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Contradictory Results of the GULAG Activities in the European North-East of the USSR

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Abstract

The author outlines the conflicts in the actions of the GULAG in the Soviet European north-east. Mobilization facilities of the GULAG allowed creating fuel and energy sources in the North-East of the country in short terms. Due to the GULAG, industries were being developed in the district without any prerequisites. Activities of the victimized population produced fulfillment of important innovative projects at the world level for that time. Primitive methods were often used for the creation of ambitious and high-tech projects with a great portion of manual labor. Forced migration brought about growth in population in the district, forced growth in the urban population, and rapid development of the area. Meanwhile, urbanization process proceeded spontaneously, without taking into consideration some of the possible negative effects of towns' development having appeared at the camp centers. The need to relocate population from the North is a serious modern problem dating back to the GULAG. Industrial development of the area was followed by the attempt at making life of the locals a little bit more civilized: the victimized population created a health-care system in the Northern districts of the Komi Republic, as well as a personnel-training system, cultural institutions (theaters, social clubs, libraries, publishing houses) and education. Besides, a drastic change in the way of life of the locals under the impact of the GULAG economic activities brought about the destruction of the traditional way of life, loss of self-identity, and transformation of traditional morality. The industrial processes fulfilled by the GULAG were accompanied by the formation and development of the system of training skilled personnel for industries and transportation. At the same time, the wasteful squandering of the skilled prisoners' abilities and talents occurred in the GULAG camps. The concentration of the labor force in the GULAG camps in the region encouraged the exploration of natural resources in the area in the short term and resulted in a developed economy. At the same time, the development by the camp method caused irreparable injury to the nature of the region. The camps' economic activities led to the formation of new advanced industrial branches, transportation system, and social infrastructure as modernization phenomena. However, the totalitarian regime did not allow the introduction of the elements of the classical liberalism in the modernization processes. Industrial modernization was carried out by means of coercive labor, deprived of their civil rights, alongside with the lack of democratic values. Modernization was halved and pared-down.

Keywords: GULAG, industrial development of the northern territories, urbanization, modernization, repressive population.

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1. Introduction

Political repression unleashed by the Soviet leadership during Stalin's period led to the creation of a powerful industrial complex, the GULAG. Prisoners' labor became an important factor in the development of the Soviet economy back in the early 1930s. In July 1929, the Soviet of People's Commissars of the USSR adopted the resolution that ordered the OGPU to broaden the existing camps and build new ones in Siberia, in the North, in the Far East, in Middle Asia, etc. The GULAG camps were organized in the uncultivated and far-from-the-center districts of the country with the aim of "colonizing those districts and exploiting their natural resources through using the labor of inmates" (GULAG, 2000).

The territory of the European North-East was included in the Komi Autonomous Region. Back in 1929, works at three interconnected enterprises started practically at once: the expedition of OGPU arrived for exploration works at the Ukhta oil fields, the Ust-Vym-Ukhta tract started being built (it was designed to deliver materials to the oil fields as well as to route leg prisoners from Kotlas. Constructions of the Pinyug – Syktyvkar railroad began through the force from the Northern camps of OGPU. It was not until 1931 that the Ukhto-Pechorsky labor corrective camp was organized, being based on the Ukhta expedition of OGPU, its camp possessions spreading from the White Sea up to Obdorsk at the lower Ob and from Kotlas up to the Arctic Islands by 1937. Prisoners of the Ukhtpechlag were engaged in geological survey, built oil-refinery, asphaltite mine, extracted and transported coal and oil, processed petroleum, built dirt roads and railways, airports, barges, extracted radium, organized camp collective farms, established schools for liquidation of illiteracy, a mining professional school, etc. (National Archive of Republic of Komi, n. d. a; Borozinets, 2009).

In May 1938, at the place of the economically multi-profile Ukhtpechlag, 4 independent specialized camps were organized: Vorkuta (mine-building and coal-mining), Ukhto-Izhemsky (extraction of oil and radium), Severny Zheleznodorozhny (building the rail-way Kotlas-Vorkuta) and Ust-Vymsky (timber-felling). Later, the existing camps were divided, united, dismissed, created anew to solve specific construction tasks. Overall, from 1929 to 1956, at different times, there were 19 independent OGPUs and People's Commissariat of Justice camp entities on the territory of Komi (Maksimova, 2005).

