Patriotism without Patriots? Perm′-36 and Patriotic Legitimation in Russia

J. Paul Goode

When do ideas matter in autocratic politics? Much of the contemporary scholarship on authoritarian and hybrid regime dynamics focuses less on legitimation than on stability and control, usually understood in terms of some mix of patronage, coercion, elite consensus, and public opinion management.[1] Lost in such approaches is the role of ideational power, or the non-material bases of regime legitimacy that remain consequential even when the flow of patronage slows to a trickle.[2] To some extent, these concerns are addressed by scholars working on political culture, political psychology, symbolic politics, and political discourse.[3]

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1. Henry E. Hale, Patronal Politics: Eurasian Regime Dynamics in Comparative Perspective (New York, 2014); Vladimir Gel′man, Authoritarian Russia: Analyzing Post-Soviet Regime Changes (Pittsburgh, 2015).

2. For recent exceptions that examine legitimation in autocracies, see: Johannes Gerschewski, "Legitimacy in Autocracies: Oxymoron or Essential Feature?" Perspectives on Politics 16, no. 3 (September 2018): 652–65; Alexander Dukalskis and Johannes Gerschewski, "What Autocracies Say (and What Citizens Hear): Proposing Four Mechanisms of Autocratic Legitimation," Contemporary Politics 23, no. 3 (September 2017): 251–68; Nelli Babayan, "Bearing Truthiness: Russia's Cyclical Legitimation of Its Actions," Europe-Asia Studies 69, no. 7 (August 2017): 1090–1105; Diana T. Kudaibergenova, "Compartmentalized Ideology and Nation-Building in Non-Democratic States," Communist and Post-Communist Studies 52, no. 3 (September 2019): 247–57; Kelly M. McMann, "Developing State Legitimacy: The Credibility of Messengers and the Utility, Fit, and Success of Ideas," Comparative Politics 48, no. 4 (July 2016): 538–56; Derek S. Hutcheson and Bo Petersson, "Shortcut to Legitimacy: Popularity in Putin's Russia," Europe-Asia Studies 68, no. 7 (September 2016): 1107–26.

3. Alexander Lukin, "Russia's New Authoritarianism and the Post-Soviet Political Ideal," Post-Soviet Affairs 25, no. 1 (January-March 2009): 66–92; Richard Rose, William Mishler, and Neil Munro, Popular Support for an Undemocratic Regime: The Changing Views of Russians (Cambridge, Eng., 2011); Graeme Gill, Building an Authoritarian Polity: Russia in Post-Soviet Times (Cambridge, Eng., 2015); Stephen Whitefield, ed., Political Culture and Post-Communism (Basingstoke, 2005); Samuel Greene and Graeme Robertson, Putin v. the People: The Perilous Politics of a Divided Russia (New Haven, 2019); Regina Smyth, Anton Sobolev, and Irina Soboleva, "A Well-Organized Play: Symbolic Politics and the Effect of the Pro-Putin Rallies," Problems of Post-Communism 60, no. 2 (March-April 2013): 24–39; Benjamin Forest and Juliet Johnson, "Monumental Politics: Regime Type and Public Memory in Post-Communist States," Post-Soviet Affairs 27, no. 3 (July-September 2011): 269–88; Graeme Gill, Symbolism and Regime Change in Russia (Cambridge, Eng., 2013); Edward Schatz, "The Soft Authoritarian Tool Kit: Agenda-Setting Power in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan," Comparative Politics 41, no. 2 (January 2009); Michael Urban, Cultures of Power in Post-Communist Russia: An Analysis of Elite Political Discourse (New York, 2010).

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This study expands upon these approaches in taking up a theoretical framework that explains regime legitimation in terms of the nationalist practices used by post-Soviet authoritarian regimes to regulate relations among elites and opposition. The advantage of this approach is that it recognizes that non-instrumental action is consequential and requires explanation. Nationalism is a convenient source of legitimation among authoritarian states in Eurasia, and the authorization or endorsement of nationalist practice by incumbent rulers generates distinctive political dynamics. In today's Russia, these dynamics may either be a calculated, patronage-based form of elite politics that sustains elite commitment to regime maintenance under the cover of patriotism (*patriotism without patriots*), or an idealized, normative form of patriotism that sustains and mobilizes regime subordinates in the name of preserving order but also emboldens opposition in exposing the gap between the formally democratic political order and authoritarian realities (*patriotism without patronage*).

Patriotism is treated here as a power-conserving form of nationalism. In his landmark study, Michael Billig notes that nationalism and patriotism are fundamentally similar phenomena, the difference being that nationalism is generally seen as dangerous and extreme while patriotism is perceived as beneficial, necessary, and quintessentially represents one's own nation.[4] Similarly, *natsionalizm* in today's Russia has become synonymous with extremism, while nationalist state policies—such as the annexation of Crimea in 2014—are justified and celebrated in terms of *patriotizm*. Hence, most Russians would consider calling the Kremlin nationalist to be nonsensical. By contrast, patriotism is unambiguously celebrated in the media and public politics while Russian citizens have complex and often contradictory understandings of patriotism in their daily lives.[5] This makes patriotism a useful resource for generating loyalty and seeking advancement within the regime, though the ways that regime subordinates connect patriotism with political action can be unpredictable or even dangerous for maintaining power. Likewise, patriotism may be invoked to challenge the regime's claim to legitimacy by opposition actors, capitalizing on multivocal, quotidian understandings of patriotism and the perceived hollowness of official patriotic claims.

A case study of the Perm′-36 museum demonstrates these political dynamics, from the emergence of the museum as an opposition platform to its take-over by the regional government. Of course, there are multiple, overlapping social and political contexts that potentially confer meaning upon the possession of, or access to, patronage resources. While it can be difficult to isolate the influence of those contexts, Perm′'s status as a relatively prosperous, loyal, and ethnically Russian region makes it reasonable to rule out the kinds of sub-national cleavages that were characteristic of regional political conflicts in Russia prior to the mid-2000s. Indeed, rather than promoting the region's uniqueness, Perm′'s governor during the Perm′-36

4. Michael Billig, Banal Nationalism (London, 1995).

5. J. Paul Goode, "Love for the Motherland (or Why Cheese Is More Patriotic than Crimea)," Russian Politics 1, no. 4 (2016): 418–49.

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affair made no secret of his ambition to make Permʹ a region like any other in Russia. Consequently, the case provides useful insight into the ways that national regime context shapes the meaning and incentives for political action among regime subordinates. Crucially, the museum's experience demonstrates that ideational power and patronage are not inseparable, and that elites find it difficult to dismiss legitimating ideas once engaged, regardless of their initial motivation. As a result, legitimating ideas can influence politics in unexpected ways and empower inconvenient allies. The next section presents the theoretical framework for examining authoritarian legitimation in terms of nationalist practices. The following section elaborates two scenarios for modeling legitimation in today's Russia in relation to official patriotism and traces their alternation in the struggle for the fate of Permʹ-36.

Nationalism and Autocratic Legitimation

In non-democratic regimes, the kinds of ideas that matter most to elites are those that help them to maintain their rule and that sustain the system of political order within which they exercise power.[6] Maintaining power is largely an elite game that only involves the masses at occasional intervals. At those moments, autocrats seek to mobilize their supporters while de-legitimating challengers by rendering alternatives to their continued rule to be unthinkable. Hence, challengers face selective attacks on their credibility that remove them as plausible alternatives to the regime. Outside of those infrequent moments in which regime incumbents seek to rally support, sustaining political order involves the ongoing legitimation of the regime. At the same time, autocrats maintain the existence of an opposition but ensure that it is not disruptive by keeping it de-mobilized. In this fashion, one might separate the ways that ideas matter in authoritarian politics in terms of their relationship to the goals of preserving the political order and maintaining power and their differential implications for the regime's supporters as well as its challengers: maintaining order involves legitimation among supporters and de-mobilization of challengers, while maintaining power involves selective mobilization of supporters and de-legitimation of challengers (see Table 1).

