



Cannibal Island: Death in a Siberian Gulag

Jan Tomasz Gross , Nicolas Werth , Steven Rendall (Translator)

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During the spring of 1933, Stalin's police rounded up nearly one hundred thousand people as part of the Soviet regime's "cleansing" of Moscow and Leningrad and deported them to Siberia. Many of the victims were sent to labor camps, but ten thousand of them were dumped in a remote wasteland and left to fend for themselves. "Cannibal Island" reveals the shocking, grisly truth about their fate.

These people were abandoned on the island of Nazino without food or shelter. Left there to starve and to die, they eventually began to eat each other. Nicolas Werth, a French historian of the Soviet era, reconstructs their gruesome final days using rare archival material from deep inside the Stalinist vaults. Werth skillfully weaves this episode into a broader story about the Soviet frenzy in the 1930s to purge society of all those deemed to be unfit. For Stalin, these undesirables included criminals, opponents of forced collectivization, vagabonds, gypsies, even entire groups in Soviet society such as the "kulaks" and their families. Werth sets his story within the broader social and political context of the period, giving us for the first time a full picture of how Stalin's system of "special villages" worked, how hundreds of thousands of Soviet citizens were moved about the country in wholesale mass transportations, and how this savage bureaucratic machinery functioned on the local, regional, and state levels.

"Cannibal Island" challenges us to confront unpleasant facts not only about Stalin's punitive social controls and his failed Soviet utopia, but about every generation's capacity for brutality--including our own.

Cannibal Island: Death in a Siberian Gulag Details

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From Reader Review Cannibal Island: Death in a Siberian Gulag for online ebook

Wojciech says

Straszna ksi??ka. Niestety na faktach

Jenna says

Only a few chapters in and the facts are overwhelming. I'm waiting for a breather but not sure it's coming.

Rodrigo says

An impressive book. A real story of death, suffering and violence. What impresses me the most is how an ideology that was built on the foundations of solidarity, equality and justice gave rise to probably the most monstrous regime ever built in the history of mankind. This book allows the reader to see its mechanisms, it's intricacies. The repressive machine, built up with bureaucratic precision, with quotas, objectives and teams desperate to reach their targets rounding up people to be sent to death camps with no particular reason. Authorities desperate with the influx of prisoners that could not be accommodated or supported trying to get rid of them as soon as possible. And the prisoners themselves trying to make sense of what was going on and using all their powers to survive. A complete political nightmare that is precisely described with clinical objectivity. Very sad.

Ciara Nicholson says

Poorly written and has little flow. My 12 year old cousin could have written a better historical novel.

Scott Brillon says

An interesting chapter in the history of the Soviets and prequel for what would eventually become known as "The Great Terror". What started as a grand design to rid themselves of undesirables (criminals, non-party members, or 'people of the past' -an expression so incredible I hope that one day that is how I am referred to) soon becomes an epic cluster-f@*&! In an effort to fill quotas, officers in cities picked up anyone without a passport. In one example a young girl of twelve left at the station by her mother is picked up and shipped off. In another a woman who had went to her ex-husband's house to pick up some of her things is picked up along with him and sent away. In other places the old, infirm, the mentally unstable are put onto trains and shipped off. In another a man who had missed his stop asked if he could get a ride back and when he was treated rudely by the guard he unwisely raised his voice and he too was shipped off. This writing is rife with examples of people who were loyal party members and even when they had proof, it was ignored. As declass elements are shipped into the wilderness to start making themselves useful by building shelter and raising crops (a skill none of them as lifelong city dwellers had not prepared them for) they get sick and die.

(The numbers are staggering.) Criminal elements, also among those expelled from the cities, take advantage. Eventually, the turn to cannibalism is more out of desperation than anything else. The stories are horrifying. The only thing that could be more so is maybe the idea that this could also happen here.
