

FORCED LABOR IN A SOCIALIST STATE: ETHNIC GERMANS FROM KAZAKHSTAN AND CENTRAL ASIA IN THE LABOR ARMY - 1941-1957

J. Otto POHL

Assist. Prof.

*Social Sciences Department
American University of Iraq*

Abstract: *During World War II the Stalin regime made extensive use of forced labor in a variety of industries including logging, mining, and industrial construction. Although the conscription of civilians for industrial labor was common in the USSR during this time, one particular component of this labor went far beyond the mere militarization of factories and definitely crossed over into the category of forced labor. The NKO (People's Commissariat of Defense) conscripted about 400,000 Soviet citizens belonging to "enemy" and "unreliable" nationalities and handed them over to the NKVD (People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs) as a labor force in the Urals, Siberia, Kazakhstan, Central Asia and other areas of the USSR. Ethnic Germans formed the largest contingent of these forced laborers with 316,000 men and women mobilized during the war. This particular institution of forced labor became known as the labor army (trudarmiia). This labor army consisted of civilians and discharged military personnel mobilized into labor columns to work in corrective labor camps (GULag) and civilian commissariats under police (NKVD-MVD) supervision.*

Keywords: *Forced Labor, Germans, GULag, Labor Army, USSR*

SOSYALİST BİR DEVLETTE ANGARYA EMEK: EMEK ORDUSUNDAKİ KAZAKİSTAN VE ORTA ASYALI ETNİK ALMANLAR - 1941-1957

Öz: *İkinci Dünya Savaşı sırasında Stalin rejimi, tomrukçuluk, madencilik ve çeşitli sanayi alanlarında yoğun olarak angarya emek kullanımına gitmiştir. Her ne kadar SSCB'de sivillerin zorla endüstriyel*

emek olarak kullanımları yaygın bir uygulama olmuş olsa da, bu emek gücünü oluşturan gruplardan biri, sadece sanayinin askerileştirilmesi ve angarya emek çerçevesinde değerlendirilemeyecek bir örnek teşkil etmiştir. Halk Savunma Komiserliği, “düşman” ve “güvenilmez” milliyetlere mensup 40.000 civarında Sovyet vatandaşına hizmet mecburiyeti getirerek, Urallar, Sibiry, Kazakistan, Orta Asya ve SSCB'nin diğer bölgelerinde angarya emek olarak kullanılmaları üzere Halk İçişleri Komiserliği'nin emrine vermiştir. Savaş döneminde angarya emek gücünü oluşturan bu grup içinde etnik Almanlar 316.000 erkek ve kadın ile en büyük bölümü oluşturmuşlardır. Bu hususi angarya emek ordusu sonradan emek ordusu (trudarmia) olarak anılmıştır. Siviller ve terhis edilen askeri personelden oluşan bu emek ordusu işçi kıtaları halinde NKVD-MVD'nin emrine verilmiştir ve çalışma kamplarında (gulag) kullanılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Angarya Emek, Almanlar, Gulag, Emek Ordusu, SSCB*

Introduction

Out of just over one million ethnic Germans in the USSR during 1942-1944, the Soviet government mobilized over 315,000 for forced labor of which 182,000 worked in labor camps without any charges, trials, or sentences.¹ Many tens of thousands of these men and women perished in the camps from hunger and disease.² Forced labor³ by prisoners and internal exiles played an important role in the Soviet Union during the 1930s and 1940s. This paper will examine one such mode of forced labor in the USSR, the mobilization of ethnic Germans into the labor army. In particular this paper will concentrate on the conscription of ethnic Germans from Kazakhstan and Central Asia. This paper will specifically look at the role of the state, economic versus political motives, racial/ethnic targeting, and the issue of gender with regards to the mobilization and use of forced labor. Forced labor in the USSR shared significant similarities with a number of other cases during World War II including the use of forced laborers from Poland and the USSR in Germany and forced laborers from Korea in Japan.⁴ The Soviet state deliberately used forced labor as a means to exact collective punishment upon ethnic Germans in the USSR during World War II. As such it was a political act aimed at the persecution of a racialized

- 1 A.A. German and A.N. Kurochkin, *Nemtsy SSSR v trudovoi armii (1941-1945)* (Moscow: Gotika, 1998), 67.
- 2 Estimates of the number of ethnic Germans in the USSR to perish prematurely as a result of working in the labour army range from 60,000 to 100,000 people. German and Silantjewa put the number at 60,000. A.A. German and O. Iu. Silant'evoi, "Vyselit' s treskom". *Ochevidtsy i issledovateli o tragedii rossiiskikh nemtsev: Sb. Nauchn. Statei i vospominanii* (Moscow: MSNK – press, 2011)/ A. German and O. Silantjewa, "Fortjagen muss man sie". *Zeitungen und Forscher berichten ueber die Tragoedie der Russlanddeutschen* (Moscow: MSNK – press, 2011), p. 308; Viktor Krieger estimates the number at 60,000 to 70,000. Viktor Krieger, *Bundesbuenger russlanddeutscher Herkunft: Historische Schluesselerfahrungen und kollektives Gedaechnis* (Muenster: Lit Verlag, 2013), p. 240; Alfred Eisfeld places the estimate at considerably higher at 100,000. Alfred Eisfeld, *Die Aussiedlung der Deutschen aus der Wolgarepublik 1941-1957* (Muenchen: Ost-Europa Institut, 2003), 8.
- 3 Definitions are always tricky and rather than engage in a long debate about the exact meaning and parameters of forced labour I have opted to use the one given by the ILO (International Labour Organization) in 1930. The 1930 ILO Convention on Forced Labour defined forced labour as "all work or service which is exacted from any person under menace of any penalty and for which the said person has not offered himself voluntarily." ("CO29-Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29)," International Labour Organization website, accessed 28 October 2013, http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEX-PUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C029). Thus a forced laborer is a person who is obliged to perform work, often unpaid, or face punitive sanctions administered by agents of the state beyond what a private employer can impose in the normal wage sector of the economy.
- 4 Pavel Polian, *Against their Will: The History and Geography of Forced Migrations in the USSR* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2004), 36, 39, 240.

