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Soviet Treatment of Magyars, 1945-56: Hungarian Slave Labourers in the Gulag

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The Origins and Development of the Soviet Gulag

While most people have heard of the word "Gulag," few are really knowledgeable about its meaning and significance. To our great surprise, this also holds true for Hungary, even among some educated people. Based largely on the title of Alexander Solzhenitsyn's monumental *Gulag Archipelago* (1973), many believe it to be a collection of penal islands somewhere in the far northern region of Russia.[1] In reality, however, GULAG is simply an acronym or mosaic word for the Soviet administrative apparatus *Glavnoye Upravleniye Ispravitelno-Trudovykh Lagerey* [Chief Administration of Corrective Labour Camps], which unified the administration of the many thousands of slave labour camps in the Soviet Union.[2]

Some corrective labour camps had come into existence immediately after the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. The system that held these camps together, however, was established only in 1934. Becoming known as the GULAG, it soon gave its name to the collection of all slave labour camps, which numbered in the thousands throughout the vast reaches of the Soviet Empire. At its height, from the 1930s through the 1950s, the Gulag embraced a territory that was 5,500 miles long and 2,500 wide, and it may have included up to forty-thousand camps of various sizes. It stretched from the Ukrainian Donbass region to the Kamchatka Peninsula in the Far East, from the Lapp-inhabited Kola Peninsula to the Kuril Islands north of Japan, from the Caucasus Mountains in the south to Vorkuta beyond the Arctic circle, and from Mongolia to the mouth of the Lena River on the Arctic Sea.

Although the Gulag was a separate administrative system, it always remained under the direct control of the Soviet Secret Police, even though the latter was repeatedly reorganized and frequently renamed. The most important of these names included Cheka, GPU, OGPU, NKVD, MVD, NKGB, and finally KGB, which remained intact until the very end of the Soviet Union.

The young men and women — mostly innocent victims — who found themselves in one of these forced labour camps were put to work on every possible physical labour. They were forced to work under the most inhuman conditions, which decimated them very rapidly, forcing the authorities to replenish these camps repeatedly. In point of fact, in the course of time they devised a system of work and replenishment which appeared to them to be the most effective means in exacting work from the inmates. The person who is credited with having devised this system was a certain Naftaly Aronovich Frenkel (1883-1960),[3] who in the course of time was awarded the Order of Lenin, and was also promoted to the rank of a general in the NKVD. These promotions were his rewards for his ability to exact work most efficiently from the helpless inmates in the forced labour camps.[4]

Frenkel's method was to "substitute hunger for the knout," or to put it another way, "to link the prisoner's food ration... to his production."[5] But this was only one of Frenkel's methods of labour exaction. He also became aware of the fact that the prisoners were most productive during the first few months of their incarceration. After those initial months they became increasingly enfeebled and drained of their energies. As such they became progressively less productive. Based on these observations, Frenkel came to the conclusion that production levels of camp inmates could only be kept on a high level by repeatedly culling them — killing them off — and replacing them with newcomers.

This culling process was also applied in many different ways. In one instance, when called out for the daily work detail, the laggards who were not fast enough and thus brought up the rear of the line, were simply shot from behind. Others died of exhaustion and of the various diseases that were rampant in the Gulag camps. These "weaklings" were judged to be useless for the "building of socialism," and consequently were simply replaced by fresh prisoners. This culling and weeding out process continued for decades through much of the life of the Soviet Gulag in Stalin's Russia.[6]

With his well-oiled method of exacting the maximum amount of work from the hapless slave labourers, Frenkel had endeared himself to Stalin so much that in 1931 he was put in charge of the construction of the infamous White Sea Canal, which was completed in 1933 at the cost of the lives of 60,000 human beings. Moreover, in 1937 he was appointed director of the newly founded GULZhDS [Chief Administration of Railroad Construction Camps], and in 1939 he was entrusted with providing railroad transportation for the Red Army for its invasion of Poland, and then of Finland in the so-called "Winter War." Frenkel's proven methods of labour exaction were successively applied to many other large construction projects, including the Baltic-Amur Railroad Project, the Far Eastern Construction Project, and to the construction and running of such infamous slave labour camps as those of Vorkuta and the Kolyma region of Eastern Siberia.[7]

It is difficult to estimate the number of inmates in these forced labour camps, and even more difficult to assess the number of prisoners who died during their incarceration. Solzhenitsyn claims that between 1928 and 1953 "some forty to fifty million people served long sentences in the Archipelago."[8] The estimates of those who perished range up to thirty million, although one of the recent estimates stopped at twenty--three million.[9]

Up to the outbreak of the war in Europe in 1939, the inmates of the Gulag camps came almost exclusively from the ranks of Soviet citizens. Starting in 1939, however, the camps were being replenished by an increasing number of other nationalities, including Latvians, Lithuanians, Estonians, Finns, Poles, and several smaller Caucasian and Crimean nationalities. These deportations were especially hard on the anti-communist intellectual elites of these nationalities, which nations were thus in effect decapitated.

During the final months of World War II, a new set of prisoners appeared. They came from the various conquered — according to the Soviets, "liberated" — nations of Central Europe. These included prisoners of war, but also a great number of civilians. The countries under Soviet occupation were depleted of able bodied young men and women. They were deported to the Soviet Union partially as a form of collective punishment, and partially to help rebuild the country after the devastation suffered in the war. Both of these goals were important, although their relative importance changed from time to time.

The alleged "liberation" of Hungary

After four years of war and one year of German occupation, in the spring of 1945 Hungary was freed from the Nazi German occupying forces, only to be subjugated by the "liberating" Soviet Red Army. In the course of the next forty-six years this Soviet control became a permanent feature of Hungarian life, and on April 4th every year, Hungarians were told to celebrate this alleged "liberation" of their country by the Soviet Union. Although these celebrations ceased in 1990, the Soviet troops did not leave Hungary until June 19, 1991.

To most Hungarians who had experienced first hand the circumstances of this Soviet occupation of their country, this "liberation" appeared more like the rape of their nation and their families. In private, this view was often expressed through a slightly different pronunciation of the expression "*szabadulás*" (=liberation), which with the appropriate emphasis came out as "*szabad dúlás*" (=free ravaging). Naturally, this view does not negate the fact that for some people — at least for a while — the Soviet conquest was in fact liberation. These include the Jewish and those non-Jewish Hungarians who openly opposed the Germans and their Hungarian cohorts. In the course of time, however, even these anti-Nazi groups began to feel the heavy hand of Soviet occupation.

One of the best examples of this "liberation-turned-into-oppression" is the case of Nicholas M. Nagy-Talavera (1929-2001), the scion of a well-to-do Hungarian Jewish family, who survived Auschwitz only to be taken to the Soviet Gulag soon after his return to Hungary. Allegedly, this was done because he was born into a well-to-do upper bourgeoisie family, and thus counted as one of the "oppressors" in Hungarian society. Nagy-Talavera also survived the Soviet Gulag. Soon after his repatriation, the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 broke out. He took the opportunity to flee Hungary and emigrated to the United States. Ten years later he acquired a Ph.D. at Berkeley, and then rose to a professorship at California State University at Chico.[10]

No Hungarian knew and felt the pain of Soviet "liberation" more than those tens of thousands of innocent civilians who were collected during this "liberation process" and then deported to the slave labour camps of the Soviet Gulag. As observed by Tamás Stark, a respected scholar of the period of World War II: "Who would have thought that in the immediate past century — in our own century — the institution of slavery would be reinstated? We may even assert that in the twentieth

century more people were enslaved than in all of the previous centuries together. Furthermore, in our age, slavery became 'more sophisticated' than in ancient times, not only in its organization and quantity, but also in its 'quality.' In those days the goal was simply the exaction of labour. Nowadays it was extermination for which labour was 'only' an instrument. The goal of German national socialism was to weaken and to annihilate certain 'races' or ethnic groups. The goal of Stalinist socialism, on the other hand, was to use forced labour for the decimation of Soviet subjects, and for the intimidation of the neighbouring states."[11]

We have no clear-cut picture of the number of Hungarians — military personnel and civilians — who ended up in captivity during the last phase of the war, but in generally it is assumed that their number was above 900,000. Of these, somewhat less than one-third were captured by the Western Allies (Americans, British, French), while over two-thirds or 600,000 to 640,000 ended up in Soviet forced labour or prisoner-of-war camps. Of the latter, 220,000 (or perhaps 270,000) never returned home.[12] About half of these internees — possibly 120,000 to 140,000 — were innocent civilians who had been taken captive in the period between November 1944 and March 1945. According to the *Magyar Nagylexikon* [Great Hungarian Encyclopedia],[13] of these 120,000 and 140,000 civilian captives from within Hungary's current borders only about 10% survived.[14] If we consider the territory of enlarged Hungary as it existed during World War II, then the number of civilian internees moves up to between 180,000 and 200,000, most of the extra ones coming from Northern Transylvania and Sub-Carpathia or Carpatho-Ruthenia.[15]

Although the above figures are usually mentioned, some scholars put the Hungarian losses even higher. As an example, Gusztáv Menczer, the President of the Directorate of the Central Office of Compensation [Központi Kárrendezési Iroda Társadalmi Kollégiuma], the number of the Hungarian deportees was close to 700,000 (680,900), of whom about 400,000 or 60% perished in Russia. This number, however, has to be amended by the addition of 120,000 person who died during transportation to the slave labour camps, and about whom very little information is available.[16] If these figures will prove to be correct, the number of Hungarian slave labourers who succumbed to the vicissitudes of deportation is above half a million.

But statistics about these deportations are scarce and often contradictory. This can easily be demonstrated even with the writings of such recognized experts of this mass deportation as Tamás Stark and Gusztáv

Menczer. In one of his relevant writings, for example, Menczer summarizes the statistical date of the various deportees as follows: "According to researchers, of the 750,000 Hungarian deportees at least 200,000 perished during the death march, in consequence of the horrendous conditions of their deportation. An additional 150,000 Hungarians succumbed to various diseases in the concentration camps. The primary culprit among these was alimentary dystrophy, tuberculosis, and malaria caused by shortage of protein."[17] As is evident, the statistics in this statement — which speak of 350,000 Hungarians who perished in the Gulag — do not quite coincide with the statistics given in the earlier summary, where Menczer speaks about the death of 520,000 Hungarians. This proves conclusively that even the most astute researchers are confused by the various contradictory statistics on this topic.

