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IAkutiia v sisteme politicheskoi ssylki Rossii 1826-1917 gg,  
and: Politicheskaia ssylka v Sibiri: Nerchinskaia katorga  
(review)

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Pavel Levonovich Kazarian, *Iakutiia v sisteme politicheskoi sylki Rossii 1826–1917 gg.* Iakutsk: GP NIPK “Sakhapoligrafizdat,” 1998. 495 pp. Appendices, name and geographical indices. ISBN 5-85259-200-5.

Leonid Mikhailovich Goriushkin, ed., *Politicheskaia sylka v Sibiri: Nerchinskaia katorga*, vol. 1. [Issue 2 of *Istoriia Sibiri: Pervoistochniki*.] Novosibirsk: Sibirskii khronograf, 1993. 292 pp. 41 figures. ISBN 5-87550-005-0.

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The lack of scholarship on the tsarist exile system represents a significant omission in the literature. With regard to non-Russian historians, the major reason for this neglect seems to have been the limitations the Cold War placed on archival access. Now, however, it is not ideology but resources that threaten access to the FSU’s archives. This poses a special problem for researching tsarist exile, for whereas relevant documents can be found in the central state archives, Siberia’s archives hold far more for the historian. For my dissertation on tsarist exile, I had the opportunity to visit several archives in Vladivostok and Irkutsk. The voluminous size of these collections alone suggests that, with any luck, scholars will still be discovering Siberia’s vast and rich history many years from now.

The most important non-Russian work on exile remains George Kennan’s *Siberia and the Exile System* (1891). Kennan, a distant relative of the venerated “Mr. X,” was a remarkable figure in his own right and one who, like his namesake, strongly influenced American opinion on Russia. Just as Ambassador George F. Kennan’s pivotal 1947 essay reflected his own personal prejudices and the State Department’s *Weltanschauung* more than it did the Soviet Union’s actual intentions,<sup>1</sup> the elder Kennan’s work, despite its many admirable qualities, is problematic by virtue of its nature as a relic of muckraking journalism and proto-Cold War polemics. A Rosetta stone transcribing the exile system’s abysmal conditions during the late imperial period, Kennan’s opus remains essential reading – yet it also highlights the need for a modern history of tsarist exile.

British historian Alan Wood’s numerous articles on tsarist exile fail to address this need. Wood is an engaging writer and his work serves as a useful intro-

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<sup>1</sup> The essay, entitled “The Sources of Soviet Conduct,” first appeared in *Foreign Affairs* 25: 4 (July 1947), 566–69, 571–82. Yet Kennan’s mistaken appraisal of Soviet intentions and society was in evidence long before 1947, as shown by a recently discovered Foreign Service memorandum he wrote in 1932. See George F. Kennan, “Memorandum for the Minister,” *New York Review of Books* 48: 7 (26 April 2001), 23.

duction to the topic; but each of his articles is little more than a distillation of readily available secondary sources.<sup>2</sup> The literature in Russian, by contrast, is vast. The first studies of exile were made possible by the censorship thaw of the 1860s. These and many later tsarist-era works remain, like Kennan's, essential reading, the most important having been written by Sergei Vasil'evich Maksimov, Nikolai Mikhailovich Iadrintsev, Evgenii Nikolaevich Anuchin, Ivan Iakovlevich Foinitskii, and Grigorii Samuilovich Fel'dstein.<sup>3</sup> The first known publication having to do with exile is also the most famous: Dostoevskii's semi-autobiographical, semi-fictional *Zapiski iz mertvogo doma* is useful for understanding both prison society and fortress penal labor (*krepostnaia katorga*) – one of the three categories of *katorga* formalized by the 1845 penal code, the others being mine (*rudnaia*) and factory (*zavodskaiia*). Yet no comprehensive study of tsarist exile has appeared since 1900. Even the major work published that year, *Ssylka v Sibir'*, does not address *katorga*.<sup>4</sup> While most exiles were not penal laborers (*katorzhnye*), *katorga* formed a central component of the exile system.<sup>5</sup>

As might be suspected, Soviet historians wrote diligently on tsarist exile. But they focused virtually without exception on those exiles designated as leading proponents of the revolutionary dialectic. There are studies too numerous to mention about Lenin and other Bolsheviks in exile, though special note should be made of the early Soviet journal *Katorga i ssylka*, an outlet for Social Democrats' penal memoirs. Historians also devoted much ink to the Marxists' precursors. Thus an entire hagiographic industry arose concerning the Decembrists.

