rusakov, Georgii
 1921a ‘Sonet’. *Tiur’ma. Zhurnal zakliuchennykh*, No. 1, 22.
 1921b ‘Iz nashego al’boma’. *Tiur’ma. Zhurnal zakliuchennykh*, No. 3, 75.
 1926 ‘Ne sberegli’, *Solovetskie Ostrova*, No. 4, 73.
- Shiriaev, Boris
 1925 ‘Zaiavlenie’. *Novye Solovki*, No. 15, 4.
 1926 ‘Buntar’’. *Solovetskie Ostrova*, No. 8, 3.
 1991 *Neugasimaia lampada*. Moskva.
- Shtutman, Samuil
 1972 *Vnutrennye voiska Sovetskoi Respubliki. 1917-1922 gg. Dokumenty i materialy*.
 Moskva.

Stogov, N.

1978 ‘Tiuremnaia pechat’ 1921–1935 godov’, *Pamiat*, No. 1, 527–80

Taganov, Leonid

1998 ‘Potaennaia literatura: poeziia GULaga’. *Voprosy ontologicheskoi poetiki. Potaennaia Literatura. Issledovaniia i materialy*. Ed. Leonid Bykov. Ivanovo, 80–87

Toker, Leona

2000 *Return from the Archipelago: narratives of Gulag survivors*. Bloomington.

Tsvibelfish

1926 ‘Zubry’, *Novye Solovki*, No. 8, 1.

Vertinskii, Aleksandr

1980 *Iz pesen A. Vertinskogo* (pod red. L. Gendlina). Stockholm.

Vincent, Mark

2019 *Criminal Subculture in the Gulag: Prisoner Society in the Stalinist Labour Camps*. (forthcoming)

Volodin

1925 ‘Dymovka’. *Volzhskii izoliator*, No. 1, 5

Zakl. K.

1925 ‘Ja-Vor’. *Gолос заключенного. Журнал заключенных гомельского исправруддома*, No. 4, 5.

Zh.

1925 ‘Motylek’, *Gолос заключенного. Журнал заключенных гомельского исправруддома*, No. 4, 4.

¹ [Have you seen the tail of the comet, | when the snowy fog was behind it? | Just as bright are the marks | On the fragrant chest of the pine. | There is little light in the chain of trees, | only the wind is wailing above, | as if the Div gets ready to disperse | the sadness of scattered cages. | Yes, the winter is not the quiet summer. | It has the melancholy of wasted years, | when the snow with its indestructible trail | starts to cover the parade of the churches. | The song of the winters has been sung many times, | But at times the eyes of the poet | notice the Solovki Undines | somewhere in the thick of the forest, in the bushes, ahead. | I once noticed by the sun | Suns that drifted apart in the distance. | Such are the bright marks | All on that chest of the pine.] All translations are mine. The author uses the word “звено” to indicate the ring of a chain, but I preferred to keep chain to avoid confusion with the rings that are inside the trees. | I would like to thank Kristina Landa and James Rann for their advice.

ⁱⁱ The second version contains also a wide section on Ekaterina Peshkova (1887-1965), wife of Maksim Gor'kii and director of the Political Red Cross until its closure in 1938. For more on Peshkova and the Red Cross, see Dolzhanskaia 2012 and Galmarini 2012.

ⁱⁱⁱ Throughout the article, I will use the spelling “GULag” when I will refer to the institution in charge of the administration of Soviet camps (“Glavnoe Upravlenie Lagerei”) and “Gulag” when I will refer overall to the Soviet camps.

^{iv} Other than my previous publications on the topic, the only exceptions are two articles by Claudia Pieralli, who first mentioned some poems published behind bars (Pieralli 2013) and then devoted an article to the poems published in the Solovki prison camp, describing the phenomenon but only in general terms (Pieralli 2017).

