

UNESCO INTERNATIONAL MEMORY OF THE WORLD REGISTER

NOMINATION FORM

1.0 Title of item or collection being proposed

Letters on birch bark from the Gulag (1940-1965)

2.0 Summary (max 200 words)

The collection uniting 31 memory institutions from Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Ukraine consists of letters and other documents of a personal nature on birch bark created by the political prisoners and deportees in the Soviet network of forced labour camps commonly referred to as 'The Gulag'.

The world significance of the collection is expressed in the universal character and unmatched nature of the documents as testimonies of human strength and resilience even under totalitarian system repression. The collection serves as a token for remembering all human tragedies under totalitarian regimes and acknowledges the mental strength of the people who confronted and withstood such repression.

Created on a material unique for the 20th century – birch bark – the manuscripts are a unique primary source of information, contemporary to the tragic events they concern, forming a truly communicative collection. Individual voices tell a story about prevailing humanism, notwithstanding the atrocities of the Gulag, and honour the power of self-expression of those who maintained their agency through writing. The collection is further distinguished by its overall scarcity – it contains all 148 known birch-bark documents from the Gulag held in the memory institutions of the five nominating countries.

3.0 Nominator contact details

3.1 Name of nominator (person or organisation)

The nominator is Tukums Museum from Latvia.

As co-nominators, the following Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Ukrainian and Polish organisations are included:

Estonia:

1. Vabamu Museum of Occupations and Freedom
2. Estonian History Museum Foundation

Latvia:

3. Madona Regional Research and Art Museum
4. Talsi Regional Museum
5. Aizkraukle Museum of History and Art
6. Daugava River Museum
7. National History Museum of Latvia
8. Museum of the Occupation of Latvia
9. Literature and Music Museum of Latvia
10. Jēkabpils History Museum
11. Andrejs Pumpurs Lielvārde Museum
12. Museum "Jews in Latvia"

Lithuania:

13. The Genocide and Resistance Research Centre of Lithuania (GRRCL). Museum of Occupations and Freedom Fights
14. Lithuanian Special Archives
15. Biržai District Museum Sėla
16. Freedom Fighting and Exile History Museum, a branch of the Gargždai District Museum
17. The Administration of State Cultural Reserve of Kernavė
18. Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania
19. Panevėžys Local History Museum
20. Salomėja Nėris Memorial Museum, a branch of the Maironis Lithuanian Literature Museum
21. Šiauliai Aušra Museum
22. The Wroblewski Library of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences
23. Kaunas Ninth Fort Museum

Poland:

24. Museum of the Second World War in Gdansk
25. Sybir Memorial Museum
26. Archive of the Institute of National Remembrance / Institute of National Remembrance – Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes Against the Polish Nation
27. Congregation of Marian Fathers of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Ukraine:

28. National Museum of the History of Ukraine in the Second World War
29. The Territory of Terror Memorial Museum
30. The Ternopil Regional Museum of Local Lore

3.2 Relationship to the nominated material

The nominating institutions are owners of the collection and have the right to nominate the documentary heritage.

3.3 Address

Nominator: Tukums Museum. Harmonijas iela 7, Tukums, LV 3101, Latvia

Co-nominators:

1. Vabamu Museum of Occupations and Freedom. Toompea 8b, 10142 Tallinn, Estonia
2. Estonian History Museum Foundation. Pirita tee 56, 10127 Tallinn, Estonia
3. Madona Regional Research and Art Museum. Skolas iela 12, Madona, Madonas novads, LV 4801, Latvia
4. Talsi Regional Museum. Kārļa Mīlenbaha iela 19, Talsi, LV 3201, Latvia.
5. Aizkraukle Museum of History and Art. „Kalna Ziedi”, Muzeja street, Aizkraukle, Aizkraukles novads, LV 5101, Latvia.
6. Daugava River Museum Doles sala, Salaspils novads, LV 2121, Latvia.
7. National History Museum of Latvia. Pulka iela 8, Rīga, LV 1007, Latvia.
8. Museum of the Occupation of Latvia. Latviešu strēlnieku laukums 1, Rīga, LV 1050, Latvia.
9. Literature and Music Museum of Latvia. Pulka iela 8, Rīga, LV 1007, Latvia.
10. Jēkabpils History Museum. Rīgas iela 216B, Jēkabpils, LV 5202, Latvia
11. Andrejs Pumpurs Lielvārde Museum. Edgara Kauliņa aleja 20, Lielvārde, Ogres novads, LV 5070, Latvia.
12. Museum “Jews in Latvia”. Skolas iela 6, Riga, LV 1010, Latvia.
13. The Genocide and Resistance Research Centre of Lithuania (GRRCL). Museum of Occupations and Freedom Fights. Aukų gatvė 2A, Vilnius 01113, Lithuania.
14. Lithuanian Special Archives. Gedimino alėja 40/1, Vilnius 01110, Lithuania.
15. Biržai District Museum Sėla. J. Radvilos gatvė 3, Biržai 41175, Lithuania.

