

Intro movie text

Gulag: Many Days, Many Lives takes you inside the brutal system of forced labor concentration camps and internal exile—an institution called the Gulag—to which the Soviet Union subjected millions of its citizens. Gulag prisoners performed dangerous physical labor in the mines, forests and construction sites of the harshest inhabited climates on earth. Starvation food rations, rampant disease and violence from guards as well as other prisoners tormented the Gulag prisoner's daily existence.

Soviet authorities found the Gulag a useful tool to neutralize, and often physically destroy, all real or imagined opposition to the Communist Party's dictatorship. Yet it also served as the main Soviet penal system, punishing the same type of criminals incarcerated in virtually any country. Soviet authorities utilized the Gulag as the key weapon in their battle to rehabilitate or destroy criminals, class enemies and political opponents once and for all while simultaneously accomplishing the economic goal of opening remote regions to resource exploitation.

Although camps existed from the time of the 1917 Russian Revolution itself, they only became the home to millions of prisoners in the early 1930s under the rule of Joseph Stalin, and they declined precipitously after his death in 1953. Though smaller and more focused on serious criminals, forced labor camps for political prisoners lasted into the late 1980s when reformer Mikhail Gorbachev led the Soviet Union. Soviet dissidents made up an important but small portion of the post-Stalin camp population. The last camp for political prisoners outside of Perm, Russia was closed in 1988 and has since been turned into a historic site and Gulag Museum.

In the Stalin era, some 18 million people passed through the prisons and camps of the Gulag, and perhaps another 6 or 7 million were sent into exile. More than one and a half million prisoners died in the Gulag at the hands of their government. Even those who survived had their lives destroyed by this brutal institution.

In the exhibit that follows, *Gulag: Many Days, Many Lives*, you will be assigned one former Gulag prisoner to accompany you through your exploration of life in this brutal institution. As you go from section to section, you will learn not only of the general story of this horrific institution, but you will also see the life story and the experiences of this individual unfold before you. After your trip through the exhibit, we invite you on a virtual visit to the Gulag Museum at Perm-36.

Main Text - Arrest

ARREST

MAIN TEXT

MOVIE SCRIPT

When citizens of Stalin's Soviet Union climbed into bed at night, an uninterrupted sleep was never a guarantee. The secret police's sharp 2 a.m. knock often launched an odyssey into the hellish depths of the Gulag. Many would never return alive.

When that 2 a.m. knock came, only one set of lights burned in an entire apartment building – that of the arrested man or woman. In cramped communal apartments, nothing remained secret, and neighbors would peek furtively out their door trying not to be noticed, trying not to be next. Frightened family members would watch as the secret police searched for potentially incriminating materials – anything that might indicate independent thought. Most new prisoners believed their arrest to be a mistake.

The Soviet police operated unpredictably, arresting people not only in the dark of night but also in the light of day. No matter when or where arrest occurred, special trucks outfitted with tiny prison cells hauled the new prisoners to their tormentors in an interrogation prison. The crushing loneliness of solitary confinement awaited some. Crowded cells smelling of sweat, urine, and feces greeted others. Prisoners only escaped their cell for marathon interrogations, enforced sleeplessness, and other forms of torture designed to elicit their "confessions" to often invented crimes. Interrogations concluded with a farcical trial that lasted perhaps several minutes before pronouncement of a predetermined verdict. For many, this was the end – a death sentence carried out almost immediately. The "lucky" found themselves boarding a stinking, crowded cattle car with just a hole in the floor for a toilet. Days or weeks later, they arrived to begin their sentence in a Gulag labor camp, usually with a weakened body and confused mind.

END MOVIE SCRIPT

SUBTOPIC 1: ARREST AND INTERROGATION

IMAGE DATABASE # 185

In Stalin's Soviet Union, arrests could happen anywhere, at any time, and to anybody. No citizen – regardless of power, position, or loyalty to the state – was ever totally safe from arrest.

IMAGES: DATABASE # 189 and 191

Most of the millions of men, women, and children imprisoned in the Gulag fell into one of four groups. First, there were those guilty of crimes such as rape, murder, or thievery – in other words, criminals who would be punished in any society. Second, there were “political prisoners” – sometimes true prisoners of conscience, but often ordinary men and women denounced by a personal rival, citizens arrested for something as innocuous as telling a joke about Stalin, or those incarcerated merely to fulfill the regime's arrest quotas. The third group contained members of particular social classes (such as the so-called “kulaks” or wealthy peasants) or of certain ethnic groups deemed dangerous by the state (like Soviet Germans, Chechens, and Crimean Tatars). The fourth group was those guilty of such “crimes” as leaving a job without permission or taking food from a field to feed a hungry family.

Robin Currie 7/17/07 3:36 PM
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IMAGES DATABASE # 192 and DATABASE # 200

Whether arriving at Moscow's infamous Lubyanka or at some regional prison, the newly arrested entered a basement labyrinth of crowded cells. Existing inmates immediately evaluated the toughness and worth of the newcomers, usually forcing them to sit next to the *parasha* – the cell's “shit bucket.” Torture and marathon interrogations offered the only respite from the cell, and even the most hardened of prisoners broke under interrogation and confessed to any made-up crime.

SUBTOPIC 2: “TRIAL”

In the following excerpt from *Stolen Years*, several prisoners recall the farcical justice of a Soviet trial.