group. Ethnic Germans formed the overwhelming majority of the men and women conscripted for punitive forced labor in the USSR during World War II. The treatment of ethnic Germans inducted for this punitive forced labor was considerably worse than that experienced by other groups of people mobilized to work in industry during this time. The material conditions and legal restrictions suffered by ethnic Germans in the labor army more closely resembled those imposed upon convicted GULag prisoners than those endured by other mobilized laborers. Although the induction into forced labor initially directly affected only men, the conscription of German women after October 1942 had particularly devastating results upon the family structure of the ethnic group, leaving thousands of children orphaned. The punitive nature of the treatment of ethnic Germans conscripted into the labor army distinguished it from other forms of mobilized labor in the USSR during World War II. The labor army represented an institution of ethnic repression against the German population of the USSR rather than an alternative to military service as was the case with indigenous Central Asian nationalities mobilized for industrial work. The ethnic Germans in the USSR suffered from this persecution due to their position as a stigmatized internal “enemy nationality.” In the eyes of the Soviet government their ancestry linked them to the Nazi regime regardless of their actual political loyalties.⁵ This racialization⁶ of ethnic Germans in the USSR had parallels elsewhere such as the US treatment of Americans of Japanese descent at this time.⁷ Each and every ethnic German in the USSR was deemed to be a potential threat to the Soviet state solely on the basis of his or her ancestry.

Forced Labor in the USSR

The term forced labor in the USSR has generally been associated with prisoners, particularly those that worked in the various Corrective Labor Camps (ITLs) and Corrective Labor Colonies (ITKs) administered by GULag (Main Administration of Camps). It also has been used in reference to POWs and foreign internees in camps run by GUPVI (Main

5 Viktor Krieger “Patriots or Traitors? – The Soviet Government and the ‘German-Russians’ After the Attack on the USSR by National Socialist Germany,” in *Russian-German Special Relations in the Twentieth Century: A Closed Chapter*, ed. Karl Schloegel (New York: Berg Publishers, 2006), 137-139.

6 Eric D. Weitz, “Racial Politics without the Concept of Race: Reevaluating Soviet Ethnic and National Purges,” *Slavic Review* 61, no. 1 (Spring 2002): 5.

7 Polian, *Against their Will*, 37.

Administration of Prisoner of War and Internee Camps). To a lesser extent it has also been used to refer to special settlers subjected to internal exile in the USSR. These state penal institutions represented the main branches of a vast punitive system in the USSR.

In addition to convicted prisoners in labor camps and labor colonies and special settlers, there existed another form of forced labor in the USSR under Stalin known as the labor army. That is, the Soviet government mobilized ethnic Germans with Soviet citizenship to work under NKVD supervision in GULag camps and various industrial concerns during World War II. State institutions, most notably the NKO (Peoples Commissariat of Defence), NKVD, and NKPS (Peoples Commissariat of Transportation), were responsible for mobilizing these men and women for labor, their work conditions, housing, food, enforcing discipline and punishing those who attempted to escape or refused to work. These men and women often worked in Corrective Labor Camps, but were not prisoners, having been neither charged nor tried individually for any crimes. Instead the NKO conscripted them through the existing mechanisms for military induction and then turned them over to the NKVD. Despite some similarities with conscription for military or labor service, the transfer of the conscripts over to the NKVD where they labored under almost the same material conditions, strict discipline, and restricted rights as convicted prisoners in the same labor camps distinguishes the two situations. Many scholars dealing with this topic use the term forced labor without reservation to describe the ethnic Germans conscripted into the labor army.⁸ Kirillov and Matveeva are especially clear on this issue.

It is our firm belief, supported by research into the history of the
“German-Labor Army Conscripts” in the camps of the Urals, that

8 See for e.g., V.M. Kirillov and N.V. Matveeva, “Trudmobilizovannyye nemtsy na Urale: sostoianie i novye aspekty issledovaniia problem,”; T.F. Mel’nik “Arkhangel’skaia oblast’ v 1940-e gody, kak region po ispol’zovaniiu prinutl’nogo truda poliakov, esontsev, karelo-finnov, nemtsev,” V.L. Gentshke, “Nekotorye aspekty vnuternnikh etnicheskikh deportatsii na primere nemetskogo i koreiskogo naseleniia SSSR,”; A.N. Kurochkin, “Sotsial’no-politicheskoe polozhenie nemetskogo naseleniia SSSR, mobilizovannogo v “trudovuiu armiiu” v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny (1941-1945 gg.); in *Nachal’nyi period Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny i deportatsiia rossiiskikh nemtsev: vzglaiady i otsenki cherez 70 let*, ed. A.A. German (Moscow: MSNK – press, 2011), 629, 579, 141, and 186; I.V. Cherkaz’ianova, “Deportatsiia sovetskikh nemtsev: psikhologicheskie posledstviia i vliianie na grazhdanskuiu identichnost’ i vnutrennii mir,” in *Grazhdanskaia identichnost’ i vnutrennii mir rossiiskikh nemtsev v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny i v istoricheskoi pamiati potomkov*, ed. A.A. German (Moscow: MSNK – press, 2011), 90; A.A. German, “Sovetskie nemtsy v lageriakh NKVD v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny: vklad v pobedy,” *Voenno-istoricheskii issledovaniia Povolzh’e*, Sb. Nauch. (Saratov: Izd-vo: Nauchnaia kniga, 2006), issue no. 7, 281.

these mobilized Russian Germans were not free citizens of the USSR, but people repressed due to their nationality, and placed in special settlements. They appeared as part of the composition of the “special contingent”, representing a marginal group in Soviet society employed in forced labor under conditions of strict limitations of their rights and freedoms.⁹

There is a fairly wide consensus that the mobilization of ethnic Germans into the labor army during World War II constituted forced labor. The debate revolves around how similar this form of forced labor was to that imposed upon convicted prisoners in the Gulag. One group of scholars maintains that it was almost identical.¹⁰ In contrast others point to the fact that the labor army had elements of military service and voluntary work as well.¹¹ They both agree, however, on the involuntary and obligatory nature of the labor army. My own position is firmly in the first camp. The actual experience of labor army conscripts closely resembled that of Gulag prisoners in most crucial aspects.

