

# **‘OUR PARENTS WEREN’T DISSIDENTS’:**

## **MULTIPLE LEGACIES OF THE GULAG**

*An NCEEER Working Paper by*

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## **Executive Summary**

This paper traces the different trajectories of three “daughters of the Gulag,” (daughters of so-called enemies of the people): Mariia Budkevich, Nina Kolkunova, and Elga Torchinskaia. I analyze their narratives in relation to Marianne Hirsch’s concept of post-memory from her book, *Family Frames*.

Budkevich was the daughter of a Polish Communist, Kolkunova of a Czech Communist, and Torchinskaia the daughter of an NKVD officer. Each had different ways of remembering and incorporating the memories into their lives: roughly, Budkevich developed a form of personal memory or quest, Kolkunova of activism and through active remembering of her mother, and Torchinskaia through her work as an ethnographer.

Hirsch developed the idea of “postmemory” in relation to children of Holocaust survivors. Because remembering often had to be indirect for survivors of the Gulag due to both the particular internal and external pressures of the cultural context of the Soviet Union, some of Hirsch’s concepts work for children of the Gulag and others do not: while, both groups could remember in a way that the survivors themselves could not, the particularities of this were very different for the children of the Gulag who were often living in the long silence about the Gulag that was part of the Soviet experience until the late 1980s.

Throughout, I give long quotations from the interviews, putting them into context, in order to show the workings of personal memory over time—a kind of in-depth recovery that is important because of the mass dehumanization of the Gulag.

Referring to the children of so-called enemies of the people, Giuzel Ibragimova, herself a daughter of enemies of the people, said “We’re all considered repressed, right? And—[we’re considered] dissidents. Do you understand the difference?...I’ll tell you my philosophy [on this]: Find me a government...any [government] where a person speaking against the existing power would be treated with great affection. Even in America that doesn’t happen. It’s exactly the same here! But our parents were not against but FOR!!! Soviet power. [October, 2008]

In this essay I will discuss three daughters of enemies and they all—like many children of enemies--share the feature that Ibragimova notes here: far from being dissidents, their parents were believing communists. Ibragimova is right to point out the significance of a system that put not only dissidents but supporters of the government/Party into the Gulag.

First, some background on my project: This article comes from a larger project in which I have conducted multiple interviews over ten years with fifteen survivors of the Gulag.<sup>1</sup> My interviews are life history interviews; my group of interviewees includes three workers and twelve members of the intelligentsia; eleven were women and four men. Interviewing the same people several times and in depth has meant that, over time, trust builds between those I speak with and myself; people tell me more each year about their memories of their time in the Gulag and how that affects them now.<sup>2</sup> How people remember and how they talk about their time in the Gulag is what interests me: this, I believe, is how the Gulag continues to affect/or haunt

<sup>1</sup> I also base my comments on information from others who have interviewed Gulag survivors (e.g., Nanci Adler, *The Gulag Survivor: Beyond the Soviet System* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2002); Catherine Merridale, *Night of Stone: Death and Memory in Twentieth-Century Russia*. New York: Penguin, 2000.).

<sup>2</sup> Much of the work I have done explores how important the non-narrative is for Gulag survivors; While much trauma theory argues that narrating, telling your story is the necessary initial step to begin healing, such narration was not possible in Soviet Russia. In a society where narration could be deadly, people had to find other, non-narrative ways of dealing with the catastrophic pain of their time in the Gulag; often it is through relationship that they move into or towards some form of reconciliation or inner peace, however complicated. See Gheith, “I Never Talked’: Enforced Silence, Non-Narrative Memory and the Gulag.” *Mortality* (May 2007).

Russian society today.<sup>3</sup>

Through exploring individual lives and memories we get what I think of as the under-story of the Gulag, a rooted sense of how people live with the experience of the authoritarian violence of the camps. Exploring individual experience, memory, or narration of the Gulag, listening to the individual is the work that is needed in order to begin to come to terms with (or at least see) what historian William Rosenberg calls the “indirect effects and longer term implications” of the Gulag (William Rosenberg, *AAASS NewsNet*, 2003). It is, of course, important to check oral testimony against other sources and I have done that in each case, checking the testimony against Memorial and other written records.

I will juxtapose three stories of children whose parents were incarcerated in the Gulag. These three, Maria Stanislavovna Budkevich, Nina Frantsevna Kolkunova, and El’ga Grigor’evna Torchinskaia, were daughters of non-Russian Communists: Budkevich’s father was Polish, Kolkunova’s Czechoslovakian, and Torchinskaia’s father was Ukrainian and ethnically Jewish. He was also a member of the secret police. Budkevich’s parents were both arrested and executed in 1937 when she was 14 but she did not know of their execution until more than 20 years later. Kolkunova’s father was arrested in 1938 and died in 1939 when she was 7. Torchinskaia’s father was executed in 1938 when she was 15. He had been living with his second family in Moscow even before his arrest and execution (Torchinskaia and her mother lived in Leningrad); thus, for Torchinskaia, the loss began prior to the arrest. Each of these women’s lives was interrupted and shaped in different ways. Their stories and memories

<sup>3</sup> This would probably be a good point at which to note the complexity of dealing with oral narratives. There has been an intense debate among historians about the value of oral history. I fall on the side of Alessandro Portelli: these oral narratives are not always accurate in terms of fact, but they do tell us about how people understand the experience and how that shifts over time. And that understanding affects social interrelationship as much as do the facts—perhaps more. Finally, I am not sure that archival sources are any more reliable than oral ones; they are also created by fallible humans with multiple interests; it is through exploring a combination of sources that one gets a fuller picture of any given event.

(together with the others I detail in my book manuscript) give a sense of the different kinds of radical disruption of family, of intimate relations and sense of self created by the Gulag experience as well as the diverse modes of response to those ruptures. Budkevich's story is one primarily of quest; Kolkunova's of activism, while Torchinskaia focused on impartial knowledge.<sup>4</sup> I will explain further but want first to introduce the idea of postmemory, a concept Marianne Hirsch developed primarily in relation to the children of Holocaust survivors, which has, as Hirsch herself notes, a more general relevance (p. 22).<sup>5</sup>

Hirsch argues that the first generation to experience traumatic events cannot fully remember and witness to their own experience but that the second generation, the "postmemory" generation, "is in a position to work through traumatic experience and its symptoms, narratives and images bequeathed but not fully remembered or known by the previous one" (Crownsaw 180).<sup>6</sup> On one level, Hirsch's concept works for the daughters of the Gulag: their memories and lives are often dedicated to making present, rebuilding, reconnecting, and bringing back to life, just as Hirsch describes for the children of Holocaust survivors (243). But on another level, this is a point where the fact that there was very little public accountability for the Gulag creates a crucial difference in experience, memory, and narration. Many fear that the Gulag could reopen:

<sup>4</sup> Budkevich, like Dudareva and Torchinskaia have since been interviewed by others. Budkevich was interviewed twice by Tatiana Kosinova of the Figes team for *The Whisperers* in May 2005. Torchinskaia was also interviewed twice for *The Whisperers* by Irina Flige. Those interviews can be found on: <http://www.orlandofiges.com/interviewIndex.php> Dudareva was interviewed both by the Figes team and has been interviewed by Cathy Frierson and is discussed in Frierson and Vilensky, *Children of the Gulag* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010).