<sup>2</sup> For example, see Alan Wood, "Avvakum's Siberian Exile, 1653–64," in *The Development of Siberia: People and Resources*, ed. Wood and R. A. French (Basingstoke, UK: Macmillan, 1989), 11–34; idem, "Siberian Exile in the Eighteenth Century," in *Siberica* 1: 1 (1990), 38–63; idem, "Vagrancy and Violent Crime in Siberia: Problems of the Tsarist Exile System," in *Sibérie II: Questions sibériennes*, ed. Boris Chichlo (Paris: Institut d'Études Slaves, 1999), 282–95.

<sup>3</sup> Sergei Vasil'evich Maksimov, *Sibir' i katorga*, 3rd ed. (St. Petersburg: Izdanie V. I. Gubinskago, 1900); Nikolai Mikhailovich Iadrintsev, *Russkaia obschchina v tiur'me i ssylke* (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia A. Morigerovskago, 1872); idem, *Sibir' kak koloniia: K iubileiu trekhstletiiia. Sovremennoe polozhenie Sibiri. Eia nuzhdy i potrebnosti. Eia proshloe i budushchee* (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia M. M. Stasiulevicha, 1882); Evgenii Nikolaevich Anuchin, *Issledovaniia o protsente soslannykh v Sibir' v period 1827–1846 godov: Materialy dlia ugovnoi statistiki Rossii* (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia Maikova, 1873); Ivan Iakovlevich Foinitskii, *Uchenie o nakazanii v sviazi s tiur'movedeniem* (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia Ministerstva putei soobshcheniia [A. Benke], 1889); Grigorii Samuilovich Fel'dstein, *Ssylka: Eia genezisa, znacheniiia, istorii i sovremennogo sostoiianiia* (Moscow: Tovarichestvo skoropechatni A. A. Levenson, 1893).

<sup>4</sup> *Katorga* can be translated as penal labor, but I use the Russian term because it also signifies a discrete penal-bureaucratic regime that existed alongside other forms of penal labor in the tsarist and Soviet periods.

<sup>5</sup> *Ssylka v Sibir': Ocherk eia istorii i sovremennago polozheniia* (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia S.-Peterburgskoi Tiur'my, 1900). This was commissioned by then director of the Main Prison Administration A. P. Salomon, and appears to have been written by several anonymous scholars.

Similarly, the lives-in-exile of Chernyshevskii, Bakunin, and certain Polish dissidents were scrutinized so as to prove that Siberia's revolutionary development had kept pace with that of European Russia. Some of these scholars went to ridiculous lengths to make their evidence fit the Marxist case, in the process underlining the party dictatorship's woeful influence on their profession.<sup>6</sup>

This focus on political exiles (*politicheskie ssyl'nye*) – understandable given Soviet historians' circumstances – has led to an extremely unbalanced picture of tsarist exile. Prior to 1905, and with the partial and very temporary exception of those Poles and others exiled in reprisal for the 1863 insurrection, political actors never accounted for more than two percent of the exile population. Indeed, the vast majority of the one million persons exiled between 1807 and 1898 were from non-privileged *sosloviia* (mostly the peasantry).

In 1760, Empress Elizabeth gave communal assemblies, landowners, monasteries, and other civilian authorities the right to exile persons via an administrative procedure which by-passed the judiciary. Their use of this power increased over time, so that by the 19th century half of all those in exile were administrative exiles, the large majority being punished under the ill-defined and much abused charges of vagabondage (*brodiazhestvo*) and vile behavior (*durnoe povedenie*). Only beginning with the 1880s did the government itself come to rely heavily upon administrative exile for the purpose of removing both state criminals (*gosudarstvennye prestupniki*) and those subjects deemed “untrustworthy.” Nevertheless, those exiled by the government (only a portion of whom were designated state criminals) accounted for only five percent of all administrative exiles.