Although scholars inevitably disagree with each other about the number of the deportees and the number of those who perished during deportation or in one of the many Gulag slave labour camps, we all can agree with Gusztáv Menczer's following conclusions that touch all Hungarians:

> The two horrible dictatorships of the Twentieth Century [Nazi and Bolshevik] show a 'strange' similarity not only in their methods of operation, but also in the number of Hungarians who have fallen victim to them. As such, placing special emphasis on the victims of only one of these dictatorships offends the victims of the other dictatorship. It puts a dividing wall between two groups of Hungarians, who have suffered so much in the Twentieth Century.[18]

The civilians who ended up in the Soviet slave labour camps at the end of the war were in two distinct categories: political prisoners, who were convicted on various trumped-up charges, and the *malenky robot*ers, who were deported for a "little work" without being convicted of any crime. According to some sources up to 90% of the political prisoners may have perished in the Gulag camps under the most gruesome circumstances, but based on the number of returnees, this claim appears to be too high (We should add here that the grammatically correct term should be *malenkaya rabota*. Repeated Hungarian usage or misusage, however, made this incorrect expression the accepted term for this phenomenon in Hungarian popular and scholarly literature.)[19] The mostly unsuspecting

victims of *malenky robot* were collected in villages and towns, after having been called to a public meeting under various pretexts.

According to available statistics, in the period between the summer of 1945 and the fall of 1948 somewhere between 330,000 to 380,000 Hungarians — most of them members of the military — were repatriated. Between 100,000 to 150,000 of these arrived before the summer of 1946, 202,000 returned home between July 1946 and November 1948, another 20,000 to 25,000 in the course of 1949 through 1951, and a further 3,000 between 1953 and 1955. This comes to between 330,000 and 380,000 Hungarians who survived, leaving as many as 220,000 to 270,000, or even 310,000 who did not.[20] Those who were repatriated between 1946 and 1948 also included 9,425 documented civilians, most of whom were victims of the *malenky robot*. They represented perhaps only 10% of the innocent civilians who have ended up in the Soviet Gulag in wake of World War II.[21]

Those who were convicted for espionage or for some other imaginary "crime" were not so "fortunate" as the *malenky robot*ers. They were generally taken much further into Soviet Siberia, and they had to stay there for several more years after the surviving *malenky robot*ers had already returned. If the political prisoners survived, they were permitted to repatriate only after eight, ten, or even fifteen years of Soviet slave labour, in the period following Stalin's death in 1953.[22]

Some Recent Scholarship and Memoir Literature on the Gulag

In recent years, the institution of the Soviet Gulag has been ably chronicled by a number of Western scholars, among them Robert Conquest (1965 and 1992),[23] Nanci Adler (1993 and 2002),[24] and Anne Applebaum (2003).[25] Most of these syntheses were born in wake of the monumental works by the world-renowned Alexander Solzhenitsyn (b. 1918), whose account of life in Soviet forced labour camps (1963, 1973) had earned for him a Nobel Prize in 1970.[26] There were, of course, many other survivors who have recorded their frightening and torture-filled experiences in the Soviet Gulag, but none of them were able to do so on the aesthetic level, and with the political impact of Alexander Solzhenitsyn's Gulag Archipelago.

Among the scores of Hungarians who did so, the earliest was Áron Gábor (1911-1982) and the best known is János Rózsás (b. 1926).

Both of these former Gulag prisoners wrote powerful descriptions of their experiences in the Soviet death camps. Áron Gábor had spent fifteen years in the Soviet Gulag (1945-1960), and then five more years under controlled political circumstance in his homeland. Only after his illegal emigration in 1965, was he able to recount his trials and tribulations. Only then was he able to publish memoirs in the form of his Siberian Trilogy.[27] These volumes were also published in English, German, Spanish, and Portuguese, but as they were put out by small obscure publishers that lacked the necessary tools of mass publicity, these books were never able to penetrate Western social and political consciousness.

The situation with Rózsás — the author of the first Hungarian Gulag encyclopedia[28] — is somewhat different in that his works were never published in any language other than Hungarian. But because of the unfriendly political atmosphere back in his homeland, the first edition of his voluminous memoirs had to be published abroad in Germany (1986-1987).[29] Only in 1989, at the time of the change of the political regime in Hungary, was he able to have them republished in his native land.[30]

Of all the Hungarian Gulag-memoirs Rózsás's reminiscences are by far the most detailed. Yet, not even these memoirs were able to penetrate the Hungarian mind. The nearly half century of Soviet domination has left its mark upon Hungarian society. The memory of these mass deportations was virtually obliterated from collective memory of the nation. Moreover, those who survived and returned home were received as war criminals. They were forbidden to speak about their Gulag experiences, and in this way they were unable to pass through the catharsis that would have made their lives more bearable.

The situation was somewhat different with George Bien (1928-2005), who spent over ten years in Eastern Siberia province of Kolyma, and soon after his repatriation he left Hungary to the United States. In contrast to those who remained at home, George Bien was free to speak about his life, but he never got around writing about his experiences until after his retirement in the 1990s. His work entitled *Elveszett évek* [Lost Years] appeared both in Hungarian and in English.[31] Bien also appeared in a number of documentaries about Siberia and the Soviet Gulag. As such, his reminiscences made much greater impression upon Western scholarship than those of any of his predecessors. This is true notwithstanding the fact that his work is much shorter and more cursory than those of Áron Gábor and János Rózsás. His graphic portrayal of the "Death Ship to Kolyma," in which he described the torturous six days

between Vladivostok and Magadan without a drop of drinking water, is a particularly impressive and frightening picture of the inhumanity of the Soviet Gulag.[32]

This incredible lack of information, disinterest and disregard for the Soviet Gulag and its many death camps is evident from the various major syntheses of modern Hungarian history that have been written by respected scholars several years after the fall of communism. In most instances the authors of these syntheses barely mention, let alone discuss, this major Hungarian tragedy that landed perhaps 700,000 Hungarians in Soviet slavery, and resulted in the cruel death of at least quarter million fellow Hungarians. They simply gloss over this tragedy, without any effort to point out the enormity of the crime that had been perpetrated against innocent Hungarian civilians by the brutal Stalinist system that had inundated the lands of Western Christian Civilization at the end of the war. The violence, the rapes, the mass tortures, and the resulting loss of innocent lives by the tens of thousands all remain unmentioned by these historians who had been educated without any reference to these dark and painful events of Hungarian history.[33]

The rape of Hungarian women by the conquering Soviet armed personnel was so widespread that their number may have passed one million. Of the various sources that mention these rapes include the memoirs of the former Prime Minister Ferenc Nagy (1903-1979), who presided over the Hungarian Government between February 1946 and June 1947. He writes that "ruthless red soldiers have captured and infected with venereal disease tens of thousands of women and young girls."[34] At the same time "Russian female soldiers raped many thousands of Hungarian men, who were forced to perform unnatural acts. [These Soviet women]... congregated in gangs, attacked surrounding villages, and collected men, whom they held captive for several days."[35] Ferenc Nagy also mentions that these allegations were examined by the Swiss Embassy in Budapest, which than published the results of this inquiry in May 1945.

Another historical work also discusses the mass rape of Hungarian women by members of the Red Army. The author of this work claims that in August 1945 the Hungarian Government was forced to seek help and medication from several West European states to deal with the 470,000 women who were suffering from the so-called "Lenin disease."[36] If this allegation is correct, then the number of women who have been raped should be at least around one million. After all it is prudent to

assume that not all women who had been raped contracted the disease, and not all of them reported this violation to the authorities.

One may also mention the case of the case of the small town of Felsőzsolca in the vicinity of the industrial city of Miskolc. In 1945 it had a population of approximately 2,500, among them perhaps 500 adult women. Of these women, according to local historian Sándor Zsíros, well over a 100 were raped or otherwise mishandled under the most gruesome circumstances. As related by him, "we... know of cases where on the very first night of our 'liberation' Russian soldiers marched into the cellars... and raped crying-shrieking young girls, next to a corps, within the sight of thirty or so frightened adults."[37]

This lack of attention to the terrorization and deportations of Hungarian civilians by the Soviet conquerors after World War II is characteristic of virtually all historical syntheses and textbooks published in post-communist Hungary. These include even the twenty-one-volume *Magyar Nagylexikon* [Great Hungarian Encyclopedia], which devotes a whole column to the description of the Soviet Gulag, but only a single sentence to its Hungarian prisoners: "In addition to various Soviet nationalities, many foreign citizens also lived and died in the camps of the Gulag, among them hundreds of thousands of Hungarian prisoners-of-war, and after 1944 also civilians who had been deported from Hungary, of whom 90% never returned home."[38] While very brief, here at least the low survival rate of Gulag-prisoners is mentioned.

It is interesting and even frightening that this lack of attention to the Hungarian victims of the Soviet Gulag are short-shrifted even by some prominent Western authors, as well as by Hungarian historians who had spent considerable time in the West following the collapse of communism.

This lack of attention to the victims of the Soviet Gulag is all the more surprising in view of the fact that, in addition to a few specialized studies by scholars such as Tamás Stark and Lajos Fűr,[39] at least five dozen memoirs of Gulag-survivors and documentary collections have appeared in Hungary and in the neighbouring Hungarian-inhabited lands in the course of the past fifteen years.[40]

The most important of the latter were the interviews with former prisoners, who for the first time since their repatriation were permitted to speak openly about their torturous experiences. One of the first of these interview collections was Miklós Füzes's volume *Modern rabszolgaság* [Modern-day Slavery] (1990).[41] Füzes was a professional historian and

archivist. He wrote an extensive historical introductory study to the volume which contains twenty-seven interviews and reminiscences by Hungarian Germans, commonly known as Swabians. Similarly to Tamás Stark, Füzes also makes an attempt to synthesize the many contradictory statistics about the number of the deportees and survivors. In light of the scarcity and the unreliability of the existing sources, he too had to conclude that it is really impossible to come up with reliable figures for the deportees, although he does agree with the conclusion by some other historians that "about two-thirds of the deportees perished."[42]

Only a few months after Füzes's work appeared, Ilona Szebeni's *Merre van magyar hazám?* [Where is My Hungarian Homeland?] (1991) was published. It contains interviews by seventy-four former Gulag prisoners.[43] Szebeni also appended the names of 3,230 *malenky robot*ers who had been collected and deported from the Upper Tisza region. The large majority of these prisoners perished in the Soviet Union. Szebeni was aided in her work by Tamás Stark, who wrote a postscript to this volume, which essay placed the whole Gulag-experience into the proper historical perspective.[44]

In 1994 appeared the work by Sándor Zsíros, *A front alatt* [On the Front], which is based upon the reminiscences of eleven former Gulag prisoners from the town of Felsőzsolca, as well as on some official documents and memoir fragments. The author himself escaped deportation because he was only fourteen years old in those days. His book is a microcosm of the mass deportation of Hungarians to the Soviet Gulag that took place in late 1944 and early 1945.[45] This work was subsequently published in an expanded edition in 2004, and then in English also in 2006.[46]

Ten years after Szebeni's and Füzes's, and six years after Zsíros's work, there appeared another interview volume by the journalist Valéria Kormos, entitled *A végtelen foglyai* [Prisoners of Endlessness].[47] This book is much more selective in its coverage, for it contains interviews with less than a dozen survivors, but it was put out by a Budapest publisher in a much more attractive format. The interviews are more professional than in Szebeni's case, and they are placed into more easily readable literary form. This book is embellished with several dozen photographs. They compare and contrast the appearance of the survivors before their deportation with how they looked five decades later.