Hirsch focuses on narrative aspects of photography and of memory, I want to focus on the twist that the non-narrative takes in the second generation in the case of the Gulag. While, as discussed in my "I Never Talked'...", Gulag survivors often found non-narrative ways to work through their memories, the children tend to focus both on narrative and non-narrative modes.

<sup>5</sup> "Postmemory is distinguished from memory by generational distance and from history by deep personal connection. Postmemory is a powerful and very particular form of memory precisely because its connection to its object or source is mediated not through recollection but through an imaginative investment and creation. This is not to say that memory itself is unmediated, but that it is more directly connected to the past." (Marianne Hirsch, *Family Frames*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997, p. 22).

<sup>6</sup> Rick Crownsaw, "Photography and Memory in Holocaust Museums," *Mortality*, Vol. 12, No. 2, May 2007, pp. 176-192.

a number of the physical Gulag sites have not been closed, and some continue to be used for incarceration of criminals; furthermore, the lack of worldwide outrage and demand for public accountability as well as the sheer length of its existence (30-60 years) means that the Gulag is hard to place in the past and in fact constitutes a present threat in a way that has implications for traumatic experience.<sup>7</sup> There is only one former Gulag camp that has been made into a museum site (Perm-36).<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, because many children of those incarcerated in the Gulag were also exiled or imprisoned, and because the threat of incarceration was a real and present danger for the children of the Gulag, they are themselves primary survivors in a way that means they are not second generation in quite the same way that Hirsch has in mind in her discussion of the children of Holocaust survivors.

For the children of Gulag survivors the aspects of “postmemory” that seem most salient are: 1) “the indirect and fragmentary nature of second-generation memory” (p. 23); 2) the idea that memory for the children of survivors involves both “temporal and spatial exile” and that this second generation “needs simultaneously to (re)build and to mourn” (245), and 3) that this work is accomplished through an “imaginative investment.” In the case of the Gulag, these children often never knew their parents and spent years trying to understand their parents’ stories and their own.

A crucial difference in postmemory for the children of Holocaust and Gulag survivors is that many Holocaust survivors narrated their experiences while Gulag survivors risked rearrest or harm to family members if they discussed their experiences in the camps, meaning that many

<sup>7</sup> Much trauma theory discusses the problem of sending a traumatized person back into a traumatic situation: this makes healing much more complicated. See, for example, Steven Taylor: *Clinician’s Guide to PTSD* (New York: Guilford Press, 2006) and Claudia Zayfert and Carolyn Glack Becker, *Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy for PTSD* (New York: Guilford Press, 2007).

<sup>8</sup> Such statements are delicate. I do not intend to compare the relative suffering of Holocaust and Gulag survivors; that would be to diminish the literally atrocious experiences of those who lived through them and those who died there. Perm-36 is the only working museum on a Gulag camp site.

people were silent about their time in the Gulag. Hirsch says, “Postmemory characterizes the experience of those who grow up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth, whose own belated stories are evacuated by the stories of the previous generation shaped by traumatic events that can be neither understood nor recreated” (p. 22). While the lives of the children of the Gulag were certainly “shaped” in this way, they were, more often than not, shaped by the absence of narrative rather than its presence. Thus, these children were filling in a different kind of evacuation than were those of parents who survived the Holocaust.

### **Interviews with Children of Enemies**

Maria Budkevich had just turned fourteen in 1937 when her parents, both Polish communists, were arrested. Her story is one of quest: when I talked to her in 1998, 2001 and 2008 she had spent roughly 60 years trying to find out what had happened to her parents and why. Budkevich was not herself put into a Gulag camp; instead, she, like millions of children, was put into a children’s home after her parents were arrested.<sup>9</sup>

There is a lot of concrete, daily information in Budkevich’s narration. She remembered and recounted these experiences through a wealth of detail and at times, with a child’s level of attention, with a child’s gaps in information.

Budkevich’s father was arrested first; she was not present at his arrest but she was with her mother when her mother was arrested. Her father, Stanislav Budkevich, worked on the prestigious Soviet Encyclopedia as well as on military and other encyclopedias; such a position indicated that the Bolsheviks had a fairly high degree of trust in him. He lived separately because of his work in intelligence (or so Budkevich thought—it could have been for personal reasons;

<sup>9</sup> Frierson and Vilensky put the number of orphans of the Gulag at 10 million (*Children of the Gulag*, p. 8).



there were many things she did not know because she was a child).<sup>10</sup> Her father was arrested in early June, and then Budkevich's mother, Varbara, started coming home early. "She was waiting to be arrested," Budkevich said, "or maybe it was that she had already been fired. They fired people whose relatives had been arrested." Less than a week later, her mother was arrested. "I was there when Mama was arrested. There were, you see, two rooms....And I was lying in the other room, in the bedroom. I was there while they searched, but of course I didn't show that...that I... I was crying. I lay there with my face to the wall so that I wouldn't worry Mama. They walked around, they turned on the light. I just lay there and they, well, they came around 1:00 in the morning.... Well, OK, I got up at 5:00 am, my eyes wouldn't even open. I was all swollen and I had to go to a geography class. Can you imagine? We had this wonderful Polina—our maid. She is alive to this day and we sometimes correspond... So. She said: 'Oh, sweetie, let's go outside for a walk,' she said, 'how will you go to your exam in such a state?.' I still had to take a geography exam. [Budkevich laughs]. So we went outside and it wasn't even light yet. We walked and we walked and I got to the geography class. I will never forget this. Well, so, we were sitting in the classroom, they called all of us in turn [oral exam], they called me and I couldn't even say a word. Can you imagine? Not one word. [she sighs] But the teacher understood everything....They knew everything, everything. Yes, all...Everyone knew. It's just that no one wanted to...She gave me an A." [Budkevich laughs] [21 August 2001, p. 16]

Budkevich remembers this in terms of the daily: at this point, she does not know that her life has changed forever; she goes to a geography test. Budkevich's statements are a testimony to life's going on in the face of radical uncertainty, an illustration of how the Gulag infused all of Soviet society: it was what you lived with in a daily way.