Nationalism has proven to be a persistent and useful frame for legitimation and mobilization in post-Soviet authoritarian regimes. In the first place, the historically recent independence of post-Soviet states was established in the midst of anti-Soviet mobilization and framed in terms of national sovereignty.[7] Second, post-Soviet societies continue to define and understand identity in mainly ethnic terms, and in each state this quotidian reality stands at variance with the civic definitions of the nation claimed in post-Soviet constitutions. Third, this gap between informal and formal institutional realities extends

6. Steven R. Levitsky and Lucan A. Way, "Beyond Patronage: Violent Struggle, Ruling Party Cohesion, and Authoritarian Durability," Perspectives on Politics 10, no. 4 (December 2012): 869–89.

7. Mark R. Beissinger, Nationalist Mobilization and the Collapse of the Soviet State (Cambridge, Eng., 2002). This was less the case in Belarus and Central Asian states, where independence was claimed later than other Soviet republics and nationalist movements failed to take power following independence.

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Table 1. Political Uses of Ideas for Regime Incumbents

	Preserving Order	**Maintaining Power**
Regime Supporters	Legitimation	Mobilization
Regime Challengers	De-mobilization	De-legitimation

broadly to the political realm as a defining feature of Russia and other post-Soviet electoral authoritarian regimes.[8] In such regimes, ruling elites are sustained by mutual complicity in subverting the formal institutional order, while opposition challengers highlight this subversion and seek to restore the primacy of formal institutions. As a result, authoritarian legitimation arises less from perceptions of institutional procedures than from perceptions of regime practices—in other words, the rationale for political action matters more than its legality or institutional propriety, given the widespread awareness of the gap between pervasive informal practices and the formal institutional order and social expectations that the latter can always be tailored to fit the former.[9]

Moreover, these shared expectations mean that public political struggles tend to be less about formal competition than about the significance of competing as a function of access and loyalty.[10] In this sense, incumbents may regulate political competition by *authorizing* nationalist practices among subordinates and in society, or by *endorsing* (or co-opting) nationalist practices promoted by subordinates or opposition actors. Authorization of nationalist practices often comes in vague form and encourages competition among regime subordinates in the form of *innovation* or *outbidding* as they attempt to divine the autocrat's true interest from various cues and signs. Similarly, endorsement of a subordinate's nationalist practice encourages their *emulation* (or *concealment* of non-conformist practices) by other subordinates (see Table 2).

For opposition actors, incumbents' nationalist practices generate an inverse set of competitive and mimetic stances. The authorization of nationalist competition among subordinates provides the opposition with opportunities to *expose* the gap between formal and informal political orders, enabling anticipation and *mockery* of regime tactics through their emulation. By contrast, the endorsement of subordinate nationalist practices creates opportunities for exploiting populations denied rights or recognition when

8. Alena V. Ledeneva, Can Russia Modernise?: Sistema, Power Networks and Informal Governance (Cambridge, Eng., 2013); Stephen Levitsky and Lucan Way, Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes After the Cold War (Cambridge, Eng., 2010); Richard Sakwa, "The Dual State in Russia," Post-Soviet Affairs 26, no. 3 (2010): 185–206.

9. This bears a similarity to T.H. Rigby's characterization of legitimate authority in the Soviet Union as "goal-rational" rather than a Weberian "legal-rational" authority. T. H. Rigby, "A Conceptual Approach to Authority, Power and Policy in the Soviet Union," in Authority, Power and Policy in the USSR: Essays Dedicated to Leonard Schapiro (London, 1980), 9–31.

10. This paragraph and the next adapt the schema of regime, subordinate, and opposition practices introduced in: J. Paul Goode, "Nationalism in Quiet Times: Ideational Power and Post-Soviet Electoral Authoritarianism," Problems of Post-Communism 59, no. 3 (May/June 2012): 6–16.

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Table 2. Regime, Subordinate, and Opposition Nationalist Practices

Regime practices	Subordinate practices	Opposition practices
Authorization	Innovation	Mockery
	Outbidding	Exposure
Endorsement	Emulation	Provocation
	Concealment	Outbidding

subordinates engage in mimicry and concealment. Such opportunities may entail forcing an awkward or damaging regime response through *provocation* or *outbidding*, especially for extremists open to the use of violence for political ends.

In this fashion, the nationalist practices adopted by autocrats generate distinctive competitive or mimetic dynamics among subordinates and opposition. In contemporary Russia, nationalist practices were tacitly endorsed through the 2000s, then shifted to full authorization in the form of state patriotism after 2012. Already in his 1999 "millennium manifesto," Vladimir Putin called for a revival of patriotism along with establishing a strong state and cultivating great power status as a way of restoring social unity through such traditional Russian values.[11] Upon coming to power, however, the Kremlin devoted little attention to patriotism, and few regime subordinates were willing to innovate in patriotism—unsurprising given that the regime appropriated many of the mainstream opposition's nationalist platforms.[12] By contrast, some opposition actors attempted to use patriotic displays to mock and expose the informal political order, as when Boris Nemtsov was arrested for "extremism" for celebrating the anniversary of the defeat of the August Coup with the Russian tricolor flag.[13] Some activists used new patriotic clubs more for interrogating the meaning of patriotism and exposing the gap between daily reality and the formal constitutional order than for cultivating regime loyalty.[14]

While the Kremlin tolerated nationalist provocations as long as they could be regulated or contained, it moved quickly to suppress them after the Manezh Square riot in central Moscow in 2010.[15] Nationalist opposition

11. Vladimir Putin, "Rossiia na rubezhe tysiacheletii [Russia on the Eve of the Millennium]," Nezavisimaia Gazeta, December 30, 1999, at http://www.ng.ru/politics/1999-12-30/4_millenium.html (accessed March 27, 2020).

12. Marlene Laruelle, In the Name of the Nation: Nationalism and Politics in Contemporary Russia (New York, 2009).

13. Gregory Feifer, "Russian Opposition Leader Faces Court Hearings," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, August 24, 2010, at https://www.rferl.org/a/Russian_Opposition_Leader_Faces_Court_Hearings/2136136.html (accessed May 21, 2020).

14. Anne Le Huérou, "Where Does the Motherland Begin? Private and Public Dimensions of Contemporary Russian Patriotism in Schools and Youth Organisations: A View from the Field," Europe-Asia Studies 67, no. 1 (January 2015): 28–48; Marlene Laruelle, "Patriotic Youth Clubs in Russia: Professional Niches, Cultural Capital and Narratives of Social Engagement," Europe-Asia Studies 67, no. 1 (January 2015): 8–27.

15. Helge Blakkisrud, "Blurring the Boundary between Civic and Ethnic: The Kremlin's New Approach to National Identity under Putin's Third Term," in Pål Kolstø

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increasingly fell out with the regime and made common cause with the liberal opposition in advance of the 2011–2012 electoral cycle, even joining in the mass protests for fair elections.[16] In the aftermath, the Kremlin authorized significant resources for patriotic education, ceremonies, sporting events, youth clubs, art, and media. Following the annexation of Crimea in 2014, patriotism became the only game in town, with Putin declaring in 2016 that "we do not and cannot have any other unifying idea but patriotism" and stressing that "we do not intend to come up with another idea, and there is no need to do so."[17] Being a patriot became inseparably linked to regime loyalty in public politics and increasingly associated with Russian ethnicity in everyday life.[18] The effect was to compel regime subordinates to display their patriotic credentials while boxing out the liberal opposition and dividing nationalists.

"Patriotism without Patriots" vs. "Patriotism without Patronage"

While this analytical framework provides a means to understand the uses of nationalist legitimation for the purposes of preserving order and maintaining power, it has a significant advantage over approaches that emphasize formal institutions or patronage in that it provides a means to account for the interaction of material and ideational sources of power: in brief, material resources flow from the nature of their attachment to particular ideas. Where the Kremlin plans and authorizes patriotic practices, resources tend to follow in the form of budget outlays, presidential grants, federal subventions, or rents. Where resources or rents are already in place, endorsement encourages subordinates to defend their status and fend off potential questions about their loyalty or performance.

The ensuing scenario might be referred to as one of *patriotism without patriots*, in which official patriotism serves as a mechanism for

and Helge Blakkisrud, eds., The New Russian Nationalism: Imperialism, Ethnicity and Authoritarianism 2000–2015 (Edinburgh, 2016), 249–74.

