EXECUTIVE EDITOR OF THE ANNALS OF COMMUNISM SERIES
Jonathan Brent, Yale University Press

PROJECT MANAGER
Vadim A. Staklo

AMERICAN EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

Ivo Banac, Yale University
Zbigniew Brzezinski, Center for Strategic and International Studies
William Chase, University of Pittsburgh
Victor Erlich, Yale University
Friedrich I. Firsov, former head of the Comintern research group at RGASPI
Sheila Fitzpatrick, University of Chicago
Gregory Freeze, Brandeis University
John L. Gaddis, Yale University
J. Arch Getty, University of California, Los Angeles
Jonathan Haslam, Cambridge University
Robert L. Jackson, Yale University
Czeslaw Milosz, University of California, Berkeley
Norman Naimark, Stanford University
Gen. William Odom, Hudson Institute and Yale University
Daniel Orlovsky, Southern Methodist University
Mark Steinberg, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign
Strobe Talbott, Brookings Institution
Mark Von Hagen, Columbia University
Piotr Wandycz, Yale University

RUSSIAN EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

K. M. Anderson, director, Russian State Archive of Social and Political History (RGASPI)
N. N. Bolkhovitinov, Russian Academy of Sciences
A. O. Chubaryan, Russian Academy of Sciences
V. P. Danilov, Russian Academy of Sciences
A. A. Fursenko, secretary, Department of History, Russian Academy of Sciences (head of the Russian Editorial Committee)
V. P. Kozlov, director, Rosarkhiv
N. S. Lebedeva, Russian Academy of Sciences
S. V. Mironenko, director, State Archive of the Russian Federation (GARF)
O. V. Naumov, assistant director, RGASPI
E. O. Pivovar, Moscow State University
V. V. Shelokhaev, president, Association ROSSPEN
Ye. A. Tyurina, director, Russian State Archive of the Economy (RGAE)

The History of the Gulag

From Collectivization to the Great Terror

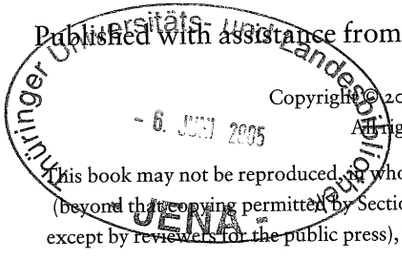
Oleg V. Khlevniuk

Translated by Vadim A. Staklo
With editorial assistance and commentary by David J. Nordlander
Foreword by Robert Conquest

Yale University Press
New Haven & London

This volume has been prepared with the cooperation of the State Archive of the Russian Federation (GARF) of the State Archival Service of Russia in the framework of an agreement concluded between GARF and Yale University Press.

Published with assistance from the Louis Stern Memorial Fund.



Copyright © 2004 by Yale University.
All rights reserved.

This book may not be reproduced, in whole or in part, including illustrations, in any form (beyond that copying permitted by Sections 107 and 108 of the U.S. Copyright Law and except by reviewers for the public press), without written permission from the publishers.

The photographs from the two photo albums, on constructing the Soroka–Obozerskaya railway and on Kolyma, are reproduced courtesy of GARF. The other photographs are reproduced courtesy of the Memorial Society. The documents held by GARF and the Memorial Society, like the photographs, are used by permission.

Designed by James J. Johnson and set in Sabon Roman types by The Composing Room of Michigan, Inc. Printed in the United States of America by Vail-Ballou Press, Binghamton, New York.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Khlevniuk, O. V. (Oleg Vital'evich)
The history of the Gulag : from collectivization to the great terror / Oleg V. Khlevniuk ; foreword by Robert Conquest ; translated by Vadim A. Staklo.
p. cm. — (Annals of Communism)
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 0-300-09284-9 (hardcover)
1. Concentration camps—Soviet Union—History. 2. Forced labor—Soviet Union—History. 3. Political prisoners—Soviet Union. 4. Prisons—Soviet Union—History. 5. Soviet Union—Politics and government. I. Title. II. Series.
HV8964.S65K48 2004
365'.45'094709043—dc22

2004010969

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

The paper in this book meets the guidelines for permanence and durability of the Committee on Production Guidelines for Book Longevity of the Council on Library Resources.

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Yale University Press gratefully acknowledges the financial support given for this publication by the Daphne Seybolt Culpeper Foundation, the David Woods Kemper Memorial Foundation, Joseph W. Donner, the Edward H. Andrews Foundation, the Historical Research Foundation, the John M. Olin Foundation, the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation, Jeremiah Milbank, Roger Milliken, the Milton V. Brown Foundation, Lloyd H. Smith, the William H. Donner Foundation, and Keith Young.

