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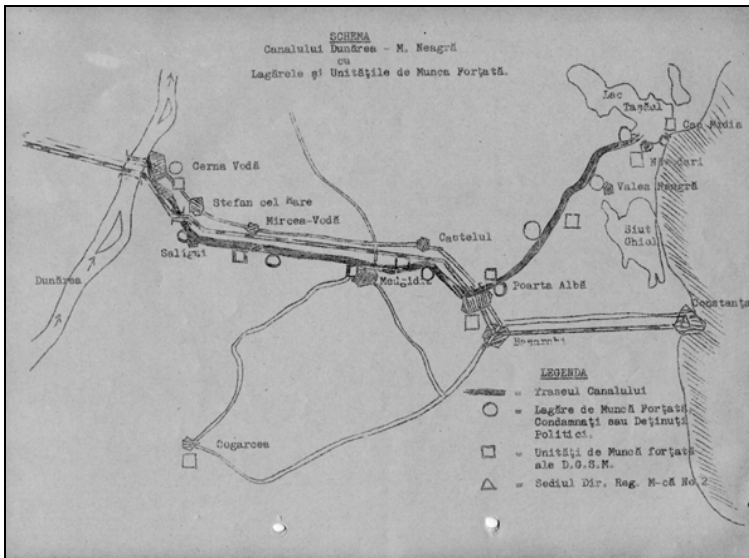
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REFERENCE INFORMATION PAPERS

Forced Labor Camps Under Communism

8

SCHEMA
Canalului Dunărea - M. Neagră
cu
Lăgărele și Unitățile de Muncă Forțată.



Forced Labor Camps Under Communism

Reference Information Paper 8: Forced Labor
Camps Under Communism. Compiled by Olga
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Open Society Archives at Central European University

OPEN SOCIETY ARCHIVES (OSA), established in 1995 by George Soros, is an independent international archival institution affiliated with the Central European University in Budapest, Hungary. OSA obtains, preserves and makes available to public research resources in three main areas: the history of communism and cold war, particularly in Central and Eastern Europe; human rights issues and movements with particular emphasis on the second half of the twentieth century; and the philanthropic activities of the Soros foundations network and the activity of the Central European University.

REFERENCE INFORMATION PAPERS (RIP), compiled by staff archivists, are thematic finding aids aiming to guide researchers to all the relevant archival materials at OSA that relate to a certain topic. Issues of the RIP series are published irregularly, and always reflect the *status quo* of the holdings. The catalogue entries indicate the exact fonds reference, date span, approximate quantity, and, occasionally, medium of the records.

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Introduction

The system of forced labor camps was established in the first years of the Communist regime in the Soviet Union. Through the organization of the NKVD and Cheka in 1917, and the adoption of the decree on concentration camps in 1918, labor camps became the most important part of the Soviet penal and repressive system.

According to Aleksandr Solzhenitsin, the Solovetsk Special Camp, situated on a remote island in the White Sea, was called the "mother of GULAG". The experience gained at this camp by the Soviet authorities was used to introduce and spread the system of forced labor camps all over the country.

In 1930 the Soviet secret police (GPU) established the main administration for corrective labor camps (GULAG), thus converting the 1918 penal colonies for "socially dangerous elements" into systematic slave labor projects.

The United Nations International Labor Organization Committee on Forced Labor stated in 1951 that "[...] since about 1930, the work of both political and other prisoners has been used in the Soviet Union for large-scale public works. [...] Corrective labor camps and colonies appear to be scattered over the whole of the Soviet Union."¹

Thousands of labor camp prisoners built the White Sea-Baltic Sea Canal, the dam and power station at Dneprostroi, the industrial center at Magnitka, the railroad between Salekhard and Igarka, known as "The Road of Death", but they worked on many other construction projects as well.

The system of forced labor camps was first exported outside the Soviet Union in 1940, when a number of arrests and deportations were effected in the Baltic countries – even before these countries became incorporated into the USSR on August 3, 1940. After the reoccupation of the Baltic States by the Soviet Union at the end of 1944, the first labor camps were established on these territories, too. By 1953 their number was as high as 56.

The Communist takeovers in the Eastern and Central European countries immediately led to mass arrests of non-communist politicians and all sorts of other people identified as class-enemies. Many of them were sentenced to forced labor camps. Thus by 1952 the International

¹ *Forced Labor in the "People's Democracies"*, Frederick A. Praeger Publishers, New York, 1955, p. 7

League for the Rights of Man was able to document the existence of more than 400 forced labor camps in Central and Eastern Europe.