<sup>10</sup> Her birthday was in May and they were arrested in June. She gives different dates for this: June 6<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>; and June 8<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>.

In the interviews, she returns over and over to her sense that “everyone knew” that injustices were being committed but that “no one wanted to...”; she can never quite say what it is that people could have done. But several times she indicates that, as here, people did what they felt they could. Her teacher couldn’t change the Gulag system, but she could be humane to someone who was suffering from it; she could give Budkevich a high grade even though Budkevich could not only not answer the question, she could not even speak. Many people have this same sense that within the system many people were as humane as they could be.<sup>11</sup> These comments raise the question of the widespread sense of helplessness, and the impossibility of accountability in this historical circumstance, topics we will return to later.

Budkevich’s parents were arrested in June and shot in August and September (though, as noted earlier, Budkevich didn’t know that until years later). Budkevich and her younger brother Andrei were taken to the Children’s Home on September 15 between the dates that her parents were shot: “Mama was shot on August 21<sup>st</sup> and Papa on September 21<sup>st</sup>.” The two children survived from June to September on money that their mother had left for them: “Well, so, and we lived together. [she and her brother] Mama, thank God, had prepared money, she knew that they would arrest her. She... That is, when they took her away, she left me a note, with this, with the maid Polina...” Polina soon decided to leave the two children and Budkevich says: “I gave her the money mama owed her, so that I still had some of the money and Andrei and I somehow lived. We lived like that until September 15. And I, of course, living in the city, I went to Kuznetskii most [to the prison there], and stood in line at the window...To get news about my parents... Well at this window they said: “The investigation is in process.” And that was all.” [21 August 2001]

Budkevich said: “I couldn’t do anything. When I was in the Children’s Home, the only

<sup>11</sup> My interviewees who stated this include Lappo-Danilevskaia Ibragimova, and Rodina.

thing I could do was to write to officials and that was it. I could only think: were my parents guilty or not guilty? And what could they be guilty of?... I worried about their fate and about our fate....And, in general, what could I think as a child? I only wondered whether my parents were guilty or not guilty. I thought that they...that maybe they really had made some kind of mistake or behaved in such a way that...Well, at that time there were so many conversations about the opposition. So—I thought that maybe someone somewhere had said something that wasn't quite right.”

I said: ‘That must have been very hard.’ Budkevich answered: ‘Well, you understand there were these kinds of doubts of course...Of course. But this didn't mean that I rejected my parents or...or renounced them or anything like that. I loved them well enough (*dostatchno*).’  
[21 August 2001]

As early as 1938, even before she went to the Children's Home, Budkevich stood in the lines that the poet Akhmatova made famous,<sup>12</sup> waiting for news of her parents. Budkevich was 14 at the time. Until 1956 (three years after Stalin's death) she still didn't know if her parents were alive or dead. This is how she found out: “And so, in 1956 I got a document saying that [my parents'] file had been reviewed and there was no crime. Well, that was it. There was no crime. No apologies, nothing about whether they'd been rehabilitated—no—but everyone got this formula “The file has been reviewed, there was no crime” So....the article—nothing was mentioned. So then, when I began...Yes, to write, so they would give me a document about my parents' deaths...’Posthumously,’ was written there. The file was reviewed posthumously. So. So that's how it was. And then I worked on getting a document about their deaths. And they gave me a document saying my mother had died from heart disease (*serdechnoe vospaleniia*)...and

<sup>12</sup> Akhmatova's well known poem *Requiem* details how she waited for news of her husband and then her son. Thus, these lines in front of prisons joined the generations: mothers and daughters waiting for news of their loved ones (it was mostly women who waited in these lines).

my father from kidney failure.” [21 August 2001]

For nearly twenty years after their deaths, Budkevich searched for her parents. A search that could never find its object; and this makes it doubly poignant that Budkevich feels shame for not trying harder, for not having been perfectly loyal at all times to her parents. She expresses uncertainty when she says: “I loved them *dostatchno*,” a Russian word that means “sufficiently” or “enough”; enough for what? Budkevich here articulates a deep sense of riven inadequacy. Children were regularly required to renounce their parents in order to get employment or to move to a major city; often, they would renounce the parents but continue to visit them.<sup>13</sup>

When I asked Budkevich if she talked to anyone later about her time at the Children’s Home or her parents’ arrest, she said: “No one denounced me. No one denounced me. But I was very careful all the time. I never spoke about it. I said nothing. I never talked about my parents, nothing like that.”

I asked her: “Was it hard not to talk about it?” Budkevich (surprised at the question): “Well, it was necessary. I had to not talk with anyone. Well, with those who were closest to me, those I worked next to and lived near and all. Never.” So there was a comfort in living and studying; or as Budkevich put it “sleeping in the same bunk” with those who knew, with those who had been “there.” [21 August 2001]

In 1956, Budkevich discovered, almost accidentally (through the one word, *posmertno* [posthumously]), that her parents were dead. At that point, she immediately began the quest for where they were buried; for many years, this was an unsuccessful search. In 1989, 33 years after she got the news of their deaths, she found out that her parents had, in fact, been shot. Under Gorbachev in the late 1980s, it became possible to get information about what had happened to people in the purges; more than that, it became important to establish what had happened to

<sup>13</sup> Viola, *Unknown Gulag*, pp. 177-178. Viola is talking about special settler children.

them, important not only emotionally but also financially as some pensions were paid to Gulag survivors and their children, Budkevich experienced this almost as a weary duty, a bad dream: “And for me it was all again, all over again...And again, the place of death wasn’t...the place of burial was unknown. And the place of death was also unknown.” But she went to Moscow every year and got help from Moscow Memorial to find the place where they had been cremated. Workers at Memorial found new lists for the Moscow crematorium and that is how Budkevich determined that her parents were there; but she was not quite sure of the information: “But perhaps it’s in another place in another cemetery. No one knows. Perhaps they did not take them there but to some common grave....But that’s all in the past, you can’t change that—you can’t return it.” She was skeptical, I think, because her parents had not appeared on the first lists; also, she very much wanted them to be buried rather than cremated; and, perhaps, too, she was not quite ready for the quest to be over; the quest was what she still had of her parents. [21 August 2001] Budkevich’s quest was for information about her parents, but it was also a way of mourning and hoping, a kind of connection to them and to her own past.

In 2008, Budkevich had finally found definitive proof of where her parents were buried: she had a photograph of the mass grave and an archival document with their names on it. She said, sadly: “I know my story, my family’s story [history], only through the archives” [interview, 2008].