Contents

Foreword by Robert Conquest ix
Acknowledgments xiii
List of Abbreviations xv
Map of Gulag Sites, 1929–1941 xix

Introduction 1

CHAPTER 1. Origins of the Stalinist Gulag 9
The Peasant Zone
New Camps
Life in an Unfinished System

CHAPTER 2. Famine 54
Plans for Mass Purges
A Deadly Year

CHAPTER 3. Stabilization of the System 83
Kirov's Murder and the Creation of the NKVD
Camp Laws and Camp Reality
Colonies for Children
Old and Young in "Kulak Exile"

CHAPTER 4. The Great Terror 140
Plans
Mechanisms
Victims
Extermination Camps

CHAPTER 5. Beria's "Reforms" 186
The Legality of Torture
"New Order" in the Camps
The Fight Against "Wreckers" and "Spies"
The Case of the Krasnoiarsk Camp

CHAPTER 6. Mobilization and Repression 236
Supplying a Workforce
Camp Mobilization
The Erosion of "Kulak Exile"
The Fate of the New Special Settlers

CHAPTER 7. The Victims 287
The Character and Scale of the Stalinist Repression
Camps, Colonies, Prisons, and Special Settlements and Their Population

Conclusion: The Price of Terror 328

Brief Biographies 345
List of Selected Camps and Projects of the OGPU-NKVD 358
Excerpts from the Criminal Codes of the RSFSR and the Constitution of the USSR 364
Notes 369
Index of Documents 395
General Index 403

Illustrations follow page 286

Foreword

Robert Conquest

What a long, extraordinary process digging into the deepest secrets of the Gulag has been. Now, here is its history, fully, factually, and humanly effected for the present day by Oleg Khlevniuk.

Dozens of firsthand accounts were available by the late 1940s from such clear and meticulous witnesses as Eleanor Lipper, Vladimir Petrov, and the anonymous Poles in the *Dark Side of the Moon,* edited by T. S. Eliot. In 1946, David Dallin and Boris Nikolaevsky produced their wide-ranging and broadly documented *Forced Labor in the Soviet Union,* covering 125 camps and camp clusters. But this *History of the Gulag,* built on many documents in the Soviet archives, brings the story to a contemporary audience.

Although it is sometimes suggested that the Gulag was in some way derived from an older Russia, one has only to read about Dostoevsky's experiences as a political prisoner in *The House of the Dead* to find many differences. By the early twentieth century a number of Russian people—far fewer of them in any case than in Soviet times—were either in prison or in "exile." The latter penalty, whose victims included Lenin and Stalin, simply meant forced residence at some distant village, with a monetary allowance, sometimes with wives, but with no barbed wire or penal labor. The Gulag is only one example of how the Soviet regime represented a huge decline in civilization in Russia. But it is a revealing one.

Areas of the Stalinist experience still remain obscure. But with the

Great Terror by Robert Conquest, *Let History Judge* by Roy Medvedev, and *The Gulag Handbook* by Jacques Rossi.

The late 1980s and 1990s saw an explosion of publications about Stalin's terror.[8] Most of these publications dealt with the already known facts and materials and, although they played an important social and political role, were of little scholarly value. The collections of documents related to terror and the books commemorating the victims of political repression and listing the names of those executed are more than just means of overcoming Stalinism, however, and represent important historical sources.

Historians who used new archival documents produced four main groups of works: (1) encyclopedias and general studies of the history of repression, camps, and repressive organs;[9] (2) documentary publications and studies of "dekulakization"—the mass repression of peasantry and forced collectivization;[10] (3) analyses of internal OGPU-NKVD statistics providing the numbers of those repressed, imprisoned, and exiled; and (4) the histories of various departments and camps of the Gulag.[11]

This book is an attempt to reconstruct the history of the Gulag on the basis of new archival documents in combination with the already known and researched facts and sources. Any kind of generalization has limitations. Let me say, however, that the Gulag is more than just an episode in the history of the Soviet Union: it is its almost direct reflection. The history of the Gulag is the history of establishing a dictatorship; of forming the most important segment of the Soviet economy—forced labor; of creating a distinct social milieu of convicts and their guards and prosecutors. It is the history of a specific camp culture and mentality, which strongly affected the culture, traditions, and worldview of Soviet society at large. As the list of comparisons goes on, it becomes clear that the history of the Gulag is just as important to our understanding of the past as the history of the USSR or the United States—and just as applicable to new sets of problems.

CHAPTER 1

Origins of the Stalinist Gulag

On 27 June 1929 the Politburo, aiming to conserve state resources, decided to create a network of self-supporting camps to replace the existing system of prisons. The OGPU concentration camps, renamed corrective labor camps by this resolution, were to receive all inmates sentenced to three or more years. The result was the creation of new camps—in addition to the Solovetsky Camp of Special Designation (SLON)—capable of holding altogether 50,000 inmates. The task of the camps was to colonize remote regions of the country and to "develop mineral deposits using convict labor." People sentenced to less than three years remained under the supervision of the NKVDs of the union republics and had to work in special agricultural or industrial colonies.[1]

This decision could have remained just another attempt to reorganize the penitentiary system had it not coincided with events that changed the course of Soviet history. In 1929 the Stalinist leadership adopted a policy of forced collectivization in the countryside and rapid industrial development. The resultant purge was aimed at the isolation or extermination of the segment of the population that resisted or could potentially oppose the government's plans. The collectivization of the countryside was accompanied by mass arrests, executions, and the deportation of peasants, primarily wealthy farmers (the so-called kulaks), and the village intelligentsia, including priests. In the cities the

OGPU fabricated cases of numerous "counterrevolutionary organizations" and targeted the old intelligentsia, the so-called bourgeois specialists. The famed Shakhty trial (1928) and the trials of the Union Menshevik Bureau, the Union for the Liberation of the Ukraine, and the Industrial Party (1929–30) are only a few of the many trials that decimated the urban intelligentsia.[2] Related to these developments was a purge in the All-Union Communist Party (Bolshevik) itself—the VKP(b)—aimed at the more moderate "right deviationists."