16. Pål Kolstø, "Marriage of Convenience? Collaboration between Nationalists and Liberals in the Russian Opposition, 2011–12," The Russian Review 75, no. 4 (October 2016): 645–63; Nicu Popescu, "The Strange Alliance of Democrats and Nationalists," Journal of Democracy 23, no. 3 (July 2012): 46–54; Natal′ia Iudina, Vera Al′perovich, and Aleksandr Verkhovskii, "Mezhdu Manezhnoi i Bolotnoi: Ksenofobiia i radikal′nyi natsionalizm i protivodeistvie im v 2011 godu v Rossii [Between Manezh and Bolotnaya: Xenophobia, Radical Nationalism, and Efforts to Counteract them in 2011]," SOVA Informatsionno-analiticheskii tsentr, February 24, 2012, at http://www.sova-center.ru/racism-xenophobia/publications/2012/02/d23739/ (accessed March 27, 2020).

17. "Putin: Natsional′naia ideia v Rossii—eto patriotizm," RIA Novosti, February 3, 2016, at https://ria.ru/society/20160203/1369184806.html; Vladimir Putin, "Vstrecha s aktivom Kluba liderov [Meeting with Members of the Club of Leaders]," Prezident Rossii, February 3, 2016, at http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/51263 (accessed March 27, 2020).

18. Yuri Teper, "Official Russian Identity Discourse in Light of the Annexation of Crimea: National or Imperial?," Post-Soviet Affairs 32, no. 4 (2016): 378–96; J. Paul Goode, "Everyday Patriotism and Ethnicity in Today's Russia," in Pål Kolstø and Helge Blakkisrud, eds., Russia Before and After Crimea: Nationalism and Identity, 2010–2017 (Edinburgh, 2018), 258–81.

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coordinating and incentivizing elite competition largely through material and status inducements. In other words, this form of patriotic legitimation veers closest to the popular notion of patriotism as the "last refuge of a scoundrel," providing no positive role for the masses aside from supporting the regime and opposing its challengers. *Patriotism without patriots* has a long tradition in Russia, satirized by the intelligentsia during the nineteenth century as *kazennyi patriotizm* (bureaucratic patriotism) in reference to the kind of patriotism invoked by the state's agents when attacking the regime's opponents.[19] It is this variety of cynical, public patriotism that often leads observers to dismiss ideas rather than recognizing them as order-preserving and power-maintaining resources.

One must, however, also account for scenarios in which patriotic practice does not benefit from patronage and may even threaten existing patronage streams or political status, or what one might simply term *patriotism without patronage*. In this scenario, patriotism is an ideational source of legitimacy existing autonomously of the regime and its resources. Moral authority and the resonance of patriotic claims are key to perceptions of one's right to invoke this form of patriotism, as well as the popular success or resilience of patriotic appeals. At a common sense level, moral authority stands in opposition to material exchange or commodification of patriotism—even where supported by significant state or private investment. The *georgievskaia lentochka* (St. George ribbon) provides a vivid illustration: though introduced by state media and backed by a corporate sponsorship campaign, its status and utility as a patriotic symbol became bound to the notion that it is "nonexchangeable." Campaign organizers even threatened moral condemnation of companies attempting to attach the ribbon to goods and services.[20]

This mode of legitimation further prompts the regime's endorsement of patriotic practices arising outside of its control, including attempts to co-opt opposition actors. When the regime rewards patriotic practice with its endorsement, however, elites fall over themselves to emulate or even to claim credit for its success. In time, endorsed practice becomes absorbed into regime politics and turns into routinized, authorized practice. A prime example is found in the *bessmertnyi polk* (Immortal Regiment), which began as a grassroots movement that contended with the government's official celebration of Victory Day (May 9). As it spread, however, it quickly received government endorsement and then was effectively co-opted with the top-down organization of Immortal Regiments and their official integration with May 9 parades.[21] Framed in this manner, it becomes possible to disentangle

19. M. P. Odesskii and D. M. Fel′dman. "Ideologema 'Patriot' v Russkoi, Sovetskoi i Postsovetskoi Kul′ture. Lozung i Rugatel′stvo (The Concept of 'Patriot' in Russian, Soviet and Post-Soviet Culture: Slogan and Curse Word)," Obshchestvennye Nauki i Sovremennost′, no. 1 (2008): 109–23.

20. Serguei Alex Oushakine, "Remembering in Public: On the Affective Management of History," Ab Imperio, no. 1 (2013): 269–302.

21. Peter Hobson, "How Russian Authorities Hijacked a WWII Remembrance Movement," The Moscow Times, May 6, 2016, at https://themoscowtimes.com:443/articles/how-russian-authorities-hijacked-a-wwii-remembrance-movement-52776 (accessed March 27, 2020).

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the relationship between the power of ideas from the power of patronage. Moreover, analytically distinguishing between *patriotism without patriots* and *patriotism without patronage* suggests a range of possibilities that would be difficult for patronage-based approaches to explain, including situations in which regime incumbents or subordinates act contrary to their material interests, or when ideas become impossible to abandon even after they cease to be useful for maintaining power.

In the following section, a case study of the museum for victims of political repression known as Perm′-36 provides insight into these dynamics of ideational power and legitimation under authoritarianism.[22] Founded in 1994, the museum was built on the site of one of the last Gulags designated for the incarceration of political prisoners. After twenty years of relatively peaceful co-existence with regional and federal authorities, the museum came under a series of attacks from the regional government, fringe communist groups, and even national media, allegedly for unpatriotic distortions of history and promotion of opposition agendas. In short order, the museum was taken over by the regional government and transformed into a museum celebrating the Gulag system and its guards rather than memorializing victims of political repression.

At first glance, patronage appears to be an obvious motivation for the regional government. Specifically, the attacks started in earnest following the promise of approximately 600 million rubles in federal funding, yet they continued even after the prospect of federal patronage disappeared. Moreover, the attacks did not clearly benefit any group in the region as national and even international attention only served to push Perm′ down ratings of regional stability while estranging its governor and cultural minister from the region's political and cultural elite, eventually even falling afoul of the Kremlin.

The analysis of the regional government's attack on Perm′-36 is presented in three phases corresponding with the scenarios discussed, above: the museum's origins, its emergence as an opposition platform, and initial attacks by regime subordinates (patriotism without patronage); the regional government's attempt to take-over the museum and the intensification of attacks following Crimea (patriotism without patriots); and the slow war of attrition that followed the completion of the government's take-over (patriotism without patronage). The case study thus illustrates how ideas can empower opposition in ways that compel regime responses, but also bind regime subordinates to policies long after they cease to yield any material benefits.

22. Local press accounts were accessed via the Integrum full-text database. While seeking a balanced range of sources, the most comprehensive coverage was provided by the business daily Novyi Kompan′on. The timeline of events was triangulated with other federal and regional news sources, though duplicate stories are not cited here. Other press sources used in compiling this timeline include: Argumenty i Fakty—Prikam′e, Chusovskoi Rabochii, Ekho Moskvy v Permi, Kommersant—Perm′, Komsomol′skaia Pravda—Perm′, Permskii obozrevatel′, Rossiiskaia Gazeta—Iuzhnyi ural, and Zvezda. Interviews were conducted by the author in Perm′ in 2015.

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"Patriotism without Patronage" (I): Origins, Rise, and Initial Attacks on Perm′-36

During the Soviet era, in 1946, Perm′-36 was established as a prison colony near the village Kuchino, in the Chusovksii raion of what would become Perm′ krai. From 1953, the camp was used primarily for holding NKVD officers who had been blamed for Stalin's repressions. In 1972, the camp's designation was changed by Iurii Andropov to hold dissidents who were brought to Perm′-36 from different regions like Mordovia. From 1972 until its closing in 1988, approximately 40% of prisoners in Perm′-36 were political prisoners sentenced for anti-Soviet agitation.[23] According to historian and museum co-founder Viktor Shmyrov, members of nationalist movements—Russian, Ukrainian, Lithuanian—represented one of the largest categories of prisoners (about 18%), though they tended to be non-violent dissidents since those who actually took up arms against the Soviet state were usually executed.[24] In 1992, a series of conferences involving historians and former prisoners were held by the non-governmental organization Memorial. From there, the idea of building a museum for victims of political repression was hatched by Shmyrov and Sergei Kovalev, a human rights activist and former prisoner of Perm′-36.