VIDEOCLIP

FROM STOLEN YEARS:

Paulina Myasnikova - 22:45

This is how the trial went. They asked us our name, last name, patronymic, date of birth and whether or not we admitted our guilt. And then they left the room. Five minutes later they reappeared back in the room with the sentence all typed up, and you would get a 10-year prison sentence.

Nikolai Getman - 23:06

The trial lasted no more than 5 or 7 minutes. There was no need to prove any of the evidence. Everything had been determined in advance.

Simeon Vilensky – 23:22

My sentence was announced to me at the Butyrki prison. It was in a little cigarette paper-size document – tiny piece of paper. I was supposed to sign it, and confirm that I had heard the sentence, and received the document. I refused to sign it, but that didn't make any difference. That's all there was to the trial.

END VIDEO CLIP

SUBTOPIC 3: THOSE LEFT BEHIND

IMAGE DATABASE ITEM # 128

The parents, spouses, and children whom prisoners left behind faced a difficult life. In her poem "Requiem," Anna Akhmatova voiced the pain of those hoping for the slightest news about the fate of loved ones on the far side of the prison wall.

In the terrible years of the Yezhov terror I spent seventeen months waiting in line outside the prison in Leningrad...

*And I pray not for myself alone
but for all who stood outside the jail,*

*in bitter cold or summer's blaze,
with me under that blind red wall...*

*And if my country should ever assent
to casting in my name a monument,*

*I should be proud to have my memory graced,
but only if the monument be placed*

*not near the sea on which my eyes first opened –
my last link with the sea has long been broken...*

*but here, where I endured three hundred hours
in line before the implacable iron bars...*

*And from my motionless bronze-lidded sockets
may the melting snow, like teardrops, slowly trickle...*

Poems of Akhmatova, selected, translated, and introduced by Stanley Kunitz with Max Hayward. Boston, 1973.

Main Text - Labor

LABOR

Main Text

MOVIE SCRIPT

Armed guards and attack dogs accompanied many prisoners' daily march to their Gulag worksite. Icy winds battered their poorly clothed and barely fed bodies. Prisoners will die this day digging in the mines. Prisoners will die this day digging a 140-mile canal with the most primitive tools. Prisoners will die in the forest and in construction. Only the lucky will avoid hard labor in a workshop, a cafeteria or an office.

Gulag labor was inefficient and often lethal. Officials distributed food according to labor output, forcing prisoners to work long, hard hours trying to complete often impossible quotas, so that they might receive a full food ration. But even full rations often failed to provide enough calories to ensure health and survival. Exhaustion and starvation constantly accompanied prisoners. Many returned from work dead—carried on the backs of their fellow prisoners who then had to extend their workday to dig graves for the fallen.

END MOVIE SCRIPT

SUBTOPIC 1: THE NATURE OF LABOR PERFORMED

IMAGE DB #179

Work. Back-breaking, unskilled, inefficient physical work performed in impossible climates with starvation-level food rations. This was Gulag life.

In this excerpt from *Stolen Years*, several prisoners recall work in the Gulag.

VIDEOCLIP

FROM STOLEN YEARS Tamara Petkevich - 33:29

All of those years, we were hungry, cold and loaded down with impossible physical labor—forestry, digging, breaking rock, in other words, we returned to the barracks so weakened, knowing that at 5:00 in the morning, they would bang on the rails again, which meant that we would have to wake up for roll call and we would have to line up and put on our wet clothes that hadn't dried out from the previous day, and go back out to the woods.

Nikolai Getman - 36:23

Most of all, we dug mine shafts. But before we dug the shafts, we had to conduct exploratory digs. 2 meters, 3 meters, 4 meters, 5 meters. But you've got to realize that this is a permafrost region. Permafrost! We were working with stone, granite. All the labor was done by hand with pickaxes. All the debris had to be removed by hand. This was exhausting labor. Picks had to be sharpened and hardened, yet they never were.

SUBTOPIC 2: AVOIDING GENERAL LABOR

Even if prisoners managed to meet their outrageous production quotas, food provisions often failed to replenish the calories expended. Prisoners all knew that those most likely to survive were those most successful at avoiding hard labor.

IMAGE DB # 169

If prisoners could not avoid work entirely, they sought light work in camp kitchens, offices, hospitals, or barracks.

IMAGE DB #177
AND IMAGE DB #270

"We all agreed on the following maxims," recalled former prisoner Dmitri Panin: "a day of shirking guarantees a longer life; don't put in a single day's hard labor if you can help it; work is not a bear—it won't run off to the forest and disappear; even horses will die if they're overworked...We agreed that we would serve out our sentences, but not to end them prematurely along with our lives." (Panin, 50)

IMAGE DB # 167

Many prisoners intentionally injured themselves to avoid work—an act that could be prosecuted as sabotage. Joseph Scholmer remembered his desperation: "One evening I went to my friend Richard, the Estonian, and explained my predicament. 'You must smash my wrist for me with a piece of wood.' I had everything prepared. I had hidden a stout piece of wood in the snow. Richard asked, 'How hard shall I hit?'" (Scholmer, 125-126)

SUBTOPIC 3: TUFTA

Prisoners who could not avoid general labor needed to learn how to cheat while in the forest or the mines. Officials required prisoners to fulfill a certain labor quota every day—to mine a certain number of tons of coal, or cut a certain number of cubic feet of timber. They set quotas at levels impossible to fulfill given the climate and the poor food provisions, but survival often depended upon receiving the full ration of food that went with these quotas. So, the

prisoners invented numerous ingenious ways to cheat on their quotas, a practice referred to as *tufta* or *tukhta*.

