

TITLE: THE PRACTICE OF DENUNCIATION
IN STALINIST RUSSIA

Volume 1

AUTHOR: Sheila Fitzpatrick, University of Chicago

**THE NATIONAL COUNCIL
FOR SOVIET AND EAST EUROPEAN
RESEARCH**

TITLE VIII PROGRAM

1755 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036

PROJECT INFORMATION:

CONTRACTOR:	University of Chicago
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:	Sheila Fitzpatrick
COUNCIL CONTRACT NUMBER:	808-04
DATE:	December 19, 1994

COPYRIGHT INFORMATION

Individual researchers retain the copyright on work products derived from research funded by Council Contract. The Council and the U.S. Government have the right to duplicate written reports and other materials submitted under Council Contract and to distribute such copies within the Council and U.S. Government for their own use, and to draw upon such reports and materials for their own studies; but the Council and U.S. Government do not have the right to distribute, or make such reports and materials available, outside the Council or U.S. Government without the written consent of the authors, except as may be required under the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 5 U.S.C. 552, or other applicable law.

The work leading to this report was supported in part by contract funds provided by the National Council for Soviet and East European Research, made available by the U. S. Department of State under Title VIII (the Soviet-Eastern European Research and Training Act of 1983). The analysis and interpretations contained in the report are those of the author.

THE PRACTICE OF DENUNCIATION IN STALINIST RUSSIA

Sheila Fitzpatrick
University of Chicago

CONTENTS

Vol. 1

Executive Summary of the Project	i
Introduction	1
Social Class	9
Abuse of Power	13
Secrecy	17
Manipulative Uses: The "Apartment" Denunciation	19
Outcomes	21
Concluding Remarks	24
Appendix A: List of Denunciations	28
Appendix B: List of Archives	32
Appendix C: Characteristics of 94 Letters	33

Vol. 2

Summary and Full Text of Conference Paper by Dr. Viadimir Kozlov (State Archives of The Russian Federation), "Denunciations within the NKVD/MVD System of the USSR, 1944-1953"

Summary of Conference Paper by Dr. Herbert Reinke (Stasi Archives, Berlin), "STASI: The East German State Security, Its Organization and Its Informers"

Conference Summary: "The Practice of Denunciation in Comparative Perspective"

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE PROJECT

Denunciation by individuals or groups to high authorities is one of the continuities between the Tsarist regime and the administrative methods of the Soviet Communist state. Both regimes depended in large part upon the population's sense that local maladministration was the fault of local officials, and on its belief in the efficacy of appeals to the "good Tsar" at the center - in Soviet times the highest state authorities. The archetypical denunciation took the form of ordinary citizens informing the center of some local malfeasance, incompetence, or political unreliability. For central authorities in both eras it was a means of controlling lower levels of the state apparatus, especially in distant provinces, and as such served as a substitute for the underdevelopment of many social institutions. In contemporary Russia denunciation seems to have died out. On the face of it, this is a positive development. However, it also has a negative side, the population no longer believes in central authorities as higher arbiters and protectors of the people, and denunciation no longer serves as a check on the arbitrary authority of local bureaucrats. The new institutions, formally established and nominally resembling the institutions of civil society, have failed to work at all effectively. These new institutions of civil society have not yet evolved to the point that they can provide an alternate check on local officials. That bureaucracy has escaped the control of the central power and is now free to exploit the populace as it will¹.

Denunciation was part of the fabric of life in Russian society for most of the 74 years of the existence of the Soviet Union, and the same was true of Eastern Europe and East Germany under their postwar Communist regimes. The recent collapse of these regimes and consequent opening of police archives has had painful repercussions in many of the new post-Communist states, especially the former GDR, and brought the whole subject of denunciation vividly to our attention.

The purpose of this project was to re-examine the phenomenon of denunciation in the Soviet Union in the light of the new archival data now available to scholars. Its major component was a research project by the Principal Investigator on Stalinist denunciations in the 1930s, including three months research in Russian archives in the spring and summer of 1994. Vol. 1 of this Final Report contains the product of this research: "Signals from Below: Soviet Letters of Denunciation in the 1930s" by Sheila Fitzpatrick.

¹This line of analysis is taken, by Council staff, from the paper by Dr. Vladimir Kozlov in Volume 2 of this Council report. Volumes 1 and 2 are being distributed separately and seriatim.

The second part of the project consisted of a conference, "The Practice of Denunciation in Comparative Perspective," organized by Sheila Fitzpatrick (PI) and Robert Gellately at the University of Chicago on April 29-30, 1994. Six papers were presented by scholars from North America, Russia, and Germany, and 20-30 invited faculty and graduate students attended the conference sessions and took part in the discussions. A summary of conference proceedings is presented in Vol. 2 of the Final Report, together with a summary and the full English text of a paper by Dr. Vladimir Kozlov (State Archives of the Russian Federation), and the summary of a paper by Dr. Herbert Reinke (Stasi Archives, Berlin).

The PI's report, "Signals from Below," is a study of denunciations found in archives in Moscow, St. Petersburg, and Novosibirsk. (For a complete listing of archives used, see Appendix B.) There are large numbers of denunciations in many different archives in Russia, though they are not always readily locatable because "denunciation" was not a filing category. While the PI was unable to gain access to the archives of the former KGB (now called the Federal Counter-Intelligence Service), party and state archives contain many denunciations received by other agencies, copied, and sent on to the NKVD (predecessor of the KGB), or, conversely, received by the NKVD and sent on to a party committee or state agency. It is unlikely, therefore, that access to KGB archives would substantially change the picture obtained from materials in other former-Soviet archives.

The PI's report analyzes a database of 94 denunciations (see Appendix A for the complete listing) found in various Russian archives. A denunciation is defined for the purpose of this report as an unsolicited written communication from a citizen to a representative of the regime about the wrongdoing of another citizen. This definition excludes reports by NKVD personnel and informers (*sekretnye sotrudniki*), as well as testimony (*pokazaniia*) on suspected individuals solicited from citizens and prisoners by the NKVD.

Denunciation was found to be a multi-faceted phenomenon in Stalinist Russia. Some denunciations, especially those by Communists about other Communists, were written in a spirit of party duty, acknowledging the citizen's responsibility to take part in the surveillance of other citizens. Others were written manipulatively, to get the state to act on behalf of an individual's private agenda. Still others belong to a genre with a long pedigree in Russian history in which citizens wrote to higher authority to denounce injustices committed by lower-level officials. Denunciations of this last type, often written by peasants, invoke a patriarchal image of authority and have a distinctly "pre-modern" character.

While some denunciations were sent directly to the secret police, this body was not the sole or even the primary recipient of denunciations in Stalin's Russia. Many were sent to

the Communist Party, individual political leaders at central and regional level, regional control institutions, and newspapers.

The study revealed three main types of denunciation: denunciations dealing with political loyalty, denunciations dealing with social class, and abuse-of-power denunciations. The first type was usually written by Communists about Communists. The second was concerned with concealment of class identity (people with undesirable class origins - bourgeois, kulak, clerical, and so on - were objects of civil and political discrimination in the Soviet Union for most of the period under study). Denunciations of the third were written mainly by peasants about their immediate bosses (kolkhoz chairmen, chairmen of rural soviets).

The Stalinist state was very responsive to popular denunciations, that is, it usually investigated the accusations made in denunciations and punished persons found guilty of wrongdoing. This created the possibility of citizens manipulating the state by using denunciation to settle personal scores or advance the denouncer's individual interests. One of the most interesting types of manipulative denunciation was the "apartment" denunciation (examined in a special section of this report), in which an individual denounced his or her neighbor in a communal apartment with the aim of getting the neighbor evicted and increasing his own living space. It should be noted, however, that denunciation was not risk-free. Sometimes investigation of a denunciation by the authorities led to punishment of the denouncer, not his intended victim.

The prevalence of denunciation in other former Communist-bloc countries, as well as in Nazi Germany, suggests that denunciation may be regarded as a characteristic feature of totalitarian regimes. Nevertheless, there were major differences between its practice in Nazi Germany, on the one hand, and the Soviet Union and the GDR, on the other. One significant difference is that denunciation in Stalinist Russia had strong "pre-modern" as well as "totalitarian" characteristics. Another significant difference lay in the different relative importance of denunciation as a source of information for the secret police in each society. By the late 1930s, Stalin's Russia had a much higher degree of police "saturation" than Hitler's Germany. Consequently the NKVD relied less than the Gestapo appears to have done on unsolicited denunciations from citizens, and more on solicited testimony, confessions, and agents' reports. By contrast, the degree of police "saturation" in Stalin's Russia was much lower than that in the postwar GDR, where the extraordinary growth in numbers of regular informers led to a withering of the practice of spontaneous denunciation. This never happened in the Soviet case. In Soviet Russia, the practice of denunciation had deep

societal roots, flourishing regardless of the ebbs and flows of police power up to (and perhaps even beyond) the end of the Soviet state.

SIGNALS FROM BELOW:
SOVIET LETTERS OF DENUNCIATION OF THE 1930S

Sheila Fitzpatrick
(University of Chicago)

INTRODUCTION

The term "denunciation" (meaning telling the authorities something damaging about another person) generally has negative connotations. On the one hand, it suggests something furtive and mean. On the other hand, it invokes the image of totalitarian police states, à la George Orwell's 1984, in which surveillance of others is every citizen's duty. Both these genres of denunciation existed in the Soviet Union of the 1930s. Many denunciations were informed by personal malice: the desire to settle scores, cause trouble for a neighbor, and so on. Many other denunciations, particularly those written by Communists about other Communists, were written in a spirit of duty, following the often-repeated Soviet precept that it was a citizen's obligation to report any act or statement that suggested political disloyalty or ideological impurity. These "duty" denunciations might be products of real commitment and zealotry for the cause, but this was not necessarily the case. Many people wrote such denunciations (for example, of anti-Soviet statements in casual conversation) because they judged that it might be dangerous not to make them: if the statements were reported by someone else, the non-informer would look like an accomplice.

But there was another, no less important, genre of denunciation in Stalin's Russia: the denunciation of injustices committed by Soviet officials. This last category, which comes out of a long Russian tradition of appeal to a presumably benevolent Tsar against the evils done by corrupt officials and extortionate landowners, has quite different characteristics from the first two. These letters are not furtive and mean, but righteously indignant. They imply a world of values and practices that - far from being specifically Communist, totalitarian, or even modern - seem appropriate for a pre-modern paternalist state in which the citizen's relationship to authority is construed in personal rather than legal terms.²

The writing of denunciations in one or another form was very widespread in Soviet society. In fact, the question "Who wrote denunciations?" can perhaps best be answered in a popular Soviet phrase: "Everyone, except the people who were too lazy (Vse, komu ne len')." Denunciations were written by Communists and non-Communists (though Commu-

² This is a new issue in the scholarship. For an interesting historical overview (focussing on complaints and appeals, not denunciations), see Margareta Mommsen, Hilf Mir, Mein Recht zu Finden. Russische Bittschriften von Iwan dem Schrecklichen bis Gorbatschow (Frankfurt, 1987).

nists may have been more prone to write them), urban-and rural-dwellers, men and women (though men more than women), and persons of all social classes and groups, from the intelligentsia to the kolkhoz peasantry.