2. Oil instead of wood

The above list of works does not reflect the complete picture of the camps' economic activities. Still, it is evident that as a result of the numerous prisoners' hard work, the Komi ASSR became an important fuel-and-energy basis of the European North. Besides it is necessary to note that with the help of the GULAG those branches of industry, with no prerequisites for development at that time, were developed in the region. In the mid-1920s the leading role in the economy of the region was played by the forestry industry, with manual and horse-driven labor prevailing. Small enterprises of local importance represented the regional industry: Seregovskoe salt-works, Nyuvchim iron foundry, Ust-Usinsk canning factory and Ust-Tsilma suede works. It is known that in December 1925 the XIV Congress of VKP(b) "considered the socialist industrialization of the country as the main link in the chain of historical objectives of socialist construction" (The CPSU in resolutions, 1953), because "it would lead to the establishment of the material and technical basis of the socialist society, contribute to improving the people's well-being, strengthen the independence and security of the country"

(Essays on the history of the Komi ASSR, 1962). The decisions of the VII Komi regional party conference and later the decisions of the V regional party congress declared plans to sharply increase the volume of timber felling, with paramount importance of the forestry sector of the industry as the main and leading branch. Actually, the main treasure of this region is wood. Trades, related to secondary forest products processing, were the major occupation of the indigenous people since the opportunities to develop agricultural production were very limited due to environmental and climatic conditions. A live economic mechanism, related to the development of the forestry industry, was historically established in the North with its tremendous reserves according to the experience of Sweden, Finland, and other countries. The most far-seeing representatives of municipal, zemstvo and stock-exchange institutions raised a question on the economic integration of the European North and Western Siberia (Vlasov, 1997). In the course of the special conference of the members of the Archangelsk Society for Russian North Studies the following proposal was put forward: for the North to come to life in a normal way, "it should not set before itself grandiose construction objectives, rely on some secret treasures, deposited somewhere, and adjust the scale of its economic projects to them. It would be expedient to progress gradually, avoiding leaps, avoiding risk, increasing its richness step by step..." (Proceedings of the Arkhangelsk Society for the Study of the Russian North, 1910). Later, historians of the republic quite convincingly explained the local priorities: "the Komi autonomous region possessed inexhaustible forest resources, which could be involved in economic activity without considerable capital investment. Regional forests had ways out to international trade routes by the Severnaya Dvina, Mezen' and Pechora; by the rivers of the Kama basin and by the Kotlas – Vyatka railroad – to the internal regions of the country. There was a surplus of the labor force, especially in winter, which could be used in the forestry industry (Essays on the history of the Komi ASSR, 1962). It is evident that prospective opportunities of the region in terms of the prospects of its industrial development, and, first of all, of the forestry sector development, were underutilized before the revolution. Probably, there was no purposeful regional development program.

At the same time, in 1929 the union government passed a large-scale plan on the systematic studies of the Pechora area and on converting this territory into a fuel-and-energy basis of the European North. There were no such convincing arguments for its fulfillment, by means of which the necessity of the forestry sector development was proved. The Pechora region lacked sufficient funds, material and technical base, necessary for its development, qualified human resources and sufficient amount of labor force in order to fulfill the program laid down. In order to develop the Pechora region, the labor camp method was deemed to be the most suitable one. The problem of the labor force was solved by means of the forced migration to the region.

In the course of development, economic interests of the local population were ignored. The development of the territory was of directive, strictly regulated character. Everything was done under the scenario from the center: Stalin's, Political Bureau's or Government's. None of important decisions were made locally. Regional, federal or party authorities simply "approved" resolutions and decisions passed by superior authorities. The conductor of the center's will was NKVD, whereas the inmates were the main performers. Regional historians noted that, in fact, two independent in many aspects economic systems were established in the region (Smetanin, 1991): traditional, local, which included traditional kinds of economy, local industry and a part of the forestry sector, and new, created by force

of labor-correction camps, which included oil, gas, coal, radium, the major part of forestry and accompanying production sectors.