IMAGE DB #163

Eugenia Ginzburg recalled *tufta* in the forests. "This forest is full of piles of timber cut by previous work gangs. No one ever counted how many there are...If you saw a small section at each end, it looks as if it had just been cut. Then you stack them up in another place, and there's your norm...This trick, which we christened 'freshening up the sandwiches,' saved our lives for the time being...[W]e laid the foundation of our pile with trees we had really cut down ourselves, leaving a couple or so we had felled but not yet sawn up to create the impression that we were hard at it. Then we went to fetch some of the old logs, 'freshening up' their ends and stacking them up on our pile."

[Ginzburg, *Into the Whirlwind*, pp. 428-9.]

Tufta led to reporting of false figures all the way up the chain of command and ultimately to Moscow. Sometimes it was discovered there. Thus, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn reported on an official telegram complaining about the discovery of *tufta* at the construction of the White Sea-Baltic Sea Canal. "It has been learned that, according to the [reports], 100 percent of the total amount of earth to be moved to build the canal has already been excavated several times over — yet the canal has not been finished." (*Gulag Archipelago*, v. 2, p. 95.)

IMAGE DB #604

Main Text - Suffering

SUFFERING

MOVIE TEXT

Deep, pounding hunger pangs tormented the Gulag prisoner's every moment. Shoving their way to the cafeteria window, prisoners craved...cried out for food, always knowing but wanting to forget that the thin, watery gruel...that the small hunk of bread (sometimes made of little more than sawdust)...that these pathetic "meals" would never prepare them for the climatic assault of the day.

The pathetic rags, not even worthy of being called "clothes," no more protected prisoners from the constant cold than the pitiful "food" satisfied their constant hunger. The Gulag, after all, inhabited some of the planet's coldest places deep in frozen Siberia.

Even the end of the work day brought no respite in this hell. Barely heated, crowded barracks stank of the ill and the dying, though even this was better than the "punished" prisoners who could spend months in a totally unheated, dank punishment cell with no blankets and a sub-starvation penalty food ration.

END MOVIE TEXT

SUBTOPIC 1: Hunger

No Gulag indignity consumed prisoners like hunger. Prisoners could think of nothing but the search for food. To scrounge an extra bowl of soup made for a great day in the camps. Bread was treated as gold. Eating was ritualized – a holy moment when every prisoner sought to convince himself that he was eating enough. Based on his own Gulag experience, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's famous novella *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* reflects on the ritual of eating. "You had to eat with all your thoughts on the food, like he was nibbling off these little bits now, and turn them over on your tongue, and roll them over in your mouth – and then it tasted so good, this soggy black bread." [Solzhenitsyn, *One Day*, p. 54 in 1990 Bantam edition]

IMAGE DB #271

Hunger could so destroy human dignity that scenes of prisoners digging through trash heaps in desperate hope of finding something edible became commonplace.

IMAGE DB #143 (NEED TO CROP IMAGE)

Dmitri Panin recalled, "Death from a bullet would have been bliss compared with what many millions had to endure while dying of hunger. The kind of death to which they were condemned has nothing to equal it in treachery and sadism." (Panin, 66)

SUBTOPIC 2: Cold

Gulag prisoners worked in some of the harshest inhabited climatic environments on the planet, whether north of the Arctic Circle or deep in the *taiga* and steppe of Siberia and Central Asia.

IMAGE: [Let's put a Gulag map here.](#)

DB #276

Prisoners were frequently forced to work outside in temperatures of -30 to -40 degrees Celsius (-22 to -40 degrees Fahrenheit) with extreme winds.

DB #278

In this excerpt from the documentary film *Red Flag*, former Gulag inmate Mikhail Mindlin recalls the cold and hunger of his imprisonment.

VIDEOCLIP

From RED FLAG:

Mikhail Mindlin

45:10

"First I worked on the BAM railway, then in Kolyma. The important thing was not to die of hunger. They gave you *balanda*, a soup with just a few fishbones and some oats floating around. We drank from metal bowls. They gave us a ladle of *balanda* and a lump of bread. We could hardly work for the cold. If we didn't move or work, we would have frozen. When someone wanted to relieve themselves, they had to take their mittens off. By the time they undid their trousers, their hands were frozen. As soon as they pulled it out, it froze. Many people had their parts amputated."

"There were no injections or anything to reduce pain. They didn't even have proper scalpels. When I was in the camp, they asked me to hold out my frostbitten foot. And with pliers, they just took chunks out. That was the treatment – the operation. It was considered that if you survived the first winter, you'd get through your sentence. Most people didn't survive."

END VIDEOCLIP

IMAGE DB #282

SUBTOPIC 3: Dehumanization

The indignities visited on prisoners did not stop with the hunger and the cold. Prisoners were frequently reminded that even their bodies were no longer their own.

