

The Memorial Center for the History of Political Repression “Perm-36”

Ekaterina Abzalova,
International Relations Coordinator

The Gulag Museum at Perm-36at resides in the former corrective labor camp number 6 and is located 120 km far from Perm. This is the eastern European part of Russia. The left hill slope of the Ural Mountains.

I am going to tell you about the history of a camp, then I will give an insight into how the Gulag Museum at Perm-36 was created, after that I will move to the main lines of our activities and the challenges that founders faced at the moment of the Gulag Museum at Perm-36creation, and will finish with the latest projects and perspectives.

You know perfectly well what the Gulag is. But I would like to touch upon this subject, to show the context in which the Gulag Museum at Perm-36 operates.

Gulag - an acronym for the term "Chief Administration of Corrective Labor Camps and Colonies (the Gulag)." This is a huge camp system, which was created primarily as a political tool of mass terror, repression, and only afterwards, at the beginning of 30s was used for economic purposes.

Here you see a map of the Gulag. Gulag system comprised 53 camp administrations (command camps). Camp administration, as a rule, incorporated a number of camp divisions, camp points and other smaller locations (the number of them ranged from a few to hundreds). One camp division imprisoned from 5 to 25 thousand people, and camp point up to 5000 people. This is what Solzhenitsyn called the Gulag Archipelago.

Forced labor was used to build major plants and factories, roads, railways, for the colonization of the territories in agriculture, extractive industries and logging.

For this reason, camp points and smaller camps locations established for the economic purposes were temporary. Whenever the work had been executed, the buildings were abandoned and the prisoners were transferred to a new location.

Similarly to many other in 1946 the Corrective Labor Colony was relocated from Selyanka Settlement to the village of Kuchino to log timber. The colony was built as temporary. It was built by the hands prisoners themselves with poor quality materials that the inmates themselves produced. The camp report for 1952 recorded four barracks each to host 250 prisoners, a solitary confinement, a medical center, and a bath house. The camp was encircled with barbed-wire fences with four watchtowers at the corners. The camp contained only 279 prisoners. Therefore, according to the description of 1952, one of the barracks was converted into a dining room and a kitchen. Starting from 1948, another one of the barracks was used as a solitary confinement (penalty) as a punishment measure for those who violated the regiment, refused to work and prisoners who did not regularly meet the production norms. In addition to the

base camp compound at the village of Kutchino, there were also four so-called "*komandirovki*" ("business trips") which were camp outposts located directly in the woods.

The colony imprisoned the convicts accused of domestic crimes, theft, and sentenced on the grounds of Decrees of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. Thence on September 1, 1943 the colony hosted 394 inmates, only four of them were convicted on the basis of the Article #58 of the RSFSR Criminal Code, 8 people were condemned by the "Five Spikelets" Decree. A major portion of 81 people were sentenced on the grounds of the Decree of the Supreme Soviet on December 26, 1941 ("Criminal responsibility for unauthorized voluntary retirement from the defense industry").

And you certainly understand the conditions the inmates were living in, for example, prisoners slept in one room on the plank bed, only half of them had bedding such as mattresses, pillows and bed linen, there was no central heating. Moreover, the prisoners worked in -30. Low nutrition norms.

The lifetime of the timber-logging camps such as ITK-6 was typically short. They were usually relocated to new sites after the woods in their environs had been cleared. Despite this fact this colony remained at the same place and as the camp site was close to the most convenient place for lower warehouse (that is the territory to which the produced timber is taken and stored throughout the year, and then with the beginning of spring water level rise is floated down the river), the camp was left at the old place and was provided with tractors and trucks to transport wood from distant places of work.

Later on, a vehicle repair shop, a forge, garages, maintenance facilities were built. All these services were incorporated in the industrial zone adjoining to the residential zone of the camp. Both zones were enforced with co-joint fence with guard towers at the corners and separated by a dividing fence.

On March 27, 1953 the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet issued a decree of the amnesty, under which almost half of the camp prisoners whose sentence was less than five years were released over the next three months (approximately, from 1.2 million from 2.5 million people). Despite the fact that many camps were closed, the system continued to function. The manifestation of the subsequent organizational changes in the Soviet Union penal system was the establishment of the Chief Administration of Corrective Labor Colonies in October 1956. Later in March 1959 it was renamed the Chief Administration of Detention Facilities (penal institutions).