As a result of the autocracy's idiosyncratic and increased allocation of its punitive authority the *mir* became, with the exception of the judiciary, the institution most reliant upon the use of exile. Before 1895, the government imposed no limitations on the *mir* in this regard; but even after this date, peasants still managed to banish thousands of their own without trial. The history of Siberian exile makes clear that the oppression endemic in Russian society originated not only within the official arena but the civilian as well. Of the two, moreover, punitive authority was far more likely to be misused within the latter.

Late 19th-century statistics showing both the *mir*'s predominant use of exile, as well as the tiny percentage of political exiles, were summarized in two iconoclastic articles by the Soviet historian Aleksandr Davidovich Margolis,<sup>7</sup> who

<sup>6</sup> For example, see Sergei Vladimirovich Kodan, “Osvoboditel'noe dvizhenie v Rossii i sibirskaiia ssylka (1825–1861gg.),” in *Politicheskie ssyl'nye v Sibiri (XVIII–nachalo XX v.)*, ed. Leonid Mikhailovich Goriushkin (Novosibirsk: Nauka, 1983), 152–67.

<sup>7</sup> Aleksandr Davidovich Margolis, “Chislennost' i razmeshchenie ssyl'nykh v Sibiri v kontse XIX veka,” in *Ssylka i katorga v Sibiri (XVIII–nachalo XX v.)*, ed. Goriushkin (Novosibirsk: Nauka,

seems to have been made to pay for his impertinence. An American researcher who met him in Russia a few years ago told me that Margolis believed the articles caused him to suffer professionally.

The strict enforcement of ideology over historical inquiry has, of course, disappeared (at least for the moment). Although post-Soviet historians now writing on exile can ignore Marxist-Leninist dictates, their focus nevertheless remains fixed on notables and political actors rather than on typical exiles. Why this is so is not entirely clear. When I was in Vladivostok in late 1998 and met Kazarian (who had arrived from Iakutsk in order to defend his doctoral dissertation at the regional branch of the Academy of Sciences), I asked him why he chooses not to write about those who did, after all, comprise the vast bulk of the exile population. He replied: "They were criminals; they didn't have any ideas." The fact that he is himself the son of a Soviet political exile may largely account for Kazarian's narrow interest in tsarist dissidents, yet his answer also draws attention to the wide chasm still separating the Russian intelligentsia from the general public.

The elitism which Tkachev and Lenin disguised as altruism perhaps inevitably came to afflict the work of Soviet historians. Later, the paradigm-busting techniques introduced by E. P. Thompson and others proved largely inaccessible and completely impossible for these historians to use.<sup>8</sup> Russian historians now face the challenge of developing methodologies which, instead of transforming the once much-hailed masses into mere abstractions, truly account for the individuals who made up these masses.

Nevertheless, I should make clear from the outset that both Kazarian's study of political exiles in Iakutiia (present-day Sakha) and Goriushkin's document collection on Nerchinsk political prisoners are both of enormous value in furthering our understanding not just of political exile, but of tsarist exile in general.

Kazarian's book demonstrates his ongoing and assiduous commitment to archival research.<sup>9</sup> But whereas his research is admirable, he tends, as did Soviet historians, to eschew theory (regardless of those historians' obligatory nods to Marxism-Leninism) in favor of presenting an exhaustive amount of material accompanied by little or no analysis. He does, however, begin his study promis-

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1975), 222–37; idem, "Sistema sibirskoi ssylki i zakon ot 12 iunია 1900 goda," *Ssylka i obshchestvenno-politicheskaiia zhizn' v Sibiri (XVIII–nachalo XX v.)*, ed. Goriushkin (Novosibirsk: Nauka, 1978), 126–40. Both articles are reproduced in Margolis, *Tiur'ma i ssylka v imperatorskoi Rossii: Issledovaniia i arkhivnye nakhodki* (Moscow: Lanterna and Vita, 1995).

<sup>8</sup> Andrei A. Znamenski, "American Scholarship on the History of Russia for a Russian Audience," review of Michael David-Fox, ed., *Amerikanskaia rusistika: Vekhi istoriografii poslednikh let. Imperatorskii period* (Samara: Izdatel'stvo "Samarskii universitet," 2000), in H-Russia, <h-russia@msu.edu>, 8 May 2001, archived at [www2.h-net.msu.edu/reviews/](http://www2.h-net.msu.edu/reviews/).

