



MEMORIAL TO THE VICTIMS OF
COMMUNISM
TRIBUTE TO LIBERTY



Newsletter

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Project Update

We are happy to report that progress on the construction of the Memorial continues!

With construction resuming in the summer, the site has progressed substantially in the past couple of months. The concrete for the plinth and Wall of Remembrance has now been poured. Once the plinth is fully dry, it will be sandblasted for an even finish, followed by the installation of limestone around the edges and stairs. This is expected to be completed in the coming weeks. Landscaping such as the planting of trees and grass has also begun and will be completed in spring 2022.

Watch for more updates in our winter newsletter! *Photos continue on Page 4.*



History Unhidden

The Forgotten Women of the Gulag

This [story](#) by David Trilling and Joanna Lillis was originally published by Eurasianet.

The women's faces gaze down from the walls, young and old, dark and fair, blue-eyed and brown-eyed. Some look sad, some stoical, some bitter, and some simply confused. These women, who came from all over the Soviet Union, had one thing in common: they had been incarcerated in Stalin's gulag although they were not even suspected of committing an offense themselves.

Their crime? Being married to an enemy of the state, for which they were sent to this prison in Soviet Kazakhstan, ending up in part of the infamous network of concentration camps which stretched across Siberia, down onto the Kazakh steppe. This link in a chain christened "The Gulag Archipelago" by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn was called Alzhir, a Russian acronym for the Akmola Camp for the Wives of Traitors to the Motherland.

It was not only wives who served time here, but mothers, sisters and daughters, too. There were also children in Alzhir -- and not just the offspring of "enemies of the people." From its inception in 1937 to its closure after Stalin's death in 1953, the camp witnessed 1,507 births by prisoners raped by their guards.

A museum now stands on this quiet spot just outside Astana, Kazakhstan's capital. The entrance is marked by a striking black and silver monument, the Arch of Grief, whose conical shape represents a traditional Kazakh bridal headdress. Fragments of barbed wire and a watchtower are vivid symbols of the imprisonment.

The bunker-like museum building houses exhibits commemorating the lives of the women incarcerated here, who numbered more than 17,000 by 1939, when Stalin's terror was at its height. Behind, rows of names are listed on marble slabs, testimony to the sheer numbers who were forced to suffer.

Many were shipped here by train, spending up to two months trundling across the Soviet Union. On a

recent summer's afternoon, an elderly lady peered into a train wagon at the museum, similar to the one in which she was deported from Siberia in the 1930s. Why was she deported? "How should I know?" she replied. "I wasn't even eight."

Here the women eked out a miserable existence in grim barracks. Many did not survive; their bodies were hurled into a mass grave behind the camp, now marked by a cross and a crescent moon.

Back at the museum, a statue of a gaunt woman staring pensively into the distance symbolizes the spirit of struggle and hope, a tribute to the women who endured the ordeal of incarceration due to a cruel twist of fate.

Resource Spotlight

Dressed for a Dance in the Snow: Women's Voices from the Gulag

Named a Notable Translated Book of the Year by *World Literature Today*, *Dressed for a Dance in the Snow* is written by Monika Zgustova, an award-winning author whose works have been published in ten languages. Monika was born in Prague and studied comparative literature in the United States.



From the Publisher:

A poignant and unexpectedly inspirational account of women's suffering and resilience in Stalin's forced labor camps, diligently transcribed in the kitchens and living rooms of nine survivors.

The pain inflicted by the gulags has cast a long and dark shadow over Soviet-era history. Zgustová's collection of interviews with former female prisoners not only chronicles the hardships of the camps, but also serves as testament to the power of beauty in face of adversity.

Where one would expect to find stories of hopelessness and despair, Zgustová has unearthed tales of the love, art, and friendship that persisted in times of tragedy. Across the Soviet Union, prisoners are said to have composed and memorized thousands of verses. Galya Sanova, born in a Siberian gulag, remembers reading from a hand-stitched copy of Little Red Riding Hood. Irina Emelyanova passed poems to the male prisoner she had grown to love. In this way, the arts lent an air of humanity to the women's brutal realities.