The term labor army has several meanings in Soviet history, and it is important to distinguish between the various institutions described by the term. During World War II the conscription of workers for various industries had two main divisions. The first consisted of the regular mobilization of men mostly from the indigenous nationalities of Kazakhstan and Central Asia to work in Soviet industry during World War II. This labor army is more properly viewed as a genuine alternative military service and not forced labor. The second labor army consisted of the punitive conscription of people belonging to stigmatized nationalities, foremost among them ethnic Germans, under legal and material conditions greatly inferior to those of other workers inducted for industrial work. Here the Soviet regime targeted specific

9 Kirillov and Matveeva, “Trudmobilizovannye nemtsy na Urale,” 627.

10 See for e.g., E. Gribova, “K voprosy o trudovykh mobilizatsiakh nemtskoi natsional’nosti i usloviakh ikh truda byta v promyshlennosti Kazakhstana v 1940-x godakh (Na dokumentakh arkhiva presidenta Respubliki Kazakhstan),” in *Nemtsy SSSR v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny i v pervoe poslevoennoe desiatiletie 1941-1955 gg.*, ed. A.A. German (Moscow: Gotika, 2001), p. 172 and G. Malamud, “Mobilizovannye sovetskie nemtsy na Urale v 1942-1948 gg” in *Nakazannyi narod: Repressii protiv rossiiskikh nemtsev*, ed. I.L. Shcherbakova (Moscow: Zven’ia, 1999), 133.

11 See for e.g., German and Kurochkin, *Nemtsy SSSR v trudovoi armii*, 7-8 and Irina Mukhina, “To Be Like All But Different: Germans in Soviet Trudarmee,” *Europe-Asia Studies* 63, no. 5 (2011): 858-859.

ethnic groups that had been racialized during the previous decade for repression through forced labor. This repression served primarily political rather than economic motives. Collectively punishing these groups was more important than effectively mobilizing them as a labor force. This can be seen in the fact that material conditions for the Germans in the labor army were so poor that many of them could not work due to illness and emaciation. High mortality rates from these causes permanently reduced the ranks of the Germans in the labor army.¹² This second labor army represented an instrument of state repression against ethnic Germans.

The Soviet government sent most of the conscripts for this second labor army to work in ITLs under NKVD supervision under conditions closely resembling those of convicted prisoners.¹³ In the case of the ethnic Germans out of a total of over 315,000 mobilized into the labor army a full 182,000 did their service in ITLs versus only 133,000 for various civilian commissariats, 49,000 less.¹⁴ Out of 400,000 “unreliable” nationalities including Germans mobilized into the labor army a full 220,000 worked in camps and only 180,000 for civilian commissariats.¹⁵ Those sent to labor camps had the same regime and norms as prisoners. Those mobilized for civilian commissariats had somewhat less onerous conditions.¹⁶ But, even those Germans and other “unreliable” nationalities such as Finns, Koreans, Crimean Tatars, Kalmyks and Greeks working for civilian commissariats came under NKVD rather than military or civilian supervision and had far fewer rights and privileges than other Soviet citizens mobilized for industrial work during the war.

The Formation of the Labor Army during World War II

The Soviet government began issuing decrees mobilizing workers for industrial and other work along a militarized basis soon after the Nazi invasion on 22 June 1941. The first ethnic Germans mobilized for forced labor by the Soviet government after the attack came from

12 GARF (State Archives of the Russian Federation) f. 9414, o. 1, d. 1172, ll. 3-15; GARF, f. 9414, o. 1, d. 1183, l. 42; GARF, f. 9414, o. 1, d. 1207, l. 38.

13 Gribanova, 172 and Malamud, “Mobilizovannyye sovetskie nemtsy na Urale v 1942-1948 gg,” 133.

14 German and Kurochkin, *Nemtsy SSSR v trudovoi armii*, 67.

15 Viktor Krieger, *Rein, Volga, Irtys*, 194.

16 A.A. German, “Sovetskie nemtsy v lageriakh NKVD,” 282.

eastern Ukraine. By 3 September 1941 these men numbered 18,600 conscripts organized into 13 labor battalions.¹⁷ After 26 September 1941 the NKVD reorganized these battalions into work columns that received the same rations and supplies as GULag prisoners.¹⁸ On 7 October 1941, the SNK ordered the NKO to conscript 300,000 men of all nationalities for industrial work.¹⁹ These men were to be assigned to 18 different economic commissariats in the USSR. The Peoples Commissariat of Construction with an allotment of 96,000 conscripts was to receive the largest number of mobilized workers performing obligatory war time labor.²⁰ It is only in 1942, however, that these decrees start to target specific nationalities and geographic territories in a major way. The three biggest waves of conscription of Germans into the labor army took place in accordance with GKO Decree 1123ss of 10 January 1942, GKO Decree 1281 ss of 14 February 1942, and GKO Decree 2383ss of 7 October 1942.²¹ In total these three decrees mobilized 264,182 ethnic Germans including 52,742 women into the labor army.²² These decrees took place after the mass deportation of ethnic Germans from western regions of the USSR to Siberia and Kazakhstan during the fall of 1941 and sought to further isolate and punish them.²³ The Soviet government deported a total of 799,459 Germans eastward during fall 1941.²⁴ By 25 November 1941 a total of 310,195 deported Germans had arrived in Kazakhstan.²⁵ The deported Germans thus only had a short stay in Kazakhstan before the Soviet government began a second forced relocation of tens of thousands of able bodied German men to the Urals and other places.

The mass induction of non-Germans from Kazakhstan and Central Asia for industrial work during World War II is first specifically mentioned in GKO resolution No. 2414 of 14 October 1942 “On mobilizing from

17 GARF f. 9414, o. 1, d. 1157, l. 3.

18 GARF f. 9414, o. 1, d. 1157, l. 5-a.

19 Document reproduced in N.F. Bugai, *Oni srazhalis' za rodinu: Predstaviteli repressirovannykh narodov SSSR na frontakh Velikoi Otechestvennoi voyny* (Moscow: Novyi Khorongraf, 2005), 344-345.

20 Bugai, *Oni srazhalis' za rodinu: Predstaviteli repressirovannykh narodov SSSR na frontakh Velikoi Otechestvennoi voyny*, 344-345.

21 RGASPI (Russian State Archive of Social and Political History), f. 644, op. 1, d. 19, l. 49-50; f. 644, op. 1, d. 21, l. 51; f. 644, op. 1, d. 2, l. 138-140.