Thus, the idea of industrial development of the territory with special stress laid on coal and oil branches was dictated by the approval of the high-speed industrialization plan. It did not rest upon demographic and geographic potential of the region and was not based on its local traditions. Already existing ready production forms were mechanically transferred from other regions, which characterizes the overall development process as the process, which was not customized to meet the specific needs of the region, with all corresponding consequences and after-effects.

3. Ambitious projects and manual labor

Another contradiction is the disparity of results and labor techniques and methods. The activity of the repressed population led to the fulfillment of innovation projects even by global standards of that time. It was for the first time in the USSR that heavy oil mines were constructed in the Ukhta district. Geologists of Ukhtpechlag discovered the unique heavy oil field. This type of oil “looks very much like tar” and it can be “used as a raw input material for electrical engineering and varnish production industry,” noted geologist Rudnev (Rudnev, 2005). No less famous scientific and industrial achievement of the GULAG was the construction of the plant for radium sedimentation from mineral water and receiving radium concentrate in the settlement of Vodny (1931- 1953), located 23 kilometers from Ukhta. The extracted concentrate was soldered into glass ampoules and shipped to Saint-Petersburg-based Radium Institute. From 1931 to 1952 the volume of extracted radium made 271 grams (Zelenskaya, 2009). The names of prominent scientists who worked at the Vodny works include such internationally known chemists as I. Ya. Bashilov, I. I. Ginsburg, S. I. Golovinski, M. D. Krasheninnikov, G. A. Razuvayev, F. A. Toropov.

Still, very primitive techniques were used to realize ambitious and high-tech projects. The portion of manual labor was considerable. F. Rudnev describes the chemical laboratory in Vodny in the following way: “the chemical laboratory was made of wood with small stoves and chemists had to carry wastewater after laboratory experiments in buckets. Nevertheless, such amount of scientific thought, heated by small stoves, fighting the taiga frost, has been throbbing there that it would be sufficient for high and broad offices of large and multi-storied laboratories” (Rudnev, 2005).

An innovative project was the construction of a suspended gas pipeline Voivozh – Ukhta – Yarega and Voivozh – Sosnogorsk. G. M. Zelberg, Chief Mechanical Engineer of the Ukhta gas pipeline construction project, recalls: “The woodcutters were the first to break through impenetrable taiga forests. They cut an opening. They made a flooring deck, the only possible road – lezhnevka. All works were carried out with a hand saw and an ax. We drew a land gas pipeline – the only possible rapid way of its construction. Each meter of a pipeline was a challenge and a battle ... we worked right in bogs. Workers labored knee-deep in water. We faced immense difficulties related to material and technical supply. We lacked everything; metal, cement timber, nails, parts and units” (Vorontsova, 2009).

It was evident that cheap manual labor (from the authorities' standpoint) prevailed in construction. Even in the 1950s, the mechanization of labor in coal transportation was only 30% (History of Komi from ancient times to the end of the twentieth century, 2004). Trolleys with coal were raised manually. The first mine was put into service in 1932, but the electric power was fed to the mine only in 1937. The decision to construct the railroad was made in the same year.

4. Specificity of demographic processes and urbanization

Forced migration resulted in the growth of population in the region, high-speed increase of urban population, rapid development of the territory, which can be considered at the first approach as some evidence of obvious progress. According to the 1926 census, 225 thousand people lived in the republic, of which the urban population amounted only to 10 thousand. The number of population increased due to the “mechanical” growth which was expressed in multiple prisoners brought to camps. It was as early as in 1931 that 18 thousand inmates constructed the Pinyug – Syktyvkar railroad (Panchishina, 2000). By 1941 there were 250. 4 thousand inmates kept in camps (Maksimova, 2005). Together with inmates sent to labor correction camps, dozens of thousands of peasants – dispossessed kulaks – who were forcibly deported to the region, were placed in special settlements. 39184 “former kulaks” were settled in the Komi region in 1932 (Ignatova, 2009). In 1944, Lithuanian, Polish, Jewish, Belorussian, Russians etc. convicts were permitted to live at liberty in restricted Komi areas.