Adoption of a policy of mass repression altered the original plans for the penitentiary system. Not only did the camps grow faster than projected, but the OGPU was now in charge of the special settlements for hundreds of thousands of exiled peasants. Gradually, through suffering and death, this welter of camps and special settlements was turned into an organized system of terror and exploitation of forced labor.

The Peasant Zone

Stepped-up repression and the activation of security organs in the late 1920s were related, foremost, to the sharp deterioration in relations between the government and the peasants, who were the majority of the country's population. At the height of the grain-procurement crisis in the fall and winter of 1927–28, the leadership decided to extract grain forcefully from the countryside, through arrests and confiscation. These temporary measures soon turned into permanent policy. Naturally, many peasants resisted.[3]

The Stalinist leadership did not hesitate to use draconian measures to subdue the countryside and make millions of peasants work for nothing. One of the main instruments of mass collectivization, which started in late 1929, was dekulakization—the arrest and exile of the most dangerous sector (to the regime) of the rural population. Mass terror was the key method used in creating the kolkhozes: Peasants fearful of the fate of fellow villagers who had been repressed joined the hated kolkhozes, gritting their teeth as they did so. At the same time, the confiscated property of those repressed constituted a base for the productive resources of the kolkhozes. Rivalries between peasants and abuses of power by local administrators—many of whom, acting like gangsters, took the property of those dekulakized—contributed to the escalation of the repression.

With Moscow demanding "liquidation of the kulaks as a class" and local leaders and activists taking the initiative, the terror spread. It

reached its apogee in the countryside when the Politburo and OGPU were drawing up plans for a centralized operation against the kulaks.[4] This nationwide action was fully described in the Politburo resolution of 30 January 1930, "On measures to liquidate kulak farms in the areas of total collectivization."[5] All "kulaks" (including peasants disgruntled with the authorities or even suspected of opposition) were divided into three categories: "counterrevolutionary kulak activists," to be imprisoned or executed; "other kulak activists," to be exiled to remote areas; and "kulaks," who were permitted to stay in their villages but ordered to live and work on neglected or abandoned land. The Politburo mandated the completion of repressive measures against the first two groups within four months, in February–May 1930, and established a quota of 49,000–60,000 people to be sent to the camps and 129,000–154,000 to be exiled. Since the families of these 200,000 "kulaks" also had to be exiled, a total of 1,000,000 people were destined for repression. Nor did these figures constitute a final total. A number of regions and republics were assigned supplementary quotas.

Following the Politburo resolution, on 2 February 1930 the OGPU issued Order no. 44/21, which outlined procedures. The local OGPU offices set up troikas (consisting of representatives of the OGPU, the territorial Bolshevik party [VKP(b)] committee, and the Procuracy) plus "operative troikas" to conduct the relocation of exiles. A detailed addendum to this order explained the procedure for deportations.[6]

Documents outlining this first mass punitive action of the Stalinist period provided a model for future acts of state terror, including operations against "anti-Soviet elements," which formed the backbone of the Great Terror in 1937–38. The arrests and deportations of the kulaks revealed the characteristic features of Stalinist repressive actions: extreme cruelty stemming from orders by Moscow, excesses by the participants, and a lack of resources to supply even starvation rations to the "special settlers."

The OGPU found the directives regarding the first category of kulaks the easiest to fulfill. According to internal statistics, the OGPU arrested over 330,000 people in 1930. It then convicted 208,000, including 180,000 sentenced by the troikas (see Document 90). Of those convicted, 114,000 were sent to the camps, and more than 20,000 were executed. The numbers convicted and executed by the VChK-OGPU over the previous nine years (1921–29) are comparable.[7] (The Soviet secret police changed names and acronyms several times over the years, with the main incarnations being VChK [Cheka], GPU,

OGPU, NKVD, MVD, MGB, and then KGB.) A significant portion of those arrested by the OGPU in 1930 were victims of the dekulakization campaign. Between 1 January and 1 October 1930 the number of "kulaks" arrested as belonging to the first category was 283,700.[8] This overfulfilled the original plan for the first category several times over.

The situation was different with kulaks convicted under the second category. From the very beginning, it was clear that there were insufficient resources to relocate hundreds of thousands of people. That was not a reason to ditch the idea of deportations, however. Dozens of trains filled with peasant families moved to the Urals, Siberia, and the northern regions of the Soviet Union. The journeys took many days and were an ordeal. Exhausted people were often made to walk for many kilometers from the railway station to their final destination. They were accommodated in unsuitable barracks and former churches. As a rule, men were separated from their families and sent to do hard labor. Women, children, and the elderly were left without means for survival. Terrible conditions, hunger, and hard labor caused high mortality, particularly among children.

Complaints and petitions by these initial special settlers exhibit the difficulties of their life. I reproduce two such letters by colonists who were exiled from the Crimea to the Urals. The letters were sent to the Political Red Cross, then forwarded to the OGPU. Written by different people deported to different areas of the Urals, the letters reveal strikingly similar problems. The authors' names remain unknown. The letters may have been anonymous, or perhaps the Political Red Cross made anonymous copies for the OGPU.

· 4 ·

Complaint from a special settler to the Political Red Cross
25 April 1930[9]

The truth about exiles.

We want to make sure that the center knows how the measures of the party and the Soviet regime are being distorted. Considering that we live in the freest country, with neither oppressors nor oppressed, it is impossible to keep silent about the flagrant abuses that we have witnessed during the time of our exile.