Notwithstanding these numerous publications, the history, and even the very existence of the Gulag camps and their Hungarian inmates

continues to remain largely unknown and unrecognized in Hungary. By refusing to incorporate the history of the Gulag into their syntheses of Hungarian history, professional historians assign this great national tragedy to total oblivion. This approach, however, is just as wrong and unjust, as trying to deny the Jewish Holocaust. The Gulag and the Holocaust are human tragedies on a previously unheard-of scale, which need to be remembered by all succeeding generations.

The Background to the Hungarian GULAG

The collection of innocent civilians for the Soviet Gulag was done in accordance with a tacit understanding among the victorious allies that Soviet Russia would have to be compensated for its losses during the war. The Soviet Foreign Minister, V. M. Molotov had alluded to this policy already two years before the end of the war, when in a letter to the British Ambassador dated June 7, 1943, he stated clearly that "the Soviet Government is of the opinion that the responsibility for the military help that Hungary had given to Germany... has to be borne not only by the Hungarian Government, but to a lesser or greater degree also by the Hungarian people."[48]

This policy of forced labour for the citizens of the defeated states was reaffirmed by a Decree of the Soviet Union's Committee of State Security on December 16, 1944, which stated that "all German men between the ages of 17 and 44, and all German women between the ages of 18 and 30, who are residents of the territories of Romania, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia have to be mobilized and transported to the Soviet Union.

In Hungary, the Soviet zeal to collect slave labourers went much beyond the intent of this decree. As a matter of fact, Soviet military authorities, with the enthusiastic cooperation of their local cohorts and opportunists, collected not only Germans and Hungarians with German names, but also ethnic Hungarians who had nothing to do with the war except as suffering bystanders. At various places they collected Hungarians simply because their names ended in the letter "r." As remembered by ninety year old Mr. Imre Kolozsi in 1989: "Some stupid person came up with the idea that every family name ending in the letter 'r' is German, because Hitler's name also ended in an 'r.' This is how Pásztor, Molnár, Bodnár, Csiger... and even Gyüker got on the list.... But the surname was

not really important.... A certain number of people had to be deported, and the quota was filled with whomever could be caught."[49] They deported Hungarians with pure Hungarian names such as Bodnár, Bognár, Kádár, Fehér, Kövér, Vincellér, and so on, from numerous other localities as well.[50]

The Collection of Prisoners

In Hungary the first wave of deportations was haphazard and disorganized, but the second wave was a well-planned and well-carried out operation. It took place about a month or two after the first wave, and its goal was twofold: To supply free labour for rebuilding Soviet economy, and to apply collective punishment to Hungary's civilian population, particularly those of German ethnicity. This policy was to be applied not only to small rump Hungary that had been created after the Treaty of Trianon in 1920, but also to those largely Hungarian-inhabited territories that had been regained in the course of 1938-1941.

This is evident, among others, from the deportation of about 5,000 ethnic Hungarians from the city of Kolozsvár (today's Cluj) the capital of Transylvania, which in 1940 had been returned to Hungary but then in 1945 reverted once more to Romania. But it is also evident from the mass deportations that took place in Sub-Carpathia [Ruthenia],[51] as well as in the southern fringes of interwar Slovakia that had been regained by Hungary in 1938.[52]

The process of organized collection of Hungarians began in the Upper-Tisza Region of Northeastern Hungary. From there it proceeded partially toward Debrecen, and partially toward Miskolc and Eger, and then on to Budapest and its vicinity. After that it moved to the lands between the Danube and the Tisza Rivers and to Transdanubia. It seems that this process was carried out in accordance with a grand central plan that had been devised in Moscow for Soviet-style social reconstruction of postwar Hungary. Apparently, each section of the country had to supply a certain number of victims in accordance with a predetermined quota system. But once that quota had been filled, collections generally ceased.

While official documents concerning these mass deportations are sporadic, the nature of this policy can be deduced from various other sources. It is substantiated even by some of the personal papers of a number of top communist leaders. As an example, there is the letter of

Hungary's future communist cultural czar, József Révai (1898-1959), written to Hungary's "Little Stalin" Mátyás Rákosi (1892-1971) who at that time was still in Moscow. Révai recognized and readily pointed out the shortcomings of this meticulously planned deportation program:

> Sadly (he wrote) the plan concerning the deportation of the able-bodied German population did not have the effect it was meant to have.... In most places local commandants implemented this policy on the basis of family names and quotas. If there were not enough Germans, they collected Hungarians. They harvested even people who did not speak a word German, who were proven anti-Fascists, and who had even suffered imprisonments and internments [at the hands of Hungary's Fascist Government]. No matter. They were all taken.[53]

The collection process itself depended heavily on misinformation and outright deception. The majority of the internees were told that they would have to perform a "little work" ["*malenky robot*"] for a few days to clear away rubble, clean the streets, help distribute food, restart production in the local shops and factories, or to receive documents attesting to their innocence in matters relating to Nazi activities. After a few days or a couple of weeks, they would be permitted to return home to start rebuilding their own communities.

In the villages and smaller towns, the prospective Gulag-prisoners were told to assemble at one of the local public buildings — school, town hall, church, or armoury — for the purposes of being informed about new developments and for receiving their assignments to one of the many public work projects. Those who declined to come, were collected personally by the so-called "polic," usually accompanied by an armed Soviet soldier. These "polic" were eager collaborators, who usually tried to hide their recent Nazi past by over-fulfilling the demands of the occupiers. Most of the victims were not even given time to dress properly, nor to prepare themselves adequately for the so-called "little work" that allegedly awaited them. Once assembled, they were surrounded by Soviet military guards, forced to remain there for days, and then force-marched to one of the "receiving camps" or "holding camps" in their region. There, they were loaded onto cattle cars and deported to the Soviet slave labour camps.[54]

The convicted political prisoners

The *malenky robot*ers constituted only one segment of the deported civilian population. The other, perhaps slightly smaller segment was made up of the political prisoners; that is of those who were actually tried and convicted for an alleged crime and then sent off to Siberia for a period of ten to twenty-five years. These political prisoners were convicted for a wide variety of so-called political crimes, including alleged Nazi affiliation, fighting against the Soviet forces, spying, being involved in sabotage activities, uttering critical remarks about the behaviour of the occupying Soviet forces, or simply being listed on the personal papers of one who had already been arrested for any of the above alleged crimes.

If at all possible, the conditions of their deportation and confinement were even worse than those of the *malenky robot*ers. They had to travel under identically harsh conditions for a much longer period of time; their period of incarceration was much longer; and they were taken to the northern Ural region or to the far reaches of Eastern Siberia, without reasonable hope of ever returning to their homelands. Thus, among these political prisoners the number of those who survived was even smaller.

Arrest and deportation

The arrest, deportation, life, and survival of the Gulag slave labourers in the forced labour camps of the Soviet Union is a perpetual living component of the memories of those repatriated Hungarians who have survived their torturous lives in the "Soviet Paradise." They dream about it, they re-live their tormented and hopeless experiences repeatedly, they are often awakened by nightmares from their sleep, and it is this arousal that makes their lives bearable. Those who survived the camps, returned to Hungary, and then lived on to see the collapse of communism and the end to Hungary's Soviet military occupation gave us a detailed description of their march into captivity.

Their collection was done by Russian soldiers directed by Hungarian collaborators, known in common language as "*polic*," who performed their task with considerable brutality. They shouted and used their rifle butts to gain the compliance of the unfortunate prisoners, and many times they were more vicious than the Soviet occupiers themselves.[55]

The situation was very similar to what happened to the Hungarian Jews only a few months earlier. A number of the deportees to the Gulag recognized this similarity immediately and made known their views as soon as they could. Mihály Zöldi, for example, who ended up on the Gulag as a *malenky robot*er, had this to say about this parallel situation: "When in 1944 we as paramilitary forces [*levente*] were ordered by the gendarmerie to guard the unfortunate Jewish families [who were being deported], none of us thought that within a short time we too will be in the same situation.... Neither they, nor we were guilty. It was the law and human viciousness that was guilty."[56]

Some of the cattle cars were equipped with berths on both sides, and they generally crammed sixty persons into a wagon. Both sides had to accommodate thirty persons. In the middle there was a wooden stove with some pieces of wood. The bottom of the wagon had a hole which served as the toilet. There were no possibilities for cleansing oneself. Drinking water was stored in a standing barrel, but most of the time there was hardly any water in it. Moreover all of the doors were locked, and therefore there was very little possibility for escape. Yet, there were still some who tried, and a very few who actually succeeded.