The museum opened in 1994 with the help of private donations that later were supplemented from the regional budget. Its remote location, over 100 kilometers from the regional capital along roads that had potholes the size of small cars, made Perm′-36 difficult and time consuming to reach.[25] The directors struggled to piece together funding for both exhibits and for renovating the camp's original buildings, which had fallen into disrepair since the camp's closing, as most charitable funds prohibited the use of grants for remodeling buildings. Shmyrov related that former Soviet dissidents initially distrusted the museum, concerned that it might be seeking to profit from the memory of their repression. Consequently, the museum initially was supported by former Ukrainian dissidents.[26] It also relied heavily on external grants and private donations from a variety of sources, including even $28,000 from the US State Department—a source that would look suspicious for the museum's opponents in 2014, but did not draw attention at the time.[27] The museum was rarely mentioned in the local press except to note that it had become one of the region's top attractions, especially for international tourists.[28]

The museum's public profile started to rise in 2005, when it held a civic forum called *Pilorama* (named after the camp's wood cutting station). The forum was attended by former prisoners and aimed to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the museum's founding with "civic songs," though it was

23. Tat′iana Kursina, former co-director of Perm′-36, interview, Perm′, December 3, 2015.

24. Ekho Moskvy v Permi, Perm′, March 9, 2015, at https://www.echoperm.ru/interview/299/136851/ (accessed May 21, 2020).

25. Author's field observation, Perm′, November 7, 2001.

26. Quoted in: Zuzanna Bogumił, Gulag Memories: The Rediscovery and Commemoration of Russia's Repressive Past (New York, 2018), 155.

27. "Amerikantsy restavriruiut russkuiu tiur′mu," Novyi Kompan′on, Perm′, October 11, 2005.

28. "Zarabatyvat′ na istorii prikam′ia," Novyi Kompan′on, Perm′, September 28, 2004; "Gorod-urod," Novyi Kompan′on, Perm′, October 26, 2004.

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anybody's guess what that meant.[29] Pilorama became an annual festival, quickly growing in size and popularity. In 2008, it featured former prisoners who had protested the crushing of the Prague Spring by Soviet troops in 1968 and attracted participants from seven regions, as well as international representatives from Germany, Lithuania, and the United Nations.[30] By 2009, its program was headlined by a concert by pop musician Iurii Shevchuk, with the festival attracting over 10,000 participants, notably including Perm′'s Governor Oleg Chirkunov, Minister of Culture Boris Mil′gram, Human Rights ombudsman Tat′iana Margolina, and chairman of Perm′'s Civic Forum Igor′ Averkiev.[31] Pilorama became one of the region's marquee events such that the 2010 festival, dedicated to the eightieth anniversary of collectivization, included fifteen rock-collectives, twelve singer-songwriters, seven theaters, seventeen films, three performances, six poetry readings, ten exhibitions, ten group discussions, and four special events.[32] Official support for the museum continued to grow, with fifteen million rubles earmarked for museum improvements and renovations from the 2011 regional budget.[33]

As an ideological project, Pilorama as well as the museum's other projects emphasized individuality and accountability over conformism and loyalty to the state. For the museum's co-director, Tat′iana Kursina, Perm′-36 had little to do with either the state or patronage:

> We are a patriotic museum. We do it so that citizens of our country themselves can tell how, during desperate, difficult times, there were examples. . .of such personal dignity, that one cannot be silent about them. And the power of the place is precisely found in the fact that the totalitarian, Stalinist system failed despite its extraordinary power, extraordinary methods for the efficient poisoning of humanity. . .[34]

Perm′-36 thus exemplified a form of *patriotism without patronage*. With the museum's rising notoriety and the success of Pilorama, it quickly became a platform for Russia's political opposition. As early as 2006, the museum hosted a public forum on "Parliamentarism, Democracy, and Law," organized by Nikita Belykh (the local head of the party Union of Right Forces), at which the region was criticized for tumbling down ratings of regional democracy in Russia.[35] By 2011, Pilorama was dedicated to the theme of "twenty years after the USSR: losses and gains," with planned participation of anti-corruption activist and opposition figure Aleksei Naval′nyi, Mikhail Gorbachev, and films about imprisoned oligarch Mikhail Khodorkovskii and the late investigative journalist Anna Politkovskaia.[36]

29. It was decided informally that "the singers should sing what they think they need to sing, and that would make them civic." Ibid., September 20, 2005.
30. "Uik-end pesen i vospominanii," Novyi Kompan′on, Perm′, July 22, 2008.
31. "Chrezmerno populiarnaia 'Pilorama,'" Novyi Kompan′on, Perm′, July 28, 2009.
32. "Bez Shevchuka," Novyi Kompan′on, Perm′, July 20, 2010.
33. "Plata za prestizh," Novyi Kompan′on, Perm′, September 14, 2010.
34. Kursina, interview, Perm′, December 3, 2015.
35. "Perm′ lishilias′ statusa 'demokraticheskoi mekki,'" Novyi Kompan′on, Perm′, May 23, 2006.
36. "Poteri i obreteniia novoi Rossii," Novyi Kompan′on, Perm′, July 12, 2011. In the end, Naval′nyi and Gorbachev chose not to attend.

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Not everyone was pleased about this transformation of the Perm′-36 museum into a symbol for Russia's political opposition, including residents of the village of Kuchino. Even within the Memorial organization, divisions began to emerge over the museum's professionalization and institutionalization, which some viewed as weakening the principle that the history and lessons of the Gulag should be learned through individuals' direct participation.[37] The first political attacks on Perm′-36 emerged from within the regional administration and targeted the museum's budget. On the administrative front, the museum was charged with violating its terms of operation as an NGO, with the regional Ministry of Justice alleging that its directorship was improperly formed in 2008 and that all subsequent decisions made by the museum were invalid. This technicality jeopardized ten million rubles in funding received from foreign sources in 2010 for Pilorama and other activities. The museum was also charged with failing to pay taxes on donations from foreign donors—namely, the American-based International Coalition of Sites of Conscience and the National Endowment for Democracy—in the amount of $135,000. The charges effectively suspended the museum's operations until they could be resolved.[38]

A second attempt on the museum's budget was made in 2012 when regional parliament deputy Aleksandr Telepnev accused Perm′-36 of distorting historical facts and receiving significant money from abroad. He called for cutting regional funding for the museum from twenty-four million rubles to nine million, though his call was not supported by other deputies or by the regional administration. In response, Shmyrov confirmed that only half of the museum's budget came from the region (most of it for upkeep of facilities), while the rest was provided by external donors that included George Soros as well as Putin.[39]

The same year, the attacks on the museum turned ideological with the publication of a controversial interview with Vladimir Kurguzov, a veteran prison guard from Perm′-36 who accused the museum of distorting the camp's history. Kurguzov claimed that *all* prisoners had been Forest Brothers, Banderites, and "our Russian traitors" (in reference to the nationalist dissidents imprisoned for anti-Soviet activities) who sold secrets to other countries; that anti-Soviet agitators had been supported by foreign powers while they were in the camp; that prisoner treatment was "ideal"; and that the museum's directors were financed by the west with the aim of brain-washing Russia's youth.[40]

The museum was next targeted by the neo-communist group *Sut′ vremeni* (Essence of Time, or EoT).[41] Initially, it focused on opposing the so-called "cultural revolution" in Perm′ led by artist Marat Gel′man, the changing of

37. Bogumił, Gulag Memories, 155–60.

38. "Miniust potoptal zonu," Kommersant-Perm′, Perm′, August 12, 2011.

39. "Muzei finansovykh repressii," Kommersant-Perm′, Perm′, November 22, 2012.

40. "Khvatit vrat′," *Argumenty i Fakty—Perm′*, Perm′, July 25, 2012.