After 1953 the camp was redesigned to hold former officers of state security, procuratorship, police, courts, camps, suspected to organize and execute illegal repression. At this time the camp hold 469 prisoners. The prisoners occupied two barracks. Most of them were senior officers - colonels, lieutenant-colonels and even generals of the former NKVD (People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs) and the MGB (Ministry of State Security), and members of other secret police departments equal to them in rank.

Since many of them perfectly well knew all the peculiarities of the camp security system and could use this knowledge to organize the escape, the ITK-6 security

system had been dramatically elaborated and refined. The new multi-row barbed wire fences were installed. They were surrounded by plank fences mounted behind them. And alarm systems were constructed. The industrial zone with all maintenance facilities adjoining to the living was also covered by fences and other barriers and was incorporated in the camp complex as a manufacturing zone.

Since logging had significantly decreased in the camp, it was decided to develop industrial production. By the 60s logging for the floating to the next river points stopped completely. The camp stocked forest primarily for its own use. In 1961 – 1964 woodworking shop building standing at the former lower warehouse, including new production premises (package boards, lath, packaging, etc.), was repeatedly reconstructed and expanded. In this state, the camp operated until the early 70's.

In the second half of the 60s the very strong human rights movement springs up in the Soviet Union. In the late 60s the government launches a targeted anti-activist campaign. The members of human rights movements and actions were sentenced to imprisonment and were sent to the Mordovia Political Camps, the Far East of Russia. But even being imprisoned they still continued their activity to identify human rights violations and make it public. In the late 60s the information on the conjuncture in Mordovia Political Camps was regularly distributed through human rights *samizdat*, foreign publications and broadcasts. The world learned that political camps and political prisoners do exist in the USSR. It hindered much the country's leaders, who tried to lead a policy of "detente."

Therefore, when the government planned the ultimate extermination of dissident movement, they concerned about maximum isolation of the most active members of human rights movement. This explains why the choice was made in favor of Kuchino special camp having the most sophisticated security system.

In the early 70s new political camps were opened, so called prisons for the "especially dangerous state criminals". These prisons were VS-389/36, also known as ITK-6, also known as the Perm-36, VS-389/37, and later in 1976 - VS-389/35, which formed a "perm triangle" of political camps.

On July 13th, 1972 the large group of prisoners was transferred from Mordovia camps to the ITK-6.

The "Perm-36" stood out among the USSR system of political camps. It was marked by the harshest regiment. That it Perm-36 that imprisoned those whom the government attributed to their most dangerous enemies - the leaders of national liberation movements of the former Soviet republics, as well as human rights activists and members of the Helsinki group.

In January 1980, the special regime detention zone (maximum security zone), the second part of the VS-389/36 establishment was launched.

The special regime detention zone department of «Perm-36" camp was the first and the only entirely political camp in the special regime detention zone category. The government managed to completely isolate prisoners from the outside world and to stop the information drain from the camp.

The cells in the barrack were small and were designed to detain only 2 and 4 people. Only 2 cells were arranged to hold 6 people. The number and the size of working premises constructed in the same barrack corresponded to the number and the size of the living cells. For years the detainees had been working worked and living only with their cell inmates. From a living cell the prisoners were conveyed to the working cells - they never crossed with prisoners from the other cameras.

Over the years (the usual sentence term in the special regime detention zone was 10 years) prisoners had not seen anyone except few inmates and the same guards. Cell windows were obscured with special shields or with the fences placed closely to the windows and one could not see anything but the fence out of them. Once a day for 45 minutes the inmates were transferred to walk yards finished with iron and covered atop with barbed wire net.

This special regime detention zone was given the codename of VS-389/36-2, in comparison with the previously existing wing of a regime that received the new code of VS-389/36-1.

The camp existed in such a state until its closure in 1988

Thus, three historical layers can be found in the history of the place as a penal institution:

1. 1946 – 1953 rr. – typical Gulag camp;
2. 1953 – illustrates not just the change of prisoners, but serves as the evidence for the steep change in policy - the camp detained not simply former employees of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Prosecutor's Office and the court, but very senior management engaged in decision-making.
3. 1972 r. – again, the steep change in policy – the start point of KGB and personally Adropov campaign against dissidents in the USSR.
1980 r. – special regime detention zone – «the last and the decisive battle» of KGB against dissidents.