22 GARF f. 9479, o. 1, d. 110, l. 126.

23 A.A. German, “Sovetskie nemtsy v lageriakh NKVD,” 281 and Viktor Krieger “Patriots or Traitors?,” 150-151.

24 GARF f. 9479, o. 1, d. 83, l. 203.

25 GARF f. 9479, o. 1, d. 83, l. 204.

the Uzbek, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, and Turkmen SSRs men for obligatory military service to work in industries, construction of railroads, and in industrial enterprises.”²⁶ This resolution was issued on the same day as the one conscripting ethnic Finns, Hungarians, Romanians, and Italians into the labor army.²⁷ After the Nazi invasion of the USSR on 22 June 1941 the rapid advance of the German *Wehrmacht* and subsequent capture of millions of Soviet POWs created a severe man power shortage in the USSR. The replacement of these soldiers through the conscription of industrial workers displaced this labor power shortage from the military onto Soviet industry. The Soviet government responded by using administrative decrees to force people to work in mining, logging, construction, and heavy industry.

Thus there were two distinct labor armies with about 400,000 people each. The first one consisted primarily of ethnic Germans. This punitive labor army was over 78% ethnic German with the remainder being members of other nationalities at war with the USSR like Finns, Hungarians, Romanians, and Italians. As well as some members of suspect nationalities subjected to internal resettlement from 1937-1944 including Bulgarians, Koreans, Crimean Tatars, Kalmyks, and Greeks. Finally, it included some 31,600 former kulaks of various nationalities by 1 October 1945.²⁸ The second labor army consisted of other ethnicities from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan mobilized for industrial work as an alternative to military service during World War II rather than as punishment as in the case of the ethnic Germans. Most, but not all, of these men were members of the indigenous titular nationalities. Their population greatly outnumbered that of the ethnic Germans and the other stigmatized nationalities recruited for forced labor. The 1939 census counted 2,640,000 Kazakhs, 760,000 Kyrgyz, and 4,080,000 Uzbeks living in their designated republics.²⁹ It should be noted, however, that these nationalities unlike Germans and Koreans were subject to general conscription into the Red Army where many of them fought as soldiers against Nazi Germany. Nonetheless, the percentage of Germans conscripted into the labor army dwarfed the labor and military conscription of any other nationality in the USSR. On 6

26 B.D. Pak and N.F. Bugai, *140 let v Rossii: Ocherk istorii rossiiskikh koreitsev* (Moscow: IV RAN, 2004), 314.

27 RGASPI, f. 644, op. 1, d. 64, l. 24.

28 Viktor Berdinskikh, *Spetsposeletsy : Politicheskaia ssylka narodov sovetskoï Rossii* (Moscow: Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie, 2005), 622.

29 Ian Murray Matley, “The Population and the Land” in *Central Asia: 130 Years of Russian Dominance, A Historical Overview* 3rd edition, ed. Edward Allworth (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1994), 96.

October 1942, the NKVD counted 799,989 Germans deported from regions of the USSR west of the Urals to Siberia and Kazakhstan classified as special settlers and 231,301 local Germans who had already been living in Siberia and Kazakhstan before 1941 for a total population of 1,031,290.³⁰ The German contingent of the labor army comprised at least 316,000 or over 30% of the total population of ethnic Germans with Soviet citizenship living in areas controlled by Moscow in fall 1942.³¹ In contrast the available figures suggest that less than 10% of the total population of any other nationality served in either labor army.

Republic	Germans Conscripted into Labor Army	Total number of Conscripts
Kazakhstan	71,977 ³²	245,054 ³³
Kyrgyzstan	NA	58,419 ³⁴
Uzbekistan	NA	155,000 ³⁵

Table 1) Number of Labor Army Conscripts from Kazakhstan and Central Asia during World War II

30 N.F. Bugai, ed., “Mobilizovat’ nemtsev v rabochie kolonny...I. Stalin”: *Sbornik Dokumentov (1940-e gody)* (Moscow: Gotika, 1998), doc. 173, 251-253.

31 Bugai, “Mobilizovat’ nemtsev v rabochie kolonny...I Stalin,” 11

32 G.A. Karpykova, ed., *Iz Istorii nemtsev Kazakhstana (1921-1975 gg.)*: *Sbornik dokumentov: Arkhiv Prezidenta Respubliki Kazakhstan* (Almaty - Moscow: Gotika, 1997), doc. 84, 143-144. This figure is the official number cited in the document, but other tabulations of Germans conscripted for the labour army are all considerably higher. See the discussion later in the text regarding these numbers.

33 Karpykova, *Iz Istorii nemtsev Kazakhstana*, doc. 84, 143-144. This number includes the 71,977 ethnic Germans recorded in the previous column.

34 G.K. Krongardt, *Nemtsy v Kyrgyzstane: 1880-1990 gg.* (Bishkek: Ilim, 1997), 240. The population of the Kyrgyz SSR was only 51.7% ethnically Kyrgyz in 1939, a percentage that decreased during World War II due to evacuations and deportations into Kyrgyzstan. The 1959 census showed ethnic Kyrgyz as only 40.5% of the republic’s population (Gerhard Simon, *Nationalism and Policy toward the Nationalities in the Soviet Union: From Totalitarian Dictatorship to Post-Stalinist Society*, trans. Karen and Oswald Forster (Westview Press: Boulder, CO, 1991), 385). Due to the large numbers of non-Kyrgyz living in the republic most of those mobilized for labour by CAVO (Central Asian Military Region) were not Kyrgyz. For instance at military construction site no. 367 in Kyrgyzstan on 1 January 1944 out of 1,054 mobilized workers the largest contingent at 387 were Jews, followed by Ukrainians with 130, and then Belorussians with 124. Alfred Eisfeld, ed., *Iz istorii nemtsev Kyrgyzstana 1917-1999 gg.* (Bishkek: Sham, 2000), doc. 69, 114.

35 Valeriy S. Khan, “Uzbekistani Koreans in the Labor Army during World War II,” *International Journal of Central Asian Studies* 11 (2006): 60. This number only includes those labour conscripts sent to work outside of the Uzbek SSR by the end of 1943.

