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Problems In Historical Research

Historians working with Soviet source materials face a difficult problem sorting out fact from fantasy. The following article about the New Deal translated from the March 12, 1933, issue of *Trud*, a Russian newspaper of the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions, is an amusing illustration of this problem:

CONCENTRATION CAMPS FOR THE UNEMPLOYED IN U.S.A.

How Roosevelt Intends to Combat Unemployment

The Speaker of the House of Representatives...said that newly elected President of the United States Franklin D. Roosevelt is working out a legal project for the organization of paramilitary labor camps for the unemployed in various parts of the country. Workers in the camps will be occupied with public works projects, forest cultivation, etc. Five hundred thousand unemployed workers will be concentrated in the camps. The unemployed workers will receive a maximum of one dollar per day. On this wage (which, for the majority obviously will be lower than a dollar), they will have to support themselves and their families. In the camps there will be a regime of strict discipline but no military training.

The object of the concentration camps is the removal of the most "restless" elements of the unemployed from major industrial centers. Officially, the project is motivated by the necessity of reducing cities' expenses for assistance to the unemployed.

Contributed and translated by Michael Gelb
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