41. The group describes itself as motivated by "the development of the communist ideal in the 21st century and the search for a synthesis of the red project with national traditions," positions itself as a "left-patriotic force," and views its historical mission as advancing the "USSR 2.0" project.

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Soviet-era street names, and opposing "orangeism" (in reference to the mass protests of Ukraine's Orange Revolution) in the regions.[42] In short order, it focused its attention and resources on Perm′-36. Initially it formed an "anti-Pilorama" group outside of the festival in 2012, later publishing a series of interviews with veteran camp guards in November-December 2012 under the rubric of "Perm′-36. Truth and lies."[43] The interviews attacked the museum and its defenders, declaring the museum's directors to be tools of the west, disputing claims about the treatment of prisoners, and alleging contacts between dissidents and the CIA.

"Patriotism without Patriots": The Government's Takeover Bid

With the departure of Oleg Chirkunov and the appointment of Viktor Basargin as Perm′'s governor, the regional administration turned from protector to predator. Perm′-36 featured prominently in plans for a federal targeted program for "immortalizing the memory of victims of political repression," spearheaded by chair of the Presidential Council for Development of Civil Society and Human Rights Mikhail Fedotov. The museum would become one of just three federal memorials (the others yet to be constructed in Moscow and Leningrad oblast′). The museum's conversion from NGO to federal memorial would mean 400 million rubles in federal funding and a further 160 million rubles in regional funding—a colossal amount for the museum. Around the same time, Kursina also was visited by a representative of the American firm Ralph Baum, which was known internationally for the Holocaust Museum in Washington DC, the Freedom Bell in Philadelphia, Constitution Hill in South Africa, the Museum of Tolerance in Moscow, and most recently the Yeltsin Center in Ekaterinburg. The firm offered to join forces with the museum to turn Perm′-36 into a world-class memorial and international tourist destination.[44]

The newly-appointed Minister of Culture, Igor′ Gladnev, argued in June 2013 that the museum needed to be transformed first into a regional administrative entity before it could be included in the federal program.[45] Shortly afterwards, EoT sent an open letter to Basargin declaring that Pilorama was clearly politicized, alleging that it was intended to destabilize the region, and demanding that it not be allowed to move forward. The regional Ministry of Culture suddenly sequestered half of the funds allocated for Pilorama from the regional budget (2.5 million rubles), forcing organizers to cancel the festival just two weeks before it was to start.[46] According to the museum's co-director Tat′iana Kursina, the move came as a shock as the museum had been assured

42. "Kto my [Who we are]," April 9, 2012, at http://eotperm.ru/?cat=7 (accessed March 30, 2020).

43. "Perm′-36. Pravda i lozh′ [Perm′-36: Truth and lies]," November 21, 2012, at http://eotperm.ru/?p=639 (accessed March 30, 2020).

44. Kursina, interview, Perm′, December 3, 2015.

45. "Pozitsiia rezhissera 'Belykh nochei'—konkurentnaia, i my gotovy provodit′ konkurs idei," Novyi Kompan′on, Perm′, June 20, 2013.

46. "Nezazhivaiushchaia 'Pilorama,'" Kommersant-Perm′, Perm′, July 9, 2013.

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by the Ministry that Pilorama's budget was safe.[47] Nevertheless, the directors managed to make up the shortfall in the event budget with a private donation from businessman Evgenii Fridman, but the regional administration then failed to arrange for security.[48]

The unfolding drama within the region over Perm′-36 stood in stark contrast to its treatment in Moscow, where plans continued apace for Perm′-36's conversion into a federal memorial and tourist center. The museum even earned praise from the federal Finance Ministry for its unique system of state-private partnership in which state subsidies were about equal to private donations.[49] The museum further received 1.9 million rubles in a presidential grant for the following year's festival.[50]

By the end of 2013, the regional Ministry of Culture moved ahead with creating a government entity to manage the museum's property, claiming over Shmyrov's objections that it was necessary for the museum's participation in the federally-targeted program.[51] Elaborating on the need to divide the museum's projects and exhibitions as run by the NGO and the management of its property by the government entity, Basargin bluntly articulated the political rationale for the move: "If resources are located to bring foreigners to take part in meetings, for goodness sake, let them come. But this habit of coming here on our money and criticizing us. . ..Well, as soon as we say, "you take responsibility," that's when the problems start."[52] The museum directors negotiated a division of labor between the government entity—now an autonomous government institution (GAU)—and the museum, formally an autonomous non-commercial organization (ANO), with the region guaranteeing that the GAU would not use "Perm′-36" in its name and appointing Kursina to serve as its director to maintain continuity of operations with the museum.[53]

From Crimea to the Kremlin: Patronage Denied

Events once more took a turn for the ideological following the annexation of Crimea on March 18, 2014, and Putin's warning against the work of fifth columnists to undermine the country.[54] EoT stepped up its public attacks on the museum, claiming that it taught schoolchildren that Russia was a criminal

47. "My ponimaem, chto otmena mezhdunarodnaia foruma—eto ogromnyi reputatsionnyi udar po Permskomu kraiu," Novyi Kompan′on, Perm′, July 8, 2013.

48. "Proverka na 'Piloramu,'" Novyi Kompan′on, Perm′, July 15, 2013.

49. "'Perm′-36' stanet Muzeem GULAGa," Novyi Kompan′on, Perm′, October 14, 2013.

50. "'Perm′-36' poluchila federal′nyi grant na provedenie v 2014 godu 'Piloramy,'" Novyi Kompan′on, Perm′, December 5, 2013.

51. "My reshili otstavit′ obidy v storonu i nachat′ s chistogo lista," Novyi Kompan′on, Perm′, December 12, 2013.

52. "Viktor Basargin: U menia srok idet," Novyi Kompan′on, Perm′, January 14, 2014.

53. "My mogli by vstat′ v pozu. No my vyshli v rezhim dialoga," Novyi Kompan′on, Perm′, January 16, 2014; "Tat′iana Kursina vozglavit AU 'Perm′-36,'" Novyi Kompan′on, Perm′, February 11, 2014.

54. Vladimir Putin, "Obrashchenie Prezidenta Rossiiskoi Federatsii" (Address by the President of the Russian Federation), Prezident Rossii, March 18, 2014, at http://kremlin.ru/transcripts/20603 (accessed March 30, 2020).

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state and that Ukrainian wartime nationalist Stepan Bandera was a hero.[55] When pressed by the chair of Perm′'s Civic Chamber, Igor′ Averkiev, to name those he considered to be "national traitors," the movement's activist Pavel Gur′ianov declared any list must include "the directors of the pro-Banderite museum Perm′-36, which teaches Perm′'s children that Bandera was a hero in the struggle against Russian occupation. . ."[56] Within a month, the regional government turned off the museum's electricity and withdrew its funding for Pilorama.[57] Finally, while Shmyrov was hospitalized with a heart ailment, Kursina was fired as director of the GAU at the end of May 2014 and replaced by Deputy Culture Minister Natal′ia Semakova.[58]

The museum's operations ground to a halt since the GAU could not use the museum's exhibits (which belonged to the ANO) while the ANO could not use the museum's territory (which now belonged to the GAU) to conduct its activities.[59] Although the museum was closed, a television crew somehow gained access and filmed former prison guards complaining about the museum's distortions of history as they toured its exhibits.[60] In a pair of NTV documentaries that were broadcast nationally in early June 2014, the museum was alleged to have been built with money from the US and Soros, to have misrepresented nationalists as "prisoners of conscience," and to have deceived students. The programs also featured covert footage of an unidentified tour guide saying that the Soviet-era prison wardens were worse than fascists. Kursina was asked leading questions and smeared by implication.

The allegations in the NTV broadcasts were so shocking that they provoked an investigation of the museum directors by the Center for Counteracting Extremism (known colloquially as "Center E"). Commenting on the investigation, Averkiev expressed doubt on the possibility of any kind of conspiracy: "It's just the way things are now, that any patriotic idiocy can have unintended consequences. Probably everyone understands that it's nothing,

55. Bandera was a controversial leader of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) that fought against the Soviet Union for Ukrainian independence in the 1930s-1940s, including during Nazi Germany's occupation of Ukraine. In the wake of Ukraine's "Revolution of Dignity" in 2013–2014, Russian state media frequently referenced the new regime's celebration of Bandera (hence the term "Banderites") as evidence of its allegedly Russophobic and fascist nature.