IMAGE DB #254

Former prisoner Nadezhda Grankina recalled the indignities visited upon women arriving at a prison in Suzdal: "In the middle [of the cell], opposite the peephole, stood a table. Fifteen of us were called in. The duty officer came in and announced that anyone who attempted to resist would be severely punished...In came two women in uniform, who began to search us. They looked in our hair, inside our mouths, and between our toes and fingers. Then they ordered us to get dressed again and left. Two other women guards came in. One was wearing a rubber sheath on one of her fingers, and the other was carrying a glass with liquid in it. 'Take off your underpants and lie down,' one of them said. Horrified, we huddled like sheep in a corner, not saying a word and trying to hide behind each other. Finally a young Austrian [female prisoner] spoke up: 'Oh, this is nothing to be afraid of,' she declared defiantly, and lay down on the table opposite the peephole. The cover on the peephole continually scraped open and shut. A vaginal search: we also had to endure that. All of us had been brought there from maximum security prisons, and none of us could possibly have had anything illegal to hide. This was a simple act of barbarism." (Nadezhda Grankina in Vilensky, pg. 130)

IMAGE DB #218

Main Text - Propaganda

PROPAGANDA

MAIN TEXT

Movie Text

Over many Gulag camp gates, a slogan declared: "Labor in the USSR is a matter of honor, glory, courage and heroism."

In the barracks, posters screamed, "Glory to Stalin, the Greatest Genius of Mankind."

At the work place, banners urged, "More Gold for Our Country, More Gold for Victory!"

These proclamations of the glories of socialism, the heroism of Soviet labor, and the possibilities of reeducation and reintegration into Soviet society sat uneasily in an environment saturated with death and deprivation.

Millions survived their Gulag, but they would have laughed at the notion that they were re-educated. Most would have used words such as "traumatized," "brutalized," or "disfigured" – terms not featured on the propaganda posters.

END MOVIE TEXT

SUBTOPIC 1: THE GULAG AS EDUCATIONAL?

Soviet authorities presented their camps as the world's most progressive penal institution – at the forefront of a shift away from punishing and to reeducating prisoners. Camp newspapers, propaganda posters, political speeches, theatrical productions, film showings, literacy classes – these were just a few of the ways in which camp authorities sought to convince their prisoners of the educational aspects of Gulag life. They even created an entire administrative structure – the "cultural-educational sections," or K.V.Ch. – to oversee this Gulag activity. Prisoners viewed it as a cruel joke.

IMAGE DB #21

"The 'K.V.Ch.' which was supposed to conduct cultural and educational activities among the inmates," recalled former prisoner Jerzy Gliksman, "ran a Clubhouse in every zone, the so-called 'Red Corner,' a special barracks in which prisoners could – and were even expected to – spend their free time. Here the

inmates were supposed to read, study, play chess, or engage in other cultural pastimes. For the most part, however, these Clubhouses stood empty, and the vast majority of camp inmates never frequented them. The prisoners were far too tired and far too intensely concerned about satisfying their most primitive wants to find time and energy for filling intellectual needs.” (Gliksman, 327)

SUBTOPIC 2: SOVIET PROPAGANDA IN MICROCOSM

IMAGE DB #292

The content of the propaganda activities in Gulag camps mirrored those in the Soviet Union at large. Images of Stalin, slogans extolling the heroism of labor in the Soviet Union, explanations of the superiority of socialism to capitalism, lessons on hygiene and cultured living – all showed the type of society and the type of person Soviet authorities were trying to create. Above all, propaganda focused on labor, which was seen as the key to rehabilitating the criminal and to completing the camp’s economic plans. A prisoner who refused to work was refusing to reform himself and did not deserve rehabilitation or release.

[ADD IMAGE OF “GRAVEYARD OF THE LAZY” NOT YET IN DATABASE.]

In this excerpt from *Stolen Years*, former prisoner and painter Nikolai Getman recalls working on propaganda in the Gulag.

FROM STOLEN YEARS Nikolai Getman – 45:31

“So I was given jobs painting slogans and posters. Slogans like ‘shockwork is the path to liberation,’ or ‘liberation through honest toil.’ And whose quotations were these? The words of our great father. So I had to make a portrait of him, as well. I did a good job of painting him. His portrait came out well.”

IMAGES DB #311 and #296 (IMAGE CAPTIONS NEED GOOD DETAIL ON THE CONTENT OF THE POSTERS)

SUBTOPIC 3: PROPAGANDA’S IMPACT

Measuring the impact of propaganda is difficult. Despite all they suffered, many Gulag prisoners loved their country, and when it faced a battle for its very survival in World War II – the Soviet Union’s “Great Patriotic War” – the love of country proclaimed in camp propaganda found a receptive audience. Eugenia Ginzburg recalled the arrival in Kolyma of news about the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union. “We, the outcasts, racked by four years of suffering, suddenly felt

ourselves citizens of this country of ours. We, its rejected children, now trembled for our [motherland]." (*Within the Whirlwind*, p. 27)

Many Gulag prisoners worked hard in the camps to provide food, energy, and munitions for the front. More than a million prisoners were even released to join the Red Army at the front, and some performed heroically in defense of the motherland. But did their love of country and their heroic actions come from the Gulag's propaganda? It seems very unlikely.