To start with our departure from the Crimea: many were taken from their houses and given only twenty minutes to prepare for exile. They were not given any indictment or legal explanation; their property was confiscated without leaving a bare minimum for survival, with no consideration for age, pregnancy, or disability. They were locked up, forty people to a carriage, and handed three buckets, one to be used as a toilet and two others for water. Here the unfortunate passengers felt, for the first time in many years, that they were not in a free country and that those who treated them like that should not be called authorities. Eighteen hundred people, among them women, the elderly, and infants, felt mocked by someone.

Water was not provided upon departure, and the empty buckets were an omen of the coming sorrowful and mysterious journey. What came next? Next came the unspeakable, for it was a shame to pass by cultural centers where no one knew that 1,800 people were being transported somewhere in manifestly unsanitary conditions, without food or water. The bucket, used by everyone without regard to sex, age, or time of day, was full. The rocking of the car caused it to spill its stinking contents over those sleeping on the floor. Water was provided at will by the train warden and was absolutely insufficient. Baby diapers rotted without enough water to launder them and poisoned the already stifling air of the locked car. This lasted for ten days, during which time food was provided only four times, and hot water once a day. People contracted infectious diseases. There were cases of infant deaths. In Nadezhdinsk, during the change of cars, there were cases of direct public badgering. Police and some party workers openly beat up the young and the old who moved slowly or who were suspected of an unwillingness to change cars. During the transfer to other cars, they were constantly yelling, "Go, parasite." The arrival at our destination, Bogoslovsky plant, fully demonstrated the degradation and misery of our situation. They call us settlers, but we do not know who we are, of which country we are citizens, or what rights and responsibilities we have. We are ordered to forestry work, accompanied by our families. They took men to the forest for logging while their families remained in the village, starving and waiting to be sent to their husbands. Some families live in the forest. If the rest come to live there, however, there will be massive infant mortality in the summer because everybody lives in common barracks without sanitation or medical assistance. Those who work receive meager food rations, with no chance to share it with their families. Families receive absolutely nothing. Those who brought some food with them can eat, while others starve. It is impossible to buy anything, for they sell nothing to the settlers, who at any rate have no money. They survive by exchanging personal belongings and bedsheets for food. The food situation is getting hopeless, and our relations with the administration have become hostile. The authorities have warned the local population not to supply us with newspapers. There is a sign in the movie theater saying that

OGPU, NKVD, MVD, MGB, and then KGB.) A significant portion of those arrested by the OGPU in 1930 were victims of the dekulakization campaign. Between 1 January and 1 October 1930 the number of "kulaks" arrested as belonging to the first category was 283,700.[8] This overfulfilled the original plan for the first category several times over.

The situation was different with kulaks convicted under the second category. From the very beginning, it was clear that there were insufficient resources to relocate hundreds of thousands of people. That was not a reason to ditch the idea of deportations, however. Dozens of trains filled with peasant families moved to the Urals, Siberia, and the northern regions of the Soviet Union. The journeys took many days and were an ordeal. Exhausted people were often made to walk for many kilometers from the railway station to their final destination. They were accommodated in unsuitable barracks and former churches. As a rule, men were separated from their families and sent to do hard labor. Women, children, and the elderly were left without means for survival. Terrible conditions, hunger, and hard labor caused high mortality, particularly among children.

Complaints and petitions by these initial special settlers exhibit the difficulties of their life. I reproduce two such letters by colonists who were exiled from the Crimea to the Urals. The letters were sent to the Political Red Cross, then forwarded to the OGPU. Written by different people deported to different areas of the Urals, the letters reveal strikingly similar problems. The authors' names remain unknown. The letters may have been anonymous, or perhaps the Political Red Cross made anonymous copies for the OGPU.

· 4 ·

Complaint from a special settler to the Political Red Cross
25 April 1930[9]

The truth about exiles.

We want to make sure that the center knows how the measures of the party and the Soviet regime are being distorted. Considering that we live in the freest country, with neither oppressors nor oppressed, it is impossible to keep silent about the flagrant abuses that we have witnessed during the time of our exile.

To start with our departure from the Crimea: many were taken from their houses and given only twenty minutes to prepare for exile. They were not given any indictment or legal explanation; their property was confiscated without leaving a bare minimum for survival, with no consideration for age, pregnancy, or disability. They were locked up, forty people to a carriage, and handed three buckets, one to be used as a toilet and two others for water. Here the unfortunate passengers felt, for the first time in many years, that they were not in a free country and that those who treated them like that should not be called authorities. Eighteen hundred people, among them women, the elderly, and infants, felt mocked by someone.

Water was not provided upon departure, and the empty buckets were an omen of the coming sorrowful and mysterious journey. What came next? Next came the unspeakable, for it was a shame to pass by cultural centers where no one knew that 1,800 people were being transported somewhere in manifestly unsanitary conditions, without food or water. The bucket, used by everyone without regard to sex, age, or time of day, was full. The rocking of the car caused it to spill its stinking contents over those sleeping on the floor. Water was provided at will by the train warden and was absolutely insufficient. Baby diapers rotted without enough water to launder them and poisoned the already stifling air of the locked car. This lasted for ten days, during which time food was provided only four times, and hot water once a day. People contracted infectious diseases. There were cases of infant deaths. In Nadezhdinsk, during the change of cars, there were cases of direct public badgering. Police and some party workers openly beat up the young and the old who moved slowly or who were suspected of an unwillingness to change cars. During the transfer to other cars, they were constantly yelling, "Go, parasite." The arrival at our destination, Bogoslovsky plant, fully demonstrated the degradation and misery of our situation. They call us settlers, but we do not know who we are, of which country we are citizens, or what rights and responsibilities we have. We are ordered to forestry work, accompanied by our families. They took men to the forest for logging while their families remained in the village, starving and waiting to be sent to their husbands. Some families live in the forest. If the rest come to live there, however, there will be massive infant mortality in the summer because everybody lives in common barracks without sanitation or medical assistance. Those who work receive meager food rations, with no chance to share it with their families. Families receive absolutely nothing. Those who brought some food with them can eat, while others starve. It is impossible to buy anything, for they sell nothing to the settlers, who at any rate have no money. They survive by exchanging personal belongings and bedsheets for food. The food situation is getting hopeless, and our relations with the administration have become hostile. The authorities have warned the local population not to supply us with newspapers. There is a sign in the movie theater saying that