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Oblast	Local Germans	Resettled Germans	Total Number of Ethnic Germans in Oblast	Mobilized
Alma-Ata	3,000	8,840	11,840	1,339
Akmola	10,130	75,418	85,548	11,408
Aktiubinsk	401	11,632	12,033	—
East Kazakhstan	856	28,499	29,355	4,163
Jambul	1,150	10,480	11,630	1,500
Karaganda	10,000	20,639	30,639	3,739
Kzyl-Orda	215	4,807	5,022	527
Kustanai	8,000	53,317	61,317	8,149
Pavlodar	4,900	51,317	56,217	6,940
North Kazakhstan	17,950	62,473	80,423	11,860
Semipalatinsk	2,500	41,913	44,413	4,597
South Kazakhstan	1,715	24,798	26,513	3,473
West Kazakhstan	500	—	500	—
Gur'ev	21	—	21	—
Total	61,338	394,133	455,471	57,695

Table 2) Number of Germans in Kazakhstan by Oblast in 1942³⁶

The Kazakh SSR military committee counted 71,977 German men and women mobilized into the labor army in Kazakhstan by May 1945. This represented 29% of the total number of people mobilized for labor in Kazakhstan during World War II.³⁷ Other sources count the number of Germans mobilized into the labor army in Kazakhstan much higher at 82,735³⁸ and 103,733.³⁹ Estimates as opposed to tabulations reach much higher, peaking at 121,000.⁴⁰ The NKVD sent most of these men and women to work outside of Kazakhstan, particularly in the Urals. One report notes that the NKVD sent 92,438 mobilized Germans to the Urals, Siberia, and other areas of the RSFSR with only 11,295

36 Karpykova, *Iz Istorii nemtsev Kazakhstana*, doc. 76, 135-136.

37 Karpykova, *Iz Istorii nemtsev Kazakhstana*, doc. 84, pp. 143-144.

38 E. Gribanova, "K voprosy o trudovykh mobilizatsiakh nemtskoi natstional'nosti," 172.

39 N.A. Efremova-Shershukova, "Deportatsiia nemtsev na territoriu Kazakskoi SSR: prichiny i mekhanizm provedeniia," in *Nachal'nyi period Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny i deportatsiia rossiiskikh nemtsev: vzglady i otsenki cherez 70 let*, ed. A.A. German (Moscow: MSNK – press, 2011), 876.

40 E. Gribanova, "K voprosy o trudovykh mobilizatsiakh nemtskoi natstional'nosti," 172.

remaining to work in Kazakhstan.⁴¹ The currently available data suggests that over a third of the 316,000⁴² ethnic Germans conscripted into the labor army by the Soviet government during World War II came from Kazakhstan. However, since nearly half of the ethnic German population in the USSR lived in Kazakhstan in October 1942, 469,202 people out of 1,031,290, even the higher estimates under represent the region.⁴³ A larger portion of ethnic German labor army conscripts came from Siberia than Kazakhstan and Central Asia. Most of the Russian-Germans deported to Siberia in 1941 came from the Volga region while most of the Germans deported to Kazakhstan at this time came from other regions including Ukraine, Crimea, the North Caucasus, Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Moscow.⁴⁴ It is thus probable that a disproportionate number of ethnic German labor army conscripts originally lived in the Volga region before the mass deportations eastward in 1941.

Oblast	Total number of Conscripts	German Conscripts
Alma-Ata	33,308	2,860
Jambul	16,841	2,723
South Kazakhstan	35,125	4,368
Kzyl-Orda	13,748	24
North Kazakhstan	33,215	18,289
Kokchetaev	1,233	—
Akmola	29,895	4,887
Karaganda	14,104	6,162
Pavlodar	20,755	15,104
Semipalatinsk	24,290	8,164
East Kazakhstan	20,403	9,396
Taldy-Kurgan	2,137	—
Total	245,054	71,977

Table 3) Labor Army Conscripts from Kazakhstan by Oblast during World War II⁴⁵

41 N.A. Efremova-Shershukova, “Deportatsiia nemtsev na territoriu Kazakskoi SSR,” 876.

42 Bugai, “Mobilizovat’ v rabochie kolonny...I Stalin,” 11.

43 Bugai, “Mobilizovat’ v rabochie kolonny...I Stalin,” doc. 173, 251-253.

44 A.A. German, *Bolshevistskaia vlast’ i nemetskaia avtonomiia na Volge (1918-1941)* (Saratov: Izdatel’stvo saratovskogo univerteta, 2004), 371 and N.F. Bugai, ed., *Iosif Stalin – Lavrentiiu Berii: “Ikh nado deportirovat’” Dokumenty, fakty, Kommentarii* (Moscow: Druzhba narodov, 1992), doc. 45, 75-76.

45 Karykova, *Iz istorii nemtsev Kazakhstana*, doc. 84, 143-144.

Differentiation of Mobilized Workers by Nationality

The differences between ethnic Germans and indigenous nationalities from Kazakhstan and Central Asia mobilized for labor during the war were indeed stark. The state's disparate treatment of these groups based upon ethnicity is readily apparent. The ethnic Germans were a group collectively targeted for punishment through the use of forced labor while the Central Asian nationalities were viewed more benignly as a labor source to replace Russians, Ukrainians, and others who had been conscripted into the Red Army. Thus Central Asians inducted for industrial work labored under considerably better conditions than did ethnic Germans. For instance Uzbek men mobilized into the labor army in addition to not having to work in GULag camps under NKVD guard for the most part⁴⁶ received special allocations of green tea, rice, Uzbek bread (naan) and mutton.⁴⁷ Central Asian conscripts in the labor army unlike mobilized Germans also received reductions in work hours due to cold weather. Regardless of weather conditions German labor army conscripts had to work a minimum eight hours a day whereas it was reduced to 6 hours and 30 minutes for Central Asians if the temperature fell below -15 C in calm weather and -10 C in windy weather. It was further contracted to a mere 4 hours and 30 minutes if the weather fell below -20 C in calm weather and -15 C in windy weather.⁴⁸ The laws prohibiting discrimination were also much better enforced regarding mobilized Kazakhs, Uzbeks, and Kyrgyz than for the repressed peoples.⁴⁹ Even compared to other repressed nationalities the ethnic Germans in the labor army fared worse. The Soviet government conscripted a far greater percentage of their population and they were the only nationality in which women, teenagers younger than 17, and men older than 50 were subject to labor mobilization. After 7 October 1942 all these categories of ethnic Germans became subject to induction into the labor army.⁵⁰ The Stalin regime inducted over 84,000 German women into the labor army mostly to work in the oil industry during 1942 and 1943.⁵¹ More than 21,500 of these women were working in

46 There were some exceptions such as the 4,064 Central Asian recruits working in Bakalstroj along with 20,810 mobilized Germans, and 12,091 prisoners on 1 December 1943. GARF f. 9414, o. 1, d. 1183, ll. 127-128.