IMAGE DB #148

Main Text - Conflict

CONFLICT

MAIN TEXT

MOVIE TEXT

To survive the Gulag, prisoners had to compete not only with the elements, the authorities, the work, and the starvation, but also with other prisoners. Suspicion, jealousy, and violence pervaded a world where prisoners fought for access to limited necessities of life. Prisoners stole food and clothes from each other; they grabbed credit for the labor output of others; they informed to curry favor with authorities. They even raped and beat to satisfy desires for sex, power and violence.

Prisoners had to make quick judgments about other inmates – knowing whom to trust was key for survival. Was the prisoner sitting next to you an informer, a member of a violent criminal gang, part of a rival nationalist group, or even a potential rapist?

Wartime Gulag prisoner Janusz Bardach captured the uncertainties: “Chelovek cheloveku volk – ‘man is wolf to man.’ My mother had taught me this phrase when I was a child. Now it bore into my heart every day, every hour, as I saw prisoners fight each other savagely for paika or a puff of a cigarette; heard them curse, cry, and moan; smelled their decaying, rotting bodies; saw them die. I could be forced to lie on a bench in this or in another bathhouse and be repeatedly raped not by my oppressors – whom I considered to be the NKVD guards – but by my fellow prisoners. For the first time I realized how vulnerable I was – only twenty-two, alone, and still too weak to resist an assault.” (Bardach, p. 125)

END MOVIE TEXT

SUBSECTION 1: CRIMINAL GANGS

The tattooed members of the Gulag’s criminal gangs posed the most serious threat to those who did not belong. These criminal gangs maintained their own vicious subculture in the Gulag, one notable for its vulgar language, pornographic tattoos, gambling (often with the life and limbs of other prisoners as the stakes), and violence against all inmates not in the gang. Criminal gangsters robbed, beat, raped, and murdered their fellow prisoners, often with the toleration or outright encouragement of the Gulag authorities.

“The professional criminals are beyond the bounds of humanity,” observed Eugenia Ginzburg in the typically stark terms used by political prisoners to describe the criminal gangs. “I have no desire to describe their orgies, although I had much to put up with as an involuntary witness.” (*Within the Whirlwind*, 12)

In this excerpt from *Stolen Years*, several political prisoners recall their experience with the criminal gangs.

VIDEO CLIP FROM *STOLEN YEARS* Simeon Vilensky – 37:23

The camp criminals lived at the expense of the political prisoners. In other words, the political prisoners did the actual labor, while the criminals, who often didn't do any work divided up the work quota points among themselves.

Nadezhda Joffe – 37:38

The criminals didn't work at all. The men had to cart wheelbarrows with ore around the side and the criminals used to sing a little ditty. “Wheelbarrow, wheelbarrow, don't you fear, I won't touch you, or come near.”

Nikolai Getman – 37:55

The criminals were obviously a lowly bunch of people. They despised those of us convicted of political crimes. They called us, enemies of the people. If they like a jacket or pants that we were wearing, they would make us give it up.

THE FOLLOWING QUOTE SHOULD BE THE CAPTION FOR ONE OF THE TATTOO IMAGES

“In the same primitive manner they liked to tattoo arms and legs, and in some cases, entire bodies. More than once I saw people who resigned themselves to the painful treatment of their skin by amateur tattooers. The designer first came in with a drawing representing some mysterious symbol – a big cross, an eagle, or a dragon, and then the legend. Girls, too, underwent the same operation – and some of them finished up with incredibly obscene tattoos. They were done with several needles strung together on a thread, and dipped in the color chosen by the client.” (Solomon, 138)

SUBSECTION 2: AMONG THE CRIMINALS

Membership in a criminal gang did not guarantee safety. Gangs operated with their own internal code of conduct, their “thieves' law,” and punishment for its violation was quick and lethal. Michael Solomon recalled one incident: “Sashka got up from his bunk. He was a young lad, bony, with hollow cheeks and watery blue eyes. Like all of us, his head was shaven. At 23 he had been jailed several times, and now, as a habitual criminal he had been sent to work in the mines of Kolyma. In the Arctic camps, Sashka, like all of those of his kind, refused to work and managed to live from what he stole from the kitchen or from the poor meals

of his fellow inmates. He didn't earn much as he had to share the 'fats' and the sugar with the senior thieves. Now he faced judgment for the worst offense in the criminal world: 'selling' his brother thieves to the camp administration. For such a crime of betrayal there was only one punishment – death." (Solomon, 133)

After the Second World War, a pitched battle broke out between criminal gangs – the so-called "bitches' war." Members of criminal gangs who had supported the Soviet war effort were accused of breaking the thieves' law, of becoming "bitches." The resultant conflict between the "bitches" and the "thieves" was protracted and violent through the late 1940s and early 1950s.

SUBSECTION 3: SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Prisoners faced the constant threat of rape, both homosexual and heterosexual.

IMAGE DB #291 (Make sure caption that appears notes translation of the sign on the camp gate – "Work in the USSR is a matter of honor, glory, courage, and heroism.")

IMAGE DB #320

"[A]n excited group of prisoners gathered around a bench next to the wall," recalled Janusz Bardach. "Those in the back row were jumping up, trying to see over the heads and shoulders of those in front, who were shouting obscenities and holding their penises....A young man lay on his stomach [in the baths], and another man lay on top of him, embracing him around the chest and moving his hips back and forth. His back was tattooed with shackles, chains, and the popular Soviet slogan 'Work is an act of honor, courage, and heroism.' On both sides were trumpeting angels. He breathed heavily, while the young man underneath moaned and cried out. The spectators shouted. I caught sight of the young man's grimacing face." (Bardach, p. 125)

In this excerpt from *Stolen Years*, Yelena Glinka describes gang rape on a ship transporting prisoners to the Gulag.