The objects of denunciation were similarly varied, but with certain underlying regularities. Communists were particularly liable to be denounced. This was only partly because of the ethos of mutual denunciation within the party. Another very important reason was that Communists were the people with power, and a large proportion of Soviet denunciations were written by people without power about the powerful people that mistreated them. Men were denounced much more often than women, mainly because few women were in positions of power, but there was nevertheless an identifiable sub-category of denunciation in which women (wives or mistresses) were mentioned with particular malice as exercising malign influence on powerful men.

Soviet denunciations, in contrast to Nazi Germany's, were not typically directed against members of stigmatized "deviant" minorities. To be sure, "social aliens" or "class enemies" (present and former kulaks, priests, "former people," i.e., members of the pre-revolutionary privileged nobility and capitalist bourgeoisie, and relatives of the above), were particularly at risk of denunciation, especially when, as frequently happened, they were trying to hide the stain on their pedigree. But this category was so broad and ambiguous that a large part of the population could be fitted into it, albeit with an effort and ill-will. Many of the "class aliens" exposed in Soviet denunciations were persons who had (wrongly, in the opinion of the writer) retained or recovered power and privilege in post-revolutionary society as well as holding it before the revolution. In other cases, the label was applied, with or without justification, to personal enemies, troublesome neighbors, and so on.

Contrary to the stereotype of denunciations in a police state, Soviet denunciations were not written exclusively or even mainly to the secret police. Denunciations written by Communists about other Communists were usually sent to the party (either the party's Central Control Commission, or to other local control institutions like the Red Army's Political Administration, or to regional party committees). In keeping with the "paternalist-state" framework within which many denunciations were written, the addressees were often individual political leaders: Stalin, Kalinin, Molotov in the center, but also regional leaders like Robert Eikhe in Siberia, whom the writers addressed by name and patronymic, often with reference to the addressee's alleged reputation as a just and caring man, sensitive to injustice, a protector of widows and orphans. Letters were also sent to the central government (Sovnarkom, TsIK, VTsIK) and its individual agencies (the Commissariat of Agricul-

ture etc.). The central State Procuracy and its regional branches received many denunciations, along with the secret police. Denunciations were also sent in large numbers to central and local newspapers, not so much in the hope that they would be published as in the expectation that they would be forwarded to the appropriate agency to take action. Often a single denunciation was sent to several different addresses (even though each letter cost the sender 20 kopeks in postage - 40 kopeks if sent by registered mail).

Before proceeding to the main body of the paper, some clarification of definitions, scope, and research conditions of the investigation is necessary.

The definition of denunciation (Rus. donos) in Ozhegov's Soviet dictionary published in the 1960s is a secret communication to a representative of the regime or a superior about somebody's illegal activity.³ I have used Ozhegov's definition with some modification. Reporting on "illegal activity" is too narrow for Stalinist denunciations (it was not illegal, for example, to have been a supporter of Trotsky, yet many people were denounced for this), so I substitute reporting any information liable to be damaging ("compromising", in the terminology of the time). For the purposes of this paper, I include only written communications, available in their original form⁴ with full text. This may be either signed or anonymous (in fact, somewhat surprisingly, the majority of those I found were signed). They may be either individually or collectively authored, although individual denunciations are more common.

As Ozhegov notes, the term "donos" has a pejorative meaning in contemporary Russian, and did so in the 1930s as well. For this reason, the word never appears in letters of denunciation or material relating to them; we must identify denunciations by their content rather than by any universal formal characteristic or heading. In my sample, there is no standard form by which authors identify their letters as denunciations. Some authors write "Secret" or "Top secret" on their letters. Others head their letters with the word "Statement" (Zaiavlenie). When excerpts of denunciatory letters were published in the press, they were often labelled "Signals from the Grassroots" (Signalny s mest). In official usage, the word "signal" often served as a euphemism for denunciation.

³ S. I. Ozhegov, *Slovar' russkogo iazyka* (Moscow, 1964), 169.

⁴ Or a typed copy thereof. Sometimes the archival file contains only the original letter, usually handwritten; sometimes both the original and a typed copy (with the notation "*verno*" attesting to the accuracy of the transcription) are in the file; and in some cases the original has been forwarded elsewhere (e.g. to the NKVD) and only the typed copy remains.

There are a special problems of definition and scope that should be mentioned here. In Soviet letter-writing practice of the 1930s, only a fine line separates complaints (*zhaloby*) from some categories of denunciation. I count a letter as denunciation if it dwells primarily on wrongdoing by another person, and as a complaint if it dwells primarily on the author's own suffering or mistreatment that resulted from this wrongdoing.

In my working definition of denunciation I have excluded the following types of document: reports (*doneseniia*) by regular police informers (*osvedomiteli*, *sekretnye sotrudniki*); reports by other officials written as part of their official duties; and denunciatory statements solicited from citizens by the NKVD, in the course of interrogation or otherwise.⁵

The question arises of how to handle denunciatory letters sent to newspapers rather than state, party, or police agencies. This is a peculiarly Soviet phenomenon. Throughout the Soviet period, all Soviet newspapers received huge numbers of letters to the editor and maintained large departments for dealing with them. But selecting and preparing letters for publication was only a minor function of these departments. Their main functions were a) to forward complaints and denunciations to the appropriate agencies (government, party, procuracy, NKVD, etc.) and follow up on those agencies' responses, and b) to conduct their own investigations into the misdeeds (especially bureaucratic) disclosed in the letters. Thus, there was no substantive difference between sending a denunciation to a newspaper and sending it to the NKVD or some other government agency; and in the database for this paper I have included unpublished denunciations from the archives that were originally sent to newspapers.

Location of denunciations in former-Soviet archives was one of the most complicated aspects of this project. Although there are many denunciations in Soviet archives, finding them is no easy matter. They are not gathered in any specific archival locations but scattered throughout Soviet party, state, police, regional, and city archives.⁶ Within the archives,

⁵ For a 1936 example of such testimony obtained from kolkhozniks by police in the course of an investigation of an arrested kolkhoz chairman, see Smolensk Archive, WKP 355-48. On the question of solicited denunciation, see below, n. 5.

⁶ Two presumably rich archival locations of denunciations were not accessible to me. One was the Central Control Committee of the party, since RTsKhIDNI would not let me see or arrange for excerpting from the personal dossiers of Communists in this archive. The second was the KGB archives, particularly the KGB's investigatory files (*sledstvennye dela*), which in principle should include any denunciations that caused the police to begin an investigation. In Nazi Germany, as Robert Gellately's research on such files in the Gestapo archives has shown, a large proportion of all investigations began with an unsolicited denunciation. But this was apparently not the case in the Soviet Union. A Russian scholar working with materials from the KGB archives in the Urals reports that most denunciations in investigatory files are statements obtained by the police in the process of investigation, and only

they are virtually never collected in separate "Denunciations" files. One finds out by experience that there are particular types of "letters" files⁷ that are likely to contain denunciations, along with complaints, appeals for help, and other types of letters from citizens.

The database for this paper consists of 94 denunciations, listed with their archival locations and brief descriptions in Appendix A. The denunciations come from 10 different Soviet archives in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Novosibirsk, and Ekaterinburg (see Appendix B for details). There was no way of making a scientific random sample, given the scattered locations of the denunciations; and readers should bear in mind that the characteristics of my sample (set out in table form in Appendix C) are not necessarily representative of all Soviet denunciations of the 1930s. The denunciations range in date from 1929 to 1940, with a strong concentration (51 out of 94 letters) on the years of the Great Purges, 1937 and 1938. This reflects, though in slightly diluted form, the pattern of distribution I found in the archives.

The first three sections of this paper deal with three major types of denunciation, classified according to subject: political loyalty, social class, and abuse of power. The fourth section discusses the manipulative uses of denunciation, taking the case of "apartment" denunciations. The fifth section deals with anonymous denunciations and the general issue of secrecy; the sixth section with outcomes of denunciation. The concluding section addresses systemic questions of the function of denunciation in the Stalinist state and its relationship to other "totalitarian" features such as the secret police and terror.

POLITICAL LOYALTY

This is the paradigmatic form of Communist denunciation. In my sample, 72% of all denunciations by Communists deal with questions of loyalty. The most frequent specific accusation in these letters is that another Communist is hiding something disreputable in his past, usually support for Trotsky or friendship with Trotskyites. Other allegations run the gamut from "anti-Soviet conversation" to terrorism and counter-revolutionary conspiracy. "Compromising facts" commonly cited include past membership of (non-Communist) political parties, supporting the White armies during the Civil War, participating in uprisings

a few are voluntary "signals" from members of the public; S. M. Popova, "Sistema donositel'stva v 30-e gody [K probleme sozdaniia bazy dannykh na materialakh Urala," *Klio*, 1991 no. 1, pp. 71-2. (Thanks to Hiroaki Kuromiya for alerting me to this article.)

⁷ Common archival labels include "*Pis'ma trudtashchikhsia*," "*Zhaloby i zatavleniia trudtashchikhsia*," "*Pis'ma v redaktsiu*," and "*Pis'ma na imia [predsedatelia Sovnarkomu, sekretaria obkoma, etc.]*".

against Soviet power, membership of party Oppositions (Trotskyite, Zinovievite, Rightist), and connections of any kind with Oppositionists, foreigners, or emigré relatives.

It was the duty of Communists to make known to the party any compromising information about other Communists that came to their attention. Failure to do so was always a major delinquency, at least in principle, even (or especially) if the person concerned was a spouse, parent, or close friend; and during the Great Purges, failure to pass on damaging information could be really dangerous. Some writers of loyalty denunciations use the formulaic preamble "I consider it my party duty to inform you...." But many dispense with any introductory phrase or use the ambiguous "I consider it necessary to inform you...." Many such denunciations were evidently written out of fear of the consequences of not writing, especially during the Great Purges, when the volume of loyalty denunciations increased markedly.

There are loyalty denunciations that convey a real impression of outrage. The author of one such denunciation (probably a young engineer) wrote to Ezhov⁸ in 1936 asking him to "pay attention to some outrageous facts" about the director of the "Red Flag" factory in Leningrad who made fun of young Communist engineers, mocked the factory party committee ("he calls it the party condom"), helped people who had been arrested as terrorists by the NKVD, and on top of that was of alien social origin - the son of a rich merchant under the old regime (#8).⁹

Others wrote with conviction, but in more measured terms, of problems of loyalty in the party. For example, the group of young South Osetian Komsomols working on the construction of the Moscow Metro wrote a collective letter addressed to Stalin, Kaganovich, Molotov, and Kalinin about the former Mensheviks and "opportunists" who had wormed their way into the party leadership in South Osetia (#49).

