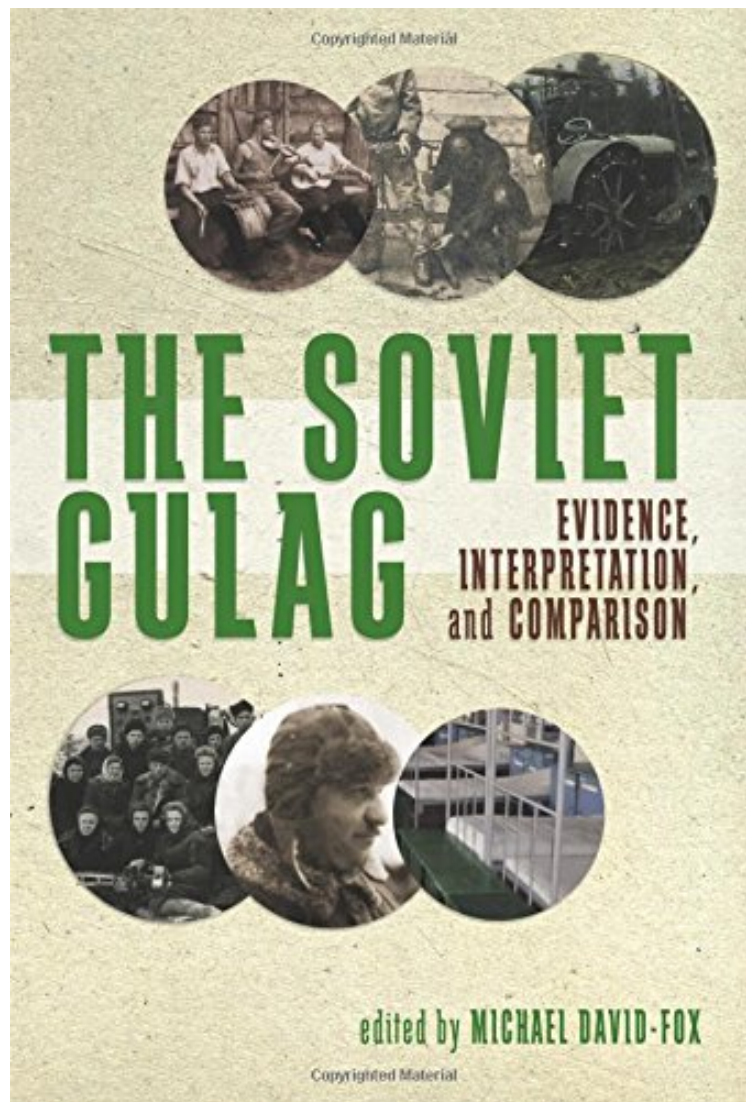


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The Soviet Gulag: Evidence, Interpretation, and Comparison (Pitt Russian East European)

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From University of Pittsburgh Press : The Soviet Gulag: Evidence, Interpretation, and Comparison (Pitt Russian East European) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Soviet Gulag: Evidence, Interpretation, and Comparison (Pitt Russian East European):

Before the collapse of the Soviet Union and the subsequent archival revolution, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's famous "literary investigation" *The Gulag Archipelago* was the most authoritative overview of the Stalinist system of camps. But modern research is developing a much more thorough and nuanced understanding of the Gulag. There is a greater awareness of the wide variety of camps, many not isolated in far-off Siberia; prisoners often intermingled with local populations. The forced labor system was not completely distinct from the "free" labor of ordinary Soviet citizens, as convicts and non-prisoners often worked side-by-side. Nor was the Gulag unique when viewed in a global historical context. Still, the scale and scope of the Soviet Gulag was unprecedented. Intrinsic to Stalinist modernization, the Gulag was tasked with the construction of massive public works, scientific and engineering projects, and such mundane work as road repairs. Along with the collectivization of agriculture, the Soviet economy (including its military exertions in World War II) was in large part dependent on compulsory labor. The camp system took on an outsized economic significance, and the vast numbers of people taken in by zealous secret police were meant to fulfill material, not just political, goals. While the Soviet system lacked the explicitly dedicated extermination camps of its Nazi counterpart, it did systematically extract work from inmates to the verge of death then cynically "released" them to reduce officially reported mortality rates. In an original turn, the book offers a detailed consideration of the Gulag in the context of the similar camps and systems of internment. Chapters are devoted to the juxtaposition of nineteenth-century British concentration camps in Africa and India, the Tsarist-era system of exile in Siberia, Chinese and North Korean reeducation camps, the post-Soviet penal system in the Russian Federation, and of course the infamous camp system of Nazi Germany. This not only reveals the close relatives, antecedents, and descendants of the Soviet Gulag—it shines a light on a frighteningly widespread feature of late modernity. Overall, *The Soviet Gulag* offers fascinating new interpretations of the interrelationship and importance of the Gulag to the larger Soviet political and economic system, and how they were in fact parts of the same entity.

"This deeply-researched collection brings together many of the world's best Gulag scholars. Their new research challenges the old paradigm of the Gulag existing outside Soviet society by placing it squarely in a dynamic and interactive relationship with it. These chapters allow a more nuanced understanding of the Gulag, Soviet society, and the nature of the communist experiment." —Deborah Kaple, Princeton University