The forced labor system was primarily an institution of political repression, but it also served as a way of redistributing available labor force in order to meet the needs of the central economic plan. The economic rationale of such measures was highly questionable from the very beginning, yet the system of forced labor survived despite of the obvious indicators of its inefficiency.

Life conditions in these camps were extremely hard. Many of them earned the dubious reputation of "death camps" because of the high death rates caused by the inhuman workload imposed on the inmates, and the severe conditions under which the work was performed. Hunger, brutality, fear, and death were everyday companions of the forced laborer.

After Stalin's death in 1953, due to several amnesties issued in the USSR and other communist countries of Eastern Europe, many people purged as "political prisoners" were released and rehabilitated.

Khrushchev's secret speech to a closed session of the 20th Congress of the Communist Party signaled the beginning of the period known in the history of the Soviet Union as The Thaw, which was marked by the hope of reconciliation between the regime and society. The conspiracy of silence surrounding the GULAGs was broken.

However, The Thaw did not last long, and though some of the camps were closed in the Brezhnev era, the labor camp system continued to serve the oppressive needs of the regime.

With the development of the human rights movement in the USSR, information sent from prisons and labor camps reached the Western world via free thinkers and dissidents from inside the country. The letters and appeals of dissidents about the conditions in the labor camps became a significant part of the archives of Radio Free Europe (RFE) and Radio Liberty (RL). Many people behind the Iron Curtain learned details about their countries' labor camp system from these radios, which sometimes managed to include in their broadcasts even the names and information about the fate of particular political prisoners.

The Open Society Archives, which took into custody the records of the RFE/RL Research Institute, holds materials relating to forced labor and concentration camps in the following funds:

HU OSA 205 Records of the Open Media Research Institute

Bulgarian Subject Files

- Security: Prisons: [General], 1950-1996, 0.10 lm
- Security: Prisons: Victims, 1984-1990, 0.03 lm

Former Soviet Union Archives: Subject Files

- Law and Justice: Penology: Prisons and Camps: GULAG, 1991-1995, 0.07 lm

HU OSA 300 Records of RFE/RL Research Institute

HU OSA 300-3 German Affairs (AGA)

HU OSA 300-3-1 East German Subject Files

- 2500 Prisons and Camps, 1956-1974, 0.05 linear meters

HU OSA 300-20 Bulgarian Unit

The materials include press clippings, news agency releases, RFE/RL research reports about prisons and camps (e.g. Belena), and lists of political prisoners from 1989. Files are primarily in Bulgarian and English.

HU OSA 300-20-1 Subject Files

- 1919 Labor: Recruitment of Manpower, 1952-1988, 0.03 lm
- 1925 Labor: Work Safety, 1951-1992, 0.03 lm
- 1926 Labor: [Forced Labor], 1985-1993, 0.03 lm
- 2200 Persecution and Purges: [General], 1968-1991, 0.03 lm
- 2315 Police and Security: KGB, 1991-1994, 0.03 lm
- 2400 Prisoners of War: [General], 1952, 0.03 lm
- 2500 Prisons and Camps: [General], 1992-1994, 0.03 lm
- 2503 Prisons and Camps: Inmates, 1962-1993, 0.05 lm
- 2505 Prisons and Camps: Labor-Educational Schools, 1988-1992, 0.03 lm
- 2506 Prisons and Camps: Security Measures and Conditions, 1989-1990, 0.03 lm

HU OSA 300-30 Czechoslovak Unit*HU OSA 300-30-2 Old Code Subject Files I*

1951-1961, 7 microfilm rolls

- 2500 Prisons and Camps: Pankrác, Jáchymov, Ilava
- 2502 Personnel and Guards: Inmates
- 2504 Female Prisoners
- 2507 Security Measures
- 2508 Conditions
- 2511 Escapes

HU OSA 300-30-8 Old Code Subject Card Files

- 2500 Prisons: Prisons A-Z, 0.05 lm
- 2502 Prisons: Personnel and Guards, 0.01 lm
- 2506 Prisons: Conditions, 0.01 lm
- 2500 Prisons and Camps: Camps, 0.12 lm

HU OSA 300-40 Hungarian Unit*HU OSA 300-40-2 Subject Files in English*

- Justice: Amnesty: Rehabilitation, 1972-1989, 0.03 lm
- Justice: Political Crimes, 1966-1978, 0.05 lm
- Justice: Prisons and Camps, 1966-1978, 0.03 lm