A denunciation that was surely written "to be on the safe side" was sent to Gamarnik, head of the Red Army's political administration, in 1935. (#14) Its subject was an anti-Soviet conversation at a drinking party the previous summer. In the presence of the writer (and "a lot of other comrades"), "comrade Smirnov, having had a bit to drink, made a speech in defence of Zinoviev and especially Trotsky." He said that "if Lenin were alive, Trotsky, Zinoviev, Bukharin and the others would be in the Politburo and would have worked for the

⁸ N.I. Ezhov, who headed the NKVD during the Great Purges. This denunciation, however, was sent to him (by name) at the Commission of Party Control.

⁹ Cases in data bank are cited by number (see Appendix A for archival location).

good of the party, and that in general the wheel of history would probably have turned in another direction," and he called Trotsky "exceptionally talented," second only to Lenin in the party. These comments were sufficiently rash that at least one of his listeners was likely to pass them on, and the writer evidently felt that as a party member, he had no choice about reporting them. But his letter shows little sign of indignation at Smirnov's disloyalty; the man was "half drunk," he stresses, even though as Smirnov was reportedly "a professor of dialectics," he "should not make such remarks even when drunk."

The Great Purges stimulated many denunciations about conspiracies and sinister signs and connections whose full import (the authors write) had only just become clear. In Siberia, a semi-literate woman farmworker wrote to the regional party committee in 1937 to say that reading "all those articles by comrade Zhdanov and Vyshinskii"¹⁰ had made her wonder about the loyalty of a party organizer who had worked at her state farm in 1933 - his mother-in-law, who came from Latvia, used the pre-revolutionary salutation "Sir" (gospodin), and the man himself inherited \$60 from a Latvian relative.(#40)

A local prosecutor in Leningrad wrote in, apropos of the suicide of a colleague early in 1937, to say that he had just thought of something sinister: Palgov, the man who killed himself, had a friend called Nechanov, also a prosecutor, whose wife had once denounced or threatened to denounce her husband as a Trotskyite. Were Palgov and Nechanov involved in some sort of plot together? Might this not explain both Palgov's suicide and Nechanov's strangely rapid promotion?(#9)

An engineer wrote a loyalty denunciation about an official named Uralov who was in charge of purchasing aircraft and determining their routes. Uralov always made the wrong decisions, and the writer had many conflicts with him. "At the time it seemed to me that Uralov was simply ignorant, uninformed, not a real engineer but just an incompetent," the engineer wrote to the Political Administration of the Northern Sea Routes in November 1937. "But after my investigation of the Tiumen air route I analyzed a number of facts and came to the conclusion that Uralov is an enemy, a wrecker".(#73)

Such illumination was sometimes conveyed in exalted tones. "I accuse Popovian, a party member since 1918, of being an enemy of the people, a Trotskyite," wrote M. P. Griбанова, a Communist, to her local party committee in October 1937. Griбанова had worked with Popovian when he was chief physician in a hospital on the island of Spitzber-

¹⁰ Andrei Zhdanov was the party leader who took over in Leningrad after Kirov's assassination. Andrei Vyshinskii was the State Prosecutor in the famous show trials of former opposition leaders held in Moscow in 1936, 1937, and 1938.

gen. She remembered that he and his wife had a very suspicious meeting with a Norwegian who came to the hospital at 8 o'clock in the morning and met them behind closed doors: "The conversation was conducted rather quietly, in English and sometimes in German. Before [the Norwegian] left, Popovian gave him a package and added something in German, but I don't know what it was...." (#68)

Sometimes there was a note of urgency, almost desperation, about the fact that an obvious enemy had so far escaped detection. "I don't understand why up to the present time S. P. Vaniushin still enjoys honor and respect.... Who is protecting him?" asked one baffled denouncer in May 1938. (#75) This is "only one tenth of what I could say about Vaniushin's enemy activities," he wrote at the end of a long and circumstantial letter. "I have got tired of writing; I have already written eight times to various places, but for some reason Vaniushin still survives unscathed." Given the facts cited in the letter, notably Vaniushin's close contacts with prominent Communist leaders who had been shot as enemies of the people, it was indeed surprising that Vaniushin remained at liberty. Such people were not only in great danger themselves but also constituted an involuntary danger to all around them. This was perhaps why the author, probably a colleague of Vaniushin's, was so anxious for Vaniushin to be arrested and thus removed from his environment.

Similar concerns are evident in one of the most striking denunciations in my sample, a letter sent to the editor of Pravda (Lev Mekhlis) by a Komsomol student of a Leningrad technical institute in 1936. (#5) The student was in "torment", he wrote, because N. V. Kitaev, another student at his institute, had just been reinstated in the party despite having supported Zinoviev in the party debates of 1925-6 and, worse, having been a co-worker and perhaps even friend of one of the Leningrad oppositionists executed for complicity in Kirov's murder.

How can a parasite WHO ALWAYS SOBS WHEN HE HEARS LENIN'S NAME AND GROANS WHEN HE HEARS STALIN'S (those are not just words, comrade Mekhlis, but the appalling truth), how can such a person be allowed to remain in the walls the institute, how can we, comrade Mekhlis, shelter such a snake in our bosom?

Since he became "so agitated" about Kitaev's continued presence, the author wrote, Mekhlis might suspect that he had some personal grievance against Kitaev.

No comrade Mekhlis, it's much worse - for four years, until February 1935, we venerated him as a "real party man", politically highly developed, an activist, someone who always spoke up at every meeting and assembly, who

could quote Lenin and Stalin and in our (the Komsomol members') eyes was the INCARNATION OF PARTY CONSCIENCE, ethics, and PARTY SPIRIT.

It was painful to recall that the Komsomol students of the Institute had defended Kitaev a few years ago when the Institute tried to expel him for academic failure. But now this previous admiration had turned to hatred.

Since Kirov's murder, [Kitaev] arouses an animal fear in me, an organic disgust. Just as I previously venerated him and respected him, now I fear him and expect him to do something terribly evil, some irreparable harm to the whole country. If you could have seen the unfeigned joy we all felt... when we learned of his expulsion [later revoked] from the Institute after the execution of Zinoviev and Kamenev.... It is impossible and criminal to allow him to finish his studies at the Institute, because comrade Mekhlis even THE CAMPS OF THE NKVD WILL NOT REFORM HIM.... I am terribly sorry now that he was not sitting next to his hero Zinoviev and Kamenev [in the court that ordered their execution].

SOCIAL CLASS

An individual's social class (or the social class ascribed to him) was a key attribute in the Soviet Union in the 1920s and 1930s.¹¹ According to Bolshevik/Marxist thinking, certain classes were ipso facto enemies of the revolution, and their members had to be stigmatized and marginalized by various discriminatory measures (deprivation of voting rights, restricted access to higher education, ineligibility for party and Komsomol membership, and so on). The main objects of stigmatization were members of the urban bourgeoisie (both the old pre-revolutionary and the new "NEP" bourgeoisie), the old nobility, kulaks (prosperous peasants), and the clergy. Such people were categorized as "social aliens" (*sotsial'no-chuzhnye*, *chuzhnye elementy*), much as Jews, Gypsies, and other "asocials" were categorized as *Gemeinschaftsfremde* in Nazi Germany.

To avoid stigma, many people with "bad" class backgrounds tried to hide them. This in turn made it imperative for Communists and other friends of the revolution to discover the identities that had been hidden. An important category of denunciations consists of the unmasking of class enemies. In my database, class is one of the grounds of denunciation in

¹¹ On this theme, see my article "Ascribing Class: The Construction of Social Identity in Soviet Russia," *Journal of Modern History* 65 (December 1993), 745-70.

39% of letters and the main grounds in almost a quarter of all letters (22 out of 94). Class was an equally popular subject with urban and rural writers. Interestingly enough, among urban writers non-Communists were more likely (11:3) to write class denunciations than Communists; and their letters often seem to hint that party and government leaders are too lenient on questions of class.

A good proportion of class denunciations simply stated that someone holding a responsible position was of alien class origin and ought to be dismissed. For example, a person identifying himself as non-party wrote to the Leningrad party committee in 1935 to say that there were many class enemies (whom he named) in the local district soviet: two daughters of a rich kulak who had been arrested and died in prison were working in the education department, the daughter of a former landowner was employed as court secretary, there were kulaks (as always!) in the agriculture department, and "no fewer than three kulaks" in the State Bank.(#15)

A more passionate denunciation came from nine "old party members, civil war veterans" who wrote to Molotov in 1934 about class enemies in responsible positions in the Crimean party organization: four merchants' sons; two priest's sons, including one who was a former Tsarist officer; three mullah's sons, one of them rector of the local Communist University, and so on. Everybody knew about this, but kept quiet. The authors were afraid to sign their letter for fear of retaliation. But if Molotov did not respond to their letter, they wrote, "then we will appeal to comrade Stalin, and if comrade Stalin does not take measures, then one must say straight out that our regime is not socialist but KULAK."(#50)

A Siberian miner wrote to the regional party secretary to denounce the chairman of the local trade union, whom he had just heard was "the son of a big merchant," married to a kulak's daughter, who had got into the party by changing his name and concealing his real identity. "This bastard should be driven out of the trade union," the miner wrote. "If you don't take measures, I will write directly to the Central Committee of the party."(#38)

The implied threats in these last two denunciations were untypical but by no means unique. A small but distinct sub-group of denunciation writers seemed to enjoy the sensation of bullying the important man to whom they addressed their letter and/or hinting that he, and perhaps the regime as a whole, shared the sins of the individual being denounced.

The underlying theme of many class denunciations was resentment that "they" (the formerly privileged and powerful, who had retained at least part of their power under the new regime) "still treat us as they used to in the old days." When the Siberian Waterways

Administration was going through a routine purge¹² in 1930, several workers with memories of the old days wrote into the purge commission to denounce "bourgeois specialists," holdovers from the equivalent prerevolutionary bureaucracy. (#31.32) These were people who had been responsible for having sailors flogged and workers arrested before the revolution, the letters stated. They had served Kolchak's (anti-Bolshevik) administration willingly in 1918; they were protectors of counter-revolutionaries. "This citizen Gavril Meshkov is cunning," one worker wrote about the specialist who had headed the Waterways Administration under the Tsar. "I know his tricks since 1905 as well as I know my own five fingers." He pretends to be loyal to Soviet power, but in fact his record shows that he will work for any regime - Tsarist, Kolchak's, or Soviet. (#31)

Women workers at the Leningrad Knitting Plant wrote to a newspaper in 1931 to denounce the manager of their plant, a former entrepreneur (they claimed), whose associates were of the same bourgeois ilk. This "former petty boss" (*byvshii khoziaichik*) treated the workers like any capitalist,

making them have hysterics, and he answers just like a little capitalist. "If you don't like it you can leave, I will hire others in your place." (#18)

In similar vein, a group of peasants denouncing their kolkhoz chairman in 1938 recalled that his father, a labor contractor, had always exploited and cheated poor peasants:

That's how Romanenkov's father carried on the whole time up to the revolution, and made people's lives miserable and beat them like a Fascist contractor: the old people in the district know that, but the rural soviet [leaders] themselves, being young, don't know it. (#44)

Another group of kolkhozniks, also writing about their kolkhoz chairman, noted that he was "the son of a former elder who always tormented poor peasants (*bedniaki*)" under the old regime. The son was behaving just the same way, they claimed, and moreover his victims were the very same *bedniak* families that his father had tormented (#85). (Although these victims were written of in the third person, their names appear among the signatories.)