Nina Frantsevna Kolkunova, whose father was arrested when she was five and died when she was seven, did not explore the inner experience of her loss; the one time that we got close to that, she began to cry and asked me to turn off the tape recorder, which I did. Rather than mourning in a quest, Kolkunova became remarkably self-sufficient and an activist for political change. She advocated for legislation for the “repressed” in Moscow and also led local organizations that aided the repressed. The rebuilding that Hirsch describes as an essential part of

the work of mourning in the second generation, took place for Kolkunova primarily through activism, personal self-sufficiency, and also through her relationship with her mother.

Kolkunova was born in 1932. Because she was a daughter of an enemy of the people, she was refused admission at the journalism faculty at Moscow State University but was admitted to the Moscow Institute for Civil Engineering (MISI).<sup>14</sup> She graduated in 1955 and during the period of the thaw worked as a construction engineer at Baikonur, a top-secret missile test-site in Kazakhstan.<sup>15</sup> On returning to Moscow in the mid-1960s, she was able to get a coveted position at the newspaper *Izvestiia*. Kolkunova accomplished this, she said, through a combination of personal connections, spunkiness and determination (*naglost'*) and hard work. She was married twice and had two children.

Kolkunova's mother is an integral part of everything that she discusses, on both the personal and the larger social levels. As is true for many children of enemies, the loss of Kolkunova's father at an early age meant a great intensification of the already intense relationship of mother and daughter.

One of Kolkunova's structuring narratives was that her mother was an unrecognized hero. This is a common narrative in Russian culture but it had an added weight in the context of the immense and complicated losses of the Gulag and World War II, in a world where so many women were left without husbands as solely responsible for themselves and their families. Throughout our interviews, Kolkunova related the story of her understanding of her mother's experience of the loss of Kolkunova's father and its aftermath in their lives. On the larger

<sup>14</sup> Moscow Institute for Civil Engineering, established 1921, since 1993 MGSU—Moscow State University of Civil Engineering.

<sup>15</sup> The contradiction of her being refused admission to higher education but working at a top-secret facility is partly due to the loosening of repressive standards that occurred after Stalin's death in 1953. Ibragimova, discussed later in this chapter, had a similar experience. And, arguably, Budkevich's work on the Moscow-Volga canal, Dudareva's work at the police academy, Kolkunova's work at a major newspaper (*Izvestiia*), all seem contradictory if one thinks about what was permissible under Stalin and in what remained a totalitarian society.

societal level, as her narration will show, Kolkunova's image of her mother served as an important motivator for her advocacy for legislation regarding Gulag survivors.<sup>16</sup>

Kolkunova's father, Franz Perchak (Zabrovskii) was arrested in 1938 when Kolkunova was five; he died from tuberculosis a year after his arrest in a hospital just outside the camp zone. I asked Kolkunova how she had found out that her father had been in the camps. She packed a lot of family history into her response, showing how what I had thought was a comparatively simple question was, for her, a deeply complicated one, affecting multiple layers of life. She answered: "Well, Mama told me, that is, in general....Well, first, I was only five years old when they arrested him. And I couldn't know anything really (*tolkovo*) about that then—at five years old. Mama told me that he left...there...and that was it...Later, of course, she talked to me in more detail."<sup>17</sup>

Kolkunova explained that her father had been in the White Czech army, at first, fighting against the Bolsheviks and added: "My father, was one of...well, the very, very few...who went over to the side of the Red Army. Then...at that time...he entered the Party at that time. And he decided to work for the Communists. And, so when the war ended, he worked in Agitprop in the Central Committee and ....headed the Czech *zemliachestvom*.<sup>18</sup> There...I have a document [she shows it] : he worked in a lot of places. Everywhere...And later,...somewhere on the Volga, I've forgotten...I'll have to remember later, he had typhus and after that he got a terrible case of tuberculosis. Second degree...this...was completely horrible...So...he moved to simpler

<sup>16</sup> She repeatedly expressed her awareness that her mother had raised her by herself and all the difficulty of that; she also saw her own giving birth as partly responsible for her mother's death.

<sup>17</sup> All citations to Kolkunova's interview are from an interview of May 25, 1998.

<sup>18</sup> *Zemliachestvo*: a diaspora or organization of foreigners permanently located in the Soviet Union. In the Soviet period this was political work.

work...he had a profession before the war, he was a *tekstil'shchik*<sup>19</sup>....And so he moved to some kind of trust simply as a regular worker, because he had this illness, tuberculosis, a very serious thing. And you know, my first brother was born, who was named Rostislav, my father called him that and he died at age 3 from tuberculosis...And then they couldn't think about having kids for a long time. They were afraid...with Mama...but then they decided to do it all the same. And so, that is, I was born in 1932. And that is, I was already 7 years old in 1939...well and...that's already a little later.”

This was early in our first interview, and Kolkunova compresses a great deal of information into this statement: the history of her father's disease, from which he eventually died; the brother who died of the same disease as the father; the fact that she was the first child after that loss, a weighted position in any family.

She added: “They arrested him [her father] in 1938. In the summer, when it was still almost spring...they arrested him in June. Well, Mama told me briefly about this. Well, I understood: Mama immediately began to work two jobs. She didn't have a specialization, she worked first in a pharmacy at a low-level job.”

Kolkunova quickly connected her father's arrest to her mother's work. She made this same move several times throughout our interviews. For Kolkunova, as a child, this was a central part of what her father's absence meant: that her mother worked two jobs. It was also a way of showing her mother's strength and practicality, qualities that later in the interview, Kolkunova also ascribes to herself.

She continued: “And Mama remained alone with me and she went to work again. It was hard....And she worked two jobs. All the same, she got enough there so that we could live. And...my father that is, ...I say, they couldn't even accuse him of anything in particular because

<sup>19</sup> Either an engineer or a worker in textiles. In the Soviet Union this was considered very progressive labor.



they gave everyone 10, 15 years and shot them...and that was it...There is this, ‘without the right of correspondence’...This is a code...It means: shot. And they gave him [only] five years because he...in general he wasn’t...they couldn’t [find] anything [he had done wrong].”

I asked: “And what was their ostensible reason for his arrest?”

Kolkunova’s personal story of her mother has larger social resonances: Kolkunova noted that her own political involvement was largely inspired by her admiration of her mother. In the 1990s, Kolkunova lived in Moscow and was part of an organization that helped to draft laws and encourage legislators to create and pass laws both acknowledging the suffering of the repressed and granting them material privileges. She later moved on to head an organization in her district of Moscow, Kon’kovo, that gave aid to repressed people in that district.