VIDEO CLIP FROM STOLEN YEARS Yelena Glinka – 26:06

We were taken to this ship. We were marching, 5 abreast, as always, in columns. 5 abreast, surrounded on all sides by guards, guards dogs, German shepherds. All around, guards with machine guns.

27:03 – They loaded us aboard, and the first thing that happened was that female criminals – the people from the criminal underworld – began to rob us of our own clothes. They made the women strip. The women resisted, they yelled, they

batted. It got so bad, that if the criminals liked your underwear, they made you sleep naked – naked – and tossed you some flea infested rags, in return.

28:12 – The prisoners in one of the men’s holds found a pickaxe. They pierced a whole through the wall – into the women’s hold with a pickaxe. And the men – the criminals began filling the women’s hold, and then they gang raped the women.

END VIDEOCLIP

SUBSECTION 4: ETHNO-NATIONAL CONFLICT

IMAGE: DB #315

The multi-national and multi-ethnic composition of the Gulag fostered further conflict. Prisoners often clung together in ethno-nationally homogenous groups – Russian, Ukrainian, Estonian, Chechen – and conflicts often emerged among these groups. Some prisoners, especially from western Ukraine and the Baltics, had been part of fiercely nationalist partisan armies that fought against the Soviets during and after World War II. Upon arrival in the Gulag, many took out their frustrations especially on Russian and Jewish prisoners, whom they blamed for their subjugation. Anti-Semitism was common among nearly all national groups, who wrongly deemed all Jews communists. As Joseph Scholmer recalled, “Whenever conversation in the camps turns to the subject of what will happen when the Soviet Union collapses, the enemies of the Jews, whether Lithuanians, Ukrainians, or Poles, always say the same thing: ‘You can be sure of one thing, there won’t be a single Jew left alive by the time we’ve finished.’” [Scholmer, p. 102]

Main Text - Solidarity

SOLIDARITY

MOVIE SCRIPT

Conflict and violence pervaded the Gulag, but so too did solidarity, compassion, and the close bonds forged in hardship. Finding allies was critical to survival. Often, alliances followed the same lines as conflict. Prisoners within the same ethnic group often looked out for one another. Criminal gangs provided protection for their own members and their favored friends. People from the same political party, religion or region, speakers of the same language, people with similar interests, mothers – there were many ways for prisoners to find common cause with one another.

Prisoners who survived their first months in camps were more likely to survive their full sentences, precisely because they had developed support networks.

Prisoners formed particularly intense relationships, whether in love or in hatred. Simple human compassion was not uncommon, even when it meant sacrificing your own chance for survival. At times, even the free Soviet population or Gulag guards themselves would find the courage to help a struggling prisoner. Such acts posed grave danger for those who helped because the Soviet authorities understood any sign of solidarity with prisoners as evidence of an anti-Soviet viewpoint.

END MOVIE SCRIPT

FIND MOVIE CLIP FOR THIS THEME!!!

SUBTOPIC 1: NATIONAL SOLIDARITY

Nationality groups in the Gulag tended to form tight-knit mutual-assistance networks, especially among those who spoke languages other than Russian.

DB #263 [IF WE CAN GET PERMISSION, OR FROM MEMORIAL]

Prisoner cooks tended to favor their co-nationals with the best food. Prisoners evaluated one another's trustworthiness based on stereotyped images of national identity. Thus, former prisoner Edward Buca remembered that some Georgians trusted him, a Pole, because "the Poles aren't usually double-crossers." Co-nationals were often the key to survival in a world where it was difficult, even impossible, to survive alone.

SUBTOPIC 2: RELIGION IN THE GULAG

Religious believers went to great lengths to maintain their rituals inside the camps. Joseph Scholmer recalled Lithuanian Catholics holding mass 600 feet below the surface in an unused portion of a mine. "About twenty men had collected there.... All were standing there in silence: they were sunk in prayer. They felt quite safe here. No soldier who values his life would ever venture down into the pit.... [After the Mass] we departed as silently as we had come." [Scholmer, p. 130]

IMAGE #264

Even gender segregation—a significant hindrance to a Catholic woman who could only receive the sacraments from a male priest—could be creatively overcome. As the historian Reverend Christopher Lawrence Zuger has written, "In many camps, Catholic women would write down their sins on a piece of paper or tree bark with a number, which would be smuggled to the priests on the men's side [of a Gulag labor camp]. The priests would go along the fence and silently dispense absolution to the women, who held up their fingers to identify themselves, and smuggle penances back to them."

IMAGE DB #265

SUBTOPIC 3: INDIVIDUAL RELATIONSHIPS

Living in the Gulag fostered intense hatreds, but also intense friendship and even love. A prisoner's network of friends became like a new family.