Class discrimination was deeply embedded in Soviet law as well as custom until it was abolished (at least in theory) by the new Soviet Constitution of 1936; and many class denunciations had the aim of invoking a specific legal or administrative sanction against the

¹² This kind of purge (*chistka*) was a review of white-collar personnel in government agencies whose purpose was to weed out (i.e. dismiss, not arrest) social and political undesirables.

person denounced. For example, a trade-unionist wrote to the Central Electoral Commission in 1929 arguing that a woman living in his neighborhood should be deprived of the vote because she was not an unskilled worker, as she claimed, but a former nun who made a good living trading in icons and crosses. (#19) Another denunciation (#24) was sent to the Commission on Passportization in 1933 with the aim of preventing the issue of passports to persons the author claimed were class aliens.

When Communists wrote denunciations on class grounds, the purpose was usually to unmask another party member who was concealing "alien" class background. In one such letter (1935), an old Communist (Civil War vintage) wrote to the regional party committee to denounce a Communist woman called Khomlianskaia, currently resident in Novosibirsk. According to the writer's information, Khomlianskaia claimed to have joined the party organization in his district in 1922. That was impossible, he said, because he knew her to be the sister of a rich wool and leather merchant who had fought against the Reds in the Civil War and subsequently been exiled. Evidently, therefore, she had obtained her party card fraudulently and lied about her social origin. Moreover, the writer added, she was probably still in touch with her capitalist brother, in whose home she had been reared and educated, for "according to my information Khomlianskaia's brother at the present time is also in Novosibirsk and trades in cigarettes in a kiosk opposite the Soviet Hotel." (#37)

Vigilance about class enemies was particularly strong in the late 1920s and early 1930s, the time of collectivization, dekulakization, expropriation of urban Nepmen, and mass arrests of priests. Any Communist worth his salt was going to be watching local "kulaks" like a hawk, as did the Komsomol from Kuntsevo who wrote to the district OGPU in 1933:

Pay attention to the citizens living in Usovo village, Stepan Vasilevich Vatusov and his wife Nadezhda Senafantevna, since according to my observations of them they... are like kulaks working by stealth; up to 1930-31 they had their own separate farm with about five hectares of land which they worked by exploiting the bedniak population. The land has now been transferred to the kolkhoz, but [the Vatusovs] are making money on their well-appointed house, which has all kinds of extensions, by renting it out to vacationers.... In all probability they have gold because when they come from Moscow they bring all kinds of packages whose wrapping could only be from Torgsin.¹³ (#13)

Despite the 1936 Constitution, old class stigmas and suspicions were not forgotten even in the late 1930s. Reading in 1938 of the appointment of V. S. Tiukov as deputy

¹³ In the early 1930s, Torgsin stores sold scarce goods for hard currency, gold, and silver only (no rubles).

chairman of the State Bank, an alert resident of the village of Maksimovka in Voronezh oblast realized that a class enemy might have penetrated the highest ranks of government. He wrote to Molotov to warn him that this could be Valentin Tiukov (or perhaps his brother Vitalii) who was the son of a big local landowner, Stepan Tiukov, who had suddenly vanished from the district with his entire family around 1925.(#54) As late as December 1940, a Communist wrote in to complain that one Mikhailov, recently admitted to candidate membership of the party, was ineligible for party membership on class grounds¹⁴ "since his parents were former owners of furnished rooms and commercial bathhouses in the city of Tambov."(#25)

ABUSE OF POWER

Abuse of power (*zloupotreblenie vlasti*) is a Soviet term sometimes used as a special category by archivists filing citizens' letters.¹⁵ It is one of the accusations in more than a third of the denunciations in the database (33 out of 94) and the primary accusation in 21 cases. This is the type of denunciation most frequently written by peasants: of 33 rural letters in my sample, 21 are "abuse" denunciations, and of these, 16 are directed against kolkhoz leaders, in particular the kolkhoz chairman. The genre is less common in an urban setting, though there are denunciations of district (small-town) leaders (e.g.#39) that have similar characteristics.

"Abuse" denunciations clearly owe a great deal to prerevolutionary traditions of peasant petition against unjust officials, landlords, bailiffs, etc. Unlike the peasant petitions from the 1905 period analyzed by Andrew Verner, however, Soviet "abuse" letters rarely came from the whole village community,¹⁶ though it was not uncommon for more than one (but not more than five or six) kolkhozniks to sign. But it was equally rare for an "abuse" letter to be written as if it represented only the opinion of the individual writer. "All the kolkhozniks are indignant," is a standard phrase. Often an individual author will name other kolkhozniks who have denounced the same offender to the authorities.(#83) or list the names

¹⁴ In fact, the party had dropped formal class criteria when it renewed admissions after a four-year hiatus in 1937.

¹⁵ For example, in the *Krest'ianskaia gazeta* files of letters written in 1937-39 in TsGANKh, f. 396, op. 10 and 11.

¹⁶ See Andrew M. Verner, "Discursive Strategies in the 1905 Revolution: Peasant Petitions from Vladimir Province," *Russian Review*, forthcoming.

of kolkhozniks who will back up his version of events.(#47) or even enclose a copy of the minutes of a kolkhoz meeting censuring the offender.(#81)

The "abuse" letter of the 1930s also had specifically Soviet antecedents, namely the letters from rural correspondents (sel'kory) of the 1920s. The sel'kory registered with various newspapers were self-appointed "eyes and ears" of Soviet power in the village, writing exposés of kulak intrigues, corrupt officials, backsliding by Communists who had their children christened, and so on.

By the late 1930s, however, the sel'kor movement had withered. Only a minority of peasant writers to Krest'ianskaia gazeta in 1938 identified themselves as sel'kory: in my database, only 4 out of 21 rural "abuse" letters were signed by someone who identified himself as a sel'kor, and probably only 1 of the 4 was formally registered as such. Perhaps the classic, registered sel'kor of the 1920s should be regarded as something like a regular informer (though not working for the police), but most of the peasant writers of "abuse" denunciations in the late 1930s were of a different type - basically just ordinary peasants with a grievance against the kolkhoz chairman or brigade-leader. The purpose of writing the denunciation was to get the chairman or brigade-leader dismissed from his job (or, for those of more vengeful character, arrested).

It should be remembered, in any case, that rural "abuse" denunciations were not sent only to newspapers. Peasants sent exactly the same kind of letter to regional party and soviet authorities. Sometimes (as they mention in their letters to Krest'ianskaia gazeta) peasants sent a similar or identical letter to the district prosecutor.(##81,84,88) the district soviet.(#83) the district agriculture department.(#88) or the NKVD.(##45,90) While none of the writers in my sample specifically mentions having written to party authorities, there are many denunciations of this kind in regional party archives.

Unlike the "loyalty" and "class" denunciations discussed earlier, the typical "abuse" denunciation does not focus on a single or central attribute or action. Instead, it is a grab-bag of all the crimes, shortfalls, mistakes, defects, and black marks that can plausibly be attributed to the denouncee, particularly those that are likely to weigh heavily with higher authorities. At the top of the list in our sample is "stealing" from kolkhozniks. This is not ordinary theft (usually) but rather the kind of misappropriation of kolkhoz funds that was easily done by kolkhoz chairmen and accountants: cheating kolkhozniks on labor-day payments, confiscating their animals, imposing illegal fines and a variety of other forms of extortion, treating the kolkhoz horses as personal property, drawing money out of the kolkhoz bank account for personal use, and so on.

One such denunciation described how kolkhoz leaders refused to give a deserving kolkhoznik 24 kilos of flour, extorting his fur coat in payment:

These kulak scum take grain themselves, they sell 16 kilos [on the market] for 50 rubles a pud, while honest toilers go hungry. Comrades, where is your vigilance twenty years of Soviet power and this kind of abomination and terrorizing of the dark masses continues.(#45)

Next on the list of offenses cited in rural "abuse" denunciations was "suppression of criticism," a catchphrase that covered a range of arbitrary and tyrannical practices on the part of the chairman.

Kolkhoz chairman F. A. Zadorozhnyi does not allow kolkhozniks to talk at the meeting, if somebody tries to say something he Zadorozhnyi says why are you trying to disrupt the meeting you are not our man; because of that kolkhozniks don't go to meetings, they say why should we go if Zadorozhnyi won't let us speak and stifles criticism and self-criticism.(#41)

Glaring economic disasters such as failure to meet procurements quotas, potatoes left to rot in the field, kolkhozniks fleeing the kolkhoz because of hunger and so on were frequently included in denunciations of kolkhoz chairmen. No less frequent were indignant reports of the chairmen's and brigade-leaders' offenses against the peasants' dignity: insulting, beating, and cursing kolkhozniks (from #90: "He curses out all the kolkhozniks in foul language; he can't find words bad enough to call the kolkhozniks"); treating peasants with contempt (*izdevatel'stvo*); less often, forcing kolkhoz women to have sex with them in exchange for favors.

Favoring relatives in allocation of jobs, tasks, sending to courses, use of horses etc. was also often mentioned in "abuse" letters. Drunkenness was often on the list of offenses, particularly in connection with "drinking up" kolkhoz assets (as in "the chairman took two pigs to market but stayed in town for three days and drank up all the money").

Connections with kulaks and other class enemies (see above, CLASS) appear in many guises in "abuse" letters, sometimes as a conventional pejorative, sometimes as a more heartfelt indictment, as in this 1938 denunciation of a kolkhoz chairman whom the denouncer obviously wants to get arrested as an "enemy":

Up to 1937 [the kolkhoz chairman] was closely linked with the pomeshchik (prerevolutionary landowner) Kupenko who lives next door to him.... When the NKVD took away the pomeshchik, then he... and his wife were close to Kupenko's wife who lives next door to them and they tried hard to find out

from the kolkhozniks who dared to give away pomeshchik Kupenko but did not find out.... Say nothing, he shouts at the kolkhozniks, I will hang you. I will destroy you, and the wife of the pomeshchik Kupenko... has a nephew who lives abroad and she gets parcels... through the kulak's wife Fenka...(#44)

Just as peasants quickly learnt to use the term "kulak" to discredit kolkhoz chairmen with higher authorities, so also they were quick to pick up the rhetorical terms of indictment of the Great Purges period: "enemies of the people", "terrorist", "Trotskyite".

