



Source 7

Part of a speech by VM Molotov, chairman of the Council of People's Commissars (leader of the government under Stalin), referring to forced labour, 1931
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Questions

1. According to Molotov, why was forced labour being used?
2. What was Molotov's attitude to forced labour? Choose 4 quotes from his speech to support your answer.
3. Why do you think Molotov gave this speech?
4. Why did Molotov say that forced labour was not used to produce goods for export?
5. What are the advantages and disadvantages for a historian using this source as evidence?



Source 7

Translation of Extract from Molotov's Speech at the Sixth Congress of Soviets of the U.S.S.R.

INASMUCH as a great number of newspapers are spreading abroad lies regarding forced labour and the labour of prisoners in the timber industry of the U.S.S.R., I have to draw attention to those facts which would give a true picture of the position prevailing in the northern regions. I would remark that in the timber regions, of which such a lot has been written abroad, we employed this season 1,134,000 persons, who all worked on the basis of normal free labour; and the labour of prisoners has no connexion with timber preparation work. However, we have never thought of hiding the fact that the labour of prisoners, who are healthy and fit to work, is employed on certain communal and road-making undertakings. This has been done in the past; it is being done at the present; and will be done in the future. It is profitable to society; and it is advantageous also to the prisoners, as they are being accustomed to labour which makes them useful members of society.

In a number of northern regions, of which such a lot has been written in the *bourgeois* papers in connexion with the campaign as regards forced labour in the U.S.S.R., we have in fact employed and still employ on certain constructions the labour of prisoners, but the facts which will be given later will prove completely that the labour of prisoners even in these regions has no connexion with the articles we export. Let us see in what the work of these prisoners consists.

In Karelia we have already built with the labour of prisoners a railway line from Kem to Ukhta, 208 kilom. in length; and in addition the line from Parandovo to Lake Kiksh, 190 kilom. in length. One cannot but admit that these works are necessary to the country.

Of special importance is the construction, which is being carried on at present in Karelia, of the White Sea-Baltic Canal. This canal has a length of 914 kilom., including in its route Lake Ladoga and Lake Onega, and will connect the Baltic with the White Sea. This construction will necessitate the carrying out of tremendous work in excavating virgin soil and the dredging of lakes and river valleys. At the present moment work is being carried out in the region of Lake Vyg. We have decided to finish this construction within the course of the next two years.