<sup>9</sup> See also Kazarian, *Olekminskaiia politicheskaiia ssylka 1826–1917 gg.* (Iakutsk: GP NIPK "Sakha-poligrafizdat," 1996); idem, *Istoriia Verkhnoianska* (Iakutsk: GP NIPK "Sakhapoligrafizdat," 1998).

ingly by dismissing Lenin's periodization of Siberian exile's development (which corresponds to that for Russia as a whole), and instead posits "three stages in the history of political exile – beginning with the evolution of political exile from within the system of tsarist punitive politics, its expansion during the socio-political development of the country, and its regulation as a form of punishment by tsarist legislation" (6). Kazarian argues that this first stage began in 1826 with the exile of the Decembrists and continued until 1881, when the government passed an *ukaz* allowing greater latitude in its use of administrative exile. Still influenced by the Great Reforms and more conscious than ever of international opinion, the autocracy welcomed another veiled device for denying its dissidents due process, though in fact this 1881 *ukaz* codified a procedure already long used. Kazarian's second stage begins with two *ukazy* issued the following year that enhanced the infiltration and surveillance powers of the Third Section and other police organs. As Jonathan Daly has shown, this legislation inaugurated the heyday of the *Okhrana*. Earlier, the Gendarmerie and Third Section in fact possessed very few operatives, and even as late as 1897 there were more policemen in France than in all of Russia,<sup>10</sup> all of which partly explains the relatively small numbers of political exiles prior to 1905. The social unrest which exploded into widespread violence that year greatly affected Russia's penological development. Hence Kazarian's third and final phase begins in 1906, "that is, from the beginning of the resumption of political exile ... to Siberia" (6), and ends in 1917, when the Provisional Government amnestied all political prisoners.

Although Kazarian does not make the argument, it is clear that the significantly greater level of official repression occasioned by the Revolution of 1905 helped lay the foundation for the state-sponsored terrors to come. Despite the Murav'ev Commission's abolition in 1900 of several exile categories, which together accounted for 85 percent of the exile population, the forbidding landscape east of the Enisei River remained, in the memorable words of the ethnographer and former exile Iadrintsev, whose despair led him to suicide that year, "an enormous prison without a roof." The state persisted in viewing Eastern Siberia and the Pacific Maritime as Asiatic pales of settlement to which to consign violent criminals and other social deviants (e.g., heresy and homosexuality were still punishable by exile after 1900). At the same time, it expanded its definition of political crimes so that, also due to its Stolypinite war against society, exile and *katorga* came to the fore as the major weapons for repressing even minor political opposition.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Jonathan W. Daly, *Autocracy under Siege: Security Police and Opposition in Russia, 1866–1905* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1998), 6, 9, and *passim*.

<sup>11</sup> Mikhail Nikolaevich Gernet, *Istoriia tsarskoi tiur'my*, vol. 5, 3rd ed. (Moscow: Iuridicheskaiia literatura, 1963), 30ff.; Ernot Shaigardanovich Khaziakhmetov, *Sibirskaia politicheskaiia ssylka*

Changes in the exile system's purpose and in the composition of its population made 1905–17 a transitional phase portending the coming of the GULAG nightmare. This is not to say that conditions during this phase were as barbaric as those that followed – at least not for political actors – but simply that the correlation between this final version of tsarist exile and the Soviet GULAG is primarily definable by government intention (as opposed to function).

For the reasons given above, I agree with Kazarian's delineation of this final phase. However, I find his earlier periodizations problematic, beginning with his assumption that the Decembrists constitute the first legitimate political exiles. When, in 1593, Boris Godunov inaugurated Siberian exile by banishing the townspeople of Uglich as punishment for rioting after the apparent murder of the tsarevich Dmitrii, he in essence created the first political exiles.<sup>12</sup> Many whom the autocracy subsequently exiled – from the remarkable Old Believer Avvakum to Mikhail Mikhailovich Speranskii, who correctly regarded Alexander I's reassignment of him to Irkutsk as governor of Siberia to be an extension of his Perm' exile – may, without too much leeway, also be defined as political exiles.<sup>13</sup> This question does not simply boil down to whether or not certain exiles were officially labeled as state criminals or political exiles, since evidence indicates that virtually all victims of *de facto* political repression were treated differently than average criminal exiles (*ugolovnye ssyl'nye*). For example, I found in the archives cryptic references to a small group of so-called secret prisoners (*sekretnye arrestanty*). When, in 1788, a certain Osip Anan'in entered the jurisdiction of the Nerchinsk Mining Command, he became the earliest known secret prisoner to arrive in Siberia. Little else is known about him or the six others listed alongside him, except that officials allowed all to live separate from the criminals and in