IMAGE DB #266

Along with all its horrific stories of brutality and inhumanity, the Gulag was filled with moving tales of compassion. Dmitri Panin recalled one such moment: "I encountered a prisoner named Zaitsev. Before my arrest we had lived in the same engineers' barracks, although I do not recall that we had ever engaged in conversation. But now he joined me as I was walking about the camp one day. No doubt I presented such a pitiful sight that he was quite overcome. He asked me to come inside. I replied that the five steps up were too much for me and suggested that if he had something to show me, I would be better off waiting for him on the bench outside. A minute later he came back out, holding a small package that turned out to contain bread. The compassion of this virtual stranger so impressed me that, in my weakened condition, my eyes filled with tears. I whispered, 'What marvelous people there are in this world.' With perfect clarity I saw how the power of goodness was uniting the two of us in that single

moment of time, how it ignited the spark of love. This is what holds the world together." (Panin, 171)

IMAGE DB #258

GUARDS

MOVIE TEXT

Every day, Gulag guards announced the march to work: "A step to the left or a step to the right is considered an attempt to escape. We will shoot without warning." Sadistic guard behavior toward inmates was a hallmark of Gulag life. Blatant murder of prisoners could be covered up with two simple words "attempted escape."

Soviet authorities constantly sought to prevent any sympathy from the guards for their prisoners. Guards were constantly reminded that they were the steel in the state's sword battling the evil prisoners – enemies bent on destroying the glorious society being built in the Soviet Union. Propaganda hammered home the supposed perversions and dangers of these anti-Soviet, virtually sub-human prisoners. Conditions in the camps did little to belie the characterizations of the propaganda, especially if Gulag authorities could keep guards from getting to know prisoners on a personal level.

Working conditions for the guards reinforced the propaganda. While Gulag guards certainly had it easier than the prisoners, serving on a prisoners' convoy in the harsh environments of Siberia was a difficult job. No amount of clothing completely protected a person in a Kolyma winter, and in these freezing temperatures, Gulag guards were required to maintain high vigilance. For they could be severely punished...could even become Gulag prisoners themselves, if an escape happened under their watch.

The entire Gulag apparatus was set up with incentives that heavily punished guards for prisoner escapes but rarely found fault with guard violence against prisoners – and often even rewarded violence against prisoners under the guise of preventing escapes. In such circumstances, guard brutality was unsurprising. Yet somehow, amidst all of this, signs of humanity, of guards taking pity on the prisoners, were surprisingly common.

END MOVIE TEXT

SUBTOPIC 1: GUARD VIOLENCE

Gulag guards endured their own brutal existence, and through a combination of frustration and indoctrination they frequently directed that brutality at inmates.

In this videoclip, former prisoner Oleg Volkov recalls some of the violence at one of the Soviet Union's first Gulag camps, in the Solovetsky islands.

VIDEO CLIP

FROM SOLOVKI POWER

Oleg Volkov - 29:16;20

"The northern mosquitoes were used to punish the prisoners. There was a square cordoned off by the barbed wire – a marshy shoreline and large boulders. On one of those large, table like boulders, they put the prisoners stripped naked with guards all around them. They had to stand there without stirring. The midges and mosquitoes fly in thick clouds there, they covered the prisoners and bit them. I remember the punishment of the "little Christs", prisoner from a religious sect who considered it a sin to give their name or work for the "antichrists," when asked their name, they answered, "God knows." To break their resistance, they used mosquito punishment. Then the commandant ran up to them and said: "Now, we'll finish you off, you scoundrels!" When the guards had already loaded up...stop filming...it's very upsetting to talk about."

Oleg Volkov - 36:30

"I didn't experience the full horror of Sekirny Hill. They were very cruel. They beat and tortured people. They pushed bound prisoners down this long flight of stairs [375 in all]. Then there was another punishment, "the pole." You had to stay sitting on a narrow beam and the guards would not let you get down. It was very exhausting. You might sit there for days on end."

END VIDEOCLIP

In this videoclip, Yelena Glinka recalls the guards' treatment of young female prisoners.

VIDEO CLIP

FROM BBC DOCUMENTARY

Yelena Glinka 25 yrs for "Treason" (Also in Stolen Years, I believe)

A very emotional testimony of how the guards would take a group of girls to the club and rape them over and over. They used the girls any way they wanted. Some women died. I screamed "I'm in hell, I'm in Sodom." From BBC film

END VIDEOCLIP

SUBTOPIC 2: THE CLIMATE

The extreme climates of the Gulag did not discriminate. Though they had better food, clothing, and shelter than the prisoners, guards also suffered from the brutal conditions. As former Gulag prisoner Joseph Scholmer recalled, "Most of the soldiers at Vorkuta are simple creatures, who are really just as much prisoners of the tundra and victims of the cold as the prisoners themselves. Service up there in the north is a sort of exile for them. Their life consists of guard duties, drill, and occasional visits to the cinemas in the town to which they are marched off in little columns." (Scholmer, 148)

SUBTOPIC 3: INDOCTRINATING THE GUARDS

Soviet authorities aimed a constant propaganda barrage at the guards, designed to convince them that they were watching over dangerous enemies, fascists, and spies. The propaganda dehumanized prisoners in the guards' eyes and contributed to the atmosphere of extreme violence. As former prisoner Tomas Sgovio wrote, "That summer, during Komsomol meetings, the guards were indoctrinated – to guard us was not enough! No one escapes from Kolyma anyway! And it was drummed into them that we were Enemies of the People – scum – saboteurs – and anyone who threw a stone into the mechanism of Socialism was to be shot!" (Sgovio p. 189)

In this videoclip, a former Gulag guard explains his work.