Failed escape attempts were followed by brutal punishments, and successful escapes, by replenishment. The numbers had to match. If three people escaped then three new ones were caught to replace them. Following an escape, the Russian guards began to replenish the vacancies even before the train resumed its journey. As related by Imre Kolozsi, after a successful escape by two prisoners, the Russians "caught two men on the station and threw them into the wagons. One of them was thrown into our car. His name was Asztalos and he was a railroad man, who was just leaving for home. For many days the unfortunate man could not really believe what happened to him."[57]

Another case was described by Mrs. Ferenc Vojtó, née Ilona Vinnai, in her reminiscences:

> I witnessed a dreadful incident in the vicinity of a train station. We did not reach the village yet and our train was standing at a railroad crossing. On the other side of the barrier stood a horse-drawn wagon... with a driver and his young son. The driver must have been about thirty-six or thirty-eight, his son about thirteen or fourteen. A Russian soldier ran over to them, yanked them off the wagon, and shoved both of them into one of the cattle cars. It was terrible to listen to the hysterical

> screams of the man who shouted: 'Take me anywhere you want, I don't care, but let the boy go so that he can drive the wagon home. My wife will never know what happened to us.' They did not heed his plea, but took them away. The train started to roll. I looked back as long as I could, and I saw the two horses standing there stock still, without their master. They did not move at all. The wife would have to wait in vain. Except for us, there were no eyewitnesses.[58]

The long weeks of travel in the cattle cars made all of the deportees very nervous. Many of them were unable to survive the tribulations and died on the way. They suffered from being confined to a tight space, from the inability to move, from lice and other vermin, and from hunger and thirst. But from among all these sufferings, the constant and unending thirst was by far the worse. They rarely received water, and when they did, it was never enough. They tried to quench their thirst by removing snow from the roof of the wagons and then eating it. As described by one of the survivors, "those who were close to a windows and had long arms would reach out between the barbed wires and collect snow from the roof of the wagon. We would snatch it, gobble it up, devour it, and also pass it from hand to hand, because it was impossible to change places."[59]

This long travel, which in case of the *malenky robot*ers lasted three to four weeks, and in case of the political prisoners, who were taken to Eastern Siberia, perhaps as much as eight weeks, wore the deportees down. A significant number of them were unable to take the horrors of the deportation and died on the way.

These slave labour transports are described by the Soviet writer Gennadi Beglov, who spent nine years in one of the Gulag's Siberian forced labour camps. On one occasion he was present when a new transport arrived. He watched as the guards, equipped with machine guns and fierce dogs, flooded out of the lead wagon to unlock the cattle cars to let the prisoners out. The convicts who exited slowly were more dead than alive, but at least they still lived. When the guards reached the sixth wagon, however, no one emerged. Upon inspecting it, they realized that all of the prisoners were dead. They were frozen together in groups of three or four. Apparently, in trying to protect themselves against the Siberian cold, they cuddled and then froze together like blocks of ice.[60]

Life in the Gulag Camps

The lifestyle, surroundings, and living and working conditions of the workers in the forced labour camps were as diverse as the camps themselves. These conditions depended on the camp's geographical location, nature of the work that inmates performed, climatic conditions, as well as on the composition of the camp leadership. Political prisoners sent to Vorkuta, Norlinsk, or to one of the Kolyma camps in Northern and Eastern Siberia faced conditions that were far different from those encountered by the *malenky robot*ers in Eastern Ukraine and the Don region.

Work requirements and daily quotas were very high. A normal workday consisted of twelve hours, but occasionally it was pushed up to fourteen. This heavy workload, combined with such other factors as "inhuman treatment, constant hunger, inappropriate clothing, dismal living conditions, and not the least, the merciless and forbidding climate, claimed its victims steadily in ever increasing numbers."[61] But this created no problems for the camp administrators, for they were assured of a constant flow of new prisoners. "Replacements were assured by the incessantly functioning state security organs, people's courts, and military tribunals. By turning nights into days in political show trials, based on false accusations, they were handing down arbitrary and severe sentences at the victims' expense."[62] This is how many tens of thousands of Hungarians also ended up in the Gulag. They were convicted by Soviet military tribunals on various trumped-up charges and then sent to Soviet slave labour camps for ten to twenty-five years.

The prisoners' chances of staying alive depended to a large degree on the type of work they were forced to perform. Much greater were the chances of survival for those who were employed in agriculture or in manufacturing in the more civilized parts of the Soviet Empire. This was just the opposite for those who were taken to remote Siberian lands and forced to clear forests, build railroad lines, or mine gold in far northern Vorkuta or far eastern Kolyma. There the temperature would often dip down to minus 60 degrees centigrade. Minus 36 was normal for much of the year, when the prisoners were routinely marched out for work. During the daily marches many of them collapsed and then froze to death without anyone caring until the next thaw in the summer.

A few years ago the British writer, Colin Thubron, travelled through Siberia to visit some of the former forced labour camps that since have been abandoned and are in various stages of decay. He wrote about

his experiences in his book entitled *In Siberia*.[63] After visiting the far eastern province of Kolyma, he described his experiences as follows:

> This country of Kolyma was fed every year by sea with tens of thousands of prisoners, mostly innocent. Where they landed, they built a port, then the city of Magadan, and then the road inland to the mines where they perished.... People still call it the 'Road of Bones.'.... They called Kolyma 'the Planet', detached from all future, all reality beyond its own.... Bit by bit they [the prisoners] they were reduced to savages, famished and broken. They became the animals that the authorities had decreed them to be.... They descended into the walking dead, who lingered about the camp on depleted rations, then slipped into oblivion.... Young men became old within a few months.... They were tossed into mass graves.[64]

In Vorkuta Colin Thubron visited and explored the remains of a number of mining places, and then he recorded his impressions:

> Then we reached the shell of Mine #17, Here, in 1943, was the first of Vorkuta's *katorga* [hard labour] death-camps. Within a year these compounds numbered thirteen out of Vorkuta's thirty: their purpose was to kill their inmates. Through winters in which the temperature plunged to -40 F, and the *purga* blizzards howled, the *kathorzhane* [prisoners in hard labour camps] lived in lightly boarded tents sprinkled with sawdust, on the floor of mossy permafrost. They worked for twelve hours a day, without respite, hauling coal-trucks, and within three weeks they were broken. A rare survivor described them turned to robots, their grey-yellow faces rimmed with ice and bleeding cold tears. They ate in silence, standing packed together, seeing no one. Some work-brigades flailed themselves on a bid for extra food, but the effort was too much, the extra too little. Within a year 28,000 of them were dead. A prisoner in milder times encountered the remnant of the hundreds of thousands who were sentenced between 1943 and 1947. They had survived, he said, because they were the toughest — a biological elite — but were now brutalised and half-insane.[65]

Thubron continues his description of the Vorkuta's infamous slave labour camps:

> Then I came to a solitary brick building enclosing a range of cramped rooms. The roof was gone, but the iron-sheathed timbers of their door-frames still stood, and their walls were windowless.
>
> There were isolation cells. Solzhenitsyn wrote that after ten days' incarceration, during which the prisoner might be deprived of clothing, his constitution was wrecked, and after fifteen he was dead.... I stumbled into a quagmire curtained by shrubs, and waded out again.... I began to imagine myself here fifty years ago. What would I have done? But knowing how physical depletion saps the will, the answer returned: You would have been no different from anyone else.[66]

When saying good-bye to the ruins of Vorkuta, Thubron encountered a rock, on which was written: "I was exiled in 1949, and my father died here in 1942. Remember us."[67] How many innocent prisoners must have had similar thoughts, and how many must have whispered the same words, without anyone hearing or caring for their sighs? They all died far away from their loved ones in that hell on earth. In most instances not even their names are know. And among them were tens of thousands of Hungarians, who also died thousands of miles away form their homeland and their weeping families.

Sickness and the medical support system

The primitive living conditions, the inadequate portions of food, and the exacting and oppressive working conditions, soon lead to the deterioration of the prisoners' physical conditions. Many of them died already during the first month of their incarceration. In addition to the demanding work and the constant hunger, most of them died by contracting typhus, malaria or scurvy. Frequent beatings and equally frequent industrial accidents caused many wounds and sores, which almost invariably resulted in untreatable infections. Many of them became victims of the ever present mine mishaps, landslides, workplace accidents, as well as being frozen to death.

Many of the "camp doctors" were not really full-fledged physicians. They acquired their medical skills either by working in hospitals, or by having been medical students at the time of their arrest. These captive "camp doctors" were generally highly regarded even in the forced labour

camps. In many instances the fate, and even the life of a prisoner depended on their kindness or willingness to help. If they decided to assigned a prisoner to the "hospital," this decision usually meant a temporary relief from the life-exacting mine work, and at the same time an increased hope for survival.

As an example, Gusztáv Menczer, the immediate past President of the General Directorate of the Central Office of Compensation in Budapest, was among the elite of such "camp doctors." When convicted to hard labour in Siberia, he was a fourth year medical student at the University of Budapest. During his eight years as a Gulag prisoner he lived in about half a dozen forced labour camps, but his medical knowledge always elevated him above the common prisoners. And he used his privileged position to help other prisoners, many of whom found themselves in desperate situations, at times even close to death.[68]

To a lesser degree, this was also true of George Bien, who was arrested with his cardiologist father at the age of sixteen-and-a-half. Although he was too young to have finished even high school, by virtue of having been a physician's son, he eventually landed a position that made him into a "*feldsher*" [medical orderly] and thus a virtual "camp doctor." After this fortunate turn of events, his position improved significantly. He was even permitted to grow his hair and his mustache. Naturally, he too was in a position to help some of the less fortunate inmates of his camp.[69]

Although most "camp doctors" were decent and helpful people, there were a number among them who were cruel and vicious. Among them was a certain Loránd Endrei from the provincial Hungarian town of Ceglédbercel. He was generally known among the camp inmates as "Lenci doktor" or "Dr. Lenci." According to the *malenky robot*er János Kohlmayer,

> we were treated by a doctor who didn't know the difference between diarrhea and arthritis. He was form this town of Ceglédbercel. He used to be a stretcher-bearer before becoming a coach polisher.... He was the camp's chief doctor. He was also the one who admitted one [to the hospital]. If he felt like it, he hospitalized you, if he didn't feel like it, he chased you away. It made no difference how sick you were, he drove you off to work.... This Dr. Lenci... one day made a visit to my hospital bed and ascertained that I am not alive any more. He declared me dead. He also had me put into the collection ditch, next to five or six bodies. He had me thrown into their midst....

> I did not feel anything... because I was unconscious.... Next day came the cadaver collectors with their dump truck to take the dead to their final resting place.... They were dragging the bodies around, but than one of them... shouted: This man is still alive, he is breathing![70]

This is how János Kohlmayer was saved from being buried alive as a result of "Dr. Lenci's" medical incompetence.