settlers are not allowed to go to the cinema, under fear of reprisal, with punishment for those caught purchasing tickets. Packages received by mail are opened and torn before being given to the addressees.

There are still more facts. They order people to work on *subbotniks,** which means that, when necessary (i.e., every day), they take settlers from the streets, regardless of age or sex, and send them under guard to load timber or coal. They do not announce where they take people. People go hungry for eight to ten hours and get no food after the work is done, suffering tremendously.

Some settlers live in a church, which is overcrowded and has no ovens or fuel for cooking. This has caused widespread disease, high infant mortality, and deep depression. People are not born here, but they die here. Medical care is available only for money. If someone has no money, he is on his own. A pregnant woman who refused to go to work because of her pregnancy was arrested by the authorities and locked up in a cell, where she gave birth to a stillborn child. Workers in the forest are subject to the most cruel, inhuman treatment. Besides all these misfortunes that have nothing to do with the settlers themselves, an important factor is that all of them are from the southern Crimea: gardeners, horticulturists, and tobacco growers, unable to survive both timber harvesting and the harsh climate. The question arises, Who needs this senseless system of isolation and badgering of people, whose hostility toward the Soviet regime has not been established at all or was fabricated from the statements of their personal enemies? Being in full agreement with the Soviet regime, we trust that the center will demonstrate at least a minimum of concern and alleviate our present situation.

· 5 ·

Complaint from a special settler to the Political Red Cross
[Before 8 August 1930][10]

Trip in a cargo train: Sevastopol–Moscow–Sverdlovsk–Nadezhdinsk (26 March–4 April 1930)

They loaded only part of the luggage; the rest was left behind in Sevastopol and lost. There were forty to forty-two people in each car. [We] were let out to go to the toilet no more than four or five times, irregularly and without regard to sex. At other times, people had to use buckets. They

* *Subbotnik*—traditionally a weekend day of voluntary work at one's enterprise or in a public area (Trans.).

gave free bread in Sevastopol upon departure. Later it was possible to buy some more at the stations. As a rule, potable water was scarce. We often spent a whole day without water. Children suffered from thirst the most. We received hot food three times in ten days, twice at night and once during the day, when they filmed us.

In Nadezhdinsk the receiving officers were particularly rude. The air was filled with profanity; they pushed and hit people, men and women alike. This was in sharp contrast with the polite behavior in Massandra and during the train journey to Nadezhdinsk.

We were then put on a narrow-gauge train, Nadezhdinsk to Sosva. Two cars, loaded mostly with flour, as well as fats, dry fruit, etc., were not reloaded onto the narrow-gauge train. It is unclear who disposed of them or how they did it. The cargo consisted of the confiscated property of the settlers. We traveled thirty-two kilometers on a narrow-gauge track to Pospelkovo, where we immediately stepped off into the snow but were forbidden to enter the station to warm up. People spent three days and nights in the snow, in the −12° C cold, including the children, many of whom were barefoot. Children formed at least 40 percent of the entire mass of people. For three days officials did not show up, except for one warden. We received neither hot water nor bread for three days.

It took three days to transport the luggage to the villages, and only the old women were allowed to ride. Often children under seven walked in the snow up to their knees and in the −15° C cold through the night.

The next week they again gave us no food and refused to distribute what arrived in the aforementioned cars. One week later, in the −18° C cold, they started to assign people to the barracks of the Morozkovsk forestry camp. With rare exceptions, people had to walk on their own. There were cases of children dying of cold in the arms of their poorly dressed mothers. It was probably then that an old Tatar man was lost. His body was found on the road from Semionovo to the Pinkino station after the snow had melted. In the Pinkino station barracks, measles broke out among the workers' children. Despite the parents' protests, [healthy] children were also put into these barracks, and they immediately contracted measles, resulting in two deaths. Pleas for help by the forestry camp's medical attendant went unheeded (although the Morozkovo station was only eight versts* away).

Soon they started to force people to work in the forest, with no exceptions for mothers of sick children. There was no medical care for seriously ill adults, either. A week later, we started collecting twigs while knee-deep in water. Everybody had to work, including ten- and twelve-year-old chil-

* *Versta*—old Russian measure of distance, approximately 1.06 kilometers (Trans.).

dren. Our four-day pay was 2.5 pounds of bread. No other food was provided, including that brought by the settlers themselves.

Starting in June, working settlers were allowed to purchase rations for nonworking family members (limited to 5.5 kilograms of flour and several grams of other foodstuffs). Some of the disabled settlers started receiving such rations, for which they had to pay. After June more people were allowed to purchase rations.

