

A b s t r a c t s

Spotlight Essays on terror, the truth and the law

Wolfgang Eichwede

The historical truth as a human right
On Arseny Roginsky's life's work

Arseny Roginsky was passionately dedicated to searching for the historical truth in all its contradictions. Concerned that entire epochs might be lost through the manipulation and censorship that characterised Soviet historiography, he collected personal sources and oral accounts – *oral history* avant la lettre. He was constantly looking for new ways of collecting material. He was an “institution” far beyond Russia, but had no airs and graces. He was a harsh critic and also built stable, durable bridges. The historian Arseny Roginsky was a pioneer of enlightenment and reconciliation.

Arseny Roginsky

Truth and justice

Autobiographical memories

As the son of a father sentenced to camp imprisonment and banishment, Arseny Roginsky experienced early on how it felt to be a victim of despotism and state violence. The concealed death of his father sharpened his sensitivity towards lies and fear as a weapon of power. After a period of study under Yuri Lotman, he discovered his fascination for the search for truth in the past. He was one of the initiators of the independent Pamyat (remembrance) publication. He attracted the attention of the Soviet security authorities, and in 1981 he was sentenced to four years' imprisonment. The same historian who studied the fate of people incarcerated in the first camp, the Soloviki special camp, and who electrified the Gulag Archipelago, was now forced to enter into the world of the camps himself, with their own laws and their own language. The political turmoil that began with Perestroika made it possible to establish the Memorial society, whose objective it is to educate about the infringement of human rights in the past, and to fight against that same infringement in the present.

Arseny Roginsky

The position of the historian in the Soviet Union

Closing remarks before the court

The restrictive system of archive access limits historical research. The restraints on access to authentic sources creates the basis for untruthful or intentionally falsified interpretations of history. The accusation made by the Soviet authorities and before the court, that the purpose of my archive research is to provide material for a publication abroad, fails to take into account the professional self-concept of a historian. A document that is precisely reproduced and discussed in a dispassionate way remains a document, regardless of whether or not it is published. Only the free study of the archives and free publication can help us learn the truth about the past.

Gerd Koenen

In the circle of history

Memory loss and the battle for remembrance

The general public may be only superficially aware of the battle for remembrance waged by Arseny Roginsky and *Memorial* since 1988. However, in his tenacity in breaking new ground by perpetuating the memory the victims of Bolshevik rule, Roginsky adopted the same attitude that he admired so much in the social revolutionaries, Narodniks and Mensheviks who were incarcerated in the prisons and camps during the early phase of Bolshevik rule: he remained unbroken.

Arseny Roginsky, Nikita Okhotin

The KGB archive

One year after the putsch

Since the publication of the Gulag Archipelago, a key demand made by Soviet dissidents was that the KGB archives should be opened in order to shed light on the crimes of the regime. However, they were told that this was not possible. With Perestroika and the collapse of Communist Party rule, the situation changed. On 24 August 1991, following the failed putsch, President Yeltsin ordered responsibility for the KGB archive to be handed over to the state archive authorities. Special committees were founded for regulating the transfer of the archive material and the conditions of access and usage. However, their substantial efforts became bogged down in the obstruction of the state security services and the change in the political climate. It became clear that the KGB archive will never be opened until there is a comprehensive reform of the security organs.

Nikita Petrov

“Back in the USSR”

The secret services archive in 2018

In 1991, the reform of the way the archives were administered was designed to open up archives that have been inaccessible to date, and to make it easier to view them. While some new archive laws were drafted, problems arose when it came to implementing them. The basic decree issued by President Yeltsin in August 1991, that the KGB archive should be transferred to the state archive authorities, was forgotten. New regulations were openly sabotaged. Today, the secret services again have control over the archive material. As in Soviet times, they themselves decide how the documents should be stored and used. The regulations regarding the declassification and release of documents have become more stringent.

Arseny Roginsky

Fragmented Memory

Stalin and Stalinism in Today's Russia

The Stalin era is very much present in Russia today, albeit for the most part in an idealised form. When it is equated with the war, Stalin stands for victory; when the Great Terror is recalled, the victims are front and centre. The crimes and the perpetrators are not part of the discussion. This has as much to do with the lack of a legal basis for prosecution as with the fact that differentiating between perpetrator and victim is often difficult. In addition, official history policy marginalises and trivialises terror as a feature of Stalinism.

Arseny Roginsky, Ivan Urgant

“Remember this history”

Arseny Roginsky on “The return of the names”

Every year since 2006, people gather on the Lubyanka Square in Moscow on the 29th of October. They meet in front of the headquarters of the NKVD, the Soviet secret service, which is now occupied by the FSB. At the memorial stone commemorating the

victims of Stalinism, they read out the names of the individuals who lost their lives during the terror, and light candles. Through this intimate act of remembrance, they bestow dignity to the victims, as well as one of the inalienable rights of any individual, which was denied to them by the Stalinist regime: the right to their own name and their own grave.