HU OSA 300-40-4 Information Items

0.20 lm

- 137 Labor camps: Ajka, 1953
- 137 Labor camps: Albertfalva, 1952
- 137 Labor camps: Almásfüzitő, 1953
- 137 Labor camps: Bag, 1953
- 137 Labor camps: Balatonfenyves, 1952
- 137 Labor camps: Balatonmária, 1952
- 137 Labor camps: Baracska, 1958-1959
- 137 Labor camps: Bernátkút, 1954
- 137 Labor camps: Borsós, 1954
- 137 Labor camps: Buda, 1952
- 137 Labor camps: Cegléd, 1952
- 137 Labor camps: Csabrenek, 1953
- 137 Labor camps: Csolnok, 1955-1959
- 137 Labor camps: Edelény, 1957
- 137 Labor camps: Egercsehi, 1953
- 137 Labor camps: Felnémet, 1953

- 137 Labor camps: Hamvas, 1953
- 137 Labor camps: Harta, 1955
- 137 Labor camps: Hejőcsaba, 1952-1953
- 137 Labor camps: Hortobágy-Elep, 1952-1953
- 137 Labor camps: Inota, 1952
- 137 Labor camps: Isaszeg, 1952-1954
- 137 Labor camps: Jászberény, 1952-1953
- 137 Labor camps: Kalocsa, 1951
- 137 Labor camps: Kazincbarcika, 1953-1960
- 137 Labor camps: Kistarcsa, 1951-1960
- 137 Labor camps: Miskolc, 1952-1953
- 137 Labor camps: Ormospuszta, 1955
- 137 Labor camps: Oroszlány, 1954-1955
- 137 Labor camps: Pálhalma, 1960
- 137 Labor camps: Pilisszentiván, 1952
- 137 Labor camps: Recsk, 1951-1956
- 137 Labor camps: Tarcsapuszta, 1952
- 137 Labor camps: Tatabánya, 1953-1955
- 137 Labor camps: Tiszalök, 1953-1954
- 137 Labor camps: Tököl, 1957-1960
- 137 Labor camps: Várpalota, 1953-1961
- 200.9 Armed Forces: Labor units, 1968

HU OSA 300-50 Polish Unit

HU OSA 300-50-1 Subject Files

These files consist of press clippings, RFE/RL research papers, and reports of anonymous informants relating to the forced labor system in Poland.

- 105.25 Penal Code, 1954-1962, 150 pages
- 135.01 Amnesty, 1952-1967, 200 pages
- 135.1 State Security Organs, 1951-1960, 100 pages
- 135.2 Political Cases, 1951-1960, 300 pages
- 135.3 Concentration Camps in Poland, 1953-1964, 50 pages
- 135.33 Labor Camps, 1951-1956, 200 pages
- 135.92 Poles in Soviet GULAG, 1963-1967, 50 pages
- 862 Police, 1952-1959, 300 pages
- 863 Prisons, 1952-1977, 200 pages

HU OSA 300-50-3 Subject Card Files

- Camps: A-Z, 1954-1965, 500 cards

HU OSA 300-50-7 Collection of Interviews with Jozef Swiatlo [former head of Polish State Security]
1954-1956, 0.50 Im

Additional information on labor camps and prisons is available in the Polish Evaluation Index Cards, a collection of microfilms dated 1950-1958, which contain primarily Polish and English language materials.

HU OSA 300-60 Romanian Unit

HU OSA 300-60-1 Subject Files

- 318 Armed Forces: Military Labor Units, 1951-1969, 0.03 Im
- 1700 Industry: Canal: Danube-Black Sea, 1951-1990, 0.06 Im
- 1919 Labor: Recruiting of Manpower, 1951-1976, 0.05 Im
- 1926 Labor: Forced Labor, 1951-1972, 0.08 Im
- 2500 Prisons and Camps, 1951-1971, 0.03 Im
- 2501 Prisons and Camps: Atrocities, 1951-1968, 0.05 Im
- 2502 Prisons and Camps: Personnel and Guards, 1951-1968, 0.03 Im
- 2504 Prisons and Camps: Concentration Camps: Locations, 1951-1964, 0.05 Im
- 2504 Prisons and Camps: Prisons, 1948-1964, 0.05 Im
- 2505 Prisons and Camps: New Constructions, 1951-1962, 0.03 Im
- 2506 Prisons and Camps: Security Conditions and Measures, 1951-1971, 0.03 Im

HU OSA 300-70 Yugoslav Section

HU OSA 300-70-1 Subject Files

This series contains no direct files on forced labor camps. Nevertheless, there are several files (about 0.25 Im) pertaining to Yugoslavia's 1948 split with the Cominform and especially to the Goli Otok concentration camps established by Yugoslav Communist authorities in order to isolate and control those who sided with the Soviet Union and Cominform. These files consist of Yugoslav and foreign press clippings, RFE/RL Background Reports and other printed matters. Materials are primarily in Serbian.