In the early 1990s, Kolkunova expressed delight that Iurii Luzhkov, the Mayor of Moscow had passed laws giving significant rights and privileges to the repressed but she was disappointed at the way the categorizations were designed because they excluded women like her mother. Kolkunova described her disappointment primarily in terms of the distance between her sense of the difficulty of her mother’s lived experience and what the law provided for.

Discussing Luzhkov, Kolkunova said: “He had two categories: the repressed themselves and “members of the family”. And in “members of the family” he counted wives and children and also...adopted children...and parents....When, later, the Russian law<sup>20</sup> was passed they...those who suffered...not members of the family but they called them: ‘those who suffered from the repressions’ they used a different term and there they acknowledged children...and wives if their husband died there...or was shot, if he didn’t return...If he returned, that means

<sup>20</sup> In 1991 a law "On rehabilitation of victims of political repression" was passed. In 1995, this law was expanded when the Constitutional Court of the Russian Federation determined that children of “victims of political repression” also qualified to receive special welfare benefits available to those who had undergone political repression. S. S. Vilenskii, et al., eds. and comps., *Deti GULAGa 1918-1956. Dokumenty* (Moscow: International Democracy Fund and Hoover Institution Press, 2002), pp. 555-59.

she hadn't suffered...And so, what is going on, like a *dekabristka*,<sup>21</sup> a woman went, she waited...she fed [her children]—like my Mama,...she went to see my father [in the camps]...she raised me alone...How can this be? She...It's amazing! But they didn't acknowledge these people. So in our Russian law, those wives whose husbands returned, they were not acknowledged as sufferers (*postradavshie*).”

I asked: “And why is that do you think?” Kolkunova: “Only because that way there would be fewer people [who made claims]...Because there were really a lot, I tell you, of people...And if also all the wives [were included]...then that many again would have to be included...From where...To kill—is simple and easy. One bullet; it doesn't cost anything...And then a person...After all...for the loss of a bread winner, in all countries and in ours too, they pay the mother or the child a pension for the loss of a breadwinner. We didn't get that. We were deprived of that...I already...that was the first, the most important, material, the most obvious proof that we were unfortunate (*obezdoleny*).”<sup>22</sup>

Kolkunova's statements here encapsulate many common themes expressed by other Soviet and post-Soviet citizens (both those who were directly affected by the Gulag and those who were not). These include: the sense that state violence is never far away; strategies of raw humor and intelligence for understanding and living with what had happened; and a sense that legal reforms will always be insufficient. In this excerpt, Kolkunova also indicates the distance between the needs of the state (to not go bankrupt, to retain a measure of control) and the emotional and material needs of those who had lived through the Gulag or whose relatives had

<sup>21</sup> The *dekabristki* or “Decembrist wives”—a longstanding model for Russian womanhood—are discussed below. I use the term “dekabristki” throughout; I am uncomfortable with the translation of “Decembrist wife” as the Russian term may give a kind of agency to the women that the English does not.

<sup>22</sup> This is a larger cultural narrative of lament and is gendered. As such it can be understood in relation to Nancy Ries's elegant analysis in *Russian Talk: Culture and Conversation during Perestroika* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997).

done so.<sup>23</sup> When Kolkunova talks about her mother and other women's work and how that work was not acknowledged under the new laws, she expresses her profound disappointment at the distance between the legal recognition and the lived reality.

Kolkunova ties her mother's story into Russian history by referring to the "*dekabristki*," the Decembrist wives, women who, after their husbands were arrested and exiled in 1825, chose to follow their husbands into Siberia, chose to give up comfort and all they knew. The *dekabristki* became symbols in Russian culture of true Russian womanhood, of deep self-sacrifice: in fiction and in the wider culture they became the standard of the best in a specifically Russian tradition of womanhood. Kolkunova's association revises the *dekabristka* in that she celebrates her mother's heroic and self-sacrificial act of keeping the family together in Moscow, rather than the Decembrist wives model of leaving the city and following the husband into prison and exile. Yet the role of the woman, at least in this daughter's imagination, remains constant: self-sacrificial, hard-working, keeping the family together against tremendous odds.

Kolkunova's mother plays a powerful role even in her discussion of the main consequences of being the daughter of an enemy: "So then well, it happened that I had these tragic/difficult? ck consequences besides the fact that Mama remained alone, Mama raised (*tashchila*) me by herself... But the most serious consequence, I think is that this made me strong [*zagalailo*]!"

Kolkunova wanted to surprise me here and she did. I asked: "What?" Kolkunova answered: "It made me strong! That's what I consider the most serious...[consequence]."

I asked: "In what way did it make you strong?"

Kolkunova: "Well I learned in everything ...to defend myself myself (*otbivat'sia*

<sup>23</sup> But as with Dudareva, Kolkunova's relationship with her mother became very close. Although it is beyond the scope of this project, these relationships suggest that the ways that children of enemies constructed myths of the mother are important variants of Soviet constructions of masculinity and femininity.

*samoi*)...That is, if I'd had a father and a mother, if our family were different, if everything had been more reliable, I would have known that I had a double defense and all...But the way it was I knew that Mama was a moral defense...she would never sell me out. But as a material defense, on the contrary when I gave birth, she...You know I had a hard time giving birth....[Pause] In short, I say...I was not afraid of anything, not of anything....I sewed, knitted, made heels myself, glued on the soles there and all...And when at last at age 47 my work gave me an apartment--at that time my children got married and I was given an apartment...And I did everything in this apartment myself: I took out the floors, took out the door, then I sawed a hole in the wall and rebuilt a wall cupboard.”

Kolkunova honed in here on her own fierce independence; she was no victim. Rather than focusing on what she had lost, Kolkunova concentrated on ways her experiences had made her strong. She was proud of her practical material skills and she was taking on some of the roles traditionally cast as masculine in the way that she fixed her apartment. These are unusual activities for a Russian woman of Kolkunova's generation and she proudly referred to her skills many times throughout our interviews. One could argue that this was compensatory; one could also argue that she protested too much, that this was denial. At the same time, her response evidences a humorous celebration of her own achievements and strength.

In both interviews, she described her mother as a fiercely loyal and no-nonsense person. In the first interview, Kolkunova said of her mother: “And in general she was an amazing person, amazingly loyal...No baby talk (*siusei*). So she never...well I always knew for sure that I had a wall. That was my Mama. There would never be: ‘My little daughter, goo-goo, ga-ga.’ You know how some [mothers act]...But I always knew that she would never sell me out... So in brief, when I remained alone and my husband left us, she did everything so that the kids grew up, she took it all on herself. I had to work, and at the newspaper, you know, they have unpredictable

work hours...”