However, this place has the fourth historical layer, which in this particular case does not refer to the history of the USSR repressive system, but represents a part of the history of the place itself.

When the camp was closed all its buildings and other facilities were handed over to social welfare department of the Perm Oblast Executive Committee to accommodate psycho neurological boarding hospital.

During the first years of its existence the boarding hospital demolished most of the security system structures, retaining only the outer "camouflage" wooden fence. In addition, staff boarding hospital dismantled one of the old camp

barracks, which housed the dining room, a kitchen and food warehouse, as well as and storage building at the site of strict regime used to store personal possessions of the prisoners. The boarding hospital occupied only a part of the buildings. Most of them, including the entire special regime detention zone, were abandoned and were torrentially crumbling away.

All the security system constructions in the special regime detention zone area were completely destroyed by members of the Perm Region Penitentiary Service after in 1989 a Ukrainian TV channel filmed a feature about a member of the Ukrainian Helsinki Group who died there.

This process was deteriorated by local civilians who disassembled and pilfered the camp buildings.

And now I'm getting close to how the Gulag Museum at Perm-36 was created. But first, I would like to briefly introduce the personality of Viktor Shmyrov, the founder and the director of the museum. Previously, for eight years he served as the director of the Gulag Museum at Perm-36 in Cherdyn and was a member activist in Russian National Society for the Historical and Cultural Monuments Protection. He was directly engaged in the preservation of architectural and cultural monuments and personally retrieved two churches in the area, did not let to demolish one, and drained another. Then he moved to Perm, and initially worked as an assistant professor at Perm State Pedagogical University. After that for 5 years he was a dean. And a member activist in Perm Society for the Historical and Cultural Monuments Protection was one of the directors of the historical section.

On the one hand, Viktor Shmyrov is historian, who has substantial historical background, on the other hand, an activist in the monuments protection, who can perfectly assess the value of a particular monument, and clearly realizes what, may happen if a monument is abandoned and is not duly maintained.

Now I will tell you how the idea to organize the Gulag Museum at Perm-36 appeared. On July 13, 1992 Perm Memorial Society, together with Perm historians organized a conference in Gornozavodsk with the participation of former political prisoners. The conference remembered the 20th anniversary of the first prisoners transfer from Mordovia political camps. The main request that came from former political prisoners was to visit the camps of Perm political triangle: camps number 35, 36, and 37. Thus in 1992 Viktor Shmyrov has paid his first open visit to these sites.

After the exploration of the camp, Victor noted the abnormal archaism of this place (the location of buildings in the living part - four barracks, four towers at the perimeter - was typical to many GULAG camps in the 40s. He was deeply shocked with the special regime detention zone after he learned the details of the regiment and the harshest isolation. He had never met anything similar before.

And in case this place is abandoned Victor knew what could happen and understood the necessity of the urgent restoration and preservation.

When all the fences were demolished, the special regime detention zone barrack was standing vulnerable at the open space in the field and was quickly falling into decay. Back then the founders had no financial opportunity to hire the security troop to assure continuous patrol of this camp.

And this is how the idea appeared to find enthusiasts who will agree to live in the camp, to maintain and to guard it. But who would dare to agree. It was 1994, 1995, and there was food shortage in the country. In this context, the private farms were very popular and it was the most discussed issue in the press back then. The idea was to invite enthusiasts to build a farm, to obtain land license, to find equipment, and the later to build a food production that will assure sustainable funds flow needed for preservation.

And Victor found these people. These were two friends Victor Zykov, and Vyacheslav Vorozhkin who came forward to his proposal – one was the post graduate student curated by Victor, the other - his friend. Luckily, they were both tired of the city and much willing to live in the country. They both loved the idea and immediately agreed. But there was no food production plant at the moment, and it is good that this idea had never been implemented at the museum. These enthusiasts decided to start logging. First, the wood was needed to reconstruct ruins of former political camp, and secondly, it was a way to raise funds for subsequent preservation, which the founders urgently needed but did not have. Then the enthusiasts obtained a license to cut wood and were allocated a decent part of the forest land, repaired the sawmill and started to log timber. And the life of the Gulag Museum at Perm-36 began with a voluntary enthusiastic commercial project.