HU OSA 300-80 Soviet "Red" Archives

HU OSA 300-80-1 Old Code Subject Files

- Инакомыслящие: общее [Dissidents: General], 1971-1993, 0.17 Im

- Инакомыслящие: преследования [Dissidents: Persecution], 1986-1991, 0.03 lm
- Десталинизация [Destalinization], 1954-1987, 0.10 lm
- Десталинизация [Destalinization: Stalin Reaction-USSR], 1956, 0.03 lm
- Десталинизация [Destalinization: Western Press Analysis], 1956-1966, 0.03 lm
- Идеологическая борьба [Ideological Struggle], 1976-1989, 0.05 lm
- История: общее [History: General], 1962-1988, 0.03 lm
- История: исправление [History: Re-writing], 1955-1993, 0.03 lm
- История: историография [History: Historiography], 1962-1987, 0.03 lm
- Культ личности: общее [Personality Cult: General], 1955-1966, 0.03 lm
- Культ личности: коллективное руководство [Personality Cult: Collective Leadership], 1967-1991, 0.03 lm
- Наказания: исправительный труд: общее [Punishment: Corrective Labor], 1961-1993, 0.12 lm
- Наказания: исправительный труд: Воркута [Punishment: Corrective Labor: Vorkuta], 1954-1955, 0.03 lm
- Наказания: принудительный труд [Punishment: Forced Labor], 1955-1990, 0.05 lm
- Наказания: смертный приговор: общее [Punishment: Death Sentence: General], 1961-1993, 0.12 lm
- МВД [Министерство внутренних дел] [MVD: Ministry of Interior Affairs], 1953-1993, 0.05 lm
- Право: уголовное [Law: Criminal], 1953-1968, 0.03 lm
- Преступления: политические [Crimes: Political], 1961-1993, 0.05 lm
- Сталин и сталинизм: общее [Stalin and Stalinism: General], 1951-1990, 0.40 lm
- Сталин и сталинизм: ГУЛАГ [Stalin and Stalinism: GULAG], 1965-1983, 0.03 lm
- Сталин и сталинизм: жертвы сталинизма [Stalin and Stalinism: Victims], 1988-1989, 0.12 lm
- Сталин и сталинизм: литература о сталинских лагерях [Stalin and Stalinism: Literature on Stalin's camps], 1963-1974, 0.03 lm
- Тюремьы и заключенные [Prisons and Inmates], 1961-1993, 0.12 lm

HU OSA 300-80-7 USSR Biographical Files

1953-1994

- Ginzburg, Evgeniia, 0.03 Im
- Kuznetsov, Eduard, 0.03 Im
- Marchenko, Anatolii, 0.03 Im
- Shalamov, Varlaam, 0.03 Im
- Solzhenitsin, Aleksandr, 0.87 Im

HU OSA 300-85 Samizdat Archives*HU OSA 300-85-9 Published Samizdat*

This series is a collection of copies of samizdat documents written in the Soviet Union and sent abroad which includes, among others, reports, memories and open letters about conditions in the camps and prisons, their location, and the identity and number of inmates. Most of these reports were gathered from prisoners.

HU OSA 300-85-12 Subject Files

1968-1993

- History: Stalinism, 0.05 Im
- Human Rights Movements: Amnesty International, Helsinki Groups, Memorial
- Nonconformism, 0.75 Im
- Penal Institutions: Camps, Prisons, Protests, Slave Labor, History and Memories, and Statistics, 0.75 Im
- Repressive Bodies: KGB, MVD [Ministry of the Interior], Torture, Rehabilitation, and Censorship, 0.37 Im
- Samizdat, 0.37 Im
- Terror: History, 1920-1960, 0.15 Im
- Terror: Kuropaty and Other Places of Mass Shootings, 0.12 Im

HU OSA 300-85-13 Biographical Files

1968-1993

- Amal'rik, Andrei, 0.15 Im
- Bakhmin, Viacheslav, 0.05 Im
- Bukovskii, Vladimir, 0.25 Im
- Chornovol, Viacheslav, 0.12 Im
- Galanskov, Yurii, 0.03 Im
- Ginzburg, Alexandr, 0.10 Im
- Kazachkov, Mikhail, 0.05 Im
- Kovalev, Sergei, 0.12 Im

- Matusevich, Olga, 0.03 lm
- Orlov, Yurii, 0.37 lm
- Ratushinskaia, Irina, 0.37 lm
- Solzhenitsyn, Aleksandr, 1.00 lm
- Terelia, Iosif, 0.05 lm

HU OSA 300-85-19 Informal Press
1968-1995

This collection consists of newspapers, periodicals, pamphlets, and other printed materials on the history of the GULAG. The Memorial publications (Letopis' terrora, Memorial, Memorial-aspect, Memorial-INFO, Prava cheloveka, Stranichka uznika, 58-aia and others) contain memories of the former GULAG prisoners and materials about the prisons and camps existing in the Brezhnev era as well.