Kolkunova’s repetition of the words “she would never sell me out” [*nikogda ne prodast*] is striking as is her calling her mother a “wall” and a “defense” (*moral’naia zashchita*). Kolkunova underlines here that loyalty and caring shown in action (caring for the children) was, for her, the most important quality: while her mother was not demonstrative, she was steady and Kolkunova repeated many times how important that was to her. On the one hand, given the Soviet context in which rhetoric and reality often existed in inverse proportion, it makes sense that Kolkunova valued actions over words. It may also, of course, have covered a wish that her mother had been a little more demonstrative.

She also said of her mother (second interview): “And then, ...in general, she was my very reliable friend. Who couldn’t hug and kiss but she could be a friend. So, she didn’t tell me<sup>24</sup>...but I knew that behind me was the most reliable person. And when I remained alone with two children—I told you...that my husband left us...well, she was my best helper. But she had her first heart attack when I gave birth. I had a difficult labor and I wrote her in a letter how hard it was for me...She read it and had a heart attack...Well, all of our family...many have had heart attacks. And she lived with me...took care of her grandchildren...as well as she could...until the very end. And then she died of a fourth heart attack. That was in 1969...”

Kolkunova’s connecting of her own labor to her mother’s heart attack and, indirectly, death, indicates a powerful sense of connection between daughter and mother. While several interpretations are possible, given the context of Kolkunova’s larger narrative of her mother as defense for her daughter, I believe that Kolkunova is saying that her mother, who had worked heroically to see Kolkunova through childhood, and then through a difficult divorce, then worked to see her daughter through the hardest thing—through giving birth and caring for her

<sup>24</sup> Presumably Kolkunova means “she didn’t tell me [that she loved me]” or [that I was a great person]

grandchildren--before she died.

Kolkunova's intense concentration on her mother as a source of both inspiration for her own actions and of conflicted feelings of solid support and perhaps longing; Kolkunova's insistence on her own ferocious independence are themes that came up for Kolkunova over and over again as she thought about and discussed what it meant to be a child of an enemy. As a reporter, narration was a form she was comfortable with, but when it came to dealing with her own experience of loss of her father and its significance, she put those feelings primarily into advocacy and activism as well as into creating a powerful testament to her mother.

The last daughter I will discuss here is El'ga Grigor'evna Torchinskaia, who was born in 1923 in Zhitomir, Ukraine. Her family moved to Leningrad in 1926 and she lived there for the rest of her life with the exception of the time she was evacuated to Kuibyshev (in Samara) during World War II. Her father, Grigorii Mikhailovich Torchinskii, joined the Bolshevik/Communist Party in 1919 and left it in the 1920s. He worked for the Cheka and OGPU (secret police) in the 1920s, and left the OGPU in 1929. He divorced Torchinskaia's mother in 1928 and moved to Moscow where he lived with his second family. He was arrested in 1937 and executed in 1938. He was posthumously rehabilitated in 1956.<sup>25</sup>

Torchinskaia was trained as an ethnographer at Leningrad State University. She specialized in the peoples of the Caucasus. She worked for 43 (first interview, p. 8) years at the Ethnographic Museum of the Peoples of the USSR (Muzei etnografii narodov SSSR-a), now the Russian (Rossiiskii) Ethnographic Museum. She died on March 24, 2006.

Throughout both of our interviews, Torchinskaia expressed a great respect for difference

<sup>25</sup> Figes gives 1990s as the date of his rehabilitation but Torchinskaia showed me both the 1956 and the 1990s certificates. Figes and I disagree slightly on a few other dates; it may be that Torchinskaia gave different dates of a year or two. In addition, Torchinskaia told me that her father left the party and the OGPU at the same time; she also said he left rather than being sacked as Figes has it. See <http://www.orlandofiges.com/interviewIndex.php>

and the undervalued peoples of the Caucasus, a strong desire to provide knowledge about the Caucasus, and to translate accurate information about it to Russians in part as a way to prevent further harm to the people of the Caucasus. Torchinskaia was deeply committed both to ethnography and to the peoples of the Caucasus. I want also to suggest that there is a connection between these commitments and her own experience. Torchinskaia's main paths through the thicket of being a gulag daughter were anger at the lies she had been told, a commitment to justice, knowledge and impartial fairness (especially for those who are traditionally undervalued), and a capacity to describe the fear that had governed her life and those of so many others. Torchinskaia was mild-mannered and gentle in her speech, so that the places where she did express anger were striking.

Being the daughter of someone who was in the secret police puts Torchinskaia in a different position than the other daughters I've discussed here. While the other daughters I discuss (Budkevich, Kolkunova, and most of the others I interviewed for the book) could assume a kind of innocent victim status for their parents, this was not the case for Torchinskaia who did not talk about her father much making what she did say was telling. Another difference from most of the other daughters is that Torchinskaia also did not say much about her mother, instead rooting her discussion in a story of extended family, including multiple relatives (three of whom were her father's brothers) who were also arrested by the Soviet regime: a story of multiple loss.<sup>26</sup>

Like many of those I interviewed and as cultural and literary historian Irina Paperno would predict, Torchinskaia began by rooting her story in general historical/cultural context, telling me about the recent celebration of the 10 year anniversary of Memorial on June 14,

<sup>26</sup> 1998 interview. She notes that the youngest brother was arrested and exiled, held in Dzhambule "After prison and all that happened to him, he had a...well, in general, he was soul sick (*zabolel dushevno*). It was like that for the rest of his life and he died an old man."

1998.<sup>27</sup> She discussed the general interest in the Gulag in Russian society in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and the loss of interest since then: “It’s only a small circle of people that listen to us now. And that’s very sad.”

Torchinskaia then turned to discussing her personal history, noting that her father and grandfather had both been involved in the legal profession and mentioned her own exile to Kuibyshev in World War II. Early in the interview, she said of her father: “He worked in the Cheka (secret police)<sup>28</sup> and a lot of what was going on there didn’t work for him. He was that kind of person. He couldn’t compromise with his conscience and probably that was what created [problems for him]. In any case, when I read his file, I read there what he said and it was clearly anti-Soviet. Anti-Stalin.”<sup>29</sup>

In her first statement about her father, then, Torchinskaia notes her father’s involvement in the Cheka, and immediately puts this in the context of his disagreement with the organization. She went on to say that she thought he had been involved in it for about two years before leaving both the Cheka and the Party at which point he also left her family and began to drift eventually setting up a new family in Moscow and working as a legal consultant (*iuriskonsul’t*) at the prestigious Institute of Soil Sciences (Note to self: Figes has Agropedology) there.