47 Khan, "Uzbekistani Koreans in the Labor Army during World War II," 66-68.

48 German and Kurochkin, *Nemtsy SSSR v trudovoi armii*, 90.

49 Viktor Krieger, *Bundesbuenger russlanddeutscher Herkunft: Historische Schluesselerfahrungen und kollektives Gedaechnis* (Muenster: Lit Verlag, 2013), 39.

50 RGASPI, f. 644, op. 1, d. 2, l. 138-140.

51 RGASPI, f. 17, op. 121, d. 241, l. 60.

GULag camps on 1 January 1944.⁵² The Soviet government targeted all ethnic Germans capable of physical labor for conscription into the labor army regardless of gender as a form of collective punishment against the entire minority.

Women conscripted into the labor army and working in GULag camps endured the same inhumane work conditions as men. They performed heavy labor in the extreme cold. Raisa Ostertag inducted into the labor army in March 1943 and sent to a logging camp in Gorky Oblast described her working conditions in the following manner.

During the winter we women had to fell trees, remove branches from the boles, and drag them out of the forest. That was damn hard work. Accidents were not unusual. We ourselves had to supply the wood that was used to heat our barracks. For this purpose we were allowed to dig out the tree roots. We often thought our intestines would burst out of our bodies, so torturous was this labor. We often worked in snow up to our hips. This inhumane labor inevitably made us perspire. If we then took off our jackets, we were inviting chills and fever. We were caught in a vicious circle. Those who did not work received no bread; those who received no bread could not work.⁵³

Ethnic Germans were the only nationality in the USSR where women were subject to conscription for such labor. Even women belonging to other enemy nationalities such as Finns, Hungarians, and Romanians were exempt from labor conscription.

One final difference between free citizens mobilized for industrial work and ethnic Germans in the punitive labor army was what happened after the war. Immediately after the defeat of Nazi Germany the free citizens were allowed to return home without any restrictions. In contrast the legal dismantlement of the labor army for Germans did not begin until the end of 1945, six months after the end of the war. Most labor army conscripts were released a couple of years later in 1948 and some continued to maintain this status in practice until 1957.⁵⁴ Upon release

52 German and Kurochkin, *Nemtsy SSSR v trudovoi armii*, 64.

53 Nelly Daes, ed., *Gone without a Trace: German-Russian Women in Exile*, trans. Nancy Gernahrd Holland (Lincoln, NE: American Historical Society of Germans from Russia, 2001), 163.

54 Malmud, "Mobilizovannye sovetskie nemtsy na Urale v 1942-1948 gg" 144 and Eisfeld, *Die Aussiedlung der Deutschen aus der Wolgarepublik 1941-1957*, 8.

German labor army conscripts received the status of special settler until 13 December 1955 and did not regain the *dejure* if not the *defacto* right to choose their place of residence until 3 November 1972.⁵⁵ Indeed the authorities permanently attached many of the former labor army conscripts to the industries where they had worked during the war. As late as December 1948, a total of 26,219 ethnic Germans who had been mobilized into the labor army after being deported remained attached to industries in central Russia and still had not been unified with their families who remained in Siberia and Kazakhstan.⁵⁶ The punitive effects of the labor army upon ethnic Germans in the USSR lasted long beyond the end of the Second World War.

The Legal and Material Conditions in the Labor Army

The daily regime of Germans mobilized into the labor army did not differ substantially from that of GULag prisoners. The main difference was the fact that unlike convicted prisoners that the German men and women in the labor army were never individually charged and tried for any crimes punishable by forced labor. Instead they were collectively punished on the basis of their nationality without going through the legal procedures required by Soviet law.⁵⁷ The main motive was to “punish” the ethnic “Germans” in the USSR for being members of an “enemy nationality” and the economic benefits of using them for forced labor was only a secondary consideration. The lack of court sentences also meant that their terms of forced labor unlike those of prisoners were indefinite. The decrees specify that ethnic Germans were to be “mobilized for the duration of the war.”⁵⁸ The use of decrees rather than courts to sentence people to forced labor clearly violated article 102 of the 1936 Soviet Constitution assigning the administration of justice in the USSR solely to the court system.⁵⁹ It also contravened article 123 of the 1936 Constitution which banned all forms of discrimination both direct and indirect on the basis of race or nationality.⁶⁰ This

55 Document reproduced in V.A. Auman and V.G. Chebotareva, eds., *Istoriia rossiiskikh nemtsev v dokumentakh (1763-1992 gg.)* (Moscow: MIGP, 1993), 179.

56 GARF, f. 9479, o. 1, d. 372, l. 269.

57 Krieger, “Patriots or Traitors?,” 150.

58 RGASPI, f. 644, op. 1, d. 19, l. 49-50; f. 644, op. 1, d. 21, l. 51; f. 644, op. 1, d. 2, l. 138-140.

59 A. Shadt, “Pravoi status rossiiskikh nemtsev v SSSR (1940-1950-e gg.),” in *Nemtsy SSSR v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny i v pervoe poslevoennoe desiatiletie 1941-1955 gg.*, ed. A.A. German (Moscow: Gotika, 2001), 290.

60 A. Shadt, “Pravoi status rossiiskikh nemtsev,” 289-290.

discrimination originated in the racialization of diaspora groups as fundamentally alien groups deemed incapable of assimilation during the 1930s and developed into the full blown demonization of ethnic Germans as an internal enemy nation after the Nazi invasion of the USSR.⁶¹ The labor army served as an instrument of ethnic repression aimed predominantly at people of German nationality. German labor army conscripts constituted a contingent of forced laborers legally distinct from prisoners in that they had never been individually charged with any crimes, had never been tried in any courts, and had never received any finite sentences.

Other differences between GULag prisoners and labor army conscripts were less substantial. One such difference was that labor army conscripts were supposed to receive wages equal to that of free laborers. In practice this difference meant nothing for several reasons. First, it was not until 1 October 1943 that such a system of equal payments was actually implemented.⁶² This system was installed after it was already much too late to assist the thousands of men and women in the labor army who perished from malnutrition, disease, and exposure during the winter of 1942-1943 from a lack of adequate food and warm clothing.