Havoc perpetrated by criminals in the labour camps

With very few exceptions, life of the unfortunate Gulag prisoners was living hell. They had to struggle and strive for everything to say alive. As described by János Rózsás,

> Every working day was filled with quarrels, altercations, often accompanied by violence. To this must be added the fact that the overseers designated by the camp command were usually ruthless slave-drivers. In order to retain their privileged positions, they forced the half-dead prisoners to fulfil the norms. Life in the forced labour camps was made even worse by the fact that until the 1950s political prisoners were mixed in with the common criminals, such as gangsters, robbers and murderers. Political prisoners were placed at the mercy of these criminal elements. They freely took their fellow prisoners' garments, cheated the peaceful inmates out of their food, and even forced the latter to work in their place to fulfil the norm.[71]

Common criminals included several layers, from the Mafia-like professional felons to the small-time pickpockets. But these two groups together made up only a small portion of the so-called "common criminals." Actually, most of the latter were convicted for "crimes" that would hardly have been categorized as such in the Western World. Thus, there were some who were given five years of hard labour for having been late to work on a number of occasions. Some received six years because need compelled them to steel some clothing or a pair of shoes at the bazaar. Others were convicted to seven to ten years for having appropriated a couple of bottles of wine or a few loaves of bread during store deliveries. Still others were convicted for having stolen a few pencils and some

writing paper from the offices where they worked. These were the types of "felons" who constituted the largest segment of the "criminal elements" in the forced labour camps. Naturally, they had little to do with the above mentioned Mafia-like professional felons, robbers and murderers.

The various criminal groups functioned under their own acknowledged leaders, and they could be identified by the diverse identification marks on their bodies. These professional criminals conducted virtual haunting expeditions against the defenceless political prisoners. They took away the latter's best clothing and shoes, they robbed them of their food rations, and they also took the largest share of the gift packages sent to them by their families. At the same time they refused to work, but forced their less fortunate fellow prisoners to work in their place. Anyone who resisted, was beaten, maimed, or even killed mercilessly.

Janissaries of the Forced Labour Camps

Ruthless brigade leaders generally came from the ranks of those inmates who were willing to prostitute themselves by collaborating with the Gulag authorities, and thus become *sukis* or bitches. They were present in virtually all of the camps. This was recalled, among others, by Henrik Pfaffenbüchler who was picked up as a *malenky robot*er in the latter part of 1944. Soviet camp commandants "always found people who were willing to carry out their orders. They were sadists, who would beat us regularly. Most of them came from Romania, from among the Saxons, but there were also some Czechs. I never encountered a Hungarian."[72]

This view is counterbalanced by the camp experiences of Rózsa Nagy, who was collected and deported to the Soviet Gulag at the meagre age of fourteen. She remembers that denunciations to and collaborations with camp authorities "was a very widespread phenomenon."[73] There were many who for more food or better treatment were willing to squeal on their fellow prisoners. As an example, Rózsa herself was denounced by her Russian brigade leader — who was serving a fifteen-year sentence in the Gulag — for smuggling a letter from the camp for one of her fellow prisoners.

The traitors or so-called *Janissaries*, who were willing to join the ranks of the torturers of the Gulag prisoners, also appeared in the ranks of the *malenky robot*ers who had been collected and deported from the Upper Tisza Region of Hungary. One of the worse among them was a

certain Transylvanian woman, who had married someone in the village of Böcs, from where she was take to the Gulag. In Imre Kolozsi's reminiscences she is depicted as a horribly cruel and brutal person, who appeared to enjoy torturing others. Within the camp this vicious Hungarian woman from Transylvania was appointed an overseer and then joined her Romanian lover by the name of Korushchuck to torment the camp inmates. She placed her female victims into a partially water-filled small concrete den, where they were "kept for days without food and drink, standing in the water in their undergarments..... This woman from Böcs and her Romanian lover devised various methods of torture beyond one's imagination."[74]

This also holds true for a certain Juci Schubert, allegedly a Slovak girl from the Nyírség region of Hungary, whose name is remembered by all of those who had been tortured by her, but who managed to survive. In Imre Kolozsi's words, "the Romanian man, the woman from Böcs, and the Slovak girl, these three were the terror of the camp. They were not satisfied with constantly harassing and beating the prisoners. Some of them were punished by being placed into the disinfectant room with temperatures above 100 degrees. By the time they were removed, most of them were dead."[75]

Kolozsi also related the case of a Polish escapee who was brought back to the camp and then tortured to death by this infamous trio: "It was difficult to speak with him, his face and his mouth were scarred everywhere. Within two or three weeks he escaped once more, but they caught him again. They brought him back to the camp that same night. Then they began to torture him under the stairs. They beat him and pounded him repeatedly. By next morning he was dead.... His liver had been kicked to pieces."[76]

The activities of this vicious trio remained embedded in the memory of many other Gulag prisoners. Among them was Margit Rozgonyi (later Mrs. Lajos Gulyás), who enumerated many of the methods of torture employed by these inhuman *Janissaries* against their fellow prisoners. On one occasion, for example, they caught Margit Suller from the town of Rakamaz, while she was trying to escape. Upon recapture, "she was placed in a pit and doused with cold water. Then she was forced to walk barefoot in the snow."[77] In another instance, István Kovács, who also escaped, hoping to return to his wife and his six children, "was beaten to death right in front of us by these mad dogs."[78] The prisoners had to line up and were forced to witness his torture. The

torturers were again the above mentioned threesome: "The red headed Juci [Schubert], beautiful Rózsika [woman from Böcs], and her [Romanian] lover. They were indeed a horrendous threesome."[79]

Mrs. Péter Schmidt from the Transdanubian town of Feked also recalled one of these vicious *Janissaries*. He was a lame man from Becskerek, whose name began with the letter K.

> He was much worse than the Russians, for the latter generally did not hurt us.... [This man] always carried a rubber baton and he would use it to [beat us]. [On one occasion] a young boy from the town of Bikal, who had been working in the woods, fell asleep. The rest of the workers came back, but the boy did not. They assumed that he had escaped.... Then they found him. All of us had to stand in the courtyard. The Russian officer was also there. But he only stood there, while [the lame man from Becskerek] beat the boy. He pounded him until the boy died.... He beat him to death right in front of us.[80]

There were some prisoners who tried to escape even though they knew that being caught would mean certain death. But such attempts were seldom successful. And when they were, this could only happen in the Don region. To escape from Eastern Siberia was absolutely impossible. One of our interviewees, Magdolna Rohr, related such an escape attempt. After collecting a large supply of food two men decided to escape. Given the terrain and the climate, they were only able to reach a nearby forest, where they got stuck and could not continue. There they consumed all the food they had, and then one of them ate the other. (We don't know whether the "food" was killed first, or simply died before being consumed.) After having eaten his friend, except his head, the remaining escapee had no choice but to return to the camp and give himself up. Upon doing so, he was taken back to their hiding place, where he was forced to pick up the frozen head of his colleague and carry it around in the camp to show to the others what happens to one who tries to escape. Magdolna Rohr did not know the ultimate fate of this "cannibal," but we can safely presume that he too was executed.[81]

Another case of such an escape was described by an American-born Armenian girl, who, upon visiting some of her relatives in Soviet Armenia, was accused of spying and sent to a Gulag forced labour camps. She spent five years there, before — following Stalin's death — she was permitted to return to the United States. She recalled an incident

when upon being recaptured, two escapees were thrown to a pack of wild dogs. As she recalled: "They were torn to pieces by the dogs, and human flesh was being scattered all over the place. We were forced to stand there and watch their torturous death so as to put all thoughts of escape out of our minds."[82]

Of course, occasionally even these vicious and treacherous *Janissaries* tended to stumble and ended up in the same place as their former victims.

Compassionate Overseers — Humane Russians

While life in the Gulag was cruel, occasionally one did encounter compassionate camp overseers and humane Russian citizens. Such a humane commander was a certain Russian Jew by the name of Milligram, who had been a military officer before being appointed camp commander in the Donbass region of Russia. According to Imre Kolozsi, "he was a most decent and most humane [commandant] in the camp.... We still speak of him with respect and reverence."[83]

When becoming aware that some of the prisoners were very weak, Milligram would generally remove them from the mines and send them to a collective farm, where they would live and work under much better conditions. Their diet was also improved significantly. When he was informed about the cruelness and viciousness of the above-mentioned threesome, he ordered an inquiry. The result was that Korushchuck and another Romanian "war criminal" was sent off for ten years to Siberia.[84] The interviewee did not know what happened to the two women, his bestial cohorts.

Based on the above, it is evident that the former prisoners who managed to stay alive returned to their homeland burdened with oppressive memories. These memories, however, were attached to forced labour camps, to the cruel and inhuman prison guards, to their equally insensitive commanders, and to the above-described *Janissaries* who sponged off their unfortunate fellow prisoners, and not to the Russian people themselves.

The situation was totally different with the simple folk of the countryside, who were almost as hungry and almost as badly off as the prisoners in the Gulag camps. Of course, because of their initial inability to communicate with the deportees, and because of the vicious propa-

ganda they were fed night and day, most of the locals viewed the inmates as "murderous Fascists." But as soon as the prisoners learned enough Russian to make themselves understood, and were able to explain how they ended up in the Soviet Union, their relationship changed. Hate suddenly turned into compassion and the desire to help. Naturally, this was true only in regions where the Gulag camps were located close to human settlements. Such relationships were impossible on the frigid Siberian steppes, without any human habitation. As remarked by historian Tamás Stark, "the majority of the reminiscences emphasize the benevolent and generous nature of the Russian people."[85]

Testimonials to the humanity of the Russian people in the reminiscences of former Gulag prisoners are almost as frequent as references to the inhuman actions of cruel overseers and brutal *Janissaries*. János Rózsás, for example, dedicated a whole volume to Sister Dusya, who protected him and nurtured him back to health. It was her care that made it possible for Rózsás to survive, to see his homeland again, and to write about his Gulag experiences. Rózsás regards Sister Dusya as his "guardian angle" and his "saviour," whose real identity he was never able to learn.[86]

All these reminiscences point to the fact that human beings are the same everywhere. Every nation harbours good and humane individuals, as well as villains and scoundrels. Given the above, one can hardly deny that in Russia and the Soviet Union — like everywhere else — the problem was and is not with the people, but always the political system. And it was completely irrelevant whether the system was headed by a "holy" czars or an "infallible" communist dictator.