^v The list of publications behind bars provided by Gorcheva at the end of her book lists only one prison periodical issued ever since the October Revolution, the Ekaterinburg-based *Golos zakliuchennogo: Zhurnal zakliuchennikh Ekaterinburgskogo ID*, published from 1917 to 1921 (Gorcheva 2009: 117).

^{vi} On criminal culture and subculture in the Gulag, see the forthcoming book by Mark Vincent *Criminal Subculture in the Gulag: Prisoner Society in the Stalinist Labour Camps* (Vincent 2019), who draws upon a variety of sources, mainly camp newspapers.

^{vii} Corrective labour camps – from the verb “to correct” (“ispravit”).

^{viii} GARF, f. 4042, op. 4, d. 63, l. 125.

^{ix} He was the brother of the famous theatre director Aleksandr Tairov (Shtutman 1972: 685-686). The surname is sometimes spelled Kornblitt, even in the GUMZ documents.

^x [GUMZ notifies the Heads of Teaching and Educational Sections that Heads of Teaching and Educational Sections and of the Directors of the camps will be held accountable in the event of the staging of any unacceptable shows (those of an EROTIC, PARNAGRAPHIC [sic] OR COUNTER-REVOLUTIONARY nature) in the places of detention. In light of this,

the Heads of Teaching and Educational Sections must prepare the programs of concerts and performances with particular care and examine in advance poems, couplets, etc. of any sort intended for staging in order to exclude any obscenity, anti-Semitic or similar elements.]

GARF, f. 4042, op. 4, d. 63, l. 61.

^{xi} GARF, f. 4042, op. 4, d. 63, l. 105.

^{xii} [Types of entertainment that are entirely permissible for ordinary citizens such as, for instance, films depicting adventurous escapades, shows with scenes of murders or violence, light entertainment, farcical comedies and so on are ABSOLUTELY FORBIDDEN IN PLACES OF DETENTION, where entertainment is one of the means of corrective action on criminals]. GARF, f. 4042, op. 4, d. 63, l. 118.

^{xiii} GARF f. 4042, op. 4, d. 62, l. 264.

^{xiv} [To the Directors of places of detention in Moscow. In order to establish proper oversight over the staging of shows of all kinds in the places of detention, GUMZ categorically PROHIBITS any preparation of performances, concerts or other shows without prior authorization from GUMZ.] GARF f. 4042, op. 4, d. 63, l. 59.

^{xv} GARF, f. 4042, op. 4, d. 128, l. 16.

^{xvi} [But they read the newspaper and even bought it. [...] On the Solovki they read first of all the very brief information about life in the USSR and the equally brief overview of international affairs. It's easy to understand why: no other newspapers were allowed.]

^{xvii} [The cultural-educational commission under the direction of the Director of the Teaching and Educational Section may publish journals, anthologies, etc. The widest possible range of prisoners should be involved.] GARF, f. 4042, op. 4, d. 128, l. 15.

^{xviii} Unfortunately, most of the wall newspapers are now lost. The information we have on them are either taken from the few exemplars available or drawn from other publications of places of detention.

^{xix} The variety of camp newspapers is further testified by Evgenii Natarov's article on the *Tsentro-Gidra* newspaper which provides a detailed analysis of a very interesting publication behind bars and of the use made by prisoners of literary parody, see infra.

^{xx} Most of the newspapers, journals and propaganda materials that have arrived to us are kept in private archives and in GARF. They used to be stored in the “zhurnal’nyi fond”, where I consulted some of them in 2010. The collection has been reproduced in microfilm by the International Institute of Social History of Amsterdam and is now available in a few libraries. For this research, other than original journals and publications found in private archives, in the archives of Memorial (both in Moscow and St. Petersburg) and in GARF, I have used the microfilm collection of the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek in Munich.

^{xxi} [Prison is the breeding ground of enlightenment, | In it sits a man, not a beast. | In him there is an eager aspiration for work | In it the door to knowledge is open. | Well, in a nutshell, in the present time | The prison is not a house of the dead at all.]