The position in our kolkhoz is pitiful. Comrades, answer us please where we can find justice. We often read the papers and see in them what great evil has been done in our Soviet Union by enemies of the people of the rightist-Trotskyite bloc, how widely it has spread, how they wrecked in agriculture, how many horses perished and pedigree cattle.... We as kolkhozniks people still unenlightened cannot get justice, for example in our kolkhoz there is a very large amount of stealing of kolkhoz property [details follow on thefts by brigade-leaders].... How many times we have told our local authorities about this, both the kolkhoz board and also the chairman of the rural soviet, Savoni, who has now been exposed as an enemy of the people and the police chief Arkhipov who has also been taken away by organs of the NKVD... but there were no results.(#94)

The peasants understood the mechanism of smearing by association and used it often when district leaders - who could always be more or less accurately represented as the patrons of lower-level bosses like rural soviet and kolkhoz chairmen - were arrested as "enemies" during the Great Purges. For example:

Many times I as a sel'kor have sent signals to Chistiakov, chairman of the rural soviet, and the Bolshesolskii district [leaders] about wrecking by the kolkhoz chairman and stableman, but they were deaf to these signals. Now the district soviet chairman Bugeev has been sent to prison as a wrecker [and it is] time to get all the other wreckers.(#89; see also #88)

Peasants who denounced their kolkhoz chairmen or other local office-holders wanted them to be punished, "given what they deserve"(##42,43,85). They asked higher authorities to "help us purge the kolkhoz of these rascals."(#82) "help us to rid ourself once and for all of these criminals."(#86) "deliver us from these enemies of the people who have got into the kolkhoz."(#7) Some letters explicitly asked that the offender be dismissed from his post (##80,90) or prosecuted.(#90) One writer, who had already sent material on her kolkhoz

chairman to the local NKVD, was particularly forthright about the importance of arresting him: what the authorities needed to do, she wrote, was

interview kolkhozniks on site, expose Bakaliaev as an enemy of the people, remove him from his job, prosecute him, and take him away from the kolkhoz. He must not be left in the kolkhoz [because] he will interfere with the leadership and the kolkhozniks. (#90)

SECRECY

About a fifth of the denunciations in my database (18 out of 94) were anonymous. This may or may not be close to the real-life ratio of anonymous to signed denunciations. Still, some of the characteristics of my sample probably have broader validity.

- Denunciations by persons calling themselves Communists were usually signed.
- Peasant "abuse" denunciations were usually signed, although the signatories often asked that their names not be made public in any subsequent investigation.

Why the great majority of peasants were signing their denunciations in the late 1930s is something of a mystery. There were risks in signing, as we shall see, and one would have thought that the risks were greater during the Great Purges than in the 1920s. Yet *Krest'ianskaia gazeta* was receiving proportionately fewer anonymous letters in 1938 than it had done ten years earlier.

The main reason for signing a denunciation was that it added verisimilitude. Sometimes a denouncer would even sign his letter with a false name for this purpose.¹⁷ Writers of anonymous denunciations frequently addressed the possibility that their letters, as anonimki, would not be taken seriously. (#1.50) They offered explanations for their failure to sign their names. e.g. "Chekist" (#21), writing to Moscow city authorities about a financial scam in 1933:

I am obliged to write anonymously for the following reason - I am no coward, but this is my second letter to the OGPU for 1933, and after the first letter they ground me to powder although I had done a big service for the Republic -

¹⁷ A 1939 denunciation concerning high officials in the People's Commissariat of Health, evidently written by someone who worked in the Commissariat, was signed "A. Mitrofanov" (#3) According to an accompanying memo from the NKVD, however, the handwriting was not that of the only A. Mitrofanov employed there, and the letter was treated as an anonimka.

so I am fed up with being insulted and I decided not to give my name but if you guess it I will just congratulate you.

Anonymous denouncers promised to reveal their names as soon as they saw that action was being taken on their denunciations.(#50) As "Unknown for the Time Being", wrote chattily to Kalinin in 1937 after informing him of a terrorist plot against Mikoian,

... Ekh, Mikhail Ivanovich! Check this out, and when this group figures in the press I will make my appearance and unmask [them].(#1)

It is evident that the OGPU/NKVD liked to find out who wrote anonymous denunciations. Sometimes, having identified the authors, they recruited them as agents (sekretnye sotrudniki).¹⁸ In some cases, people seem to have written anonymous denunciations in the hope that this would happen: "So long until further work with you, and [then] I will give you my name and everything," wrote the anonymous author of #6, a Tambov railway porter who noted that he had served as an informer before (not to mention helping Kirov trap the Whites in Astrakhan and having a revolutionary pedigree that went back to 1888 [sic]).

Whether the letter-writers were correct in their assumption that anonymous letters were taken less seriously than signed ones is not altogether clear from the materials I have seen. Anonymous denunciations to Zhdanov (First Secretary of the party in Leningrad)¹⁹ seem to have been handled in much the same way as signed denunciations. #12 and 15 in my database both received careful investigation by the NKVD, the accusations in the first case being ultimately dismissed and in the second confirmed and acted upon.

The obvious reason that some writers of denunciations wished to remain anonymous was that they feared retaliation, particularly if the person denounced was their boss (as in #10, in which someone using the pseudonym "Production worker" wrote a denunciation of the factory director). Retaliation was also a major worry for peasants who did sign their denunciations. Many asked that their identity not be revealed so that they would be safe from retaliation.(##41,44,46,79,83,86,94) Don't let the district know our names because they will tell the kolkhoz bosses and "they will drive us out of the kolkhoz."(#44) Don't write directly to me "because the Doronins will get it."(#45) "Please don't make my name

¹⁸ An example is described in a 1939 memo to Vyshinsky on the case of V. M. Grekov: GARF, f. 5446s, op. 81a, d. 94, l. 19.

¹⁹ In TsGA IPD, f. 24, op. 2b, d. 1518.

known, otherwise I will be in trouble."(#46) (See below, OUTCOMES, for evidence that these fears were fully justified.)

MANIPULATIVE USES: THE "APARTMENT" DENUNCIATION

The Soviet state was very responsive to denunciations. This was partly a product of the suspiciousness and security-consciousness of the political leaders, but it also reflected their belief that letters from individual citizens constituted a valuable source of information and channel of communication. State and party agencies and newspapers that received complaints, denunciations, and appeals from citizens were obliged to investigate them, protecting the confidentiality of the source if possible, and take the appropriate actions to remedy injustice, punish wrongdoing, and help the unfortunate.

This responsiveness meant that the state was vulnerable to manipulation by individual denunciation-writers with personal agendas. In my study of Russian peasants after collectivization, I found village feuds were often pursued via mutual denunciation, each side accusing each other of "kulak" ties or, during the Great Purges, "connections with unmasked enemies of the people" (i.e., local Communist officials who had fallen victim to the purges).²⁰ The newspaper *Krest'ianskaia gazeta*, one of the main recipients of peasant denunciations, discovered some extraordinary cases of manipulation via denunciation, including one in which two Belorussian comen joined a kolkhoz in Krasnodar and set out to get rid of the kolkhoz chairman (presumably with the aim of getting control of the kolkhoz assets) by encouraging the old kolkhozniks to criticize him and then writing numerous "abuse of power" denunciations against him.²¹

Urban "apartment" denunciations provide a particularly good example of the manipulative uses of denunciation. In the former Soviet Union, even now, the term "apartment denunciation" is instantly comprehensible. The context it evokes is that of acute urban overcrowding, lasting for decades (in its most acute form, from the beginning of the 1930s to the 1960s), in which apartments formerly occupied by a single family became "communal", with one family per room and kitchen and bathroom shared by all the inhabitants. An "apartment" denunciation is the denunciation of neighbor by neighbor, often motivated by the desire to increase living space.

²⁰ See Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Stalin's Peasants, Resistance and Survival in the Russian Village after Collectivization* (New York, 1994), esp. pp. 259-61.

²¹ TsGANKh, f. 396, op. 10, d. 67, l. 219 (letter of 29 January 1938 from the newspaper's editor, S. V. Urtskii, to the Krasnodar party committee).

In 1933, I. A. Leontev, a resident of no. 19, Bolshoi Spasobolvanskii lane, Moscow, wrote a denunciation about his neighbors. (#24) Although his house was small (as he noted), 18 families lived in it. Most apartment denunciations focussed on one person or family, but Leontev preferred the scatter-shot approach and gave all the damaging information he had on everybody. E. M. Dmitrieva, who had owned the house before it was municipalized and remained a resident, had been disenfranchised as a bourgeoisie. Several other residents, relatives of Dmitrieva, were in the same "alien" class category. E. I. Tregubova was a formerly disenfranchised woman who had taken over the chairmanship of the housing council (ZhAKT) the better to protect her own dubious relatives, also residents of the house. V. N. Suslin, an office-worker, probably came from a priest's family. Z. E. Ekshtein (unemployed) "probably trades in something (you should check)." V. G. Shenshev, a government employee, "has bourgeois inclinations, especially his wife," and so the list went on. Leontev addressed his letter to the Commission on Passportization, which was currently (March 1933) issuing internal passports and urban registration permits to residents of the capital - with the exception of "socially-alien elements".²² Obviously he hoped to get some of his neighbors evicted and expelled from the city on the grounds that they were unregistered residents.

In another case (##61,62), two Communists, husband and wife, each wrote a denunciation of a man named Volodarskii, also a Communist, who had lived in their apartment and still had legal claim to a room. Although the husband and wife knew of each other's letters and were evidently acting as a team, they denounced Volodarskii on different grounds. The wife said she thought Volodarskii had once been a Trotskyite. (#62) The husband said he had lived a dissolute life, often got drunk, brought women home at night, and had got the servant pregnant. (#61) When these denunciations were shown to Volodarskii, he said they were the result of a complicated quarrel about living space.²³ According to his story, the wife wanted his room for her sister and had suggested an exchange, which he refused, causing bad feeling. Then he had got a new job in another place and moved out (though retaining title), which left the spouses in effective possession of his room. But now he was trying to organize an exchange which would bring in a new resident. The denunciations, Volodarskii implied, were the spouses' revenge - perhaps even (the year was 1937) an effort to get rid of him for good by branding him an enemy of the people.

²² On passportization and the expulsion of "social aliens" from the cities in 1933, see Sheila Fitzpatrick, "The Great Departure: Rural-Urban Migration in the Soviet Union, 1929-1933," in William G. Rosenberg and Lewis Siegelbaum, ed., *Social Dimensions of Soviet Industrialization* (Bloomington, Ind., 1993), 28-31.

