

**Forced Labor and the Need for Motivation:  
Wages and Bonuses in the Stalinist Camp System**

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Abstract

Our findings in this paper challenge some stereotypes of the exploitation of forced labor in the Soviet Union during Stalinism, just as Abram Bergson's 1944 study on the structure of Soviet wages challenged the stereotypes of that time. We find that even in the Stalinist camp system, where force could be most conveniently applied, camp administrators combined overt coercion with motivation through material incentives, and, as time passed, they placed more weight on the latter. By the time the camp system was abandoned as a major instrument of Soviet industrial policy, one major distinction between forced and free labor had been blurred: prisoners were being paid wages according to a system that mirrored that of the civilian economy described by Bergson.