The preservation started with the site of the special regime detention zone. This site has been completely deserted and was rapidly tumbling into ruins. By 1996, the enthusiasts laid new floors in the barrack, mounted doors and windows, partially repaired the roof and ceilings. And in 1996 the Gulag Museum at Perm-36 was officially opened to the public and the first guided tours started, to be more precise in two years after the Gulag Museum at Perm-36 was registered.

The Gulag Museum at Perm-36 simultaneously started to identify and establish contacts with potential partners, started to design a preliminary concept for former camp conservation and preservation, and to find materials for the restoration, initiated fundraising.

In subsequent years, the restoration and reconstruction was implemented in the barrack and in the checkpoint in the special regime detention zone zone: restored interior details that were partially or completely destroyed, the in-site elements (walk yards, etc.), and the fragments of security fencing.

And as the Gulag Museum at Perm-36 had not enough funds, the fragments of security fencing and alarm systems - fences, towers, and engineered systems – were reconstructed as models close to their authentic form. They visually repeated outlines of the original objects, but were built of cheaper materials and the details were simplified: metal racks in fences and other security systems

were replaced with wooden poles dug into the ground, barbed wire was not winded over the insulators, but nailed to wooden stakes, etc.

All this was done in the conditions of funds scarcity to reconstruct in general terms at least the appearance of the camp as close as possible to its previous state. All this was implemented so that visitors could witness the former camp, if not quite the in the way it was at the time it detained political prisoners, but in a state very close to it. In the future, the models will be replaced with authentically detailed reconstruction.

Since 1999, the Gulag Museum at Perm-36 started restoration works at the strict regime detention zone.

It is worthwhile to say that the Gulag Museum at Perm-36 was founded at the time when the very problems of political repression and the Gulag have poorly been studied, and starting with the second half of the 80s, these issues were in the focus of more journalistic than scientific research (this layer could not been well explored before for obvious reasons everyone understands).

Thus in 1992, the Perm *Memorial* Society together with Perm State Pedagogical University established a research center called the *Ural-Gulag* to identify available and accessible sources on the history of political repression, in the Urals as well as in Moscow. Later in 1994 when the Gulag Museum at Perm-36 was established the *Ural-Gulag* became its affiliation. At the time Victor Shmyrov, the founder, was still a dean, and this research center was based in the Perm State Pedagogical University. The *Ural-Gulag* scholars made a comprehensive research. The themes of the research were: "*Political repression and penal system in the Urals from the first years of Soviet power and to the establishment Gulag system*," "*Camp and the colony of the Gulag era in the Urals*," "*Repression in the Urals in the 30s - 50s*," "*Perm political camps*." For each theme the *Ural-Gulag Center* identified and collected related artifacts and materials, created computer databases, collected materials on the "*Oral History*" program. Later in 2000, the Gulag Museum at Perm-36 instituted a museum based research department and invited scientists, who continued these studies and began archaeological and expedition programs.

The results of these studies laid the basis for the guided tours and educational projects. When the special regime detention zone was opened to public and first guided tours started Perm-36 Gulag Museum started to build up the relationships with the regional administration and started to receive small support aimed to the preservation. Then, in 1996 we received a donation from the Ford Foundation. This enabled the museum to bring students from the most remote areas of the region, who could not afford to visit Perm-36 as it was then very expensive. The logistics was poorly developed and this place still remained isolated. The trip to perm-36 took 4 hours one way and even more from distant cities and settlements.

So, thanks to research the Gulag Museum at Perm-36 wrote and designed 10 traveling exhibits for schools and local history museums targeted to school

children. Then the museum recruited the employees who assured the service of traveling exhibitions.

While displaying traveling exhibits in the regions we confronted a resistance. Virtually none of the inhabitants in Perm Kray knew the fact that political camps did exist. No studies on this topic could be made. There was no information drain from the camps. The staff of the camp signed a non-disclosure agreement. Therefore, many could not assume that there were political camps, which detained political prisoners, and moreover that these camps were located only 120 km far from Perm. And no one guessed about the political triangle, Perm-35, 36, 37. Moreover, for more than 60 years the system of education and museums were a part of the ideological propaganda. Therefore, when the exhibitions started to travel in the regions, we confronted intense anger and distrust.