VIDEO CLIP FROM BBC DOCUMENTARY

Andrei Cheburkin Camp Guard in Norilsk

Mindset: We were brought up told they were enemies. Why should we question? Explains the protocol for living up and marching. "They knew the rules. If they did act up, we would make them lie down, in mud, snow, whatever."

SUBTOPIC 4: GUARDING EACH OTHER

Gulag inmates were forced to be complicit in their own repression. Prisoners were constantly being watched, but not only by the guards. Prisoners were watching each other. Some prisoners worked as informants – telling camp authorities the secrets of their fellow inmates in exchange for better rations or to get a privileged job in the barracks or the kitchen. Others turned informer in order to avoid punishment or the revelation of some secret that a camp official was using as blackmail. To this day, the Gulag camp surveillance system remains

shrouded in secrecy, the only section of the central Gulag archive still marked "top secret."

Just how unappealing the job of Gulag guard was in Stalin's Soviet Union was demonstrated by the constant need to use prisoners as guards. Understaffing forced such measures upon local Gulag authorities, as one official recalled to author Adam Hochschild: "People were carefully selected for this purpose, worthy people. They were reliable. They signed special papers, they were taught how to handle weapons. They were positioned at the watchtowers and they were guarding...themselves!" (Hochschild, p. 68)

Main Text - Fates

FATES

MOVIE TEXT

Across the former Soviet Union, millions lie in anonymous graves. Whether shot in a prison basement, or killed in Gulag camps by exhaustion, starvation, malnutrition-related illness, labor accident, or the violence of fellow prisoners and guards, millions died at the hands of Soviet terror.

Telling the story of the Gulag through the eyes of its prisoners inevitably excludes the stories of those millions who died. These victims did not make it out of the camps to publish memoirs. Their stories are buried beneath the grounds of Siberia, Kazakhstan and the whole of the former Soviet Union.

Even those who survived the camps emerged traumatized and brutalized. Readjusting to life outside the camps would be a struggle. Many former inmates maintained life-long bonds with their fellow inmates after leaving the camps, and many continue to struggle to keep the Gulag's memory alive to prevent new human rights abuses in the countries of the former Soviet Union today.

END MOVIE TEXT

SUBTOPIC 1: THE GULAG'S ULTIMATE VICTIMS

IMAGE #DB148

IMAGE #DB3

IMAGE #DB156

Historians have established that at least 1.6 million died in the camps of the Gulag. The real number may well be higher, as camp authorities had many ways to hide true death figures, including releasing prisoners who were on the verge of dying. In this way, a prisoner reduced to the point of death by labor and starvation would die outside the camp and thus be excluded from official Gulag mortality statistics. Many of the unmarked graves will never be found.

In this excerpt from *Stolen Years*, Nikolai Getman describes the anonymous markings placed on prisoner graves.

VIDEO CLIP

FROM STOLEN YEARS Nikolai Getman - 44:10

When the guard filled out a report on the burial, he wouldn't say that the corpse had a name like Ivan Ivanovich Ivanov. Instead, he would write down a certain designated number. Such as M3720. This number, M3720, was then stenciled into a tin can, using a hammer and nail. Usually the perforated number would appear on the lid, but sometimes people would go through the trouble of cutting apart the whole can, thereby leaving more room for the inscription. This piece of metal was attached by wire to the foot, and that was proof that a certain person, M3720, was buried right there under the hill. I can still hear the sound of this piece of wire and can lid tinkling in the wind.

END VIDEO CLIP

SUBTOPIC 2: SURVIVORS

IMAGE #DB159

Millions of people did survive the Gulag. Whether among the 20-40 percent of the camp population released on a yearly basis throughout the Stalin era, or among the 2-3 million who went home after Stalin died, perhaps as many as 16 million who entered the Gulag came out alive.

But the Gulag even destroyed the lives of those who survived it. Families were torn apart when spouses were pressured to divorce their "enemy" relatives. Children were taken away from prisoner mothers, often never to be reunited again. The Gulag exacted a physical and psychological toll from which many would never recover.

Upon release from the Gulag, many inmates were denied permission to return to their former homes and were forced either to live in remote exile or to live no fewer than one hundred kilometers from the Soviet Union's largest cities. With a notation of their imprisonment in their official identity documents, former Gulag inmates were discriminated against in employment and access to housing. Government officials, fellow citizens, and even former friends treated them as pariahs, greeting them with suspicion at best, hatred at worst.

SUBTOPIC 3: REMEMBERING THE GULAG

[GET IMAGES OF MONUMENTS INTO THIS SECTION, AND SEEK PERMISSION FOR IMAGE OF NIGHTCLUB "THE ZONE"]

Other than a brief period of openness that saw the publication of *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* (in date TK), discussing the Gulag's history was forbidden until late in the 1980s. At that time, groups of former political prisoners started to

document and commemorate the history of Soviet repression through monuments and publications. Although at first there was tremendous interest in learning about this part of their history, since the mid-1990s Russians seem to be forgetting the Gulag – a troubling development for many who believe historical knowledge is key to avoiding a repetition of the abuses of dictatorship.

To learn about efforts to preserve as a museum and historic site the last Soviet camp for political prisoners, please visit the related exhibit on the Gulag Museum at Perm-36.