²³ RTsKhIDNI, f. 475, op. 1, d. 9, ll. 87-88.

An eloquent testimony to the power of apartment quarrels and the denunciations arising from them comes in an appeal sent to Vyshinskii²⁴ in 1939 from the wife of a man who was serving an 8-year sentence in GULAG for counter-revolutionary agitation (art. 58.10).²⁵ The family (parents and two sons) had lived for 19 years in a comparatively large room - 42 square meters - in a communal apartment in Moscow. "For all these years our room has been the apple of discord for all residents of our apartment. The endless false denunciations of residents of the house to various raion and city soviet institutions pushed us out of the normal stream of life." First the neighbors got them disenfranchised. Then (like Leontev in the previous example) they tried to stop them getting passports. Finally, the denouncer neighbors managed to get her writer's husband arrested on false accusations of counter-revolution. No sooner was he arrested than they tried to get the rest of the family evicted, but this had gone to court and been rejected by the judge.

Vyshinskii sent this along to the new State Prosecutor for investigation, and received an answer which, while refusing to reopen the husband's case and exposing a number of problematic points in the family history, essentially confirmed the wife's claims. It was true, the Prosecutor conceded, that the neighbors had written many denunciations of the family and were on bad terms with it. But the reason they were on bad terms and wrote denunciations was that the family was anti-Soviet and had foreign, class-alien connections.²⁶

OUTCOMES

Many of the archival files containing denunciations also contain some indication of the initial bureaucratic response to them (usually marginal notations like "Send to the NKVD", "Send to the Prosecutor", "Ask the raikom for information"). But information about the outcome of the case is much harder to come by. Only about 20% of the denunciations in my database have known outcomes of some sort. Most of these come from the archive of the Krest'ianskaia gazeta, which in 1938 was very persistent in pressing local authorities for responses to the denunciations and complaints forwarded by the newspaper.

There are many reports in Krest'ianskaia gazeta's files that a denunciation forwarded by the newspaper to regional authorities has led to the dismissal, prosecution, or arrest of the

²⁴ Although Vyshinskii was at this time a deputy chairman of Sovnarkom, no longer State Prosecutor, as he had been during the great Purges, large numbers of people still wrote to him (and he responded) as if he still held the latter office.

²⁵ GARF, f. 5446., op. 81a, d. 94, l. 209.

²⁶ Ibid., l. 207.

person denounced. But there are also cases - quite a few of them - where the opposite happens, and what is reported is that the writer's accusations were groundless and he himself has been arrested by the NKVD as a troublemaker, is to be charged with a crime, or turned out to be a "socially-alien element."²⁷ (Sometimes these reports come from local authorities, sometimes from a wife or friend of the author who writes in to say he has been a victim of retaliation for his letter.) In July 1935, *Krest'ianskaia gazeta* reported that it had received responses from local authorities on 746 letters sent out for investigation. 103 persons accused of abuses had been dismissed, prosecuted, or otherwise punished as a result of these investigations, while in 110 cases the accusations had been found to be groundless.²⁸ (Investigation of the remaining letters had produced no particular results - "measures were taken.") Impressionistically, accusations described as "groundless" by district authorities frequently led to unpleasant consequences for the author. This would suggest that out of every 7 denunciations sent to *Krest'ianskaia gazeta*, 1 resulted in punishment for the person denounced, 1 backfired and probably caused trouble for the author, and the other 5 had little effect.

In my data-base of 94 denunciations, there are fairly definite outcomes in 14 cases. They too divide more or less evenly between successful and unsuccessful denunciations. On the positive side, an anonymous denunciation against class enemies in the district bureaucracy (#15) was spectacularly successful: the district NKVD chief quickly investigated, confirmed the accusations, and reported this to the district party committee, as a result of which four persons mentioned in the denunciation lost their jobs. While this outcome seems almost too good to be true (leading one to suspect that the denunciation may have been a put-up job), other successful outcomes are more convincing. A bourgeois specialist with a dubious past failed to get past the state purge commission in 1930 - and presumably therefore lost his job - after two workers denounced him in separate letters. (##31,32) A Komsomol's denunciation of kulaks in 1933 (#76) was found to be fully justified by an investigating commission.²⁹ The denunciation of a Central Committee department head for softness on Trotskyism in 1937 (#93) produced his immediate dismissal from the position, though

²⁷ TsGANKh, f. 396, op. 10, d. 64, l. 165; *ibid.*, d. 143, l. 211.

²⁸ *Krest'ianskaia gazeta*, 10 and 22 July 1935.

²⁹ The report of the 3-man investigation team (representatives of the OGPU, Rabkrin, and the Commissariat of Agriculture), TsGANKh, f. 7486, l. 19, d. 258, ll. 16-23, fails to indicate what concrete measures should be taken.

Central Committee Secretary Andreev stopped short of recommending (as he did in other cases) that the matter be handed over to the NKVD.

Two outcomes in our sample are ambiguous. In the first case, a Krest'ianskaia gazeta denunciation of a kolkhoz chairman (#90) was upheld rather grudgingly by the district party committee, which indicated that the man "no longer works as chairman of that kolkhoz" and might be subject to criminal charges; at the same time, however, the local investigators had some unflattering things to say about the authors of the letter. In the second case, another "abuse" denunciation, (#41) the district party secretary had a mixed response to the allegations about the kolkhoz chairman's incompetence, ties with kulaks, and suspicious connections with recently-exposed "enemies of the people" in the district bureaucracy. Granting that there was some truth in the kulak accusation and that the chairman might be at fault for having allowed grain to rot, the secretary ignored the "enemies of the people" issue and found that there was no reason to dismiss the chairman - a warning was sufficient.

On the negative side, the NKVD investigated but dismissed an anonymous denunciation of a Communist student of Polish origin; (#12) and district authorities investigating accusations against a kolkhoz chairman and accountant cleared the chairman entirely, although ordering an outside audit of kolkhoz finances. (#81) A denunciation of a factory manager sent to the Leningrad purge commission in 1931 (#18) was investigated with great thoroughness (extra witnesses were sought out and interviewed, the background of the accusers was examined, a lengthy statement was taken from the accused). At first it seemed that the denunciation had hit its mark, for the commission decided to purge the manager "in the second category," meaning he would not be allowed to hold a senior position for three years. But this was quickly reversed on appeal, and he evidently kept his job.

Finally, one denunciation of a kolkhoz chairman by a kolkhoznik rebounded heavily on its author, after at first seeming to succeed. (#87) After Krest'ianskaia gazeta forwarded the letter to the district prosecutor in October 1937, the prosecutor began criminal proceedings against the chairman, who was arrested. But then the chairman was released - no reason is given, but presumably his patrons in the district sprung him - and returned to his old job. Evidently he knew who had denounced him, because the denouncer, Pavlenko, was immediately arrested. "There he sits in Ust'-Labinskaia jail," Pavlenko's wife wrote pathetically to Krest'ianskaia gazeta in November, "and the other kolkhozniks say look what happens when you write to the paper and expose wrongdoing, you get sent where you don't deserve." Krest'ianskaia gazeta was distressed by this and even sent a representative down to the district to sit in on the further investigation of the case. But in March, with the

concurrence of Krest'ianskaia gazeta's representative, the district party committee resolved that the chairman was not guilty of anything serious. Pavlenko had been simply settling scores as a result of his earlier dismissal as head of the kolkhoz dairy farm, and his accusations were "clearly slanderous," which was evidently sufficient reason to keep him in jail.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Denunciation served a number of functions in the Soviet Union. For the regime, popular denunciation provided a low-cost method of surveillance and source of information, particularly on Communists and officials. Citizen's letters to the authorities, including denunciations and complaints, were a valuable source of information about public opinion (supplementing as well as providing some of the data for the reports on "popular moods" that regional and central NKVD offices regularly sent the party leaders). Denunciations were also seen as a useful check on bureaucratic abuses and corruption. Although the word "donos" (denunciation) was pejorative, its euphemistic equivalent, "signal from below," had strongly positive overtones in Soviet public discourse. Such "signals" were regarded as manifestations of Soviet democracy and the close, trusting relationship of the popular masses to the Soviet state.

From the standpoint of individual Communists, and to a lesser extent other citizens, denunciation could be the fulfillment of a party or Soviet duty, or a means of self-protection. Even more importantly, in the Soviet context denunciation was one of the more effective ways of expressing a grievance and trying to get it rectified. It was hard to get injustices remedied through the courts, especially those committed by officials against ordinary citizens; and institutions like trade unions were generally ineffective in defence of their members' interests and rights in the Stalin period. The process of investigation of individual complaints and denunciations can be seen as substitute for well-functioning systems of justice, worker protection, and so on.

Merle Fainsod, along with a whole generation of Sovietologists, saw denunciation in Stalin's Russia as means by which the state exercised totalitarian control over its citizens, "one of the important techniques developed by the regime to use the Soviet citizenry to spy on one another and to report on the abuses of local officialdom, to take the measure of popular grievances and to move, where necessary, toward their amelioration."⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Merle Fainsod, Smolensk under Soviet Rule (Cambridge, Mass., 1958), p. 378.

But an opposite argument can also be made, namely that denunciation gave individual Soviet citizens a measure of power and control over the state. The mechanism of denunciation, Jan Gross writes, gave "every citizen... direct access to the coercive apparatus of the state," which could be used for the citizen's own individual purposes. "The act of effective denunciation (i.e., one followed by reprisals against the denounced) could be seen "both as a service *rendered to* the state (providing the state with sought-after information) and as a service *rendered by* the state (providing an individual citizen with prompt settlement of some private dispute in his favor)."³¹

There is truth in both these apparently contradictory interpretations, for, as this paper has demonstrated, denunciation in Stalin's Russia was a multi-faceted phenomenon. The Communist who, in fear for his own life during the Great Purges, denounced a colleague who had told an anti-Soviet joke at a party, scarcely fits Gross's stereotype of the manipulative citizen using the state for his own private purposes. By the same token, however, Fainsod's framework is less than adequate for the denunciation of a neighbor in a communal apartment whose aim was to increase the denouncer's living-space.

Since a high rate of denunciation coexisted in Stalin's Soviet Union with terror and the growth of an all-pervasive secret police, the question of the relationship between these phenomena naturally arises. Were denunciations a contributory cause of Stalinist terror? Did the power and high visibility of the secret police encourage denunciation?

It would be hard to deny that denunciations contributed to some degree to Stalinist terror. If it achieved nothing else, a denunciation created a police file on the person denounced. It lay there in the file as "compromising material" that could always be activated. That has to have been an enabling factor in a snowball process like the Great Purges.