56. "Ia k muzeiu 'Perm′-36' otnoshus′ polozhitel′no," Novyi Kompan′on, Perm′, March 25, 2014; "Mne lestno doverie, okazannoe chelovekom, sotrudnichavshim s Maiklom Makfolom," Novyi Kompan′on, Perm′, March 26, 2014.

57. "Kraevye vlasti otkazyvaiutsia ot 'Piloramy' vtoroi god podriad," Kommersant-Perm′, Perm′, April 30, 2014; "Tiur′ma—ikh dom," Novyi Kompan′on, Perm′, May 21, 2014.

58. "Direktorom gosudarstvennogo muzeia 'Perm′-36' naznachena Natal′ia Semakova," Novyi Kompan′on, Perm′, May 23, 2014.

59. "Tat′iana Margolina: Ministr Gladnev nanes bezobraznyi vred gubernatoru," Novyi Kompan′on, Perm′, May 26, 2014.

60. "Sponsory iz SShA otkryli v Permi muzei "natsionalistov-muchenikov" Ukrainy (American Sponsors Open a Museum of Ukraine's "Nationalist Martyrs" in Perm)," NTV.ru, June 3, 2014, at http://www.ntv.ru/novosti/1010037 (accessed March 30, 2020); "'Piataia kolonna' proslavliaet banderovtsev na den′gi SShA" ("Fifth Column" Glorifies Banderites with American Money), NTV.ru, June 7, 2014, at https://www.ntv.ru/novosti/1019296/ (accessed March 30, 2020).

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but that one cannot fail to react to such signals."[61] In commenting on the situation, a member of Perm′'s Civic Chamber and a museum supporter, film director Pavel Pechenkin even sympathized with the regional government: "It's easy to understand the governor's administration: they're worried that some sort of State Department contagion will reach us through Perm′-36. Like in Ukraine. . . .But there is no alternative to the museum's existence in Perm′ krai. The museum must exist."[62] The museum was later cleared of the extremism charge.[63]

As for the originators of the political signal provided by the broadcasts, the programs strongly suggested collusion between EoT and the regional administration. EoT activists were prominently interviewed during the program, among them Gur′ianov (though he was given the pseudonym of "Kuprianov" in the second program). Some of the prison guards in the broadcast previously provided interviews on EoT's website. It is not clear who the tour guide was (given that the museum was closed), or who provided the former prison guards and camera crew with access, though they could only have gained entry with permission of the regional government since it controlled access to the museum's territory. Additionally, a member of the entourage in the scandalous tour footage visibly wore a red jacket with EoT's "USSR 2.0" slogan.[64]

According to Aleksei Simonov, president of the Glasnost Defense Fund and governing chairman of the ANO Perm′-36, the Kremlin was stunned by the broadcasts as well as the earlier appointment of the inexperienced Semakova as director of the GAU. The museum's supporters quickly organized a meeting in the Presidential Administration. The governor's chief of staff, Aleksei Frolov, was directed to produce a new draft agreement to govern relations between the GAU and the ANO, who in turn promised to unlock all subsidies and to restore utilities service for the museum.[65] Later that summer, Fedotov discussed the situation with Putin, recommending that the GAU be dissolved and its budget transferred as subsidy to the ANO. Putin even appeared to agree.[66] But just as

61. "Sotrudniki tsentra 'E' proveriaiut deiatel′nost′ muzeia 'Perm′-36,'" Kommersant-Perm′, Perm′, August 26, 2014.

62. "Libo narushena vertical′ vlasti, libo kto-to lukavit," Novyi Kompan′on, Perm′, August 29, 2014.

63. "V deistviiakh sotrudnikov 'Perm′-36' ne obnaruzhili sostava prestupleniia," Kommersant-Perm′, Perm′, October 3, 2014. It is perhaps worth noting that the museum was actually cleared on a technicality: the tour guide was ruled to have made extremist statements, but the statements pre-dated the adoption of amendments to the Criminal Code under which the museum could be prosecuted. In other words, the NTV broadcast was treated as legitimate by the authorities and the museum was still attributed with having promoted extremism.

64. Gur′ianov later denied any involvement by EoT, claiming that the broadcasts were produced by those "who had seen actual preparations for a fascist maidan in Russia, and decided to warn society rather than wait for a coup along the lines of a 'Kyiv scenario.'" "Obshchestvennaia kollegiia priznala siuzhety NTV o 'Perm′-36' protivorechashchimi zhurnalistskoi etike," Novyi Kompan′on, Perm′, January 23, 2015.

65. "Libo primem soglashenie, libo budem bodat′sia," Novyi Kompan′on, Perm′, June 18, 2014.

66. "Rabochaia vstrecha s Predsedatelem Soveta po pravam cheloveka Mikhailom Fedotovym (Working meeting with Human Rights Council Chairman Mikhail Fedotov),"

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Moscow's intervention seemed to work to the museum's advantage, the federal Ministry of Culture suddenly announced it would no longer be responsible for the federal targeted program.[67] With responsibility for the program passing to the Ministry for Regional Development—which had been run by Basargin prior to his appointment as Perm′'s Governor and, unsurprisingly, had no real interest in memorials—the program was instead transformed into a state policy concept. This situation was an enigma for Perm′'s administration: no longer was there any guarantee of ample federal funding for the museum, nor was there a clear signal for how to proceed.[68] In effect, this development on the federal level marked the end of any prospect of patronage from the region's takeover of Perm′-36, though it did not halt the campaign.[69]

"Patriotism without Patronage" (II): War of Attrition

In the ensuing months, the regional administration outwardly complied with the Kremlin while repeatedly delaying negotiations over the promised draft agreement or attempting to divert them through the GAU. At the same time, the region's Ministries of Culture and Justice waged a war of attrition on the museum, attacking its finances, infrastructure, and the very content of its exhibits. Numerous cases were brought against the museum in Arbitrazh (commercial) Court for non-payment of wages.[70] Semakova also petitioned the court to cancel the 2011 agreement giving the ANO unfettered use of museum property, alleging that the ANO was not maintaining the property and had not installed fire alarms.[71] In mid-July 2014, Kursina arrived at the museum to find workers destroying the camp's intake gates—an almost irreplaceable piece of the original structure, the restoration of which would cost 1.2 million rubles.[72] Not trusting the regional administration to leave the museum's exhibits intact, Shmyrov and Kursina evacuated the exhibits to Moscow for safe keeping.[73]

The museum's operations further became subject to regular administrative obstruction. The museum's scientific director, Leonid Obukhov, claimed Semakova would not allow him to conduct an excursion for American and

Prezident Rossii, July 29, 2014, at http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/46372 (accessed March 30, 2020).

67. "ANO im nado?" Novyi Kompan′on, Perm′, June 26, 2014.

68. "Tri raunda v pustotu?" Novyi Kompan′on, Perm′, March 11, 2015.

69. The museum was not even mentioned in the government concept for memorializing victims of political repression adopted in 2015 (http://www.president-sovet.ru/documents/read/393/#doc-1), nor was it listed on the corresponding government Foundation site (http://memoryfund.ru/) or the related site of the Association of Museums of Memory (memorymuseums.ru).

70. "Eto tol′ko pervaia iz serii vstrech," Novyi Kompan′on, Perm′, July 1, 2014.

71. "Gosuchrezhdenie otsuzhivaet u ANO 'Perm′-36' kraevoe imushchestvo," Kommersant-Perm′, Perm′, July 24, 2014; "Reshenie ne smertel′noe," Novyi Kompan′on, Perm′, November 26, 2014.

72. "V administratsii prezidenta eto vyzvalo, miagko govoria, nedoumenie," Novyi Kompan′on, Perm′, July 16, 2014.

73. "Viktor Shmyrov: V Kuchino ostanut′sia golye steny. Muzei budet umirat′," Novyi Kompan′on, Perm′, July 22, 2014.