Approximately at the same time, in the museum versatile activities emerged and developed simultaneously.

In 2002, the Museum received the donation from the regional administration, Charles S. Mott Foundation, NED, and Jackson Foundation. This aggregate support was aimed to develop a permanent exhibition in the Museum and several traveling exhibits. The *Gulag: History, Labor and Life* permanent exhibition covers the history of the Gulag since 1918 till the mid-50s.

The Russia: The Hard Way out of the Gulag traveling exhibition was designed in consultation and in collaboration with the staff of the Immigration Museum in the US National Park Service and then in 2005 - 2006 exhibited at the Ellis Island and other national parks of the NPS.

Gulag. The story of One Camp traveling exhibition unveils the main points in the history of the Perm-36 camp and tells the stories of its most famous inmates. It was exhibited in October 2003 at the Senate building of the U.S. Congress. When the exhibition was displayed the conference hall of the Senate Congress Building hosted a roundtable on post-communist development of Russia. It was attended by well-known human rights activists, diplomats, politicians, historians and journalists. Since 2003 the *Gulag. The story of One Camp* exhibition travelled across colleges, universities, public libraries in Northern Italy (in Italian) and the Midwestern United States (in English).

Further, when the Perm-36 Museum started preservation of the strict regime zone, we reconstructed the interior of a typical Soviet club, a space where museum visitors could relax and get warm, and the guides were able to get feedback after the tour, to discuss questions that schoolchildren asked during a tour. This is how the idea of *Remembrance Lessons* was born. We realized that could not only meet after the tour but hold a roundtable on the issues that stimulate civic adulthood, issues of personal responsibility, issues of the place and the role in the world.

Later, we established a contact with the Diasfera Studio, an agency which, in addition to featuring documentaries was involved in the museum design and

audiovisual programs development. This is how the Perm-36 Museum developed first audio-visual programs, series of short video sequences addressing the history of repression and telling personal stories of people from different population strata who suffered from repression:

The story about a village priest Kuzmin, who refused to accept nor revolution neither the Church "renewal", and was repeatedly repressed, and finally executed in the end. Theme - the destruction of traditional Russian culture and spirituality in the 20s - 30s;

Audio-visual program about a security officer of the KGB serviceman Moryakov. He faithfully served in the NKVD and OGPU up to mid 30s in Berezniki, a city that grew out of the largest labor camp of the country. When the mass killings started – he protested and was executed;

A typical story about the fate of a village in the Perm region and its inhabitants who survived the revolution, collective farms, famine, and utter poverty;

A story about a children's orphanage in Kungur a city in Perm Region, etc.

All audio-video sequences were based on the documents and materials researched by the *Ural-Gulag* initiative group. The remembrance lessons were held on the territory of the former Perm-36 camp. And it was the first requirement. The second, we asked high school students to come with teachers together for the whole day. In the morning a group made a tour of Perm-36 and after they hold a round table or work with audio-visual programs.

In addition, in collaboration with the Ministry of Justice of the Perm region, the Friedrich Naumann Foundation, Perm State Pedagogical University, and other community based organizations Perm-36 launched the *I Have the Tight to...* discussion club aimed for high school students. The name of the club was chosen by children themselves. Students came together with teachers and in a very interesting format discussed issues related to the humanistic values and freedoms. The basic condition for participation in this club was that upon the return, teachers will organize similar discussion in the school.

When we started to carry out the remembrance lessons, even then, we noticed that it was extremely difficult for history teachers to address the history of the 20th century. Textbooks were imbued with the ideology, teachers themselves received ideological education. The first question that arose back then was: how to teach, where to find textbooks free of ideology. By virtue of employment, most school teachers do not have the ability to work in the archives.

Therefore, in 2002, together with Perm Kray Institute for the Further Training of the education professionals, the Ministry of Education and the Sakharov Centre, Perm-36 launched a competition *The Power and the people in Russia* for history teachers. The competition was organized to introduce methodological guide for teachers that Sakharov Center released the same year. It was a merger of the contest, seminar and the workshop. All that grew into school history teachers. Throughout the year, each quarter, Perm-36 hosted one phase which lasted two days. Participation was completely charitable.