The problem of urbanization was solved mainly by means of forced migration. In 1959, there were 815 thousand people residing in the Komi region, of which 484 thousand people lived in urban areas. New modern towns appeared: Ukhta, Vorkuta, Pechora and Inta (The Komi ASSR is 60 years old, 1981). The urbanization rate was higher in the Komi republic as compared to the average rate in the country. At the same time, the increase of urban population by means of forced migration provided its negative specificity of urbanization in the Komi region. There were no scientifically-grounded forecasts of the urbanization process. The characteristic features of the socialist urbanization, mentioned in scientific studies, and typical for the European North-East were the following ones: absolute priority of economic and political issues and social problems. The choice of sites for constructing towns was determined by the presence of natural resources, or by the data on availability of prospective deposits of natural resources in the specific area. Ukhta, for example, was built as an oil-industry center; Vorkuta and Inta were constructed for the purpose of the coal mining industry; Pechora – as a railway node; Sosnogorsk – as a center of natural gas processing, the settlement of Vodny – as a center of radium industry.

In spite of generally accepted scientific propositions on the top-priority creation of the social infrastructure in the course of the process of northern territories development, colonization of the region by means of “camp method” caused the parallel creation of industrial and social infrastructure, with the former passing ahead. The towns were growing as labor correction camp centers with contrasts as their characteristic features. Buildings of “high architecture” constructed by repressed architects were located downtown being surrounded by a large number of squalid and miserable-looking barrack-style houses. Moreover, construction works under the conditions of permafrost or “stagnant” frozen condition of ground were carried out in an experimental model, because the construction technology had not yet been developed for such climatic zone (Belovol and Maksimova, 2003).

Industrial enterprises, mines, and pits in the circumpolar area were constructed without research and assessment. As a result, accidents and injuries occurred frequently.

The consequences of camp urbanization can be observed to the present day. The resettlement program for the former residents of GULAG centers and towns, built at the sites, where deposits of mineral resources (exhausted at present time) were developed, requires considerable investment

from the state budget. It is the effect of a technocratic approach to the urbanization processes. At the same time, the current situation and northern towns further development prospects require the active implementation of an anthropological approach, in order to refrain from past errors repetition.

5. The introduction of civilization or destruction of traditional culture?

The industrial development of the territory was accompanied by the introduction of civilization elements into the life of indigenous people: the prisoner population happened to create the health-care system, HR training system, cultural institutions (theatres, houses of culture, libraries, and publishing houses) and educational institutions in the northern districts of the republic. Health service, which started with the first doctor N. A. Viktorov and first medical tents, took shape of professional healthcare institutions network with experienced medical staff, operating in all fields of medicine: therapeutics, surgery, pediatrics, psychoneurology etc. (State Archive of the Russian Federation, n. d. h; National Archive of Republic of Komi, n. d. b; n. d. c; n. d. d; n. d. e; n. d. f; n. d. g). The fundamental basis, on which the Komi regional medical system was built up in northern towns, was established. Medical service became accessible to the indigenous population and became a phenomenon of everyday life.

Sincere commitment of camp doctors to providing efficient medical care resulted in an extraordinary phenomenon. Research and practical medicine became developed in camps. The Sevzheldorlag scientific-research laboratory and Pechorlag scientific-research bureau were the largest centers. They promoted the appearance of a new branch of medicine, medicine of northern territories, which studies the properties of the local climate and its influence on human organism. Experienced specialists, such as B. M. Boltyanski, V. M. Dubrovski, I. M. Perelman, O. S. Kositch and others worked there. They developed new treatment techniques and medication formulae, using natural resources of the territory (herbs, local peat, organic silt, animal blood) (Poleshchikov, 1998; State Archive of the Russian Federation, n. d. g).