These stories, collected in the vein of Svetlana Alexievich's Nobel Prize-winning oral histories, turn one of the darkest periods of the Soviet era into a song of human perseverance, in a way that reads as an intimate family history.

History Unhidden

Poems from the Polish Gulag

Beata Obertyńska (1898-1980) was a Polish writer and poet. In July 1940, during the Soviet occupation of Lwów, she was arrested by the NKVD. She was imprisoned in the infamous Brygidki prison and was later moved to prisons in Kyiv, Odessa, Kharkiv, Starobielsk and finally to the Vorkuta concentration camp.

In 1942, she was released and joined Anders' Army, and served through its campaigns in Iran, Palestine, Egypt and Italy. After the war she settled in London and published in Polish-language publications and was a laureate of several literary awards.

In the Cattle Truck

And they laid him there in the corner
By the wall,
Covered him with a buttonless jacket.
He lay stiffly. Warmth gone.
Who in a transport bothers
His head about corpses at all?
No one.

Even yesterday evening
He murmured he was ailing.
Breathing
He was, still this morning.
Now all is silent.
Into the feet that tramped without haven
The rigor of death is pressing and boring

No one has power any longer
To drag or drive forth to wander
This string-tied raggedness.
Yes.
He has won, in his post-mortal
State, a bed in the corner.
Full-length on his back he now rests.

Kin? For sure, someone is waiting,
Someone prays in the night-time,
That he'll come back, survive it all...
But he has lost...
How will they know, when we've not the slightest
Idea of his name, what he's called?



Jail

Jail is not like the storybooks: silence, a gleam
From a small, high-up grating.
Jail is heat, crowding, hubbub and screams,
Water short, and gruel nauseating.

Jail is not loneliness, pitcher and straw,
Rats' feet in silken patter.
Jail is constant awareness that the door
Hides a bayonet and uniform jacket.

Over heaped bodies with floor for bed,

Making a mock of night-time,
A bubble of glass hangs over your head
The blinding glare of the light-bulb.

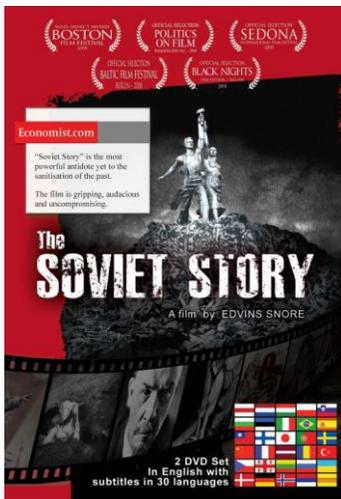
And the dreams with their unctuous, obliging
power,
That through an underground portal
Set you free again for a couple of hours —
Loyally bring you back long before morning.

And those forcefully clamped jaws,
And the will like clenched fist, that ever
In spite of what is there beyond the door —
You'll endure and remember!

Source: <https://journals.sagepub.com/toc/ioc/31/2>

Resource Spotlight

The Soviet Story



“The Soviet Story” is a unique first time documentary film by director Edvins Snore. The film tells the story of the Soviet regime and how the Soviet Union helped Nazi Germany instigate the Holocaust. The film shows recently uncovered archive documents revealing this. Interviews with former Soviet Military intelligence officials reveal shocking details. “The Soviet Story” was filmed over 2 years in Russia, Ukraine, Latvia, Germany, France, UK and Belgium. Material for the documentary was collected by the author, Edvins Snore, for more than 10 years. As a result, “The Soviet Story” presents a truly unique insight into recent Soviet history, told by people, once Soviet citizens, who have first-hand knowledge of it (IMDb). Watch it on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v7lrB_6mX4k

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