Teachers received the opportunity to come for free, to identify the range of sensitive issues they need help in, to receive the hands-on consultation from

university professors. The identified themes were then transferred to the next seminar, and so on. Teachers worked with the most complicated milestones in the Russian history, and addressed these problems from the angle, which in general had not been formulated before, from the prism of political repression and resistance to non-freedom in the USSR. In 2003 the Sakharov Center afterwards launched a contest for the best teacher lesson on *the History of Political Repression and Resistance to Un-Freedom in the USSR*. This contest is held even to date. For all that time, and to date, the best lessons were forwarded Sakharov center to participate in the contest. The results of the contest are published each year, and you may notice that in each collection there are about 20 works from the Perm region.

Besides that, in order to help teachers, we published two teacher guides: the *Elective History Course for 11 Class Students with overarching theme the Resistance to Non-Freedom in the USSR during 1945-1991*. These are lesson handouts printed on hard paper brochures or pamphlets containing copies of materials from museum exhibition - documents, museum and archive photographs, maps, charts and other visuals – specific set of materials for each lesson – and guidelines for teachers explaining how to use these visuals. The booklet addressed five themes, one of them - is: *The Human Rights Movement and Dissidents in 1960-1980*; and one of the themes addressed in the first manual was *the Main Mechanisms of Economic Modernization. The Repression and State Terror*.

I will summarize: Immediately after the registration the museum started comprehensive preservation, fundraising, establishing contacts, research activity, exhibits traveling, discussions and audio-visual programs for students, the competition for history teachers, which resulted in an integral program of *History Lessons at the Gulag Museum*. Each project we implemented was the refined continuation of the previous one.

As the result the *Power and the People in Russia*, the competition for history teachers has grown to the international school for history teachers. The school is managed by the team. The invited head of a school is the author of the *Choosing Your Own History* alternative history textbook. Lecturers are as well the authors of alternative textbooks, books, and publications. Master classes are given by the post-graduate students of the East European History Department in Friedrich Schiller Jena University. The school teachers who attend the seminar give lessons in senior classes and are coming from different regions in Russia.

The seminar lasts one week and is hosted in the former Perm-36 Camp, where the attendees live and work. In the morning, the lectures are read, and then round the table goes, where we discuss issues raised during the lecture. In the afternoon, we give master-classes: approaches how to develop the content for the school history lesson, discussions culture, audio-visual programs (which answers the question, what could be a historical source and how to use it), and teacher ethics. After that, at the end of the day teachers are working in teams and designing a history lesson on selected issues and exercise knowledge

obtained in the previous lectures, and then, after the teamwork the attendees make a presentation of preliminary results.

For the stage when teachers are selecting content of a history lesson we recommend them to rely upon universal humanistic values. The program of the school covers the entire 20th century, and is designed for three years. As a result, after school, we will compile a guide for history teachers that would be easily accessible and could be used by every teacher willing.

Another, a project that is the result of our work is the Summer School of Museology. When we worked with traveling exhibitions, we have tried to display them in museums. At the time no museum addressed political repression. It was very strong resistance. Let me remind you that the history museums were a part of the ideological education, a tool of Soviet propaganda. More than 80 years, museums had been under strong ideological pressure.

The traces of this heritage can be easily observed even now: typical museum formats, the typical proportions in which historical layers are represented. For example, almost all museums have permanent exhibitions glorifying the results of the great constructions, but only few explain that the construction of industrial facilities used prison labor. But even if any museums have been willing to work with the theme of the Gulag, that the museums have no ready to use methodology how to address this subject.

To address these challenges Perm-36 Museum launched the Summer School of Museology. Its structure is similar to that of a seminar for history teachers. First of all, this is a communication platform for the museum staff, where they can express themselves and be heard. Second, it is a way to build a dialogue between museum professionals and cultural studies scientists, historians, artists, designers and other professionals of museum allied professions. The Summer School of Museology is held for the third year. But it is still being refined.

Now I will digress and talk about cultural projects.