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1905–1917 gg. (*oblik, organizatsii i revoliutsionnye sviazi*) (Tomsk: Tomskii universitet, 1978), *passim*; Michael Jakobson, *Origins of the GULAG: The Soviet Prison Camp System, 1917–1934* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1993), chap. 2; Galina Mikhailovna Ivanova, *Labor Camp Socialism: The Gulag in the Soviet Totalitarian System*, trans. Carol Flath (Armonk, NY and London: M. E. Sharpe, 2000), introduction.

<sup>12</sup> That is, to Siberia. Exile was used as a tool against political opponents prior to Muscovy's subjugating Siberia. Ivan Vasil'evich Shcheglov, *Khronologicheskii perechen' vazhneishikh dannykh iz istorii Sibiri: 1032–1882 gg.* (1883; rpt. Surgut: Aktsionernyi Informatsionno-Izdatel'skii Kontsern "Severnyi dom," 1993), 47.

<sup>13</sup> Even if they did not label them "political exiles" per se, Soviet and FSU historians did and do consider those exiled for political reasons prior to the Decembrists to have been qualitatively different from other exiles. Cf., for example, Fedot Grigor'evich Safronov, "Ssylka v Vostochnuiu Sibir' v pervoi polovine XVIII v.," in *Ssylka i katorga*, ed. Goriushkin, 15–37; Evgenii Viktorovich Anisimov, *Dyba i knut: Politicheskii sysk i russkoe obshchestvo v XVIII veke* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 1999), *passim*.

relatively comfortable conditions.<sup>14</sup> The important point is that later the Decembrists would be treated similarly.

Kazarian does devote considerable attention to many Decembrist precursors. However, he fails to distinguish properly between those, like the Poles Samson Navatskii and Anton Dobrynskii, exiled in 1620, and others, like Senka Alekseev and Vaska Novogorodtsov, identified in a late 17th-century indictment as “former *raskoly* and mutineers ... from the Eniseisk servitor class ... to be exiled to Yakutsk and kept under heavy guard, chained in an earthen prison, so that no one can visit them and their evil knowledge cannot be spread ...” (119). The first pair seems to have been among the many prisoners of war exiled early in that century. But should this characterize them as political exiles? Similarly, although the indictment identifies Alekseev and Novogorodtsov as mutineers, it appears their apostasy was the main reason for secreting them in an “earthen prison.” Therefore, were they indeed victims of “tsarism’s punitive politics” (113), or rather Old Believer martyrs? The answers to both questions are certainly debatable, and therefore one wishes the author had more clearly positioned himself within a debate made particularly relevant by the fact that the autocracy’s uses of exile were multifarious and evolving. To give another example of these uses, until the late 18th century the state exiled entire peasant communities beyond the Urals in a long-term effort to establish local food production to supply the network of fur traders, Cossacks, and officials. Despite this purely utilitarian goal, however, Kazarian, like his Soviet mentor Fedot Grigor’evich Safronov, seems to regard these peasants as political exiles.<sup>15</sup> This is a perspective that essentially makes political exiles out of all those unwillingly sent to Siberia.

Despite his catch-all interpretation of political exile, Kazarian does see the Decembrists as both distinct and the first of a new breed of dissident – a most traditional view. Whereas Soviet historians readily acknowledged that such exiles as Aleksandr Men’shikov and Grigorii Skorniakov-Pisarev (just two of Peter’s many favorites exiled by his successors) were victims of political oppression, for them the Decembrists stood apart as children of 1789 and Russia’s first revolutionaries to promote a socio-political agenda. A closer look at the writings and actions of Pestel’, Voronskoi, et al., however, reveals them to have been considerably less altruistic and admirable than their mythologized identities allow. But historians kicked such inconveniences beneath the red carpet, and placed atop the conspirators’ ghostly pates those laurels ritualizing them as the

<sup>14</sup> Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Irkutskoi oblasti f. 24, op. 3, k. 1, d. 11, l. 2. The Goriushkin collection reviewed here reproduces a related document from this same *delo* (26).