After 30 March children were also sent to load lumber [. . .]. Loading lumber proved disastrous: bleeding, spitting of blood, prolapse, etc. So many people fell ill. For a short time, they stopped forcing people to work, but also stopped providing food [. . .]. People continued to die and give birth in the barracks, because going to the Nadezhdinsk hospital was forbidden, with rare exceptions, even in the case of fractures and surgery.

Forced labor returned in early July, when children under the age of sixteen were ordered to collect resin ten to fifteen versts away, without parental accompaniment. The was a mass recruitment to load timber, despite medical certificates of tuberculosis, female diseases, etc. Treatment was very rude, because foremen were almost always drunk. They even made sixty-four-year-old men work. One old Jew was particularly harassed for being a Jew. In addition to the typical rudeness and curses by the administrators, there were instances when special police beat up two children, aged ten and thirteen, and foremen assaulted two young people who had passes. They talk a lot about similar cases in other sectors of the camp. They say there were cases of rape at the Sotkno station by a foreman and by a special policeman, Bykov. The higher administration promised to punish them all but always spared the head of the station, Efim, who participated in the assaults.

According to OGPU data, only 113,013 families (551,330 people) were exiled in 1930, half the number set by the Politburo in January–February 1930.[11] One of the main reasons for this underfulfillment of the plan was the dismal situation with regard to placing and employing kulaks in exile. A snapshot of this problem can be seen in the Urals (one of the main exile centers) in February 1931, one year after the deportations began. Only 74,500 out of the 134,000 special settlers in the Urals were housed there in buildings erected for them, with 0.9 square meters per person. Other special settlers took shelter in the villages with local residents. Terrible overcrowding, as well as a lack of food and clothing, led to exhaustion and the spreading of infectious disease. The death rate among children and the elderly was particularly high. Of the 134,000 special settlers, 21.7 percent were handicapped, not including children.[12] According to OGPU authorities, 40 percent of special settlers in Western Siberia in February 1931 "lived in makeshift huts, dugouts, barracks, etc."[13] Harsh conditions led special settlers to try mass escapes, which the authorities lacked resources to prevent. One scholar, N. A. Ivnitsky, estimates that more than 100,000 people died in the zones for special settlers in 1930, not including tens of thousands of escapees, many of whom also died.[14]

The government decided to compensate for the disaster of the special exile plans in 1930 by undertaking a more sizable deportation of kulaks the next year. According to the OGPU, 381,173 families (1,803,392 people) were exiled in 1930–31.[15] In 1931 several times more people were exiled. The number of those sentenced to the camps was only slightly less than in 1930, and the number of executions, though cut in half, remained significant (10,651; see Document 90).

In March 1931 a Politburo commission was formed to direct the new deportations. It was headed by Stalin's closest allies, A. A. Andreev and, later, Ya. E. Rudzutak. The commission coordinated the activities of various state institutions dealing with the exile and accommodation of kulaks, and it authorized new repressions, the employment of special settlers in industry, and the allocation of resources. On 15 May 1931 the Andreev commission resolved: "In view of the poor management of the settlers' workforce and their accommodation by economic departments, the economic, administrative, and organizational management of special settlers shall be subordinated to the OGPU."[16] In addition to organizing the deportations, the OGPU was now responsible for the special villages and the exploitation of the kulaks (earlier these functions were reserved for the NKVD, as well as various economic ministries and departments). Special villages, which contained more convicts than the camps did, became an important component of the OGPU penal system.

After taking charge of special settlers, the OGPU leadership acted predictably: it ordered an inspection of the regions of "special migration" in order to demonstrate the terrible conditions under the old administration. The inspection reports were rather candid. A typical report is the 25 July 1931 memorandum by the deputy head of the Gulag, M. D. Berman, on the inspection of the special settlements of Ural province. Berman reported that the forestry administration of the Urals forced special settlers to work for a pittance, provided meager rations, and imposed work targets far exceeding those of the hired laborers. It often transferred special settlers who resisted or were unable to work to penal teams or confined them in the barracks and subjected

them to beatings. Special settlers lived in crowded rooms and constantly starved. "The commission witnessed swollen, immobilized children dying of hunger. Hunger has caused a number of suicides. All the grass around the barracks was eaten, as well as the tree bark." As a result, 70–75 percent of all children and 20 percent of the adults were sick.[17]

The situation of hundreds of thousands of kulaks was so desperate that the authorities could no longer ignore it. The main idea of the exile—isolation of the regime's opponents and development of the remote regions using forced labor—did not work. The living conditions caused many deaths and escapes. In a number of cases, wardens of the colonies, unable to prevent mass deaths, encouraged escapes: "If you are able to go and have money, leave at night and disappear so that we don't see you."[18] According to OGPU documents, in 1930–31 more than 1.8 million people were exiled. On 1 January 1932, however, only 1.3 million special settlers were registered.[19] Since healthy peasants were more likely to escape, the proportion of disabled persons grew very quickly. Instead of reaping the benefits of free labor, the state became burdened by the ever-growing numbers of dependents surviving on meager rations. Children in the special villages suffered most. According to the Politburo commission report, in early 1932 the death rate among children under eight "in some places" (i.e., almost everywhere) reached 10 percent in one month.[20] The suffering of children elicited a strong, sympathetic reaction on the part of the local population, which was reflected in numerous letters sent to central government offices.[21]