Women on the Soviet Gulag

About one-third of the deportees — at least those from the Upper Tisza Region — were women. This is how the deportees themselves remember it. This ratio was probably also true for those convicted of various political crimes.[87]

The majority of the women deportees were between sixteen and twenty-five years of age. Naturally, after their unexpected arrest by the Soviet forces they were even more frightened than the men. After all, in their case there was also the possibility of being raped. And even though this was not very common among the *malenky robot*ers, it did happen, particularly among the political prisoners.[88]

During the process of deportation all sorts of wild stories were spread, which frightened the women even more. By the time they reached Focsani [Foksani] in Moldavia (Romania) it was widely believed that the reason they were being deported was that they should give birth to little Russians. "There is a need for many women" — so the story went — "because many Russians have died and women are essential to give birth to children." This is how one of the survivors recalled it. Upon hearing this story "everyone of us began to cry," even though we thought it "impossible that such a thing could take place."[89] Fortunately, this rumour turned out to be completely false.

Upon reaching the destination camps, all prisoners were subjected to disinfection and depilation. This really caused panic among the women:

> They grudgingly agreed to the shearing of their heads, but further depilation could only be carried out after a hand to hand combat. Women also protested violently against the shearing of their locks.... Thereafter all women were lined up... and were given injections to stop their menstruations.... The reason behind this act was the belief that these 'Fascists' were brought here to work.... And because this was a joint camp, they could not discount the possibility of sexual relations. Women were therefore injected to prevent the possibility of child births.[90]

Others believe that something was mixed into their food, which sopped their menstruations. It is possible that in certain instances Soviet authorities may have mixed something into the food of the female prisoners, but most women claim that they were given injections. They were all very much afraid of this treatment, because they feared that it may destroy their ability of ever having children.

There were those who felt the negative effect of these injections already while in camp. Some of the side effects of this treatment included skin rashes and severe blisters. Among them was Erzsébet Pásztor, the future Mrs. Joseph Turkó, whose body was covered with large, ugly and painful boils, especially under her arms. And these boils lasted for many weeks.[91]

The same story was repeated by Magdolna Rohr, but she also added that the depilation of women was always performed by men, while the depilation of men was done by women. This was a horrendous experience for them, because they all had been reared with traditional ethical values. And this open violation of their modesty made their lives

even more miserable than it already was by virtue of their deportation and incarceration.[92]

After a while a number of children were born in the Gulag camps, but almost exclusively to women, who were already pregnant at the time of their arrest and deportation. There is the case of Mrs. Frigyes Muszbek, nee Mária Szloboda, who was in her fifth month at the time of when she was taken to the Gulag, where she gave birth to a little girl.[93] Meanwhile, Soviet authorities realized that they could not expect much work from pregnant women and breast-feeding mothers. As a result, a few weeks after the birth of these babies, they were collected and sent home.

There were thirteen young mothers and thirteen babies who began their repatriation to Hungary on October 20, 1945. The conditions of their travel, however, were such that there was little hope that most of the babies would make it home. As a result of malnutrition, most mothers had very little milk. And the unheated cattle cars were hardly fit to house newborn babies.

> Diapering took place by removing one rag from under them, putting another soiled rag back that had already dried. We were unable to bath them, nor to wash them. We were tearing apart whatever rags we had so as to prevent them from being kept in wet rags in the unheated wagons. Meanwhile we hardly ate anything.... The mothers' milk went dry. It became less and less. Our children slowly withered away..., and at the end they died of hunger.[94]

The unhappy mothers were forced to see the dying off of their children, one after the other; and also witness when the guards would toss their little corpses upon the snowy Russian prairie next to the railroad tracks. At the end, of the original thirteen babies only two remained alive.

There is another fact that has to be mentioned about female prisoners: They survived in much greater numbers than the male prisoners. This phenomenon was partially the result of the fact that women's bodies are tougher, because they are built to withstand the tortures of child birth. But at least of equal importance was the fact that in the Gulag camps all food portions were of equal size. Thus, it was the heavier and larger individuals who suffered most from the lack of food. Being consistently underfed, they were the ones who perished first. Those with smaller bodies — be they women or men with small frames — had a much greater chance to survive.

Repatriation and Reception at Home

As noted earlier, those who survived the vicissitudes of the Gulag were repatriated in several waves. Most of the *malenky robot*ers returned after three years toward the end of 1947 or early 1948. Political prisoners, however, were repatriated only in the years following Stalin's death in 1953. Of course, there were exceptions in both instances. Some of the former returned only in 1950, while some of the latter as late as 1960.

The desire to return home was so great among the prisoners that often they did not even feel the vicissitudes of the return voyage. They only wanted to be at home with their families. The great expectation and joy of repatriation, however, turned sour immediately upon reaching the borders of Hungary.

Hungarian communist authorities received them not as innocent victims of an oppressive political system, but as criminals who deserved everything that had been meted out to them. And the nature and tone of this reception accompanied them throughout their lives, right up to the collapse of communism, and in some instances even beyond that date.

Following their return the former Gulag prisoners were officially chastised, given a few forints — from five to thirty, depending on year and the circumstances of their return — and then sent home. There were many who upon reaching home found a house occupied by strangers, with their own family members gone. During their absence, some parents and spouses died, while others went insane,[95] Still others were declared Germans [*Volksdeutsche*] and then summarily deported to West Germany. There were also those who found a new partner, and even had children with their new spouses.

This was the direct result of the fact that the Gulag prisoners had not been able to correspond with their families for many years. Thus, with the passing of years — especially in the case of the convicted political prisoners who spent ten or more years in the Gulag -- their wives or husbands presumed them to be dead. After a number of years they wanted some security and some order in their lives. According to the law it was the wife who now had to decide with whom she wanted to spend the rest of her life. But it was usually the returned prisoner who solved the problem: He left and disappeared from the life of the family.[96]

Another problem faced by the returned Gulag prisoners was that most of them came home with various sicknesses and maladies. They received no help from Hungarian communist authorities. In fact, it was

even difficult for them to get and to hold on to a job. They were viewed and treated as dangerous criminals. In many instances the only solution for them was to leave their native village or town, relocate to a major city, and then try to conceal their past and their true identity.

Above and beyond this, however, the worse thing from a psychological point of view was that they could not speak about their horrendous experiences. They had to keep everything within themselves. They were even denied the possibilities of a spiritual catharsis that would have taken place had they been able to discuss their sufferings with their family members, their friends, and the community at large. They lived in constant fear of being discovered, and they had to suffer the contempt and scorn of the country, which had been the object of their dreams throughout their captivity.

Some Conclusions

The tormented life and often excruciating death of the former Gulag prisoners — be they *malenky robot*ers or political prisoners — constitutes an important, but mostly forgotten chapter in the history of humanity. This is a topic that is little known by the average citizen — be he a Hungarian or a member of another nation. Therefore, this topic needs to be researched, written about, and taught to people within and outside the borders of Hungary, as well as in all countries around the world.

It is true that since the collapse of communism in 1989, an increasing number of publications and documentaries have appeared on the Gulag. But compared to the coverage of the other great tragedy of the twentieth century — the Jewish Holocaust — people still know very little about the history of the Soviet Gulag and of its tens of millions of prisoners who lived, suffered, and died in the slave labour camps of Leninist and Stalinist Russia. In point of fact, we may even conclude that we have hardly made any progress in our understanding of this institution of mass extermination since 1944, when US Vice President Henry Wallace (1888-1965) visited one of the worst and most brutal Soviet penal camps in Magadan, and returned to the West "lauding its sadistic commander, Ivan Nikishov, and describing Magadan as 'idyllic'."[97] Like many other intellectuals and politicians of that period — including the Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950) — Wallace was also

blinded by his mistaken adoration of "Uncle Joe," otherwise known as Joseph Stalin.

It is our hope that with time ignorance about the Gulag will gradually disappear, and it will be replaced by a deeply felt consciousness and knowledge about this horrendous institution of human suffering and death.

NOTES

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[1] That this is a widespread belief has been demonstrated in July 2004, when discussing our research with a retired professor at the University of Pécs in Hungary. Until we explained it to him, he was convinced the "Gulag" is the name of a group of islands, containing penal colonies, somewhere off the northern coast of the Soviet Union.

[2] This is thoroughly explained by Anne Applebaum in her book, *GULAG. A History of the Soviet Camps* (New York: Doubleday, Division of Random House, Inc., 2003), 677 pp.; reissued in paperback (London: Penguin Books, 2004), p. 3.

[3] According to Alexander Solzhenitsyn, Frenkel was a "Turkish Jew born in Constantinople." See his *Gulag Archipelago, 1918-1956*, trans. Thomas P. Whitney and H. Willetts (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), II, p. 76. According to Malsagov, Frenkel was a "Hungarian manufacturer." Cf. S. A Malsagov, *Island Hell. A Soviet Prison in the Far North*, trans. by F. H. Lyon (London, 1926), pp. 161-73. Still others claimed that Frenkel came from Austria, or from Odessa, or from Palestine. Cf. Applebaum, *Gulag*, p. 52.

[4] Dan Michaels, "The Gulag: Communism's Penal Colonies Revisited," in *The Journal of Historical Review*, vol. 21, no. 1 (January-February, 2002): 29-38. Also available on the Internet at: http://www.ihr.org. Reference here is to the Internet version, p. 3.

[5] *Ibid.*

[6] *Ibid*, pp. 3-4.

[7] *Ibid*. p. 4.

[8] Quoted in the *Encyclopedia Britannica – Micropedia* (2003), vol. 5, p. 563; and on the Internet-1 http://geocentral.net/be/ archive/be/gulag.html.

[9] "Victims: People Dead from 'Violent Conflicts' in the 20th Century," http://www.nsu.ru/filf/pha/hist/Victims.html#FORMER%20SOVIET520UNION

[10] Professor Nicholas Nagy-Talavera related the story of his trials and tribulations to me during our first meeting at an international historical congress in Ankara, Turkey, in the year 1979.

[11] Tamás Stark's study in Ilona Szebeni, *Merre van a magyar hazám? Kényszermunkán a Szovjetunióban 1944-1949* [Where is My Hungarian Homeland? Forced Labour in the Soviet Union, 1944-1949] (Debrecen: Széphalom Könyvműhely, 1991), p. 302. Stark's study is found on pp. 302-310. (Hereafter cited as Szebeni, *Merre van hazám.*)

[12] According to Tamás Stark's calculations somewhere between 270,000 and 370,000 Hungarian civilians and prisoners of war perished in the Soviet Gulag camps. See Tamás Stark, "Magyarok szovjet kényszermunkatáborokban" [Hungarians in Soviet Forced Labour Camps], in *Kortárs* [Contemporary], 46, 2-3 (2002): 69-81; also available at http://www.kortarsonline.hu/0202/stark.htm. In one of his earlier works Stark calculated that the number of Hungarians who perished in the Gulag camps was between 250,000 and 300,000. Cf. Tamás Stark, "Megfogyva bár.... Háborús népességmozgás Magyarországon, 1941-1949" [Diminished.... Population mobility in Times of Belligerency], in *Hitel* [Credit], 5, 4 (April 1992): 14-20.