Second, the supply of all food and clothing to labor army conscripts was strictly rationed by GULag on the same basis and norms as for prisoners.⁶³ GULag established strict limits on the amount of food that could be provided to labor army conscripts even if such food were available and the Germans had money from wages to pay for it. Even the substandard minimal rations set by GULag, however, could often not be supplied due to chronic war time shortages that were severely exacerbated by corruption and inefficiency. Corrupt officials frequently stole food meant to feed prisoners and labor army conscripts and food allocated by the central authorities often spoiled before it reached its final destination.

Finally, the amount of wages paid to labor army conscripts were generally insufficient to pay for adequate nourishment and warm clothes at the prices set by the NKVD. The NKVD automatically deducted the cost of food and other expenses such as housing and

61 J. Otto Pohl, "Soviet Apartheid: Stalin's Ethnic Deportations, Special Settlement Restrictions, and the Labor Army: The Case of Ethnic Germans in the USSR," *Human Rights Review* 13, no. 2 (2012).

62 Irina Mukhina, "To Be Like All But Different," 862.

63 Bugai, "Mobilizovat' v rabochie kolonny...I Stalin," doc. 39, 62-64.

clothing from the wages of labor army conscripts at prices much higher than could be obtained by free workers.⁶⁴ For instance at Ivdellag wages ranged from 30 rubles to 350 rubles a month for labor army conscripts with the median being between 120-130 rubles a month. The cost of food and other expenses deducted by the camp administration from the wages of the labor army conscripts, however, was 140-150 rubles a month.⁶⁵ A report dated 14 October 1944 composed for internal use of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan quotes a number of complaints by miners in Karaganda including Germans that the cost of food and clothes exceeded their wages.⁶⁶ Unlike other sectors of the Soviet population German men and women in the labor army lacked access to any other sources of food such as relatives on kolkhozes with private garden plots to obtain food. In fact these private plots of land issued to kolkhoz farmers after 1936 were the source of the overwhelming majority of food consumed in the USSR during World War II, some 85-90% of all food consumed during these years.⁶⁷ In contrast, the established food rations rather than their wages determined the actual diet of labor army conscripts.

The meagre food rations and poor nutrition combined with inhumane work conditions, inadequate housing and clothing, and lack of medical care led to high rates of mortality in the labor army from malnutrition, disease, exposure, and accidents. Deaths from these causes were especially high in the winter of 1942-1943 among labor army conscripts sent to corrective labor camps in the Urals. Larger men who needed more calories to survive died faster. Felix Littau who worked in the labor army at Bakalstroï recalled that men died around him on a daily basis and that he survived because he was physically smaller and did not need as much food to live.⁶⁸ In addition to recorded deaths in the camps themselves a large number of German labor army conscripts released as invalids also perished shortly after their release due to ailments contracted in the camps due to poor material conditions. In the course of 1942, the Soviet government released 8,073 people from mobilization in the labor army due to severe health problems, most of

64 Mukhina, "To Be Like All But Different:," 864-865.

65 N.V. Matveeva, "Vliianie uslovii truda i zhizni na vnutrennii mir rossiiskikh nemtsev-trudarmeitsev v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny," in *Grazhdanskaia identichnost' i vnutrennii mir rossiiskikh nemtsev v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny i v istoricheskoi pamiati potomkov*, ed. A.A. German (Moscow: MSNK – press, 2011), 150.

66 Karykova, *Iz Istorii nemtsev Kazakhstana*, doc. 82, 142.

67 Mukhina, "To Be Like All But Different:," 864.

68 Interview with Felix Littau in Kant, Kyrgyz Republic on 14 November 2010.

whom died a short time later.⁶⁹ The Soviet government drafted Robert Avgustovich Ianke (Janke) into the labor army in 1942 from Kazakhstan and sent him to Perm (Molotov) Oblast to fell trees in a labor camp.⁷⁰ In spring of 1943 a devastating epidemic of typhus broke out among his work column. He described the massive deaths occurring as a result.

Of the 350 people, 100 died. And how, did they die. They went around these houses on a horse every day, on a horse they go around, collecting the bodies, those that were in the houses, but the common sick house was over on the river bank...They couldn't cope with all of them. There was this special, this big barrack, it was called the sick house. They put all the people infected with typhus in there, gathered them up. It held 70, and it was full up. Full up. And those bodies, down below, they put them in a stack. And in March, it was already getting warm, they had put them in a stack, they were lying in this big stack, they dragged them all out of the houses and brought them out from that sick house. Well, they piled up 100 people there. And they made us dig – I took part myself – dig a mass grave.⁷¹

Later in the fall of 1943 the material conditions for men and women in the labor army improved accounting for much of the decrease in death rates in 1944.⁷² The other factor reducing deaths was the fact that the weakest members of the contingent had already died earlier or been released due to poor health.

Year	NKVD Camps	Coal	Oil	Munitions
1942	11,874 (10.6%)	—	—	—
1943	11,561 (6.9%)	2,844 (5%)	342 (1.1%)	88 (1%)
1944	2,832 (2.5%)	3,650 (6.4%)	494 (1.9%)	159 (2.2%)
Total	26,267(14.43)	6,494	836	247

Table 4) Recorded German Deaths in the Labor Army 1942-1944⁷³

69 Krieger, "Patriots or Traitors?," 152.

70 Jehanne Gheith and Katherine Jolluck, *Gulag Voices: Oral Histories of Soviet Incarceration and Exile* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), 31.

71 Gheith and Jolluck, *Gulag Voices*, 40.

72 German, "Sovetskie nemtsy v lageriakh NKVD," 287.

73 German and Kurochkin, *Nemtsy SSSR v trudovoi armii, 114, and Krillov and Matveeva, "Trudmobiizovannye nemtsy na Urale,"* 635.

