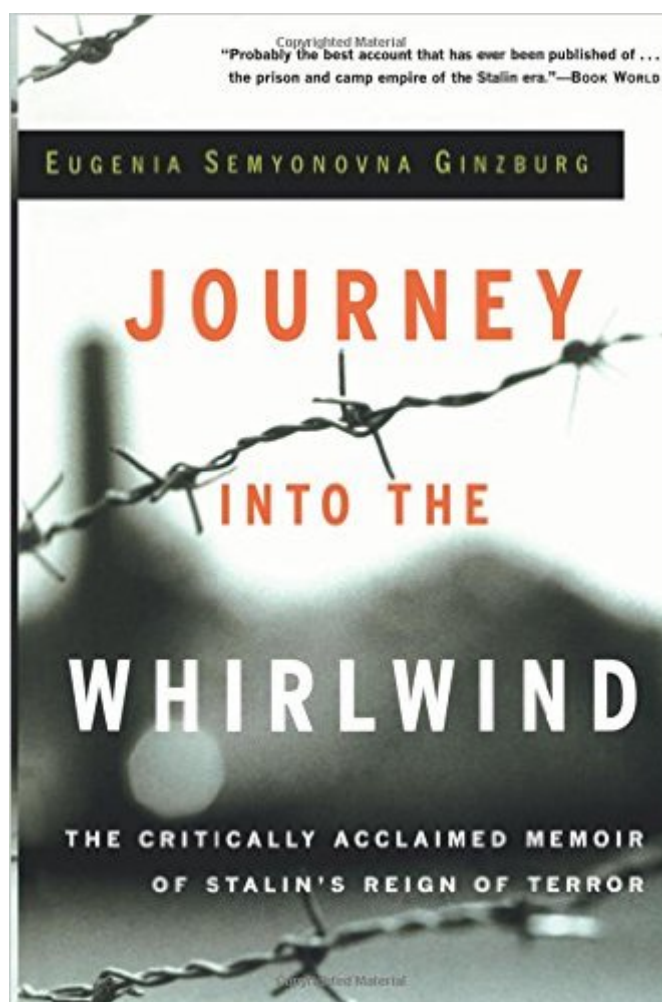


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# Journey Into The Whirlwind



## Synopsis

Eugenia Ginzburg's critically acclaimed memoir of the harrowing eighteen years she spent in prisons and labor camps under Stalin's rule. By the late 1930s, Eugenia Semyonovna Ginzburg had been a loyal and very active member of the Communist Party for many years. Yet like millions of others who suffered during Stalin's reign of terror, she was arrested "on trumped-up charges of being a Trotskyist terrorist and counter-revolutionary" and sentenced to prison. With an amazing eye for detail, profound strength, and an indefatigable spirit, Ginzburg recounts the years, days, and minutes she endured in prisons and labor camps, including two years of solitary confinement. A classic account of survival, *Journey into the Whirlwind* is considered one of the most important documents of Stalin's regime.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"The Humanity of men and women is inversely proportional to their Numbers. A Crowd is no more human than an Avalanche or a Whirlwind. A rabble of men and women stands lower in the scale of moral and intellectual being than a herd of Swine or of Jackals." So wrote Aldous Huxley. Evgenia (Eugenia) Ginzburg's *Journey Into the Whirlwind* is a powerful memoir of one woman's descent, along with hundreds of thousands of others, to the rabble of men and women that were arrested, brutally interrogated and sent to the Gulag in the Soviet Union during the great purges of the 1930s. Sergei Kirov's assassination in 1934 provided one of the pretexts for the great Soviet purges of the 1930s. The purges and great show trials began in earnest in 1937. Eugenia Ginzburg was a loyal party member, a teacher, and the editor of her local newspaper in Kazan, about 500 miles

southeast of Moscow. When she first heard of the mass arrests and imprisonments of loyal party members she was astonished that criminal elements had made their way into her party. This astonishment increased when she (and her husband) was arrested. As with thousands of other victims, Ginzburg was taken to jail, subjected to repeated interrogations and, over the course of the next year or so, traveled from prison to prison where the process of interrogation and mistreatment was continued. Ginzburg's memoirs in this volume continue through this initial imprisonment and her eventual transfer in cattle cars and a cargo ship to the frozen wasteland of Siberia. The second volume covers her years in exile, her Siberian reunion with her sole remaining son Vasily Aksyonov (a tremendous writer in his own right), and her eventual 'rehabilitation'.

In her work *Journey into the Whirlwind*, Eugenia Ginzburg gives a personal account of the first three years of her eighteen-year ordeal during the Stalin purges of the 1930s. Teacher and editor of the Communist paper "Red Tartary," Ginzburg was accused of being a Trotskyist counter-revolutionary by a colleague and was thrown in jail, interrogated, dragged from prison to prison, kept in solitary confinement, and finally sent to a labor camp in the Siberian taiga. Ginzburg's position reveals the fact that party members (especially of high rank) were the first victims of the purges. Also, her past camaraderie with such people as the daughter of the notorious Soviet jurist Andrey Vyshinsky allows Ginzburg to offer the reader information about the important players of the purges that other victims may not have been able to provide. Politically, it must be noted that this is not an anti-Communist book. The author remained loyal to her party. If anything, this book reveals how very strong party loyalties were to the men and women who were victimized as "enemies of the people." Throughout the book, Ginzburg refers to her cell mates by their party affiliation. Old party rivalries even persisted in the prisons. Communists often refused to believe that their government was arresting loyal party members and would never question the "conspirator" accounts in the Soviet newspapers. Ginzburg's husband, for example, remarked after seeing such a report: "Have you heard? Petrov has turned out to be an enemy of the people! How cunning he must have been to get away with it for so long." Out of this loyalty to the party came a loyalty to Stalin.

Eugenia "Genie" Semyonovna Ginzburg spent seventeen years in the Soviet prison system, escaping death, unlike millions of others. She never again saw her husband after being imprisoned. The *Gulag Archipelago* by Solzhenitsyn, *Man is Wolf to Man* by Bardach, *Kolyma Tales* by Shalamov and *Journey into the Whirlwind* all include overlapping and similar information, but differ in format and style (although hers is most similar to *Man is Wolf to Man* in its telling). Her memoir of

life in the Gulag is one of few written by women and so provides a unique and interesting perspective. All are fantastic books, well-written, often unbelievable and mesmerizing, but there is a noticeable difference between the multi-volume *The Gulag Archipelago* and *Journey into the Whirlwind* (seemingly short at just over 400 pages). Genie is first brought in for questioning in 1934. With her young children in the other room and her husband away on business, she takes the call. Her beliefs at that time are such that she would willingly die for the party. Soon thereafter, she is incarcerated at Black Lake and is eventually sentenced to ten years of solitary confinement for not denouncing a coworker who had written an article offensive to the party. During her interrogation sessions, in which she repeatedly refuses to "denounce" that is, lie, about the activities of acquaintances facing the same fate, she comes face to face with people who she thought were friends, but who have willingly denounced her in hopes of receiving special treatment, or lighter sentences. She herself never caves.

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