In addition to educational projects, Perm-36 holds cultural events such as Pilorama Civic Engagement Forum, Public Auditorium and Fidelio Opera at the Gulag Museum.

Fidelio is the only opera by Ludwig van Beethoven. It is telling a real story, originally written in the play of Jean Nicola Bouilly - a participant of the French revolution. The central act of rebellious enthusiasm and heroic love, committed by the main character of the opera, Leonore, related to many of Beethoven's views and values. Disguising herself as a guard, she rescues her husband Florestan from death in political prison. The opera charts her descent into the darkness, both literal and moral, of the prison and her re-emergence into the light of freedom and love. This work of Beethoven, glorifying the triumph of freedom over tyranny, resonates in large measure with the experiences of those individuals who were imprisoned at Perm 36.

Each performance could be attended by only 250 spectators (which is the exact number of prisoners intended to be held in each barrack). The entire audience and the actors simultaneously moved over the site. The spectators were able to build the connection between past and present in the space of former political camp.

Another major public project is Pilorama Civic Engagement Forum. The forum originated as guitar poetry festival as the response to recession of civil engagement and to threatened democratic values, having been apparent since early 80s up to now. It borrowed its name from the sawmill *Pilorama*, a mechanism the prisoners previously used to saw timber. The platform of this mechanism serves the main scene. The forum represents the integrity of two components the culture and the discussion. The cultural part includes performances, exhibitions brought by museums and SCOs, guitar poetry, rock band performances, human rights documentary screenings.

The second and most important part is discussion with former political prisoners, public figures, human rights activists and advocates, lawyers, journalists, politicians, government and business representatives, etc. Everyone willing can come to participate and can express their views. The issues discussed are avoided on the central channels and are blacklisted. From this year we decided to make an experiment and to continue the discussion in the internet space. The Forum is an international, and visitors and participants come from different countries. And international cooperation is becoming even stronger and more extensive.

All this is happening in the former camp and the outer territory. Pilorama is visited by over 10 000 people and over 200 participants. In front of the Perm-36 camp there is a big field that serves a pitch for the tent camp where the visitors stay during the Forum. The most peculiar thing about the Pilorama forum is that it gathers people from different communities: journalists, lawyers, former political prisoners, politicians, government representatives, rock musicians, human right activists, SCOs representatives, actors who are engaged in the completely different activities. Surprisingly, but they find the common language and are united by the shared humanistic values. And these are the only there days in the year when they have the opportunity to meet and to speak to each other.

And I'm approaching to the end of my story. In the summer of 2011 the museum was handed over a complex located on the territory of the former camp with a total surface over 2500 m². This complex will be equipped with 40 hotel rooms, 3 conference rooms equipped with simultaneous translation system, several classrooms, a library, a lounge, etc.

These premises will be used to house the *European Center for the Culture of Democracy*. The culture of democracy center is the project that consolidates all the hands-on experience accumulated for the 17 years. We anticipate establishing two communicating departments the politological aimed at the adult population and the educational tailored for the school children and education professionals. The concept of politological department is being currently

elaborated by Moscow Institute for Political Studies. This section aims to actively promote the key elements of democratic culture among the most ambitious, mostly young, community and political leaders and activists, as well as professionals working with a wide audience: journalists, university professors, bloggers, etc.

And Perm-36 Museum has the educational section ready to use. For years we gave training to school teachers, museum professionals, had matured experience of collaboration with Perm Kray libraries, and now the museum is about to launch experimental project joining libraries, and are concerned at the moment with the school museum that represent peculiar category. The schools for history teachers, museum professionals, for school museums that could play a bridge role between them, and school for librarians will constitute the cohesive educational space embodied in the ongoing trainings hosted by the Culture of Democracy Center.

The center will host the ongoing specific seminars and schools, trainings and workshops, debates, ect. The attendees will have free access to the exhibits, databases and other materials of the museum; will be offered individual and group sessions, theoretical and creative development.

I have not yet touched upon the philosophy and the values of the museum. In fact, my speech illustrates this quite well but I will give a brief insight:

Through our educational and public activity we promote values of open civil society, of the democratic state governed by the rule of law; through our activity we strive to overcome totalitarian stereotypes, and finally, and that is the most vital, to strengthen the individual rights in the political practice and social life.