At the same time, the evidence presently available suggests that in Stalinist Russia, in contrast to Nazi Germany, freely-offered denunciations were not the typical starting point for a secret-police investigation (see above, p. 4, note 5). We still have too little information to be categorical about this question. It could well be that popular denunciations were a major generator of some types of cases, for example, arrests of kolkhoz and rural soviet chairmen in the Great Purges. But on other types of cases, notably those involving high-level Communists on which quite a lot is now known, they clearly were not a major initiating factor. In the Soviet context, there were many other ways that "compromising information" was

³¹ Jan T. Gross, "A Note on the Nature of Soviet Totalitarianism," *Soviet Studies* XXXIV:3 (July, 1982), p. 375.

generated: interrogation of prisoners and others (a major source during the Great Purges), reports from NKVD informers, records from past party and government chistki, and so on.

One reason for this difference between the Soviet and Nazi German case is undoubtedly the fact that the NKVD was a much bigger operation than the Gestapo, hence more capable of generating its own "compromising materials" instead of relying on unsolicited denunciations. At the end of the 1930s, the Gestapo had about 30,000 full-time workers and a slightly smaller number of regular informers.³² That is about 1 Gestapo worker and 1 informer per 2,500 of population. At the same period, the NKVD, the Soviet Union's secret police, numbered 366,000, according to recently declassified materials of the 1939 census, which is more than 1 NKVD man per 500 of population - five times the saturation level of Nazi Germany.³³

The Stalinist regime certainly encouraged denunciations, both explicitly (in its calls for "criticism and self-criticism" and "signals from below") and implicitly (by taking denunciations seriously and investigating their claims). But it is probably not accurate to say that the NKVD specifically encouraged them. In the view of Arsenii Roginskii,³⁴ the "Memorial" historian who has worked extensively with NKVD materials, the NKVD tended to regard popular denunciation warily and suspiciously as a competing source of "compromising" information with its own sources. It was at least partly outside the NKVD's bureaucratic control (remember, denunciations were sent to many state and party agencies). The NKVD was particularly unenthusiastic about starting a case on the basis of an unsolicited denunciation, Roginskii claims, for this suggested that the agency itself was not doing its job properly. The higher the percentage of cases initiated as a result of information obtained from NKVD own agents and informers, the better the agency's "productivity" record looked.

The same bureaucratic logic, carried to an extreme, seems to have applied in the DDR in the 1980s when, according to Robert Gellately and Herbert Reinke, police saturation reached extraordinary heights, almost half the adult population was enrolled at some time or other as an informer, and unsolicited denunciation seems to have virtually disap-

³² Robert Gellately, The Gestapo and German Society: Enforcing Racial Policy, 1933-1945 (Oxford, 1990), pp. 44, 61-2.

³³ Alec Nove, "Victims of Stalinism - How Many?", in J. Arch Getty and Roberta T. Manning, Stalinist Terror. New Perspectives (New York, 1993), p. 269. Reliable figures on the number of regular informers (osvedomiteli, sekretnye sotrudniki) working for the NKVD are not yet available, but word-of-mouth figures in circulation among Russian scholars suggest that they rose rapidly from a low base in 1929 (16,000) to around 300,000 in 1937.

³⁴ Interview with Roginskii, Moscow, March 1994.

peared. This never seems to have happened in Russia, despite the further growth of the Soviet secret police in the late Stalin period. Denunciation may flourish in the surveillance state, but it may also happen that the growth of professional surveillance puts the amateurs out of business. The practice of denunciation is something more than a by-product of the modern police state.

APPENDIX A

List of Denunciations in Database

Archival location; brief description

1. GARF, f. 1235, op. 141, d. 2070, l. 4
1937 anonimka to Kalinin - plot against Mikoian
2. GARF, f. 5446, op. 32, d. 56, ll. 315-6
1937 anonimka postcard to Molotov against Goloshchekin
3. GARF, f. 5446, op. 31a, d. 154, l. 2
1939 anonimka (false sig.) to TsK against health officials
4. TsGA IPD, f. 24, op. 2b, d. 1628, l. 61
1936 to Mekhlis, on Stakhanov and wife, from photographer
5. TsGA IPD, f. 24, op. 2b, d. 1628, ll. 79-82
1936, from student, on another student (re Kirov murder)
6. TsGA IPD, f. 24, op. 2b, d. 945, l. 3
1934 anonimka, from baggage handler, re Kirov murder
7. TsGA IPD, f. 24, op. 2b, d. 1570, l. 49
1936, from Communist, unmasking former Trotskyist
8. TsGA IPD, f. 24, op. 2b, d. 1570, ll. 216, 219
1936, Communist (young specialist?) against factory director
9. TsGA IPD, f. 24, op. 2b, d. 2478, ll. 25-6
1937, prosecutor on prosecutor (to LenObkom)
10. TsGA IPD, f. 24, op. 2b, d. 1518, l. 3
1935 anonimka ("Proizvodstvennik") against Komsomol secretary at plant
11. TsGA IPD, f. 24, op. 2b, d. 1518, l. 23
1935 anonimka against Finnish kulak
12. TsGA IPD, f. 24, op. 2b, d. 1518, ll. 53, 56
1935 anonimka against student with dubious background
13. GASO, f. 88, op. 2, d. 62, ll. 125-6
1930 on collectivization/dekulakization abuses.
14. TsGA IPD, f. 24, op. 2b, d. 1518, l. 94
1935 anonimka reporting anti-Soviet conversation
15. TsGA IPD, f. 24, op. 2b, d. 1518, ll. 164-6
1935 anonimka on raion cadres from socially-alien background
16. TsGA S-P, f. 1027, op. 1, d. 1177, ll. 101-2
1933, against kolkhoz chairman, by 3 kolkhozniki
17. TsGA S-P, f. 1024, op. 2, d. 356, ll. 151-2
1933, against rural officials and former kulaks, by workers
18. TsGA S-P, f. 1027, op. 2, d. 3600, l. 52
1931, to newspaper, against manager by workers
19. TSMAM (Tiazhelnikova), f. 3109, op. 2, d. 2140
1929, to Rabkrin, against former nun, from trade unionist
20. TSMAM (Tiazhelnikova), f. 3109, op. 2, d. 2140
1930? anonimka? to Rabkrin, against house-owner
21. TSMAM (Tiazhelnikova), f. 3109, op. 2, d. 2140
Same target as #20, different author
22. TsGAOR g. Moskvyy, f. 1474, op. 7, d. 72, ll. 8-9
1933 anonimka ("Chekist") against factory director for financial improprieties
23. TsGAOR g. Moskvyy, f. 1474, op. 7, d. 79, l. 24
1933, urban, against former village exploiter (neighbor?)
24. TsGAOR g. Moskvyy, f. 1474, op. 7, d. 79, ll. 86-7
1933, against neighbors

25. RTsKhIDNI, f. 475, op. 1, d. 28, l. 395
1940, against Communist on grounds of social origin.
26. RTsKhIDNI, f. 475, op. 1, d. 28, l. ?
1940 anonimka, for anti-soviet comments
27. RTsKhIDNI, f. 475, op. 1, d. 16, l. 36
1938, against O. Iu. Schmidt, for friendship with foreigner
28. GANO, f. 47, op. 5, d. 206, ll. 76-77
(1935-6), to raion, on abuses by kolkhoz leaders ("kulaks")
29. GANO, f. 47, op. 5, d. 179, l. 170
(1933), from "former Red partisan", illeg. sig., on
financial abuses by Komendant and wife
30. GANO, f. 47, op. 5, d. 231, ll. 117-18
1937, to Eikhe, on counter-revolutionaries in sel'sovet
31. GANO, f. 288, op. 2, d. 902, ll. 4-5
1930, to Rabkrin purge commission on specialist, from
Communist worker
32. GANO, f. 288, op. 2, d. 902, l. 6
1930, to Rabkrin purge commission, on same specialist as
#31, from worker
33. PANO, f. 3, op. 7, d. 7
1934 anonimka on behavior of kraikom rep. in village
34. PANO, f. 3, op. 9, d. 10, l. 295
1935, sent to newspaper, forwarded to kraikom
35. PANO, f. 3, op. 9, d. 10, l. 1432
1935 anonimka (signed "Vysokaia", no address) against
gorsovet chairman
36. PANO, f. 3, op. 9, d. 10, l. 1434
1935, from Communist, against same man as #35
37. PANO, f. 3, op. 9, d. 801, l. 10
1935, Communist against Communist, re class background
38. PANO, f. 3, op. 9, d. 801, l. 209
1935, by worker against manager (class, abuses)
39. PANO, f. 3, op. 11, d. 41, ll. 31-36
1937, from Communist, against raion leadership
40. PANO, f. 3, op. 11, d. 41, l. 27
1937, from woman sovkhov worker, against party official and
wife (Latvian connections)
41. TsgANKh, f. 396, op. 10, d. 86, ll. 71-73
1937, from Kursk sel'kor
42. TsgANKh, f. 396, op. 10, d. 26, ll. 137-9
1938, from group of kolkhozniks, Upper Volga, on abuses,
43. TsgANKh, f. 396, op. 10, d. 26, ll. 158-9
(1938?) from kolkhoznik and Komsomol, Upper Volga
44. TsgANKh, f. 396, op. 10, d. 128, ll. 66-69
1938, from 4 kolkhozniks, Smolensk, on abuses and class
enemies
45. TsgANKh, f. 396, op. 10, d. 128, ll. 158-9
1937, from Smolensk kolkhoznik, on kulak leaders of kolkhoz
46. TsgANKh, f. 396, op. 10, d. 128, l. 262
1938, from Smolensk kolkhoznik (requests anonymity) against
kolkhoz driver
47. TsgANKh, f. 396, op. 10, d. 128, ll. 276-8
1938, from Smolensk kolkhoznitsa, headed "He vreditel'stvo
li eto?", says other kolkhoz women will confirm