Torchinskaia’s case is different from the other daughters, then, not only in that her father was in the secret police but also because he had gotten divorced from her mother and started a new family before his arrest and execution. There was an estrangement before the arrest. Thus, she did not have the sense that her father was lost to her only because of the arrest: although she

<sup>27</sup> See Irina Paperno, *Stories of the Soviet Experience: Memoirs, Diaries, Dreams* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009).

<sup>28</sup> The Secret Police in the Soviet Union underwent many name changes: from 1917-1922, it was the Cheka (Chrezvychainaia komissiia or Extraordinary Commission) and in 1922 it was renamed the GPU (Gosudarstvennoe politicheskoe upravleniie—State Political Directorate).

<sup>29</sup> All citations to Torchinskaia are from an August, 1998 interview.



continued to visit him in Moscow after the divorce, a major separation had already occurred before his arrest.

Yet, she told me that she worked to get her father rehabilitated (first interview) as soon as it became possible after Khrushchev's Secret Speech in 1956: "Right after the 20<sup>th</sup> Party Congress, ...My aunt, [Fedorov's wife,] she's a well-known lawyer and ethnographer, I wrote her right away....She did a lot for her acquaintances and I wrote to her that I wanted to put in documents for rehabilitation. And so I got that first."

She then read me the documents that she received in 1957 and compared them to those she got in 1994 after re-applying in 1993 as many people did at that time (in part to receive the newly available benefits to survivors and children of the Gulag; in part to establish truth claims). I will include part of the document: she talks back to it as if she is in dialogue with the certificate.

"In 1956, here's what they wrote: 'The case file accusing Torchinskii, Grigorii Mikhailovich has been re-reviewed by the Collegium of the Highest Court on September 15, 1956. The sentence of the Military Collegium from September 1, 1938 in relation to Torchinskii Grigorii Mikhailovich because of newly discovered circumstances is rescinded.'" She comments: 'but—he'd already been shot.'

Returning to the 1956 document, she read: "And because of the absence of a crime, the case is discontinued. He is posthumously rehabilitated."

She comments: "But later I received...here it is, very recent—in 1993, I asked to re-apply...And this one is completely different."

Here she displays the two rehabilitation certificates, one from 1956 and one from 1993 as well as other documents. She continued in an angry tone:

"So in 1993 they finally sent me the decoding." She reads: "The case file accusing

Torchinskii, born 1898, baselessly convicted according to Article 58.11 and executed.” She comments—“now at least they’re being honest!” and returns to reading the certificate: “for participating in an anti-Soviet Trotskiist organization [she took a deep breath] was re-reviewed by the Military Collegium on September 15, 1956. The sentence from September 1, 1938 was rescinded and the case discontinued. Torchinskii Grigorii Mikhailovich as a victim of political repression according to this case file is rehabilitated posthumously.”

In the 1950s, Torchinskaia, like many relatives of enemies, also received a notification of her father’s death with false dates given and stating that the person had died rather than that they had been executed by the regime. As she talked about this (immediately after reading the certificates above), she almost yelled as she said the word “died.” “In 1956 I got a death certificate: Torchinskii G.M., DIED August 3, 1940. DIED. They just said this off the top of their heads—he was only 42 years old! There is no evidence. You understand. That’s what they wrote...Meanwhile when I read the case file...the sentence there is September 1, 1938. And it is written: the sentence was carried out [on that same day]. And right there, literally right there on the same page—my inquiry from 1956. And they gave me that false certificate. You understand, this is...an open, open lie, there is no possible way it could be a mistake....In 1956 they were still afraid to admit what they had done.” She later adds: “Take any memoirs...they [the Soviet government] lied and lied, they lied all the time because they couldn’t admit it [*priznat’sia*]. And where they were buried, to this day [we don’t know].”

Many people received the dual rehabilitation certificates from the 1950s and the 1990s and so have the documentary evidence of the lies told by the Soviet regime. Scholars and interviewees have given different explanations for why the Soviet government falsified the years of death. These explanations include that the government did not want people to rise up as they might have if they knew the extent of the executions in 1937 and 1938 so they falsified the

years—sometimes even having informers go to a family saying that they had been in prison with the father and had seen him recently alive and well. But I want here to focus on the effects: It was difficult not to know the truth for so many years (nearly 50 years from the time of execution in Torchinskaia's case) and then to have to revise one's opinions of what had happened. Having that truth in documentary form was important to her and it was also important that she had the original false documents. The massive weight of information that was not transmitted—and worse, as Torchinskaia's anger shows—that disinformation was transmitted, creating major confusion about one's family history.

Those I interviewed did not consider that the 1990s documents were false: that is, this misinformation did not translate into a distrust of documents per se and the 1990s documents were received as confirming something that the interviewees had long suspected—albeit often dimly or even unconsciously. The long period of not knowing but suspecting, of not being able quite to trust either one's own perceptions or what one had been told by the authorities also shaped people's lives and psychologies as they learned, in different ways, how to come to terms with such deep uncertainties about matters that affected them so closely and deeply—what had happened to their own family members, how to feel about the loss.

Torchinskaia talked more directly about her uncle (by marriage) Grigorii Fedorovich Fedorov than she did about her father. About her uncle she said “To me he was such a kind, good man. I remember he got work for Mama and at that time getting work was impossible. And I remember when I was sick. I was little and they had already moved to Moscow, he was already in Moscow, and I remember how he sat near my bed (*krovatki*) and helped me...He was so handsome, so smart and they [killed him]...He was a marvelous man (*chudesnyi chelovek*). And yet, this marvelous man, when there was an order to bring order and deal with the bourgeoisie, he did it. Well, you can't now just judge (*delit'*) those who [did awful things] out of

conviction....There were a lot of honorable Bolsheviks who acted according to conviction. It's now that we can say everything openly. But you just try to say anything at that time!" [This relates directly to Ibragimova's opening quotation as here we see Torchinskaia struggling to come to terms both with her uncle's actions and with the fact that he was a loyal communist condemned first by the communists to prison and now by new interpretations of his behavior.]

There are many possible reasons why Torchinskaia talked more about her uncle than her father: 1) it may have been easier as he was not as directly related to her so that there is the greater distance which Hirsch argues helps second generation survivors to talk about their experiences; 2) Grigorii Fedorovich did not bear the stigma of having been in the secret police; and 3) there is the complicated personal history of her father having left her mother when Torchinskaia was five. Yet it is likely that her focus on and defense of Grigorii Fedorovich is closely rooted to her complicated feelings for her father, that she is expressing something about her understanding of both men when she talks of her uncle.

