PETER REDDAWAY reveals for the first time the full extent of Russia's prison camp system. He estimates that about a million people are held in 1,000 camps inside the Soviet Union. 'As the overall picture steadily builds up,' he writes, 'the impression created is grim indeed.'

RUSSIA is entangled in a network of camps, where, despite the efforts of the Red Cross, the convicts and concentrations of political prisoners are the same people who were interned in the Second World War and constantly interned, where human dignity is denigrated and where there is no escape. The impression is grim indeed.

In the early 1930s, under Stalin's orders, a new prison system was established in Russia. This system was designed to be a system of labor camps where convicts were forced to work for long hours in harsh conditions. The camps were intended to be a means of punishment and a way to keep political prisoners away from the rest of society.

In 1937, Stalin ordered the establishment of the Gulag system, which was the main prison camp system in the Soviet Union. The Gulag system was later expanded to include forced labor camps and concentration camps for political prisoners.

The Gulag system was characterized by the use of forced labor, where prisoners were forced to work on infrastructure projects such as roads, dams, and factories. The conditions in the camps were harsh, with long working hours, inadequate nutrition, and frequent beatings and torture.

The system was administered by the NKVD, the state security agency of the Soviet Union. The NKVD was responsible for the implementation of the policies of the Communist Party, and it maintained a strict control over the camps, ensuring that political prisoners were unable to escape or communicate with the outside world.

The Gulag system was dismantled after the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991. However, the legacy of the camps and the concentration of political prisoners continued to be a source of concern for human rights organizations.

In recent years, there have been reports of political prisoners in Russia being held in secret camps and prisons, which are not subject to international inspection. These reports have raised concerns about the use of forced labor and the treatment of political prisoners in the country.

The history of the Gulag system highlights the importance of human rights and the need for governments to protect the rights of political prisoners. The legacy of the camps serves as a reminder of the need to prevent the recurrence of such atrocities and to ensure that political prisoners are treated with respect and dignity.