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Safronov, *Russkie krest’iane v Iakutii (XVII–nachalo XX vv.)* (Iakutsk: Iakutskoe knizhnoe izdatel’stvo, 1961), *passim*; idem, *Ssylka v vostochnuiu Sibir’ v XVII veke* (Iakutsk: Iakutskoe knizhnoe izdatel’stvo, 1967), *passim*.



antecedents of the Marxist demi-gods who followed. Kazarian's statement that "quantitative and qualitative changes in the system of political exile" date "from the beginning of the exile of the Decembrists" (6) represents not only a disproportionate appraisal of their impact, but also perpetuates the Decembrist myth as transmuted by Soviet historiography. Most importantly, his statement overlooks the far greater impact that Speranskii's 1822 reforms had in systematizing exile, something Kazarian discusses elsewhere as if it were completely separate from post-1826 developments.

His decision to date the beginning of a system of political exile with the Decembrists is rendered still more questionable by the fact that the regime ended up sending only ten conspirators to Iakutsk oblast'. Nikolai Aleksandrovich Chizhov was the final Decembrist to leave the oblast', in late 1832, and it would be a full quarter-century before the next political arrived there. This hiatus throws a monkey wrench into Kazarian's assertion of the Decembrists' importance, and probably explains why he somewhat awkwardly redirects his discussion at this point toward legislative matters. Yet in pointing out that the *ukazy* issued during this quarter-century were themselves significant in exile's development, he rather muddies the waters and undermines his other argument.

All of this makes for a somewhat disjointed account that is made more, not less, difficult to follow by a decision to organize his chapters thematically rather than chronologically. The first three chapters – the administrative organization of Iakutiia, its role as a location of political exile, the establishment and functioning of the exile convoy system – collectively treat exile as a bureaucratic construct. The final two chapters concern the demographics of the political exile population. In theory there is nothing intrinsically wrong with this organization. In practice, however, Kazarian often digresses, which creates overlap between chapters and leaves certain issues unresolved. For example, his decision to parse among three chapters the complicated question of the number of Decembrists originally sentenced to Iakutsk oblast', as compared to the number who actually spent time there, is simply confusing.

Yet if the book's argument is sometimes frustrating to follow, it contains a treasure trove of information. For instance, reproduced here are three administrative documents spanning a 20-year period beginning in the mid-1890s, which together demonstrate, among other things, the distances between way-stations along the march-route (*marshrut*) and the various costs associated with conveying exile parties, which included the issuance to exiles of foraging money (*kormovye den'gi*).<sup>16</sup> Such documents allow conclusions to be made concerning ease of travel (e.g., depending on terrain and distance exiles were sometimes given

<sup>16</sup> Just as train passengers in Russia still do today, exiles would purchase food from villagers along well-established routes, providing local economies much-needed revenue.

horses), and the value and availability of local markets' goods and services. They also suggest the extent to which the government, just before it collapsed, managed to impose minimal order on a system so chaotic that in 1898 the whereabouts of one out of three exiles was unknown.

In the end, it can be said that Kazarian engages in a kind of Geertzian thick description minus the penetrating analysis. Nonetheless, while he is essentially maintaining Soviet-style methodologies rather than breaking new ground, there is an appeal here that undercuts many theory-driven monographs. Kazarian, like many Russian historians, is able to tell good stories. This talent comes through especially when he discusses the earlier (and, in my opinion, more colorful) history of Yakutsk exile. Insofar as it is necessary that Kazarian details this earlier period merely to better contextualize Social Democrats' later appearance at the eastern limit of Petersburg's geopolitical periphery, his contagious enthusiasm extracts virtues out of necessity:

From the 1720s on Yakutsk exile was being prepared to play a different role [than it had previously]. This was a period of court intrigue, when famous dignitaries fell victim. Exiled to the most distant regions and cities of Siberia were those courtiers who lost favor. It follows that the choice of Yakutsk as a location for famous exiles was no accident – the distance, eliminating almost any chance of escape; the one well-guarded highway to the interior, preventing all possibility that a scribbled message might by-pass the *voevoda's* hut; the make-up of the local population, preventing “contemplation of conspiracy”; and so on (140).