The authorities were also concerned with the growing social tensions in the exile settlements, no matter how far they were from the center. At least two major protest actions by special settlers attracted Moscow's attention. On 20 April 1931 several hundred special settlers in Nadezhdinsk region, Ural province, took to the railroad and attempted a march on the regional center. Apparently, it was a peaceful action under the slogan "If food is not supplied, we will abandon the settlement." Several days after the event, the OGPU investigation revealed a terrible picture of hunger and abuse of the special settlers by the wardens of the settlement and the foremen of the lumber farms. Many special settlers died of hunger and torture.[22]

A serious riot took place in late July 1931 in Parbig settlement in Eastern Siberia. Between several hundred and two thousand special settlers, armed with axes, clubs, and shotguns, took part in the riot,

which was put down by the OGPU and communist volunteer units. Many mutineers fled to the taiga, pursued by the OGPU and the police.[23]

Facing mass escapes, the OGPU took measures to prevent them and to recruit informers among special settlers (their contribution was officially called Cheka servicing). Plans included setting up ambushes on the known escape routes, creating "support groups" from among communists to help capture the escapees, strengthening the guard, and offering bonuses for capturing special settlers. At the same time, the OGPU leaders realized that the most effective means of preventing escapes would be "creating the living conditions that would not encourage escapes."[24]

This obvious truth led to a certain modification of the anti-kulak policy and a stress on the "economic and administrative improvement" of exile. The most important alteration in kulak policy was a decision to stabilize the number of exiled kulaks. On 20 July 1931 the Politburo resolved to discontinue mass deportations of kulak families and to limit further deportations in the areas of total collectivization to "special cases."[25] Although this resolution did not stop repression in the countryside, it reduced the scale of the kulak deportations: 71,000 people were exiled in 1932.[26]

Those deported received no explanation of their crime or what they were to expect. Because the government did not establish the terms of exile or conditions of liberation, at first there were many rumors about prompt release. In the opinion of OGPU leaders, such rumors hampered the kulaks' adjustment to their new circumstances. On 3 July 1931, following the resolution of the Politburo, the Central Executive Committee (TsIK) of the USSR issued a decree establishing that after five years of exile, the kulaks could be reinstated to all rights, including the right to vote, if they "abandon the struggle against collectivized peasants" and demonstrate good work.[27] The resolution intentionally did not mention the right of special settlers to leave exile after five years. However, as long as the exiled peasants did not know about their future, the authorities could consider this document as stabilizing. The OGPU leaders ordered the TsIK resolution posted in conspicuous locations throughout the camps "with the aim of increasing the productivity of labor, bringing down the number of escapees and expressions of dissatisfaction, etc."[28] According to the commission of the Procuracy of the USSR, which inspected the exile locations in 1931, "The decree about the reinstatement of rights after five years of

exile had a profound effect on those exiled. They realized that the regime had no intention of physically exterminating them, but had, rather, a focus on the elimination of the kulaks as a class."[29]

A Politburo resolution of 10 August 1931, "On special settlers," based on the semiannual report by the Andreev commission, outlined a quasi-program to "keep special settlers in their places of settlement."[30] The authorities counted on the improvement of living conditions brought about by exiles growing their own produce; also, peasant settlers might be attracted by the chance to work a plot of land. Special settlers received sizable plots for vegetable gardens, as well as seeds, tools, and cattle, as part of a two-year, 40 million ruble credit. If there were 1 million exiles, this amounted to only forty rubles per person. The Andreev commission, realizing that even that money would be difficult to allocate, suggested additional privileges to help mobilize the exiles' resources. They were allowed to purchase horses, cows, and other livestock and to build individual housing without limitations. The exiles working in industry were also allowed to maintain vegetable gardens. All exiles were relieved of all taxes and payments in kind to the state for two years.

The work of special settlers in industry, on state farms, and in the unregulated artels, or cooperatives, was now better organized. The August resolution equalized the salaries, supply norms, and other benefits of the special settlers working on state farms to those of free laborers. Several days earlier, the Politburo had established the output rates for special settlers and free laborers in all enterprises and reduced the deductions from salaries in favor of the OGPU from 25 to 15 percent.[31]

An important part of the program to "strengthen special exile as an institution" was the focused policy toward young people, referred to in the August Politburo resolution as "isolating the youth from the counterrevolutionary influence of old kulaks." Initially young people were granted insignificant benefits, such as the right to organize youth brigades, participate in labor competition (not "socialist" competition, as among free laborers), and join technical, sport, and other activity groups. The only real act adopted by the Politburo on 10 August, allowing young people over eighteen early restitution of civil rights, including the right to free relocation, was rescinded a few weeks later by order of Stalin.[32] But even this nominal separation of young special settlers into a unique group marked the beginning of a process of dilution in the exile experience, which was taken further in later years.

To reduce the pressure of exile, special settlers were from time to

time allowed to send "elements incapable of working" (children and old men) to the care of relatives and friends. The 10 August resolution also allowed the transfer of orphaned children from the special settlements to special institutions for children or to the care of local families (including the well-off families of special settlers). Old people who had no relatives to support them were transferred to the state-managed "homes for invalids." According to a circular letter from G. Yagoda, deputy OGPU chairman, by January 1932 more than 3,600 orphans had been identified and more than 2,100 of those had been relocated, although almost no invalids had been sent to invalid homes. Yagoda again demanded steady work to finish the task within one month.[33] Six months later, a Gulag circular letter concerning the use of unemployable special settlers again referred to this problem. Aside from the relocation of invalids and orphans to invalid homes and orphanages or to relatives, the policy statement ordered the establishment of special settlements for families without regularly employable members, such as families of invalids and old men or orphans under twelve years of age. These colonies were supposed to start producing consumer merchandise immediately.[34] Considering that no money was allocated to create these colonies, however, it is unlikely that this order was implemented.