^{xxii} Many publications of places of detention shared the same title. *Golos zakliuchennogo* was by far the most used title: other than Ekaterinburg and Gomel’, the title was used also in Nizhnyi Novgorod, Biisk, Vinnitsa, Kursk, Novgorod, Novosibirsk, Odessa, Penza, Tashkent, Khar’kov, Kherson and Cheliabinsk.

^{xxiii} [Look, we are children of freedom, | We have no idea about prisons. | The sun will rise, in freedom | We play with him for entire days. || And it is funny, because you yourself | Made your bars and prison. | You reassured your conscience with a lie | And devastated beauty.]

^{xxiv} For this reason, the newspapers of Soviet prisons and camps contain some of the very few published lyrics of criminal songs which would eventually become part of the repertoire of the so-called “Russkii shanson”, a phenomenon which, as Stefano Garzonio explained, developed over several decades and exploded in post-Soviet times by drawing from several repertoires, including the *estrada*, the *blatnaia pesnia* and the *t’iuremnaia pesnia* or *pesnia sovetskogo Gulaga* (Gardzonio 2010).

^{xxv} [I am a thief, that is how they call me, | My vocation is despicable. | Everyone around despises me, | Everyone sends me a curse. || I am now used to humiliations, | I admit it, I am to blame. | Will there really be no pity? | I myself am not happy with my fate. || (...) || Sometimes, while committing a crime, | My heart suddenly squeezes with pain, | and I immediately feel remorse | It will come, you will not raise your hands. || But a thought drills through my inflamed brain: | “So on what will you live, miserable man? | Where, homeless,

will you find shelter? | Steal something soon, to avoid being hungry!" || (...) || So do not
punish me severely, | But rather teach me how to be, | To stop me from repeating the past, |
To let me forget my dishonest path.]

^{xxvi} [The whole truth was heard in those songs, | Of how the people suffer | Under the burden,
the yoke of capital | And he knew all the songs in advance. || He called the people to fight for
freedom, | He showed them the bright future, | His songs said it's about time | that the people
should not bend their back. || (...) || The past is already forgotten now, | There is no mention
of it here. | Life here is different now | But the song... the song of the past | Lives in the minds
of everyone.]

^{xxvii} [So there it is, the Taganskaia prison, | The gloomy abode of the rejected! | Who, who
erected you? A mortal builder? | Or were you born of Hate and Darkness? || You tormented
the heralds of the mind | Who were persecuted by a cowardly ruler. | The thug and the thief
are your favourite residents | And you educate them yourself. || You went underestimated in
the days of terror, | Losing the attraction of shame, | And those locked in the stone envelope ||
Arrange a festive concert... | But on autumn nights it scares me, | This merry coffin with
living corpses!]

^{xxviii} I would like to thank Monika Spivak and Mikhail Odesskii for suggesting this.

^{xxix} [Our meetings are fleeting, our meetings are random, | But I long for them, I love them –
do you? | I will not reveal to anyone our little secret, | Our secret under the vault of the prison.
|| Is it possible to forbid smiling by decree? | No! The smile will break through, shining. | It is
worth seeing each other, it is worth meeting, | And I have fallen in love with you again.]

^{xxx} For a more detailed description of the cultural and literary milieu of the Solovki prison
camp, see Gullotta 2018.

^{xxxi} GARF, f. 5446, op 1, d. 2, l. 43.

^{xxxii} [They have not spared Serezha and his curls, | And he ran away suddenly... | Too late the
abandoned bed will be reached | By the sadness of the orphaned villages.]

^{xxxiii} GARF, f. 4042, op. 4, d. 63, l. 200.

^{xxxiv} GARF, f. 4042, op. 4, d. 126, l. 16.

^{xxxv} GARF, f. 4042, op. 4, d. 126, l. 28.

^{xxxvi} GARF, f. 4042, op. 4, d. 126, l. 53.

^{xxxvii} GARF, f. 4042, op. 4, d. 126, l. 54.