[13] *Magyar Nagylexikon* [Great Hungarian Encyclopedia], 18 vols. and 3 supplementary vols. (Budapest: Magyar Nagylexikon Kiadó, 1993-2006), vol. 8. p. 883.

[14] See *Magyarország a második világháborúban, Lexikon* [Encyclopedia on Hungary in the Second World War], ed. Péter Sipos and István Ravasz (Budapest, 1997), p. 498. See also Lajos Für's relevant work, *Mennyi sok sírkereszt? Magyarország embervesztesége a második világháborúban* [How Many Headstones? Hungary's Human Losses in the Second World War] (Budapest: Püski Kiadó, 1989). Für claims that Hungary lost close to one million persons, which include also the victims of the Holocaust.

[15] See Tamás Stark, "Ethnic Cleansing and Collective Punishment: Soviet Policy Towards Prisoners of War and Civilian Internees in the Carpathian Basin," in *Ethnic Cleansing in Twentieth-Century Europe*, ed. S. B. Várdy, T. H. Tooley, and A. H. Várdy (New York: East European Monographs, Columbia University Press, 2003), 489-502, statistics on pp. 498-501. (Hereafter cited as Vardy, *Ethnic Cleansing.*)

[16] The authors' interview with Gusztáv Menczer, June 23 and July 6, 2004. This statistical information is also available in one of the typescript authored by Mr. Menczer and given to the authors of this study.

[17] In addition to the above interviews, this information is also available in Gusztáv Menczer's typescript entitled "Gulág," that was presented to the authors of this study on the occasion of one these interviews.

[18] Quoted from Gusztáv Menczer above-cited typescript entitled "Gulág."

[19] In common usage, including popular and scholarly publications, Hungarians speak of *malenky robot*, even though grammatically it should be *malenkaya rabota*. This may be connected with the fact that the term robot — the work obligation of the serf for his lord — has been in use in Hungary ever since the Middle Ages. Cf. Steven Béla Várdy, *Historical Dictionary of Hungary* (Lanham-London: The Scarecrow Press, 1997), 596.

Totally different statistics are given by Ignác Romsics in his synthesis of twentieth-century Hungarian history. He claims that by the end of 1946 300,000 had returned, followed by 128,000 in 1947, and 170,000 in 1948. This comes to 598,000 out of the approximately 600,000 that Romsics claims as having been captives in the Soviet Union. These figures on repatriation are so unrealistic that they can only be attributed to some mixup. Cf. Ignác Romsics, *Magyarország története a XX. században* [Hungary's History in the 20th Century] (Budapest: Osiris Kiadó, 1999), 268.

[21] On these estimates, see Stark's study in Szebeni, *Merre van hazám*, 303-310; and Tamás Stark, *Magyarország második világháborús embervesztesége* [Hungary's Human Losses during the Second World War] (Budapest: MTA Történettudományi Intézete, 1989), 79-80.

[22] On these convicted political deportees, see Gusztáv Menczer: "A szovjet hadbíróságok által magyar állampolgárok politikai okokból történt elitélése és e tény jogosságának néhány kérdése" [The Sentencing of Hungarian Citizens for Political Reasons by Soviet Military Courts, and Some Questions of the Legitimacy of this Deed], in *Magyar kényszermunkások és politikai rabok a Szovjetunióban a II. világháború után* [Hungarian Forced Labourers and Political Prisoners in the Soviet Union after World War II] (Budapest, 2000), 15-33.

[23] Robert Conquest, *The Great Terror* (London: Pimlico, 1965). Revised edition: *The Great Terror. A Reassessment* (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).

[24] Nanci Adler, *Victims of Soviet Terror: The Story of the Memorial Movement* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1993); and *idem*, *Beyond the Soviet System. The Gulag Survivor* (New Brunswick-London: Transaction Publishers, 2002).

[25] Anne Applebaum, *GULAG. A History of the Soviet Camps*, cited above.

[26] Alexander Solzhenitsyn, *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, trans. Ralph Parker (New York: Dutton, 1963); *idem*, *The Gulag Archipelago, 1918-1956*, trans. Thomas P. Whitney and H. Willetts (New York: Harper and Row, 1973); and *idem*, *The Gulag Archipelago*, vol. 3 (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, Inc., 1992).

[27] Áron Gábor, *Az embertől keletre* [To the East of Man](Los Angeles and Munich: XX Század Kiadása, 1967); *idem*, *Szögletes szabadság* [Squared-off Liberty] (Los Angeles and Munich: XX Század Kiadása, 1968); and *idem*, *Évszázados emberek* [Men of Centuries] (Los Angeles and Munich: XX Század Kiadása, 1971).

[28] János Rózsás, *Gulag Lexikon* [Gulag Encyclopedia] (Budapest: Püski Kiadó, 2000).

[29] János Rózsás, *Keserü ifjúság* [Bitter Youth] (Munich: Új Látóhatár, 1986); and *idem*, *Éltető reménység* [Living Hope] (Munich: Új Látóhatár, 1987).

[30] János Rózsás, *Keserü ifjúság* [Bitter Youth], 2 vols. (Budapest: Szabad Tér Kiadó, 1989). The most recent edition of this work is: *Keserü ifjúság - Éltető reménység. Szovjet fogságom naplója* [Bitter Youth – Living Hope. Diary of My Soviet Captivity] (Budapest: Püski Kiadó, 1999).

[31] George Zoltán Bien, *Elveszett évek. Egy magyar diák raboskodása a GULÁG kelet-szibériai lágereiben*. 2d expanded edition (Budapest: Püski Kiadó, 2000), 184 pp.; and its English version, *Lost Years. A Hungarian Student's Ten Years in the Siberian Gulag. Kolyma 1945-1955* (Fairfax, Virginia: Published by the Author, 2003), 235.

[32] Bien, Lost Years, pp. 63-67; Bien, *Elveszett évek*, pp. 61-64.

[33] Some of the post-communist syntheses we have examined — all authored by respected historians or publicists — include the following: Zsuzsa L. Nagy, *Magyarország története, 1918-1945* [History of Hungary, 1918-1945] (Debrecen: Multiplex Media, 1995); Ferenc Pölöskei, Jenő Gergely and Lajos Izsák, eds., *20. századi magyar történelem 1900-1994* [Twentieth-Century Hungarian History, 1900-1994] (Budapest: Korona Kiadó, 1997); Romsics, *Magyarország története a XX. században*; *Millenniumi magyar történet* [Millennial History of Hungary], ed. György István Tóth (Budapest: Osiris Kiadó, 2001), p. 562; László Kontler, *A History of Hungary. Millennium in Central Europe* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002); and Paul Lendvai, *The Hungarians. A Thousand Years of Victory in Defeat* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

[34] Ferenc Nagy, *The Struggle Behind the Iron Curtain* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1948), 62.

[35] *Ibid.*, p. 63.

[36] Ödön Málnási, *A magyar nemzet őszinte története* [The Frank History of the Hungarian Nation], 2d ed. (Munich: Mikes Kelemen Kör, 1959), 218. See

also Steven Béla Várdy and Dominic G. Kosáry, *History of the Hungarian Nation* (Astor Park, FL: Danubian Press, Inc., 1969), 292, 369-370.

[37] Sándor Zsíros, *A front alatt. 1944 ősze. Felsőzsolca-Miskolc* [On the Front. Fall 1944. Felsőzsolca-Miskolc (Felsőzsolca: Örökségünk Felsőzsolca Alapítvány & Dominium BT Közös Kiadása, 2004), 47; see also pp. 46, 58, 61; and the English edition: Sándor Zsíros, *On the Front, Soviet Military Conquest and Sack of a Small Town, Felsőzsolca, in Hungary, in the Autumn and Winter of 1944-45* (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Department of History, Duquesne University, 2006), 39-40.

[38] *Magyar Nagylexikon*, vol. 8. p. 883.

[39] The two examples of such studies are: Lajos Für, "Magyarország emberveszteségе" [Hungary's Human Losses], in *Magyar Hírlap* [Hungarian News], June 23, 1984; and Stark, *Magyarország második világháborús emberveszteségе.*

[40] Much of this bibliographical information can be found on the Internet. Cf. http://www.gulag. hu/konyvek.htm, which lists around seventy volumes. See also György Dupka's bibliography in his book, *Kárpátalja magyarsága* [Hungarians of Sub-Carpathia] (Budapest: Magyar Nyelv és Kultúra Nemzetközi Társasága, 2000), 197-209.

[41] Miklós Füzes, *Modern rabszolgaság. Magyar állampolgárok a Szovjetunió munkatáboraiban, 1945-1949* [Modern-day Slavery. Hungarian Citizens in Szovjet Labor Camps] (Budapest: Formatív Kft., 1990).

[42] *Ibid.*, p. 39.

[43] Szebeni, *Merre van hazám?* For full bibliographical citation, see note 11 above.

[44] *Ibid.*, pp. 302-310.

[45] Sándor Zsíros, *A front alatt*, cited above.

[46] The English version will appear under the title On the Front.

[47] Valéria Kormos, *A végtelen foglyai: Magyar nők szovjet rabságban, 1945-1947* [Prisoners of Endlessness. Hungarian Women in Soviet Captivity, 1945-1947] (Budapest: Kairosz Kiadó, 2001).

[48] Gyula Juhász, *Brit-magyar titkos tárgyalások 1943-ban* [British-Hungarian Secret Negotiations in 1943] (Budapest: Kossuth Kiadó, 1978), 158; also cited by Stark in several of his relevant studies.

[49] As remembered by Mrs. Imre Kolozsi, née Erzsébet Herényi, in 1989. Cf. Szebeni, *Merre van hazám*, p. 24. For a list of these and similar names see p. 317.

[50] For a list of 3,230 deportees from the Upper-Tisza region, see Szebeni, *Merre van hazám*, pp. 311-346.