HR training system for industrial and transport sectors was organized in camps (State Archive of the Russian Federation, n. d. b). The College of Oil-Mining and The College of Railway Communications were established in Ukhta. Lecturing and educational practices developed in camps' libraries (State Archive of the Russian Federation, n. d. f). Accordingly, there was a cultural-educational unit, which was in charge not only of demagogical political lectures but also was responsible for establishing libraries, organizing concerts and exhibitions of camp painters and skilled artisans, in each camp (State Archive of the Russian Federation, n. d. a). The first theatres in the northern districts of the republic also emerged in camps. The most theatres were Ukhtpechlag and Vorkutalag ones. The Drama Theatre in Vorkuta was headed by Mr. Mordvinov, the Bolshoi Theatre Head Director. He was also a prisoner.

At the same time, the drastic changes in the local population's lifestyle, which took place under the influence of the GULAG economic activity, led to the destruction of the traditional way of life, loss of originality and transformation of the traditional morals. The economic activity of the camps led to the violation of the traditional system of natural resource utilization. Lands and pastures, used by reindeer-breeders, were ruined by transport lines, experienced explosive impact, related to seismic and geological exploration works, and were used as construction sites. The indigenous population was involved in the process of industrial transformations, and the traditional activities became insignificant

for its everyday life. “Do not kill the living being unless it’s necessary for your survival” was an indisputable rule of life for the northern people. The management of camps began to recruit local hunters and enroll them in special detachments to catch prisoners who escaped from camps. Thus, the hunters had to shoot runaway prisoners. The traditional morals and perception of life were drastically deformed. The ambiguous way of indigenous people’s transition to the new way of life was expressed in the introduction of rudiments of the cultural progress in their way of life, on the one hand, and in the simultaneous deformation of their ethnic self-consciousness, accompanied by the narrowing of the Komi language use, because the amount of forcibly resettled population outnumbered the indigenous population. Besides, there was no program developed for “the effective dialogue between the migrants and the native ethnoses” (Korotayev, 2004).

6. Creating a system of training and embezzlement of the talents of imprisoned specialists

Industrial processes, carried out by the GULAG, were accompanied by the creation and development of a proficient HR training system for the industry and transportation. At the same time, there was a destructive and injurious waste of forces and talents of qualified prisoners kept in the GULAG camps. Dozens of memoirs testify to the fact that engineers, specialists in technology, accountants, metallurgists, etc. , kept in camps, were involved in general works. No doubt, there was a system of selection of specialists in camps, geologists, for example, who was, in the first place, sent to the areas, where natural resources were explored and developed, or doctors, who were in high demand in hospitals. Still, in general, the problem of qualified specialists was ignored. A significant number of intellectuals were subjected to repressions at that time. The major part of prisoners, who were specialists, graduated from Soviet technical colleges in the 1920s. They were experienced in the construction and maintenance of industrial facilities. Still, it was a very rare case, that they were used according to their profession. The participation of specialists in any project increases its effectiveness. However, only 10 to 15 % of professional qualification and skills could be applied in practice. Registration of specialists in the GULAG camps became more systematic at the end of the 1930s. In the beginning, engineers "worked hard" on general works, which did not require any qualification. The 1938 prisoners record features the following Lokchimlag data (Table 1).

Table 1. Lokchimlag data

Specialists	Total	Working according to their profession
Accountants (book-keepers, economists)	512	319
Mechanicians, firefighters, motormen	27	7
Foremen	130	68
Builders	709	349
Automobile transport specialists	195	94
Railway specialists	36	6
Forestry specialists	44	15
Doctors	46	29

Source: State Archive of the Russian Federation, n. d. c.

It is evident, that the specialists, who were available and recorded in the lists, were not used according to their profession. Besides, not all prisoners, who had qualification and professional skills, were referred to as specialists in the GULAG. From the camp authority's standpoint, only engineers, technicians, accountants, economists, doctors and paramedics (State Archive of the Russian Federation, n. d. d) were referred to as specialists, i. e. the people who could be of benefit in the camp production process.