Women in the Labor Army

Several gender issues surrounded the induction of German women in the USSR for forced labor in the labor army. But, one of the most significant was its effect on childrearing. The forced conscription of German women into the labor army in the USSR created a severe child care crises among the group. The mass induction of ethnic German women into the labor army following the conscription of their husbands left many children as functional orphans in Siberia, Kazakhstan, and Central Asia. Their fathers had already perished or were working in the labor army. The mobilization of their mothers left many ethnic German children in the USSR without either of their parents. The initial decree mobilizing German women into the labor army specifically dealt with the issue of the children deprived of their parents. The children were to be given over to immediate family members, more distant relatives, and German kolkhoz workers in that order.⁷⁴ The NKVD leadership clarified this point of the decree with a circular originally signed by Deputy Chief Kruglov and then Beria in response to questions from local NKVD and UNKVD branches, most notably the UNKVD of Cheliabinsk Oblast. It stated that children were to be cared for by close relatives remaining on kolkhozes and that local UNKVD branches had the power to free women with more than three children from labor army conscription to allow them to watch over their own and their conscripted relatives' children.⁷⁵ This solution, however, could not possibly hope to cope with the thousands of children left without any parental supervision as a result of the induction of over 53,000 women into the labor army. In total the NKVD conscripted into the labor army the mothers' of 8,997 German children under the age of 12.⁷⁶ The massive induction of ethnic Germans into the labor army left many children without any surviving relatives outside of the labor army and necessitated the transfer of the care of many of them to strangers. On 18 November 1942, the SNK passed a resolution dealing with this problem. The resolution called for the distribution of the children of German labor army conscripts to the care of Russian and Kazakh kolkhozes. Those under eight were to be placed in the care of children's institutions in the kolkhozes and those over eight with families living on the kolkhozes.⁷⁷ The resolution

74 RGASPI, f. 644, op. 1, d. 2, l. 138-140.

75 Bugai, "Mobilizovat' v rabochie kolonny...I Stalin," doc. 23, 45-46.

76 German and Kurochkin, *Nemtsy SSSR v trudovoi armii*, 120.

77 Karykova, *Iz Istorii nemtsev Kazakhstana*, doc. 72, 129-130.

made no mention of any resources to be provided to these kolkhozes to enable them to carry out this task.

The plight of children abandoned due to the conscription of both of their parents and all their relatives into the labor army was unenviable. They often suffered from extreme deprivation and hunger. Anna Kroecker returned to Kyrgyzstan after being released from the labor army to find her children living in dire poverty.

When I returned home after being away for four years, I had found my children living in bitter poverty. We didn't have any beds to speak of. An old pelt was placed on the ground for Lilie and Alfred. The stove had been built in such a way that no one could sit or sleep on any portion of it. There were no dishes – the children had found tin cans in the hospital's rubbish heap. Since the death of my sister, no had cared for my mother and the children. As a result, Alfred starved. People would often ask, "Is Anna's little Alfred still alive?"⁷⁸

This forced abandonment of children by women conscripted into the labor army has only been studied cursorily, but certainly constituted one of the more horrifying aspects of the institution. It also clearly points to one of the ways in which forced labor has a definite gender dimension.

One solution enacted by conscripted German women to prevent this separation was to take their children with them into the labor army barracks. In Novosibirsk Oblast the barracks for labor army women attached to Munitions Factory no. 65 had 114 children between three and five without winter clothes or shoes while the barracks of Munitions Factory 564 had 135 such children. The children in these barracks suffered from a variety of contagious diseases resulting from overcrowded and unsanitary conditions. These illnesses included measles, scarlet fever, mumps, and skin infections.⁷⁹ In addition to mothers who took their children into the labor army barracks, some women also took other younger relatives such as siblings with them. Margarita Ivanovna Funk spent part of her childhood in a hostel attached to a labor army work site in Cheliabinsk. Her older sister Roza Ivanovna Funk took her to the Urals after being conscripted into the

78 John B. Toews, ed. and trans., *Journeys: Mennonite Stories of Faith and Survival in Stalin's Russia* (Winnipeg, Man.: Kindred Productions, 1998), 43.

79 German and Kurochkin, *Nemtsy SSSR v trudovoi armii*, 106 and 120-121.

labor army rather than leave her in an orphanage in Lenino, Altai. Their father had been arrested in 1937 and was never seen again. Their mother died shortly after his arrest.

My sister Roza Ivanovna was repressed to the labor army in Cheliabinsk. She took me with her, because she was older and did not want to leave me alone. We lived in a hostel in Cheliabinsk, and my sister worked in Kopeisk coal mine. I did not have shoes and clothes and that is why I did not go to school. Orphanages would not take me. It was after the war ended, I even have a certificate that proves that I was repressed with my sister from 1946 to 1954.⁸⁰

As wretched as conditions for children were in the labor army barracks they were often better than what existed in the state orphanages and as in the case of Funk they sometimes did not accept German children.

Nonetheless, the death of large numbers of women in the labor army created a significant number of orphans among ethnic German children. In March 1944, the Soviet government began to move these children into state orphanages and by October 1945 they had successfully placed 2,900 such children in these institutions.⁸¹ The policy of conscripting German women into the labor army thus greatly altered the family structure of many ethnic German families in the USSR.

Conclusion

The Soviet government dismantled the labor army after World War II. Most of the conscripts were freed from the specific restrictions of the labor army by 1948.⁸² After which the Soviet government permanently attached many ethnic Germans to their places of work while some were allowed to go join their families in Siberia and Kazakhstan as special settlers.⁸³ However, some remained in the camps working under the exact same legal conditions until 1957.⁸⁴ By 1958, the Soviet

80 Interview with Margarita Ivanovna Funk in Kant, Kyrgyz Republic on 14 November 2010.

81 German and Kurochkin, *Nemtsy SSSR v trudovoi armii*, 120.

82 Malamud, "Mobilizovannye sovetskie nemtsy na Urale v 1942-1948 gg," 144.

83 V.N. Zemskov, *Spetsposelentsy v SSSR 1930-1960* (Moscow: Nauka, 2005), 127.

84 Alfred Eisfeld, *Die Aussiedlung der Deutschen aus der Wolgarepublik 1941-1957* (München: Ost-Europa Institut, 2003), 8.

government had completely dismantled the labor army as a part of a larger liberalization which included greatly reducing the state's repressive apparatus and institutions of forced labor.

The conscription of ethnic Germans in the USSR into the labor army exhibited a number of features that also bear further research regarding forced labor in other contexts. These features include the dominant role of the centralized state in organizing and controlling this labor, the complex combination of political and economic motives, the targeting of specific ethnic or racial groups, and the role of gender. In the case of ethnic Germans in the USSR the state completely dominated the process of mobilizing, distributing, supervising and caring for the forced laborers. The state undertook this task primarily for political reasons based upon ethnicity/race rather than economic ones. This widespread mobilization of ethnic Germans of both sexes for forced labor significantly altered family life among the group due to the gendered nature of child care. Comparative historical research of various systems of forced labor could greatly enhance our understanding of the basic dynamics of such systems.

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