The history of Siberia is as broad and wild as the land itself, and Kazarian's desire to pack as much of it as possible into 400 pages renders *Iakutiia*, if not altogether satisfying, both highly entertaining and informative.

Goriushkin's document collection on political exile in Nerchinsk forms a useful complement to Kazarian's study. It covers roughly the same time-period but accounts for the far greater number of political exiles who ended up further south. Nerchinsk Mining District was centered on the Shilka River, midway between Chita and the Chinese border. Peter the Great oversaw the establishment there of the first *zavody* – ramshackle metallurgical towns that typically combined mining and smelting operations. By the 1760s, such *zavody* as Nerchinsk, Aleksandrovsk, and Gazimursk were providing the empire with much, if not most, of its lead and silver. (Petrovsk *zavod*, where those Decembrists sentenced to *katorga* served out their nominal labor terms,<sup>17</sup> was an exception in that it produced iron.) The district had also become the major locus of *katorga* labor.

<sup>17</sup> Glynn Barratt, *Voices in Exile: The Decembrist Memoirs* (Montreal and London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1974).

Nerchinsk's lead and silver production fell precipitously after the late 18th century. So as to capitalize on newly-discovered gold deposits, the mining administration turned its attention a few miles east to the Kara Valley. But the gold which Russia produced never seems to have equaled the value of its silver, which had helped finance both imperial expansion and the Romanovs' self-glorification. The loss of silver and the gold industry's disappointing performance not only help explain the government's financial woes from this point onward, but also why it became impossible to find enough work in metallurgical industries for all, or even most, of the convicts sentenced to *katorga*, whose population grew from 10,000 to 14,000 between 1850 and 1870. For years the government refused to admit this reality, however, leading to what an imperial commission would in 1868 eventually characterize as "the collapse of *katorga*." This collapse was hastened by the exiling of 4,000 Polish insurrectionists to Nerchinsk *katorga*. This was by far the largest group of political exiles to arrive in Siberia prior to 1905. Although many returned home within just a few years, they broke the back of the mainland exile system and impelled the regime to establish a penal colony on Sakhalin.<sup>18</sup> This is the larger story that Goriushkin's documents tell.

The recently-deceased Goriushkin was a senior scholar at Novosibirsk University, whose career writing and editing books and articles on tsarist Siberia and political exile spanned 40 years. *Politicheskaiia ssylka v Sibiri*, although published in 1993, has apparently never been reviewed by an English-language journal. Attention is long overdue. Reproducing 188 documents from several, mainly Siberian, archives, it is of enormous value to specialists on the judicial, administrative, penological, social, and political histories of late imperial Russia and Siberia.

The earliest of the documents, dated 1824, is a letter from Irkutsk guberniia Governor Ivan Bogdanovich Tseidler to Nerchinsk Commandant Timofei S. Burnashev, concerning the difficulties Cossacks were having in conveying exile parties from the way-station at Verkhneudinsk (present-day Ulan Ude) to Nerchinsk. It seems that the just-established Exile Office in Tobol'sk (*Tobol'skii prikaz o ssyl'nykh*) had failed to properly account for terrain and weather conditions when establishing convoy schedules. Tseidler's personal intervention in this matter represents the central roles governors-general of Eastern and Western Siberia played in the exile system. This document also shows the extent to which certain of them ran their regions like personal fiefdoms and the chaos that often ensued when, despite their enormous authority, these top officials received from Petersburg neither the means nor the personnel to correct problems.

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<sup>18</sup> I analyze this topic in detail in "The Institution of Russia's Sakhalin Policy, from 1868 to 1875," *Journal of Asian History*, forthcoming 2002.