HU OSA 300-506 Records of Analyst Vladimir Socor: Subject File

- Canal: Danube-Black Sea, 1984-1991, 0.05 lm

Related RFE/RL Research Institute materials

Among the materials related to the topic of forced labor camps there is an unprocessed collection of *Information Items* (77 microfilm rolls), covering the years 1951-1956. Several titles from this collection:

- Item 5592/1953: Profile of the Bulgarian Forced Labor Camp Belene
- Item 11524/1956: Radio Free Europe in Soviet Prison Camps
- Items: 8047, 8614, 8807, 12545, 12577/1953, 813/1954 (reports of prisoners who spent years in the Soviet GULAG and were rehabilitated after Stalin's death)

HU OSA 314 Interviews by Miklós Kun Relating to the Soviet Union

HU OSA 314-0-2 Audiovisual Interviews, 45 VHS videotapes

- Oral history interviews with former communist party officials and leaders of security organs, their relatives and dissidents

HU OSA 317 Collection of Miklós Kun Relating to 20th Century History

- Belomorsko-Baltiiskii Vodnyi Put [The White Sea Canal], 1936, 0.30 hours

A propaganda film produced by Vostokfilm and directed by Aleksandr Lemerg.

- Solovki [Solovki-Solovets Special Labor Camps], 1927-1928, 1.20 hours

A propaganda film produced by Sovkino and directed by A. A. Cherkasov.

Library materials

The OSA Library has a collection of official Russian sources and booklets from the Western press. Handbooks, documents from the fifties and sixties, reports, and publications from contemporary archival research await the curious. Books from the RFE/RL collection related to the GULAG have generally been donated to the Library of the Central European University.

Please also visit the *Forced Labor Camps* online exhibition in Galeria Centralis at OSA

<http://www.osa.ceu.hu/gulag/>

Publications by the RFE/RL Research Institute

Press Surveys, averaging 15 pages each, consist of original language articles or English translations of the most important articles appearing in the East European press. Such surveys were made for Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, and Romania.

Information Items are based on interviews made in Western Europe with visitors and refugees from Eastern Europe.

Situation Reports contain summaries of current developments in Eastern Europe. These reports were prepared by the national units twice a week.

Background Reports are special studies providing perspectives on current events and trends in the communist world. The reports were issued on a regular basis, as well as in response to sudden developments, such as government reshuffle or an unannounced meeting of communist leaders.

Information for researchers

Open Society Archives is an open-access facility committed to making materials available to users on equal terms of access.

On-site reference services are provided in the Research Room, every work-day from 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Every researcher must obtain a researcher identification card at the OSA Reception Desk which is valid for two years. Research status is available to anyone at least 16 years old.

The Archives provides **copying services** in the following formats: electrostatic reproductions, videotape and audiotape, and photographs.

The **OSA website** is designed to provide basic description of OSA reference services available online, and other information of interest to **off-site researchers** (including the OSA Restriction Statement, citation recommendations etc.).

General reference or research questions may be sent via e-mail, regular mail, fax or phone (see information on back cover). OSA staff does not perform research on behalf of researchers. However, researchers may request that copies of documents relevant to their research interest be delivered by express mail or regular mail, or by fax.

OSA offers a variety of **grants** to scholars, archivists, journalists, artists and others exploring the fields covered by OSA's holdings.

Research grants are offered on a competitive basis to support scholars who wish to pursue research in OSA's holdings. These grants provide travel to and from Budapest, a modest stipend, and accommodation in Budapest for a maximum research period of two months. The application, including a research description plan, C.V., and two letters of recommendation should be sent to the Research Grant Selection Committee, OSA. The Selection Committee normally meets four times a year in March, June, September and December.

OSA regularly offers **other grants** to scholars, artists or journalists who wish to carry out projects related to topics covered by the Archives' programs, and exhibitions to be hosted by Galeria Centralis.

Available issues:

- 1 Raoul Wallenberg
- 2 The Environment
- 3 The Roma (Gypsies)
- 4 The 1956 Hungarian Revolution
- 5 Church and Religion
- 6 Nonconformist Artists in the USSR, 1956-1986
- 7 Prague Spring 1968
- 8 Forced Labor Camps Under Communism

FURTHER INFORMATION:

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