48. TSGANKh, f. 396, op. 10, d. 128, ll. 282-3
1938, from Smolensk kolkhoz accountant, Komsomol (requests anonymity)
49. GARF, f. 5446, op. 32, d. 42, l. 103
1936, from 1 Komsomols, on S. Ossetian leadership
50. GARF, f. 5446, op. 32, d. 27, l. 172
(1934), from 9 "old party members, civil war veterans" (no sigs.) against obkom leadership
51. GARF, f. 5446, op. 32, d. 27, ll. 60-62
1934, sent to newspaper and forwarded to Sovnarkom, from kursant against sel'sovet chairman
52. GARF, f. 5446, op. 32, d. 65, ll. 8-13
1938, from Communist, against Armenian party leaders
53. GARF, f. 5446, op. 32, d. 65, 14-5
1938, "personally to comrade Molotov", from Ukrainian official (sent on to Ezhov)
54. GARF, f. 5446, op. 32, d. 65, l. 53
1938, from rural resident, against deputy chairman, Gosbank
55. GARF, f. 5446, op. 32, d. 65, l. 183
1938, from Kerzhentsev, against Dr. Pletnev (may have murdered Dzerzhinsky)
56. GARF, f. 5446, op. 32, d. 56, ll. 285-7
1937, from musician, against NKVD chief in N. Osetia
57. GARF, f. 5446, op. 32, d. 56, ll. 263-1
1937, from Communist to Molotov, against woman friend of enemies, compromising Molotov's wife
58. GARF, f. 5446, op. 32, d. 51, l. 110
1937, sent to Pravda and forwarded to Sovnarkom, on "Stalinets" sports society leaders
59. RTsKhIDNI, f. 475, op. 1, d. 9, ll. 4-8
1937, Communist against Communist (Trotskyite), headed "'Figaro' Glavsevmorputi".
60. GARF, f. 5446, op. 32, d. 65, ll. 204-7
[1938] from Iudin, Mitin and Maksimov (eds., Pod znamenem marksizma, to Molotov, against physicists
61. RTsKhIDNI, f. 475, op. 1, d. 9, l. 32
1937, Communist against Communist, for disreputable private life
62. RTsKhIDNI, f. 475, op. 1, d. 9, l. 83
(1937), from Communist (wife of #61 author), same target, suspicion of Trotskyism
63. RTsKhIDNI, f. 475, op. 1, d. 9, ll. 107-8
1937, Communist against Communists ("Trotskyite wreckers")
64. RTsKhIDNI, f. 475, op. 1, d. 9, l. 162
1937, Communist against Communists (Trotskyites at rabfak in 1920s
65. RTsKhIDNI, f. 475, op. 1, d. 9, l. 259
1936, from Communist woman on former Trotskyites, including friend's (former?) husband
66. RTsKhIDNI, f. 475, op. 1, d. 2, ll. 39-40
1935, from Communist ("Zorkii" + name), against Communist official, originally sent to Pravda
67. RTsKhIDNI, f. 475, op. 1, d. 2, l. 274
1935, from journalist against scientist, for arrogance and possible disloyalty

68. RTsKhIDNI, f. 475, op. 1, d. 10, l. 2
1937, from woman Communist against Communist physician (for Trotskyism, contacts with Norwegians)
69. RTsKhIDNI, f. 475, op. 1, d. 10, l. 138
(1937), from Irkutsk resident, against aviator Babushkin
70. RTsKhIDNI, f. 475, op. 1, d. 10, l. 166
1937, from scientist (non-party?), against physician (too interested in topological charts)
71. RTsKhIDNI, f. 475, op. 1, d. 10, l. 225
1937, from Communist, against former colleagues ("Trotskyites")
72. RTsKhIDNI, f. 475, op. 1, d. 10, ll. 338-9
1937, from Communist scientist against sea captain
73. RTsKhIDNI, f. 475, op. 1, d. 10, ll. 356-7
1937, from Communist(?) engineer, against Communist official
74. RTsKhIDNI, f. 475, op. 1, d. 16, ll. 132-3
[1937?], woman Communist on Communist subordinate (wife of arrested enemy of people)
75. RTsKhIDNI, f. 475, op. 1, d. 16, ll. 130-2
1938, from Communist on (Communist?) school director, for wrecking, links with enemy of people
76. TsGANKh, f. 7486, op. 19, d. 258, l. 13
1933, from Komsomol, against kulaks, kolkhoz leaders, sent to OGPU
77. GARF, f. 3316, op. 64, d. 1854, l. 258
1937, from Ukrainian kolkhoznik against former Makhno and Petliura supporters in sel'sovet, sent to Kalinin
78. RTsKhIDNI, f. 613, op. 3, d. 193, l. 6
1929, Narkomindel secretary against Litvinov, for sexual harrassment (in TsKK files; from wall-newspaper)
79. TsGANKh, f. 396, op. 10, d. 142, ll. 40-41
1938, from village-resident pensioner, Tambov, against kolkhoz leadership
80. TsGANKh, f. 396, op. 10, d. 142, ll. 141-2
1938?, anonimka?, against chairmen of kolkhoz, sel'sovet
81. TsGANKh, f. 396, op. 10, d. 142, ll. 493, 496-7
1938, two letters from Tambov kolkhoznik
82. TsGANKh f. 396, op. 10, d. 161, ll. 203-4
1938, from Iaroslavl kolkhoznik, on abuses, class
83. TsGANKh f. 396, op. 10, d. 161, l. 289
1938, from Iaroslavl kolkhoznik ("organizer of kolkhoz", semi-literate), on abuses of kolkhoz chairman
84. TsGANKh f. 396, op. 10, d. 161, ll. 217-8
1938?, from Iaroslavl kolkhoznik, in letter to worker son, with request to pass on to newspaper
85. TsGANKh f. 396, op. 10, d. 87, ll. 125-6
1938, 5 signatories (3 with same last name), against kolkhoz chairman
86. TsGANKh f. 396, op. 10, d. 87, ll. 281-4
1937, from 3 kolkhozniks (first signatory is registered sel'kor), pseudonym "Jack", on attempted robbery and murder, politicized rhetoric
87. TsGANKh, f. 396, op. 10, d. 68, ll. 77-8
1937, from Azovo-Chernomor kolkhoznik, on abuses

88. TsGANKh, f. 396, op. 10, d. 142, ll. 173-7
1937, from Tambov sel'kor, on abuses of kolkhoz chairman
89. TsGANKh, f. 396, op. 10, d. 161, ll. 29-32
1937, from Iaroslavl kolkhoznik, veterinary feldsher
90. TsGANKh, f. 396, op. 10, d. 161, ll. 64-7
1938, from Iaroslavl kolkhoznitsa, on abuses of kolkhoz
chairman (endorsed by six other kolkhozniks)
91. PANO f. 3, op. 9, d. 8, l. 914
1935, signed, against plant manager for driving out
Communists, preferring byvshie. Sent to industrial
department of kraikom
92. TSGAIPD, f. 24, op. 2b, d. 772, l. 22
1934, Leningrad Komsomolka denounces herself
93. RTskhIDNI, f. 17, op. 114, d. 822, l. 62
1937, on head of Central Committee department soft on
Trotskyites, sent by Communist to Ezhov, Andreev (CC sec.)
94. TsGANKh, f. 396, op. 10, d. 65, ll. 212-4
1938, from 3 Krasnodar kolkhozniks, on abuses

APPENDIX B

List of Archives Cited in Appendix A

MOSCOW

GARF (State Archive of Russian Federation, formerly TsGAOR)

- f. 1235 (VTsIK secretariat)
- f. 3316 (TsIK secretariat)
- f. 5446, op. 32 (Sovnarkom SSSR - Molotov secretariat)

RTsKhIDNI (Russian Central Collection of Contemporary Historical Documentation, former the Central Party Archive)

- f. 17, op. 114 (Central Committee, Orgburo/Secretariat)
- f. 475 (Political Administration of Northern Sea Passage**)
- f. 613, op. 3 (Central Control Commission)

TsGANKh (Central State Archive of the National Economy, now renamed RAFE)

- f. 396, op. 10 (letters to Krest'ianskaia pravda, 1938)
- f. 7486, op. 19 (Secretariat of Narkomzem SSSR)

TsGAOR g. Moskvy (Central State Archive of the City of Moscow)

- f. 1474 (Rabkrin: complaints bureau, materials on purges)

TsMAM (Central Municipal Archive of Moscow)

- f. 3109*

ST. PETERSBURG

TsGA IPD (Central State Archive of Historical-Political Documents of St. Petersburg, former Leningrad Party Archive)

- f. 24, op. 2b (Leningrad obkom, special sector)

TsGA S-P (Central State Archive of the City of St. Petersburg)

- f. 1024 (Leningrad guberniia Rabkrin/Control Commission)
- f. 1027 (Leningrad oblast Rabkrin/Control Commission)

NOVOSIBIRSK

GANO (State Archive of Novosibirsk Oblast)

- f. 47, op. 5 (Novosibirsk kraispolkom, secret sector)
- f. 238 (Novosibirsk oblast Rabkrin/Control Commission)

PANO (Party Archive of Novosibirsk Oblast)

- f. 3 (Novosibirsk kraikom)

EKATERINBURG

GASO (State Archive of Sverdlovsk Oblast)

- f. 88 (Sverdlovsk oblispolkom)

* Thanks to Viktoriia Tiazhelnikova (TsMAM) and her team for making available xeroxed denunciations from their database on lishentsy

** Thanks to Chicago graduate student John McCannon for telling me about this exceptionally rich source of denunciations.

APPENDIX C

CHARACTERISTIC OF 94 LETTERS IN DATABASE

1. Date of Letter

year	1929	1930	1931	1932	1933	1934
no.	2	5	1	-	7	5

year	1935	1936	1937	1938	1939	1940
no.	14	6	28	23	1	2

2. Archival Provenance

	Central Moscow*	Leninrad	Novosibirsk	Sverdlovsk	total	
party	21	-	12	9	-	42
state	37	6	3	5	1	52
TOTAL	58	6	15	14	1	94

* city and oblast archives

3. Authors of Denunciations

Breakdown by rural/urban location, gender, and party status

	urban		rural		Communists*		total
	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.
men	52	63	30	17	32	19	82
women	9	15	3	25	7	58	12
TOTAL	61	65	33	35	39	41	94

* party and Komsomol members

4. Communist Authors

Breakdown by rural/urban location and gender

	urban			rural			total
	male	female	all	male	female	all	
party members	25	5	30	1	1	2	32
Komsomol members	2	1	3	4	-	4	7
total Communist	27	6	33	5	1	6	39

5. Type of Denunciation

		sent in first instance to		
		newspaper	govt./party/NKVD	
anonymous*	18	1	16	
signed	76	24	52	
by one individual	54	17	47	
by more than one	12	7	5	
TOTAL	94	25	69	

* includes one letter with false signature

6. Grounds of Denunciation
distinguishing primary and secondary accusations

	loyalty	class	abuse/power	morals	crime	other	total
primary	37	22	21	6	6	2	94
secondary	13	15	12	1	6	5	52
total	50	37	33	7	12	7	146

Grounds of Denunciation (1937-38 letters only)

	loyalty	class	abuse/power	morals	crime	other	total
primary	24	4	15	3	3	2	51
secondary	10	5	3	1	3	5	32
total	34	9	23	4	6	7	83

7. Objects of Denunciation
with breakdown by gender and location of objects and authors of denunciation

	main object				ALL	main author				Comm.
	male	fem.	urb.	rur.		male	fem.	urb.	rur.	
neighbor	4	2	6	-	6	5	1	6	-	3
colleague	9	1	8	2	9	9	-	6	3	3
boss(es)	21	-	2	19	21	19	2	2	19	1
celebrity	7	-	7	-	7	6	1	6	1	2
Communist	41	5	40	6	46	36	10	40	6	28