^{xxxviii} A detailed reconstruction of the dynamics between GUMZ and Glavlit is in Fischer von Weikersthal (Fischer von Weikersthal 2001: 167-169).

^{xxxix} [The shoulder will not tremble, the arm will not get tired, | We will achieve our victories stubbornly, | And the motherland will tell us from afar: | “Thanks to the builders of BAM!”] BAM is the acronym for *Baikalo-Amurskaia Magistral'*, a 4,000 km-long railway built partly by Gulag prisoners.

^{xl} [We had not yet had time to think how our journal and newspaper should stand on their own feet when a flood of mud was slung on all our employees, right up to threats and libel; of course, imperfections in the publication and unsatisfactory nature of the whole thing are partly responsible for the fact that there are many inaccuracies in the material. [...] A “Dymovka” will not take place here. Our employees ignore these attacks and with ever-increasing energy pursue their activities. Of course, the Teaching and Educational Section will take all measures to prevent them making any kind of comment on how we are “wicked and disgraceful”. That time has passed, the time of darkness; there are no chains manacling thought, they are gone. We need more effort, more willingness to win happiness. The road to it is open. No more “Dymovkas”.] The author here refers of the murder of a “sel’kor” (*sel’skii korrespondent*, village correspondent) in the village of Dymovka in 1924.

^{xli} [In the first days of my new life I happened to be at a meeting of prisoners at the club. There, the head of the camps, Kogan, a sturdy, stocky man, who struck me as good-natured, gave the main speech. He urged us to work hard to redeem our sins against the Soviet state. He said that by working hard we would shorten our term, acquire the right to private correspondence, improve our living conditions and food and win the right to join the working family of free Soviet citizens on an equal basis with all freemen. The main idea of his speech was: your past no longer exists. We are now interested in your future, and it is in your hands. The promises he gave have been fulfilled. Indeed, the camp was not at all like the SLON (Solovki special purpose camp). There, they would publish a non-party journal, *Solovetskie Ostrova*, with a big gull on the cover. The prisoners would write romantic tales from the Middle Ages, elegies in which the longing of the soul for freedom and for the family could be felt. Here the camp publication was the newspaper *Perekovka*. It was we counter-revolutionaries who were being reforged into Soviet citizens. It was already a typical restrained Soviet newspaper, mostly about the construction of the canal, that ideologically re-

educated the prisoners. The materials published in that newspaper could be used to write a novel like Azhaev's *Far from Moscow*. At the end of my stay in Medvezh'ia gora I published in *Perekovka* an article on the history of the projects aimed at connecting the White Sea to the Baltic Sea. The editors entitled my article "The Year that Defeated the Centuries".] The word "perekovka" means "reforging", hence the use of the verb by Antsiferov. The author mentions also Medvezh'ia gora (today Medvezhegor'sk), a village in Karelia that became the administrative centre of the Belbaltlag. There is also a reference to Vasilii Azhaev's *Far from Moscow*, a 1948 novel about the construction of an oil pipeline during the Great Patriotic War.

^{xlii} For instance, Vladimir Kemetskii wrote a poem devoted to a "prekrasnaia neznakomka" (Kemetskii 1930: 28).

^{xliii} As written above, on the pages of the publications of the Solovki prison camp, Kazarnovskii was a regular contributor of humoristic pamphlets, poems and epigrams – he had a column in the newspaper *Novye Solovki*. In the Belbaltlag, he published a softer version of his humoristic poems, for instance in the almanac *Moria soedinim* (Kazarnovskii 1932: 29-33). His last poems – published outside of camps but still emblematic of Kazarnovskii's path – are fully ideological, with no trace of humour (Kazarnovskii 1936).

^{xliv} [Yes, I will die. But in the quiet whistle of a bird, | In the autumn gold of the already fallen leaves, | And in the emerald sprouts of barley | I will live! And, captivating me with that thought, | The peace of my soul is mysteriously inert: | I feel — I know — I am immortal.]