Elena Zhemkova, Arseny Roginsky Between empathy and indifference

The rehabilitation of the victims of Soviet repression

In the Soviet Union, many millions of people were subject to repression for political reasons. Over five million were arrested under false accusations and sentenced to many years of imprisonment or to death. A further six million people were dispossessed and deported solely due to their belonging to a specific social group. This repression began directly following the takeover of power by the Bolsheviks in 1917; in 1987, people were still being arrested for political reasons. The rehabilitation of the victims of the great waves of repression during the 1930s began after the death of Stalin in 1953, and increased again during the Perestroika period. However, many of the victims of the state have still not been rehabilitated even today, and the few who are still alive receive little social support. The state regards history as a tool to use for its own purposes. The general public may occasionally show sympathy, but overall, they are indifferent.

Jens Siegert

The friend of humanity

On the death of Arseny Roginsky

Arseny Roginsky's life was dominated by the camps. He was born in a penal colony, his father died in a camp, and as a historian, he was interested during the early stages of his career in the victims of Bolshevik rule. In the Soviet Union, he was sentenced to four years' camp imprisonment for his work on the *Pamyat* publications. Following his release, Roginsky was spiritus rector of the *Memorial* organisation, which during its 30 years of existence brought to light and disseminated fundamental knowledge about life in the camps, the system of terror and the structure of totalitarian rule. While at first, he supported the new Russia under President Yeltsin with high hopes for the future, he did not balk from sharply criticising the shelling of the Russian White House and the first Chechen war. As a result, he gained many enemies. However, even among those who disagreed with him, there was no-one who doubted his great integrity, sincerity and decency.

Arseny Roginsky

"Overcoming the past in the present"

Speech following the presentation of the Pax Christi award to *Memorial*

Russia's history policy is not oriented to preserving remembrance, but to "patriotic education", the strengthening of the state, and the assertion of the notion that the state is a priori and always in the right. Memorial counters this with the idea of civic responsibility, in which the past and the present are combined to create a whole. The reappraisal of the past is indissolubly intertwined with the present-day promotion of human rights.

Yuri Dmitriev

"Tell the truth and fear nothing"

On his time in remand custody

On 27 January 2018, the historian Yuri Dmitriev was released from remand prison. The accusation levelled against him was "the production of pornographic images of his underage daughter" and "child abuse". Observers suspect that he is being persecuted for his work on behalf of the victims of political repression. He identifies those who have

been murdered, who were hastily buried in mass graves on the White Sea-Baltic Sea canal. During his time in prison, Yuri Dmitrev was treated respectfully. His credo is that any individual who knows their ancestors and who is aware of what they achieved for the country must take a critical view of any rule.

Anna Leszczynska-Koenen

“Zionists, to Siam!”

The Polish 1968 and the Jews

The student protests in Poland in 1968, which were triggered by an attack on the freedom of national culture, were presented by the official propaganda as the work of “Zionist” enemies of the Polish People’s Republic. Anti-Semitism, masked as anti-Zionism – a phenomenon that was neither acknowledged nor understood by the students protesting in the West, who took up the cause of socialism – broke out in socialist Poland. Around 15,000 Polish Jews were forced to emigrate. Although in western and eastern Europe, the “68ers” shared a common generational experience, they remained distanced from each other.

Ignaz Lozo

Terrorism myths

The Soviet Union, the KGB and the RAF

40 years after the German Autumn, several questions still remain unanswered. They include the issue of whether the Soviet secret service, the KGB, supported terror groups in the West during the East-West conflict. Since Claire Sterling’s *The Terror Network*, published in 1981, the theory has been in circulation that the RAF was assisted by Moscow. This theory is untenable: at no time did Moscow support the RAF terrorist activities. The overriding interest in a policy of détente and the CSCE process, as well as the fight against terrorism within the Soviet Union itself prior to the 1980 Olympic Games, were more important than supporting ostensibly anti-imperialist freedom fighters and terrorists in western Europe.

Ilya Kukulin

“Eurasia” instead of the “Russian World”

On the transformation of a iridescent concept

The Eurasianists of the 1920s regarded Eurasia as a political, cultural and spiritual antipode to the western world. Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, this concept enjoyed a renaissance. Once again, it took on imperialist, anti-western features. However, for several years, some intellectuals have been redefining the term. The ethno-nationalist mobilisation in Russia has meant that in the humanities, “Eurasia” has become a counter-concept to the “Russian World”. The intention is to replace the hegemonial claim in favour of all things Russian with the notion of a post-imperialist space for different cultures.

Tomasz Sahaj, Dariusz Wojtaszyn

Football fans in Poland

Sport, violence and politics

Football is inseparably linked to politics and society. From the independence movement to today, football has been a means of national mobilisation and individual and collective identity formation. While in the Polish People’s Republic, football fans used the stadiums to articulate criticism of the regime and express democratic views, today, anti-democratic forces dominate the scene. Violent hooligans are a particular problem. Government officials are now attempting to woo these thuggish “fans” as voluntary members of territorial defence groups. It is no coincidence that the first units in eastern Poland have been created in areas where militant football fan groups live.