[51] Concerning the situation in Sub-Carpathia or Carpatho-Ruthenia, see the following rich memoir and documentary literature: György Dupka and Alekszej Korszun, *A "malenykij robot" dokumentumokban* [Malenky Robot in

Documents] (Ungvár-Budapest: Intermix Kiadó, 1997); Dupka György, *Kárpátaljai magyar GULAG-lexikon. Lefejezett értelmiség 1944-1959* [Sub-Carpathian Hungarian GULAG Encyclopedia. Beheaded Intelligentsia, 1944-1959] (Ungvár-Budapest: Intermix Kiadó, 1999); *Sötét napok jöttek. Koncepciós perek magyar elitéltjeinek emlékkönyve 1944-1955* [Dark Days Descended. Memorial Volume of the Victims of Sham Political Trials, 1944-1955], ed. György Dupka (Ungvár-Budapest: Intermix Kiadó, 1992); *Élő történelem. Válogatás a meghurcolt magyarok visszaemlékezéseibŒl 1944-1992* [Living History. Selections from the Victims' Memoirs, 1944-1992] (Ungvár-Budapest: Intermix Kiadó, 1992); *Egyetlen bünük magyarságuk volt. Emlékkönyv a sztálinizmus kárpátaljai áldozatairól 1944-1946* [Their Only Sin Was that They Were Hungarians. Memorial Volume in Honor of the Sub-Carpathian Victims of Stalinism, 1944-1946], ed. György Dupka (Ungvár-Budapest: Intermix Kiadó, 1992); *Istenhez fohászkodva, 1944, Szolyva. Verses levelek, imák a sztálini lágerekből, szemelvények a hozzátartozók visszaemlékezéseiből.* [Praying to God, 1944, Szolyva. Poetic Letters and Prayers from Stalin's Camps. Selections from the Memoirs of Relatives]. Preface and Postscript by György Dupka (Ungvár-Budapest: Intermix Kiadó, 1994); and *A haláltáborból. Badzey Pál szolyvai lágernaplója* [From the Death Camp. Paul Badzey's Camp Diary from Szolyva, compiled and edited by Imre Badzey (Ungvár-Budapest: Intermix Kiadó, 1996).

[52] For the situation in the reclaimed territories from Slovakia, see the following studies: Kálmán Janics, *Czechoslovak Policy and Hungarian Minority, 1945-48*, ed. Stephen Borsody (New York: East European Monographs, Columbia University Press, 1982); Katalin Vadkerty, *A reszlovakizáció* [Re-Slovakization] (Pozsony, 1993); Edward Benesch, *Präsidentendekrete oder die Rechtsberaubung der Ungarn und Deutschen* (Pressburg, 1992); *Beneš Decrees. Taking Victims in 2002*, ed. Miklós Patrubány (Budapest: World Federation of Hungarians, 2002); and Róbert Barta, "The Hungarian-Slovak Population Exchange and Forced Resettlement in 1947," in Várdy, *Ethnic Cleansing*, pp. 565-574.

[53] Révai's letter to Rákosi, January 7, 1945, in *Moszkvának jelentjük. Titkos dokumentumok* [Reports to Moscow. Secret Documents], ed. Miklós Kun and Lajos Izsák (Budapest: Századvég Kiadó, 1994), p. 35. See also Stark, "Magyarok szovjet kényszermunkatáborokban," p. 73; Internet version, pp. 3-4.

[54] Much of the information concerning the collection of prisoners and their life in the Gulag is derived from the oral interviews we have conducted with the following persons: In Budapest: Gusztáv Menczer, Mrs. Károly Pintér, née Magdolna Rohr, and Father Placid Olofsson; in Nagykanizsa: János Rózsás, Ferenc Hársfalvi and Zsigmond Szabó; in Milota: Sándor Járai and Árpád Szabó; in Rakamaz: Mrs. Sándor Somlói, née Irén Képes, Mrs. József Turkó, née Erzsébet Pásztori, Mrs. István Sándor, née Margit Ruba, Mrs. Ferenc Szőke, née Borbála Rudolf, Károly Jung and Mrs. Károly Jung, née Mária Bodnár; in Gávavencsellő: Mrs. Ferenc Vojtó, née Ilona Vinnai, Béla Labanc, Mrs. Béla

Labanc, née Rozália Türk, Mihály Rák, András Türk, Mrs. András Türk, née Ágnes Labanc, and Mrs. József Varga, née Éva Türk; in Balkány: Béla Réti and Mrs. Béla Réti, née Gizella Csatlós; and in Magyarboly: Károly Szabó. Only segments of these long interviews were transcribed. Once done, they will all be published. In addition to our own interviews, we also relied on well over a hundred additional interviews conducted by Ilona Szebeni, Miklós Füzes, Sándor Zsíros, and Valéria Kormos; as well as on scores of memoirs published by the survivors.

[55] We have describe the treacherous activities of these so-called "polic" in another part of our study. Their despicable role was also mentioned by most of our interviewees, among them Mrs. András Türk, née Ágnes Labanc (Gávavencselő, June 23, 2003), Mrs. József Varga, née Éva Türk (Gávavencselő, June 24, 2003), Mrs. István Sándor, née Margit Ruba (Rakamaz, June 28, 2003), and Károly Jung (Rakamaz, June 28, 2003).

[56] Reminiscences of Mihály Zöldi, in Szebeni, *Merre van hazám*, pp. 159.

[57] Reminiscences of Imre Kolozsi, in Szebeni, Merre van hazám, pp. 62-63.

[58] Reminiscences of Mrs. Ferenc Vojtó, née Ilona Vinnai, in Szebeni, *Merre van hazám*, p. 138.

[59] Reminiscences of Mrs. László Homolya, née Piroska Pásztor, in Szebeni, *Merre van hazám*, pp. 34-35.

[60] This event is described by Gennadi Beglov in Part 3 of a documentary about Joseph Stalin. The documentary was prepared by Public Media Video in 1990.

[61] János Rózsás, "Rabszolgamunka a Gulag táboraiban" [Slave Labor in Gulag Camps], manuscript, p. 1.

[62] *Ibid.*

[63] Colin Thubron, *In Siberia* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1999).

[64] *Ibid.*, pp. 266-269. See also Michaels, "The Gulag...," pp. 29-38.

[65] Thubron, *In Siberia*, p. 40.

[66] *Ibid.*, pp. 40-41.

[67] *Ibid.*, p. 41.

[68] The authors interviewed Gusztáv Menczer at his office on June 23 and July 6, 2004. In addition to these oral interviews, Mr. Menczer also supplied the authors with a number of important printed sources. Concerning Gusztáv Menczer, see Rózsás, *Gulag Lexikon*, p. 244.

[69] Bien, *Elveszett évek*, pp. 82-85; and Bien, *Lost Years*, pp. 93-97.

[70] Reminiscences of János Kohlmayer, in Szebeni, *Merre van hazám*, p. 261.

[71] Rózsás, "Rabszolgamunka a Gulag táboraiban," p. 2.

[72] Reminiscences of Henrik Pfaffenbüchler, in Füzes, *Modern rabszolgaság*, p. 149.

[73] Reminiscences of Rózsa Nagy, in Füzes, *Modern rabszolgaság*, p. 271.

[74] Reminiscences of Imre Kolozsi, in Szebeni, *Merre van hazám*, p. 77.

[75] *Ibid.*

[76] *Ibid.*

[77] Reminiscences of Margit Rozgonyi, Mrs. Lajos Gulyás, in Szebeni, *Merre van hazám*, p. 270.

[78] *Ibid.*

[79] *Ibid.*

[80] Reminiscences of Mrs. Peter Schmidt, in Füzes, *Modern rabszolgaság*, p. 165.

[81] The authors' interview with Mrs. Károly Pintér, née Magdolna Rohr, Budapest, October 30, 2003. A similar incident is related by Sándor Adorján in his *A halál árnyékában. Magyar rabszolgák Szibériában* [In the Shadow of Death. Hungarian Slaves in Siberia] (Pápa: A szerző kiadása, 1993), 105-106. This section has also been reprinted in the quarterly *Örökség* (Felsőzsolca), vol. 3, no. 2 (2004), p. 50.

[82] Alice Mulkigian narrated this horrendous event when she was being interviewed for a documentary on Joseph Stalin. See Part 2 of Stalin's biography ("Generalissimo"), prepared and published by the Public Media Video in 1990.

[83] Reminiscences of Imre Kolozsi, in Szebeni, *Merre van hazám*, p. 77.

[84] *Ibid.*, p. 78.

[85] Stark, "Magyarok szovjet kényszermunkatáborokban," p. 79.

[86] János Rózsás, *Duszja nővér* [Sister Dusya] (Nagykanizsa: Canissa Kiadó, 1994).

[87] See for example the reminiscences of Mária Hardicsai, in Szebeni, *Merre van hazám*, p. 99.

[88] Based on the authors' interview with Mrs. Károly Pintér, née Magdolna Rohr, Budapest, October 30, 2003. See also István Stefka's interview with Magdolna Rohr in one of the January 2001 issues of the *Magyar Nemzet* (Budapest), which appeared in an English translation in the *American Magyar News*, January 2002, pp. 4-5, having been translated by Erika Papp Faber.

[89] Reminiscences of Mrs. László Homolya, née Piroska Pásztor, in Szebeni, *Merre van hazám*, p. 34.

[90] *Ibid.*, pp. 41-42.

[91] The authors' interview with Mrs. József Turkó, née Erzsébet Pásztor, June 28, 2003.

[92] The authors' interview with Mrs. Károly Pintér, née Magdolna Rohr, Budapest, October 30, 2003.

[93] Reminiscences of Mrs. Frigyes Muszbek, née Mária Szloboda, in Szebeni, *Merre van hazám*, pp. 121-125.

[94] *Ibid.*, pp. 121-123.

[95] This is what happened to Piroska Pásztor. Her mother went insane and did not recognize her, while her father died only a few months after her return. See the reminiscences of Mrs. László Homolya, née Piroska Pásztor, in Szebeni, *Merre van hazám*, pp. 57-58.

[96] János Rózsás, "A volt Gulág rabok sorsa hazatérésük után," pp. 2-3. Rózsás also described these developments to us personally, when we interviewed him on October 24, 2003.

[97] Michaels, "The Gulag," Internet version, p. 1. Henry Wallace's naive description of the Soviet "Paradise" under Stalin's rule can be found in his *Soviet Asia Mission*, with the collaboration of Andrew J. Steiger (New York: Raynal and Hitchcock, 1946).