

Gulag Documentary Takes Russian YouTube by Storm

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Vdud / Youtube

Russia's online community has been abuzz over the past week with praise for popular YouTuber Yury Dud's documentary about life in the land of the gulag labor camps.

It's a departure for the 32-year-old sports editor, whose 5.1 million subscribers tune in to watch him interview personalities from all walks of life about their personal lives. More often than not, Dud's questions have been said to "[border on the tabloid-esque.](#)"

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"Why is it that — after rappers, comedians, musicians, actors and directors — we approached this difficult and alarming subject?" Dud [asks](#) at the top of the show.

The first answer, he says, lies in a 2018 survey showing that almost half of Russians aged 18 to 24 (Dud's target demographic) have [never heard](#) of Stalin's repressions. The second is to

explore the origins of his parents' and their generation's reluctance to "[stick your neck out](#)" that he says has affected modern-day Russia.

"Kolyma is among those places where that fear was born," Dud says as he embarks on a visually gripping two-hour journey into Russia's Far East, a resource-rich region with subzero temperatures and a legacy of Stalinist repressions.

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The project, which spans 2,000 kilometers in nine days, aims to strike a balance between addressing serious subject matter while still appealing to younger audiences.

Dud intersperses breathtaking footage of endless inhospitable land with interviews with the descendants of the victims of Stalin's Great Terror and current residents torn between staying or leaving for warmer weather.

His documentary, "Kolyma — Birthplace of Our Fear," was viewed 9.5 million times in seven days.

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