Approximately half of the documents deal with well-known political exiles, including the Decembrists. Here are selected minutes of Nicholas I's Special Committee, signed by Imperial Chief of Staff Ivan Ivanovich Dibich, Third Section Chief Aleksandr Khristoforovich Benkendorf, Eastern Siberia's Governor-General Aleksandr Stepanovich Lavinskii, and Stanislav Romanovich Leparskii, the general in charge of the 90 Decembrists eventually sent to Nerchinsk. The final signatory was Speranskii, whose shaky, illegible scrawl on the original reflected his physical revulsion at the task Nicholas had sadistically foisted upon him. The committee was key to Nicholas's stage-managed excuse for justice, and so it is not surprising that we see its members trying to follow their director's wishes. However the documents also reveal Nicholas's indecisiveness, suggesting how shaken the young man really was by the uprising that inaugurated his unfortunate reign. Indeed, while the first conspirators were literally en route to Siberia he was still trying to decide their destination. Not until 1830 did he finally settle on Petrovsk *zavod*. He never did choose permanent locations for those 15 conspirators exiled to Siberia without labor terms, many of whom changed locations more than once as a result of imperial petitioning and paranoia, so that, ironically, they suffered more in Siberia than those sentenced to *katorga*.

Goriushkin's collection contains such a wealth of information it cannot possibly be summarized here in full. Yet what stands out in terms of general interest are documents such as those concerning Chernyshevskii, a couple of which reveal that at one point, Nerchinsk administrators suspected him of conspiring with the Poles also incarcerated at Aleksandrovsk *zavod* prison. (Soviet historians seized upon these suspicions as evidence that he continued his revolutionary activity in exile.) Goriushkin also reproduces a touching series of letters Chernyshevskii wrote his wife during his first years in exile:

[1 January 1867:] My sweet Olin'ka, ... I'm getting along as usual, just as I wrote in my last letter .... My health remains satisfactory. You worry too much about it. Be more peaceful in your thoughts .... [Three months later:] My health remains as before. Don't worry about it .... I would also like you to send me journals (not newspapers, because I'm not allowed to receive them, but journals) – Russian, those better ones [published] by Russians, and foreign [journals], the cheaper ones. I'd also like to receive books. Address them to the Commandant of Nerchinsk District, for Chernyshevskii. (189, 194)

In late 1871, the administration, primarily out of security concerns, transferred Chernyshevskii to Irkutsk Prison, where he occupied what he told his wife was an "apartment." Chernyshevskii would not return home until 1883, a broken man, but in the final letter to his wife included here and dated 18 December 1871, he continues to assure her that his health is fine:

Sweet friend Olin'ka ... Do not be depressed, my sweet darling. Be strong and happy – I am absolutely healthy. Passionately I kiss your hands and eyes a thousand times. I received your letter of 8 November. Thank you. Kiss the children. My sweet, I'm holding you tight and kissing you. Yours, N. Chernyshevskii. (225–26)

Despite all Chernyshevskii's assurances to the contrary, at least one exile official recognized as early as February 1867 that he was actually very ill, and that if he remained in Aleksandrovsk's decrepit cells it would prove "disastrous for his health" (192). Nonetheless, Petersburg waited another four years before approving Chernyshevskii's transfer to the marginally better conditions at Irkutsk.

Besides the Decembrists and Chernyshevskii, numerous documents concern the multitudes exiled as a result of the 1863 Polish Insurrection and the strain they were putting on Nerchinsk's already fragile infrastructure. Siberian officials pled for Petersburg to limit the influx, but to no avail. A January 1865 memo is typical of Nerchinsk administrative documents from around this time: "besides the 680 political criminals [already] assigned to Nerchinsk *zavody* who will begin arriving here early next year, there will be up to 800 additional such criminals" (171). The author goes on to helplessly ask where the space would be found to incarcerate all the new arrivals.

Goriushkin includes a brief introduction, summarizing the history of both tsarist exile and Nerchinsk political exile. He also provides annotation nearly as extensive and informative as the documents themselves, identifying individuals and cross-referencing both archival and published sources. He has arranged documents chronologically rather than thematically – a necessity, given that one document might refer, say, to both Chernyshevskii and Polish insurrectionists. For what it sets out to do – demonstrate the evolution of political exile as it related to Nerchinsk *katorga* – Goriushkin's collection is non-pareil. Still, it must again be emphasized that the vast majority of those who labored in Nerchinsk's mines and smelteries, or who rotted away in its dank prisons, were, as in Iakutiia, average criminals, mostly from the peasantry, and not victims of political repression hailing from the privileged *sosloviia*. There is still no single publication that provides this balanced picture of tsarist exile. But for now, those with more than a passing interest can do no better than to begin with the books reviewed here.

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