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English colleagues and instead fired him.[74] The Police and Federal Migration Service (FMS) conducted visa inspections of German and Polish visitors to the museum. According to Obukhov, the local police confirmed the inspections were requested by Semakova.[75] The regional administration complained that the ANO heaped slander and unfounded accusations on Semakova and the GAU, alleging that the museum was attempting to extort tens of millions of rubles from the regional government. It further announced that it had uncovered serious mismanagement by the museum, implying that further court cases were forthcoming.[76]

Finally, the museum yielded to the attacks and announced that it would cease operations.[77] Shortly afterwards, the governor's representative, Sergei Malenko, discussed the region's future plans for the museum, revealing that it would include veterans of the prison service in developing new exhibits about the history of the Gulag.[78] When later asked about the museum's new direction following the takeover, Perm′'s Culture Minister Igor′ Gladnev commented that working with prison veterans was essential for ensuring historical authenticity: "We live in a great country, and many things happened in its history, which is why we shouldn't hide the truth. If Perm′-36 was where sentences were served by traitors and bandits who killed Soviet soldiers, officers, party members, families, and even children, then it must be said. And not pretend that Banderites in the 1940s were noble champions of freedom and independence."[79] From the government's perspective, there was no contradiction between acknowledging the existence of political prisoners while collapsing the distinction between dissidents and criminals. In Averkiev's characterization, however, this amounted to turning the museum for victims of political repression into "a museum about enemies of the people," with just a tiny "dissidents' corner" for its progressive international audience.[80]

The museum's defenders arranged another series of meetings in Moscow in the hope of saving the museum. Fedotov's proposal of dissolving the GAU, previously approved by Putin, was rejected by the regional administration. Instead, it agreed to form a new board that would guide the museum's work under the leadership of former Human Rights Commissioner Vladimir Lukin. It was also to include three members each from the ANO and the GAU. The

74. "Prichina uvol′neniia—'nesoglasie s politikoi ministra Gladneva,'" Novyi Kompan′on, Perm′, July 1, 2014.

75. "Natal′ia Semakova initsiirovala proverku inostrannykh ekskursantov v Kuchino," Novyi Kompan′on, Perm′, July 22, 2014.

76. "Ot imeni Tat′iany Kursinoi l′etsia potok klevety s obvineniiami v unichtozhenii imushchestva," Novyi Kompan′on, Perm′, July 23, 2014.

77. "Muzeia v tom vide, kak on byl zaduman, bol′she ne sushchestvuet," Novyi Kompan′on, Perm′, July 25, 2014.

78. "Muzei budet sozdan nezavisimo ot zhelaniia ili nezhelaniia otdel′nykh lits," Novyi Kompan′on, Perm′, July 28, 2014; "Chinovniki pridumyvaiut svoiu versiiu permskogo muzeia politrepressii," Kommersant-Perm′, Perm′, July 29, 2014.

79. "Igor′ Gladnev: Istoriia dolzhna ob"ediniat′, a ne razdeliat′ narod," Novyi Kompan′on, Perm′, January 22, 2015.

80. "Muzei i festival′ dolzhny moshchno i s dostoinstvom umeret′," Novyi Kompan′on, Perm′, July 29, 2014.

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board would then oversee the drafting of a new agreement between the museum and the regional administration.[81] Putin's intervention was praised by Sergei Karaganov in the Presidential Council for the Development of Civil Society and Human Rights for narrowly averting tragedy:

> More than two years ago at one of our meetings, you [Putin] ordered the preparation of a federal targeted program on this matter. And afterwards what transpired was worthy of Saltykov- Shchedrin. . ..The lack of a clear government position meant negative consequences. One of the most egregious, of course, was the near-death of one of the most important memorials to victims of political repression—the museum complex Perm′-36. We thank the representatives of Your administration, who intervened on Your behalf and saved the museum after several tries.[82]

Yet the celebration was premature. Despite the center's intervention, the museum continued to suffer delays from the regional administration and assaults through the courts.

First, the museum lost the suit brought by Semakova in July, meaning that the ANO no longer had the legal right to use its land and buildings.[83] Later, the regional appeals court rejected Kursina's petition and upheld her sacking as director of the GAU.[84] In March 2015, the Ministry of Justice began an inspection of the ANO to determine whether it should be considered a "foreign agent."[85] The ANO's archives were then sealed by local police in connection with the investigation, rendering them inaccessible at the same time that the Ministry of Justice demanded the ANO produce documents that could only be retrieved from its archives.[86] Failing to present those documents, the Ministry of Justice moved forward with categorizing the ANO as a "foreign agent,"[87] charging it with failing to register itself as such, and further with failing to produce the required documents.[88] The regional Ministry of Culture followed up by suing the museum for failing to return state property (to which it had no access) in the amount of 1.5 million rubles.[89] As it happened, the Ministry of

81. "Neobkhodimo pereiti ot protivostoianiia k sotrudnichestvu," Novyi Kompan′on, Perm′, September 8, 2014; "Ne lakirovat′ tot period i ne politizirovat′ temu repressii," Novyi Kompan′on, Perm′, October 2, 2014; "Muzei 'Perm′-36' teper′ ofitsial′no kuriruet byvshii rossiiskii ombudsmen," Kommersant-Perm′, Perm′, October 4, 2014.

82. "Biuokratii byl dan sovershenno nepravil′nyi signal," Novyi Kompan′on, Perm′, October 15, 2014.

83. "Reshenie ne smertel′noe," Novyi Kompan′on, Perm′, November 26, 2014.

84. "Tat′iane Kursinoi ne udalos′ vosstanovit′sia na rabote," Novyi Kompan′on, Perm′, December 15, 2014.

85. "V 'Perm′-36' ishchut priznaki inostrannogo agenta," Kommersant-Perm′, Perm′, March 17, 2015.

86. "My stali uchastnikami ocherednogo spektaklia absurda," Novyi Kompan′on, Perm′, April 9, 2015.

87. According to Kursina, the basis for claiming the museum undertook political activities was a journal dedicated to Pilorama that was published by the region's human rights ombudsman. Kursina, interview, Perm′, December 3, 2015.

88. "ANO 'Perm′-36' soobshchilo o priznanii svoei organizatsii 'inostrannym agentom,'" Novyi Kompan′on, Perm′, April 21, 2015; "ANO 'Perm′-36' vkliucheno v reestr 'inostrannykh agentov,'" Novyi Kompan′on, Perm′, April 30, 2015.

89. "'Perm′-36' budut sudit′ za neosushchestvlenie deistviia, kotoroe 'dolzhno bylo byt′ osushchestvleno,'" Novyi Kompan′on, Perm′, July 17, 2015.

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Culture lost the suit, appealed, and lost again. The ANO successfully defended the charge that it failed to register as a foreign agent and the administrative fine was withdrawn.[90]

Meanwhile, the regional administration continued to evade signing a draft agreement with the museum. When Lukin decided the governor's office was sabotaging the process, he called for a new meeting in the Kremlin. Just after being summoned to Moscow, however, the governor's chief of staff unexpectedly resigned, forcing postponement of the meeting.[91] Lukin then attempted to organize another meeting of the board in Perm′, this time involving Volga Presidential Representative Mikhail Babich.[92] On the eve of the meeting, the regional administration submitted a draft agreement that lacked guarantees for the preservation and ownership of the museum's archives, resulting in another postponement.[93] The practical effect of the various court cases as well as administrative obstruction was to prevent the ANO from formally dissolving, leaving it exposed to ongoing attacks that ultimately drained the last of its meager resources.