As a result of unsatisfactory conditions in camps, even regular works were beyond prisoners' physical abilities. Thus, according to the 1938 reports of Registration and Distribution Department of the GULAG, the lowest percentage of specialists' utilization was observed, among the other camps, 59,6% in Uhtpechlag, with the average index of 70. 6%. In 1938 the percentage of the ill and disabled was 17% in Sevzherdorlag, for example, with the average in the GULAG being equal to 9. 2% (State Archive of the Russian Federation, n. d. e).

Thus, the HR training organization efforts produced nothing because of hard living conditions of the "special contingent". The labor became disabled very quickly for the reason of poor nutrition and lack of warm clothes in northern conditions. Besides, the wasteful approach to qualification, skills and education of specialists did not contribute much to production efficiency.

7. The environmental cost of creating a new fuel and energy base

Concentration of working force in the GULAG camps in the region gave way to exploration of natural resources in the region in short term, development and creation of developed economy. At the same time, the development of natural resources by means of the camp method caused irreparable damage to the nature of the region, since the people extermination policy was transferred to nature. Analysis of the archive documents, related to the camps' activities on the territory of the region ascertains that the GULAG authorities were not concerned about the camps' impact on the environment. There was no project, plan or recommendation with evidence of any attempt to secure the nature against active anthropogenic intervention. The authorities were concerned only about the fulfillment of the production plan. It was not until 1960s that the scientists of the region began to seriously think about the consequences, brought about by the use of the spontaneous camp method of the territory development. Miscalculations in planning and realization of oil, coal etc. exploration and boring works, resulted in the dramatic disturbance of the tundra top-soil and vegetation. Particularly, it was expressed in the area of lichen tundra, because transportation of equipment caused absolute destruction of the vegetation (Nature protection in the production of exploration for oil and gas, 1987). Natural vegetation degraded for the reason of contamination of the areas with petroleum products. Some plant species (lichen, for example) died immediately (Nature protection in the production of exploration for oil and gas, 1987).

In the process of destructive industrial development of the region, slowed forest renewal under the severe northern conditions was not taken into consideration. Timber became the major construction material in the region, with pine being the most widely used one. Harvesting of the "special timber" by the camps meant the selective harvesting of pinewood of the best production categories, such as "aviation" pinewood, "deck" pinewood, "pontoon-bridge" pinewood, "aviation"

larch etc. Selective felling of that time, when only pine trees were cut, promoted the extensive accumulation of spruce in pine forests, and sometimes caused the replacement of pine trees with spruce. Forests with precious wood species were lost (Nature protection in the production of exploration for oil and gas, 1987). Destructive treatment of forests led to the extreme depletion of the natural resources of southern timber industry enterprises. In 1960s many timber industry enterprises of the Priluzye and Koigorodok districts were on the brink of closing down.

In 1951 exploration and development brought about the reduction of the territory of the Pechora-Ilych natural reserve (founded in 1930) by 13 times. Nearly all the plain-coniferous forest areas with pine and green moss vegetation, which were the major pastures for the reindeer in wintertime, were torn away from the natural reserve. Intensive wood harvesting works, seismic exploration and boring works were started on that territory. In 1958, when the issue of recovery of the natural reserve within its former boundaries was raised, it was decided that it was unreasonable to include the major part of plain-coniferous forest landscape zone into the natural reserve territory, since the changes, caused by the human intervention, were very considerable. In 1940, the estimated reindeer livestock amounted to 1000 (Teplov, 1960), whereas in 1959 it reduced to 600 heads, and in 1970 – to 250 heads (Sokol'skiy, 1961). The reduction of the number of reindeer was caused, on the one hand, by the blockade of the coniferous forest area with the all-year-round timber-transportation road, and, on the other hand, by its isolation from the main pine-forest areas, which had not yet been subjected to felling. In 1960, scientists of the natural reserve ascertained that the areas of the all-year-round reindeer inhabitation, even of small groups of animals, exceeded the virgin coniferous forest areas by their territory (Sokol'skiy, 1973).