To prevent escapes and reduce the number of state dependents, camp authorities often commuted sentences and permitted kulaks given short terms to move to special settlements and reunite with their families.[35]

On 25 October 1931 separate resolutions on special settlers were compiled into a document of instructions, "Provisional instructions on the rights and duties of special settlers, on administrative functions, and on the rights of the Administration of Settlements in the zones of special migration," which regulated the rights and duties of the special settlers, as well as the administrative offices that oversaw them.[36] According to these instructions, special settlers were employed by orders from the OGPU. They were assigned to particular settlements and houses and had no right even to change apartments without official permission. The instructions reaffirmed many of the earlier orders: the right of special settlers to a salary and goods equal to free laborers'; the right to build individual housing and acquire property, including livestock and tools; the right of their children to study in local schools; the right of homeless children and invalids to social services; and the right of families to transfer their children to outside care. The instructions also established a 15 percent salary deduction to cover the costs of "administrative services" for special settlers.

A clearer elucidation of administrators' rights to punish special settlers (sentences of five to ten days and fines of five to ten rubles) was vital, considering the abuses and crimes committed by wardens and their assistants. In addition to arrests and fines, territorial departments for special settlements could move special settlers to more difficult jobs, relocate them to different settlements, or bar them from work for up to two months. To deny food rations as a punishment was explicitly forbidden. But special settlers were punishable for crimes just as other citizens were. In addition to the instructions, Yagoda recommended the discontinuation of penal teams and penal quarters for special settlers. His circular letter stressed that "the regime in such quarters is similar to the regime in the camps. Beyond this, such illegalities as additional work and denial of salaries are permitted there. This does not and cannot contribute to the [successful] employment of special settlers in industry."[37] A Gulag circular letter of 8 April 1932 urgently ordered the removal of those wardens, assistants, and guards who were recruited from among the convicts: "Life has shown that this contingent of workers is the most prone to committing crimes at work."[38]

A certain diminution of repressive and arbitrary treatment of kulaks, but more significantly the hard work and resiliency of the special settlers, helped to avoid a total catastrophe in the system of special exile. Even so, the situation in the "Gulag peasant zone" remained dismal. In 1932 famine took over the country. Despite the arrival of new exiles, by the end of 1932, according to internal statistics, the number of special settlers had decreased by 175,000 people over the course of the year—down to 1,142,000. Almost 90,000 special settlers were registered as dead, and 207,000, as escaped.[39]

New Camps

As a result of mass punitive actions and the transfer of inmates sentenced to three or more years to the jurisdiction of the OGPU, the network of corrective labor camps grew much faster than originally planned in 1929. The number of inmates in the Solovetsky camp grew from 19,876 to 57,325 between 1 April 1929 and 1 April 1930. The main influx (19,720), which occurred between November and January, prompted the construction of several new camps.[40] By the summer of 1930 such camps as the Northern, Vishersky, Siberian (Siblag), Far Eastern, Kazakhstan, and Central Asian camps were finished or under construction. By August 1930 the total number of inmates in the camps was about 170,000.[41] Still, the future of the camps was unclear. Even the

OGPU leaders originally saw the camp network as a provisional measure, a temporary and inefficient way to house and employ the inmates.

· 6 ·

G. G. Yagoda's proposals to convert camps into colonization settlements
12 April 1930[42]

To Comrades Bokyi, Eikhmans, Messing, Yevdokimov.

The question of the camps must be resolved from a different perspective. Today the camp is a mere gathering of inmates, whose labor we use without any prospects for either the inmates or ourselves. It is essential to make labor more voluntary by giving the inmates more freedom after work. We have to convert the camps into colonization settlements without waiting for the conclusion of prison terms. Reducing a sentence for good behavior, out of philanthropic impulse, is unacceptable and often quite harmful. This also gives the wrong impression that the inmate has been rehabilitated and a hypocritical notion of good behavior, which may be suitable for bourgeois states, but not for us. The whole purpose of transferring inmates to us is to liquidate prisons. It is clear that, under the existing system, their liquidation will take many years, because a camp per se is worse than prison. We have to colonize the North in the shortest possible time.

Here is my plan: All inmates should be transferred to settlements until the end of their terms. Do it this way: a group (1,500 people) of selected inmates from different regions—give them lumber and offer to build huts for them to live in (develop a project; take one from Austrin). Those willing to bring their families should be allowed to do so. [They will be] controlled by a warden, in a settlement of 200–300 houses. During their spare time, after the lumbering season, they (especially the weak) will work in vegetable gardens, raise pigs, mow grass, and fish. At first they will survive on rations, and later—on their own. The settlement could be expanded by adding exiles. All settlements [should be] numbered. In the winter all residents will go lumbering or do work as we indicate. There are colossal deposits of natural resources there: oil and coal, for instance. I am sure that, years from now, these settlements will become proletarian mining towns. Today our prisoners are, for the most part, agriculturalists. They are attracted to land. We now have very few guards and very few escapes. Even if someone escapes, it is unimportant. Those ten–fifteen guards who are now watching over thousands [of inmates] will live by the warden's office. Women should also be allowed to settle and marry. It should be done immediately. We have to find enthusiastic people capable of turning the entire prison system upside down; it has become thoroughly rotten.