In the above quotation, Torchinskaia also displays her characteristic nuanced and complex understanding of the Gulag and Soviet society; she also refers to the difference between then and now, something that she did often. When she says that Grigorii Fedorovich "dealt with the bourgeoisie" because he was ordered to do so, this means that he likely had them arrested and imprisoned. But her tone, when she called him a "marvelous man" is not ironic: rather, she is applying the impartial fairness she brought to her ethnographic work. You cannot divide people who were truly committed to the Communist cause into bad and good without an understanding of both their internal convictions and the times. Even Bolsheviks who arrested others can be described as honorable because they were following their inner convictions. Also, Torchinskaia understood that it is easy to judge from the safe perspective of the glasnost' and post-glasnost periods. Several times in our interviews she noted that 'at that time' it was dangerous to talk.

When one considers that her father, four of her uncles, and one of her cousins were incarcerated and at least two of them executed, her commitment to impartial fairness is remarkable. It is also, I think, a powerful (unconscious) survival strategy in the sense that it helped her to make sense out of these experiences.

In our second interview, Torchinskaia elaborated on what being Jewish meant for her, tying it both to her larger beliefs on religion and back to her father. She said: “The thing is, I was raised, well not exactly as an atheist. This is complicated. Well in my family--I’m Jewish but we never went to synagogue or...But they [her parents] always cultivated in me respect for the church and for people of faith. For those who truly are believers. So I never heard negative judgments about believers...Quite the opposite! [They taught me] If someone believes, that his business. And thank God that he believes!”

Torchinskaia then discussed how this basic respect had become deeper as an adult: “Besides which, I’m an ethnographer. And the thing is, I’ve studied religions. And this rejection of religion [by the atheist state] always bothered me. Because religions are a part of culture. How could you study the culture of a people if you don’t know their world view? Therefore I’ve always related to religion with the utmost respect. But only for those who really believe.” Just as Torchinskaia was troubled by the Soviet state’s rejection of religion, she was adamant that the current wholesale acceptance of Orthodoxy was equally problematic. Several times in our interviews she made some version of the following statement: “In the last few years, there is such a wave: everyone is falling into religious ecstasy. I don’t believe everyone. It bothers me that members of our government who at one time, being in a different place, punished people for their religious beliefs—but now, suddenly they’re all crossing themselves. I don’t understand this! I don’t understand it and it shocks me a little—well, it surprises me. I don’t believe them,,,I don’t believe them. And this external, ostentatious side of all this....Religion is such an intimate

thing, it's an inner conviction.... If one is truly a religious person, one needs to follow the *kanony* of one's religion. But here, they go against them...And so that kind of religion with crosses that are supposed to be worn under your clothing displayed so that everyone can see them—well I don't respect that kind of religion.”

Many New Russians were displaying their crosses in just the way that Torchinskaia notes here. She is pointing to a hypocrisy that she finds dangerous; she is expressing concern that people are still not living out of inner conviction, and that, in fact, nothing has changed internally: the change is only external. The same officials, who, under other circumstances would put you in prison for having faith, now that faith is the accepted mode, have jumped on the Orthodox Christian bandwagon. But for Torchinskaia, this desecrates what is important about religion and it is frightening in that it harks back to the same kind of hypocrisy and conformity that created the problems in the first place. [Just as she defended Grigorii Fedorovich and other Communists who acted out of inner conviction, here she shows that, for her, the inner conviction of faith is what counts.]

She followed her statement about inner conviction with a rare memory of her father and one that moved from the intimate world of inner conviction to that of public monument (second interview): “I even remember my father who was, of course, not at all religious. He was for the revolution, then in the Red Army, at first, he was a very committed communist. But when he ran up against it all, he understood that it wasn't right...In 1937 they arrested and shot him...Well, I remember very well...I was in Moscow....he lived in Moscow at that time and I was there [visiting]...I remember very well the day they destroyed the Cathedral of Christ the Savior<sup>30</sup>...And I remember that he came home and said—and usually he was a very jolly

<sup>30</sup> This happened on 5 December 1931. The Moskva open air pool was then built and the Cathedral was rebuilt in the early 1990s and was consecrated in 2000.

(veselyi) man. And he said, they just now destroyed the Cathedral of Christ the Savior. And I was surprised by his expression—so disturbed. Do you understand? For him this was ...a monument! And you can't make attempts on, endanger something that was made for the ages. And for me, too, every monument is very important.”

Here, Torchinskaia connected her own interest in cultural monuments to her father. Because this is one of the rare times that Torchinskaia discussed her father, it has added meaning. There is something very poignant in this story of an atheist man, ethnically Jewish, at one time a committed Communist, deeply upset at the destruction of the Christian temple. The Cathedral of Christ our Savior, razed on December 5, 1931 and the Moscow open air pool built on this site [in 1958]. Torchinskaia's father, like Torchinskaia herself, was capable of nuanced and even contradictory understandings and commitments. It may be that Torchinskaia did not draw this parallel consciously, but the fact that she adds “And for me, too, every monument is very important” makes an explicit connection to her father.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, because much of her work as an ethnographer was focused on the habits and monuments of the Caucasian peoples—including religious sites (ranging from mosques to Buddhist temples) which she describes often in both interviews, the connection between her father and her work is strengthened.

Torchinskaia, Kolkunova, and Budkevich show different aspects of how people lived with these experiences, the kinds of rupture and the kinds of repair that the Gulag created in familial relationships. Budkevich quested and mourned fairly directly. Kolkunova, like several of the daughters I interviewed, did not mourn directly as did Budkevich but rather moved into activism and self-sufficiency, and created a relationship with and then memories of her mother that were, for her, both a symbol of Gulag experience and motivator for activism. She

<sup>31</sup> The importance of this memory is underlined by the fact that Torchinskaia repeats this story in her interviews with Irina Flige. See <http://www.orlandofiges.com/interviewIndex.php>

remembered through her mother. And Torchinskaia moved into the world of impartial knowledge and justice concerns. Each of these daughters is certainly doing the work of postmemory, blocking forgetting and imaginatively investing, they also tend to do it indirectly.

The ghosts and shadows that Hirsch mentions, the ways that tremendous early losses shape family lives and identity certainly apply for these daughters of the Gulag. Yet one of the biggest differences between Holocaust postmemory and Gulag postmemory is that for the children of those exiled and executed in the Gulag memories had to be made in the absence of narrative and in the absence of information. That it was loyal supporters of the regime who were imprisoned was complicated for both the parents and for the children and adds an additional important layer to the ways that the children of Gulag survivors remember and live out their memories.