Boring, explosive and earth-moving works took place very often in the closest proximity to fishing reservoirs. Petroleum-containing products leaking into water reservoirs contributed to the reduction of fish productivity. At bore-well sites in tundra foundation pits for sedimentation were constructed. They were not included in the circulation system of water supply, which in its turn polluted the environment with sedimentation waters of boring-wells (Nature protection in the production of exploration for oil and gas, 1987). It brought about drastic changes in the standard biological processes and acute oxygen deficiency in water reservoirs. The main culprits of the wastewater were mines. There were no limitations with regard to fishing, which caused the reduction of fish reserves. Centralized food supply plans were fulfilled only by half in some years. At the same time, fish was at hand in rivers and lakes. From 1930 to 1934, according to biologists' estimates, 1.6 thousand metric centners of salmon were fished, whereas from 1935 to 1939, when camps intensively expanded, the amount increased to 4.5 thousand metric centners. In five-year periods that followed, fishing reduced (Protection of wildlife in the Komi ASSR, 1973). Lack of any control over overfishing and excessive fishing of salmon led to the reduction of salmon population, and difficulties with regard to the renewal process.

The intensive process of the territory development did not spare unique natural monuments located on the territory of the regions. Among others, presumably one of the largest caves of the European North-East was lost. It was situated 25 kilometers upward the mouth of the Sed'yu river, left tributary of the Izhma. According to descriptions made by local people and by Mr. Rusanov, a well-known researcher, who visited it in 1902, the cave extended 500 meters deep into the limestone mountain-mass. Judging by Rusanov's findings, the cave used to be ancient people's site of sacrifices.

The cave's entrance was buried under a mighty talus caused by Ustizhemlag limestone development works (Protection of wildlife in the Komi ASSR, 1973). Archive records contain many documents – complaints, memos of local authorities sent to Syktyvkar, submissions of Komi authorities sent to Moscow, which testify to unfavorable relationships between the local population and camps. For example, more than 50 hectares of arable lands were alienated from the collective farms of the Aikino village council by Sevzherdorlag in 1938 for the construction of the camp facilities, a pier and quarry facilities. The collective farmlands were illegally captured by Ustvymlag, Ukhto-Pechorski trust, etc. (Morozov, 1997).

In 1947 with the help of camp doctors, mainly Professor G. M. Danishevski, a scientific-practical conference was organized in Abez' (Sevzherdorlag). The reports, presented at the conference, were devoted to the problem of human adaptation in Northern conditions. Besides, the issues, related to climatic conditions, dynamic of the temperature regime, and atmospheric pressure changes in the North were discussed. Well-known experts on climatology, doctors (from prisoners) took part in the conference. The GULAG authorities were interested in the results of the conference only from the standpoint expressed by the GULAG leading ideologist Naftaliy Frenkel. "We have to take everything from the prisoner and exploit him to the full during the first three months, after that we do not need him!" (A sad jetty, 1991). They were not interested in the issues of environmental protection and prisoners' health. Still, G. M. Danishevski, who headed the Scientific Council of the USSR Health Care Commissariat before he was arrested in 1937, wrote a book "Human Acclimatization in the North" (Antonov-Ovseyenko, 1994) in 1955 after his being freed from the camp.

In 1920s scientists did take the impact on the environment produced by the latest technical developments into consideration. In the 1930s the belief in inexhaustibility of natural resources, in unconditioned, absolute progress of technology and industry development, became firmly established among politicians. Academician S. G. Strumlin, Deputy Chairman of Gosplan of the USSR alleged: "The idea of making the life of workers healthier by means of removing factories farther from their dwelling residence, protecting their houses with some green screens ... it is nothing but sugar-sweet intelligentsia Manilovshchina" (Strumilin, 1964). Such allegations made from the high rostrum shaped the public attitude towards nature.

8. Conclusion

Camps' economic activities led to the modernization of the region's economy: newly advanced branches of industry, transportation system and social infrastructure were created. At the same time, the totalitarian regime did not allow the introduction of the elements of classical liberalism in the modernization processes. Industrial modernization was carried out by means of the coercive labor of people, deprived of civil rights, alongside with the lack of democratic values. Modernization was halved and pared-down.

Thus, the inconsistency of the GULAG activity appeared in various fields of life. The negative consequences of those activities had long-term effects, some of them are still tangible today.

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