



Gulag: A History

By Anne Applebaum

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In this magisterial and acclaimed history, Anne Applebaum offers the first fully documented portrait of the Gulag, from its origins in the Russian Revolution, through its expansion under Stalin, to its collapse in the era of glasnost.

The Gulag--a vast array of Soviet concentration camps that held millions of political and criminal prisoners--was a system of repression and punishment that terrorized the entire society, embodying the worst tendencies of Soviet communism. Applebaum intimately re-creates what life was like in the camps and links them to the larger history of the Soviet Union. Immediately recognized as a landmark and long-overdue work of scholarship, *Gulag* is an essential book for anyone who wishes to understand the history of the twentieth century.

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Gulag: A History By Anne Applebaum Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Nearly 30 million prisoners passed through the Soviet Union's labor camps in their more than 60 years of operation. This remarkable volume, the first fully documented history of the gulag, describes how, largely under Stalin's watch, a regulated, centralized system of prison labor-unprecedented in scope-gradually arose out of the chaos of the Russian Revolution. Fueled by waves of capricious arrests, this prison labor came to underpin the Soviet economy. Applebaum, a former Warsaw correspondent for the Economist and a regular contributor to the Wall Street Journal and the Washington Post, draws on newly accessible Soviet archives as well as scores of camp memoirs and interviews with survivors to trace the gulag's origins and expansion. By the gulag's peak years in the early 1950s, there were camps in every part of the country, and slave labor was used not only for mining and heavy industries but for producing every kind of consumer product (chairs, lamps, toys, those ubiquitous fur hats) and some of the country's most important science and engineering (Sergei Korolev, the architect of the Soviet space program, began his work in a special prison laboratory). Applebaum details camp life, including strategies for survival; the experiences of women and children in the camps; sexual relationships and marriages between prisoners; and rebellions, strikes and escapes. There is almost too much dark irony to bear in this tragic, gripping account. Applebaum's lucid prose and painstaking consideration of the competing theories about aspects of camp life and policy are always compelling. She includes an appendix in which she discusses the various ways of calculating how many died in the camps, and throughout the book she thoughtfully reflects on why the gulag does not loom as large in the Western imagination as, for instance, the Holocaust.

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From Library Journal

More than a full-scale history of the Soviet Gulag, this work by the Spectator's deputy editor asks why it is so little remembered in both Russia and the West.

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From [Booklist](#)

Starred Review We have massive amounts of data about the Nazi concentration and death camps, ranging from memoirs of survivors to incredibly detailed records kept by Nazi officials. The Nazi camps lasted just over a decade. On the other hand, the vast system of confinement, forced labor, and executions dubbed the "Gulag Archipelago" by Alexander Solzhenitsyn lasted almost 70 years, and we are just beginning to get a comprehensive picture of this affront to the human spirit. Applebaum is a former Marshall scholar and is now a journalist who covered the collapse of Communism in Central and Eastern Europe. With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the gradual opening of KGB archives, the full horror of the Gulag is gradually emerging, and Applebaum has done a masterful job of chronicling the origin, growth, and eventual end of this monstrous system. Contrary to the beliefs of many, the Gulag was not a product of the Stalin era. Both Lenin and Trotsky staunchly backed the creation of these camps as a useful tool in their promotion of "Red Terror." Under Stalin, of course, the camps were greatly expanded, both as a repository for the victims of his various purges and as a vital component, via slave labor, in industrialization. Like the Nazi camps, the Gulag became a virtual industrial complex. Now, we are left with the evidence, the memory of survivors, and the moral obligation to uncover the full story. This brilliant and often heartbreaking work is a giant step in the fulfillment of that obligation. *Jay Freeman*

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

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