Conclusion: Explaining the Role of Ideas in the Takeover of Perm′-36

Most local supporters of the Perm′-36 museum viewed the affair as a cynical and opportunistic move by the regional administration to seize control of a new patronage stream. In these accounts, the regional administration ran interference while the regional Ministries of Culture and Justice attacked the museum and its directors. While this explains the timing of the regional takeover of the museum, closer scrutiny shows that an informal alliance between the regional administration and self-styled patriots (mainly linked to EoT) sustained the attacks on the museum even after the patronage stream disappeared. The museum's opponents focused on its perceived distortions of history and their damaging effect on patriotic education, later emboldened and seemingly authorized by Russia's conflict with Ukraine. The foundation of opposition to the museum involved the demand that former prison guards be rehabilitated and included in the museum's operations, and that all prisoners be treated as criminals regardless of whether they were dissidents, nationalists, thieves, Nazi collaborators, or murderers.[94]

90. "'Perm′-36' ne budet platit′ 'Memorial′nomu kompleksu politicheskikh repressii,'" Novyi Kompan′on, Perm′, August 24, 2015; "'Memorial′nyi kompleks politicheskikh repressii' obzhaloval reshenie kraevogo arbitrazha po 'Perm′-36,'" Novyi Kompan′on, Perm′, October 8, 2015; "Mirovoi sud′ia prekratil administrativnoe delo v otnoshenii ANO 'Perm′-36,'" Novyi Kompan′on, Perm′, October 16, 2015; "ANO 'Perm′-36' ne budet platit′ 1,5 mln rublei," Novyi Kompan′on, Perm′, November 19, 2015.

91. "Sud′bu muzeia 'Perm′-36' budet reshat′ Kirill Markevich," Novyi Kompan′on, Perm′, January 25, 2015.

92. "Kraevoi Minkul′t gotov idti na mirovuiu s ANO 'Perm′-36,'" Novyi Kompan′on, Perm′, March 12, 2015.

93. "Dokument ne podgotovlen," Novyi Kompan′on, Perm′, March 20, 2015.

94. Leonid Obukhov, former scientific director for Perm′-36, interview, Perm′, November 25, 2015. More generally, this shift in focus is now reflected in the museum's

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For the museum's new scientific consultant, Mikhail Suslov, a crucial problem with the previous museum was not just the "tactless" politics of Pilorama, which ran it afoul of the new regional government, but also its very approach to history: ". . .tell me, how can you inculcate patriotism on negative examples? They killed, punished, imprisoned. . .well, and repressed, deported, and so on. How can you raise a patriot on that basis?"[95] In explaining the stakes involved in this approach to history and memorials, Suslov linked state patriotism to counteracting disintegrative tendencies (referring to Ukraine as a cautionary tale) and resisting western aggression and the imposition of western values.[96] He also took direct aim at Perm′-36: "If this memorial is financed [by the government], who and what will use it for the patriotic education of our youth? And will it achieve the opposite, that is, anti-patriotism? Does today's Russia need this, at a time when secret and open enemies of Russia are starting a new campaign against us?"[97] Perm's Minister of Culture Gladnev similarly raised the connection between the museum's "historical authenticity" and Russia's very survival, focusing particularly on erasing the distinction between dissidents and ordinary criminals:

> In the course of historical events, there were those who were students of fascism, those who committed crimes, and those who defended their country, their motherland, and thought of the future of the nation, because the matter was simple: will Russia survive, will the Russian language survive? Or would it have another fate—the fate of slaves, of a nation subordinated. And there is archival proof of this. There are orders and corresponding transcripts of conversations. This is why I don't distinguish between those you call dissidents and those who were criminals. They were all criminals.[98]

This existential tie claimed between the state management of Perm′-36 and Russia's very survival provides a vivid illustration of the extent to which regime subordinates and non-regime actors may be bound by ideas that are more robust and mobilizing than patronage.

The transformation of Perm′-36 thus begins and ends with competing understandings of patriotism, demonstrating the ways that ideational power constructs meaning and shapes political action in autocracies. Where regimes authorize or endorse nationalist practices, they encourage competitive and mimetic dynamics among subordinates seeking advancement and opposition seeking support. Where they authorize nationalist practices as a field for informal competition, subordinates attempt to innovate or outbid one

current exhibits, which showcase prison labor production and achievements and draw no distinctions between categories of prisoners.

95. Mikhail Suslov, current scientific consultant to Perm′-36, interview, Perm′, December 9, 2015.

96. M.G. Suslov, "Patriotizm i problemy patrioticheskogo vospitaniia v sovremennykh usloviiakh (Patriotism and the Problem of Patriotic Upbringing in Contemporary Conditions)," in E.P. Skachkova, ed., Znat′, pomnit′, ne zabyvat′: Sbornik statei i materialov po voprosam patrioticheskogo vospitaniia (Perm′, 2015), 5–28.

97. Suslov, "Patriotizm i problemy," 19–20.

98. "Igor′ Gladnev: Sluzhit′ i verit′, verit′ i sluzhit′," Novyi Kompan′on, Perm′, October 2, 2015.

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another. Such competition creates opportunities for regime subordinates to co-opt outsiders or to ride on the coattails of innovators. By contrast, regimes encourage conformity when they endorse existing practices, as subordinates aim to emulate those practices while concealing their failures.

Of course, arguing that ideas are powerful in autocracies is not the same as claiming that all actors are principled. It is no secret that elites make opportunistic use of ideas to secure access to patronage when opportunities present themselves. Yet doing so also creates alliances and empowers constituencies for those ideas, making it difficult for elites to disavow or distance themselves from them after they cease to be profitable or useful. In the case of Perm′-36, the nationalist turn in Russian politics in 2014 provided the regional administration with tacit authorization to turn patriotism into a foil for its takeover bid. The regional government's actions emulated the rhetorical and coercive action endorsed by the Kremlin at the federal level in 2014, in turn co-opting EoT's ongoing fight with the museum for its own purposes. For EoT, however, the shift in the national climate and alliance with the regional government meant that it was no longer a fringe actor but authorized to escalate its fight with the museum. Hence, patronage may explain the initial timing and incentive for the regional administration's making common cause with EoT, but this informal alliance persisted well beyond the period of mobilized nationalism and even outlasted the prospect of federal patronage.

In the aftermath of 2014, the regional administration's alliances with nationalists like EoT remained binding and influential. Those seeking to move upwards or out of regional politics deflected blame or denied their roles in the debacle when called into the Kremlin, all the while concealing ongoing efforts to sabotage the museum. In practice, this also meant that their assault on the museum could not be called off without exposing certain ambitious actors' roles in the campaign. Hence, the rent-seeking interests in the regional administration that initially motivated the alliance with EoT were held hostage to their partners' ideological designs. In this manner, the constituencies for the ideas authorized or endorsed by the regime require ongoing accommodation, otherwise they threaten to expose rifts between state and society, region and federal center, and even among ruling elites.

This case study further suggests one of the principle mechanisms by which ideas become binding on regime subordinates and continue to exert an influence independently of material resources: when promoting the regime's ideas is perceived to influence the career prospects of regime actors such that they are induced to form alliances during a mobilizational phase, those same ideas can continue to constrain or even dictate politics during quieter periods of legitimation with potentially unpredictable results. In relation to Perm′-36, key regional actors came to view existential concerns as both meaningful and compelling regardless of their access to federal patronage, even committing themselves to ideas that may actually have hurt their careers.[99]

99. A prime example is Perm′'s governor during the Perm′-36 affair, Viktor Basargin, who eventually resigned from office and was demoted to head the federal transportation oversight service, Rostransnadzor.

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The Perm′-36 affair thus highlights the potential risks and unintended consequences of nationalist legitimation, manifesting as unpredictable alliances and seemingly irrational action. The attacks on the museum were emboldened by the wave of official patriotism that swept Russia in 2014, but the Presidential Administration intervened (unsuccessfully) on several occasions to restrain the regional administration when it went too far. The regional government was warned repeatedly throughout the ordeal that the region was losing significant revenues from tourism and that the governor's reputation was declining as news of the attacks spread. Yet the administration's takeover of Perm′-36 was pursued even after the potential for federal patronage disappeared and regional political sentiment started to turn against the regional administration. As if confirming the extent to which the governor's administration had embraced official patriotism contrary to local political rationality, Aleksandr Telepnev—previously known for accusing the Perm′-36 museum of distorting history and calling for its funding to be slashed—was appointed to run the regional administration's program for patriotic education. The leader of United Russia's fraction in the regional parliament, Iurii Borisovets, weakly praised the appointment by calling it "age appropriate." "But that's what they decided," he concluded with resignation, "and surely things can only get better!"[100]

100. "Aleksandr Telepnev zaimetsia patriotizm," Kommersant-Perm′, Perm′, August 17, 2016.

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