16. Freedom Fighting and Exile History Museum, a branch of the Gargždai District Museum. Klaipėdos gatvė 29, Priekulė 96341, Lithuania.
17. The Administration of State Cultural Reserve of Kernavė. Kerniaus gatvė 4a, Kernavė 19172, Lithuania.
18. Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania. Gedimino alėja 51, Vilnius 01504, Lithuania.
19. Panevėžys Local History Museum. Vasario 16-osios gatvė 23, Panevėžys 35185, Lithuania.
20. Salomėja Nėris Memorial Museum, a branch of the Maironis Lithuanian Literature Museum. S. Nėris gatvė 7, Kaunas 52249, Lithuania.
21. Šiauliai Aušra Museum. Vilniaus gatvė 74, Šiauliai 76283, Lithuania.
22. The Wroblewski Library of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences. Žygimantų gatvė 1, Vilnius 01102, Lithuania.
23. Kaunas Ninth Fort Museum. Žemaičių plentas 73, Kaunas 47435, Lithuania.
24. Museum of the Second World War in Gdansk, Plac Bartoszewskiego 1, 80-862 Gdańsk, Poland.
25. Sybir Memorial Museum, Węglowa 1, 15-714 Białystok, Poland.
26. Archive of the Institute of National Remembrance / Institute of National Remembrance – Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes Against the Polish Nation, ul. Janusza Kurtyki 1 / 02-676 Warsaw, Poland.
27. Congregation of Marian Fathers of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Sanctuary of Our Lady of Licheń, Klasztorna 4 Str., 62-563 Licheń Stary, Poland.
28. National Museum of the History of Ukraine in the Second World War. Lavrska str., 24, Kyiv, 01015 Ukraine
29. The Territory of Terror Memorial Museum. Sholom-Aleichema str., 14, Lviv, 79007 Ukraine
30. The Ternopil Regional Museum of Local Lore. Heroiv Maidanu square, 3, Ternopil, 46008 Ukraine

3.4 and 3.5 Telephone and email

Nominator: Tukums Museum. E-mail: administracija@tukumamuzejs.lv; tel.: +371 27843190

Co-nominators:

1. Vabamu Museum of Occupations and Freedom, info@vabamu.ee; tel.: +372 6680250
2. Estonian History Museum Foundation, post ajaloomuuseum.ee; tel.: +372 696 8662
3. Madona Regional Research and Art Museum. E-mail: muzejs@e-madona.lv; tel.: +371 64822480
4. Talsi Regional Museum. E-mail: novadamuzejs@talsi.lv; tel.: +371 29102628
5. Aizkraukle Museum of History and Art. E-mail: muzejs@aizkraukle.lv; tel.: +371 65123351
6. Daugava River Museum. E-mail: daugavas.muzejs@inbox.lv; tel.: +371 67216367
7. National History Museum of Latvia. E-mail: muzejs@lnvm.lv; tel. +371 67223004
8. Museum of the Occupation of Latvia. E-mail: info@okupacijasmuzejs.lv; tel.: +371 67229255
9. Literature and Music Museum of Latvia. E-mail: muzejs@rmm.lv; tel.: +371 67216425
10. Jēkabpils History Museum. E-mail: info@jekabpilsmuzejs.lv; tel.: +371 27008136
11. Andrejs Pumpurs Lielvārde Museum. E-mail: muzejs@lielvarde.lv; tel.: +371 65053759
12. Museum “Jews in Latvia”. E-mail: info@ebrejumuzejs.lv; tel. +371 67283484
13. The Genocide and Resistance Research Centre of Lithuania (GRRCL). Museum of Occupations and Freedom Fights. E-mail: muziejus@genocid.lt; tel.: +370 602 87022
14. Lithuanian Special Archives. E-mail: lja@archyvai.lt; tel.: +370 (85) 2649024
15. Biržai District Museum Sėla. E-mail: sela@birzumuziejus.lt; tel.: +370 45033390
16. Freedom Fighting and Exile History Museum, a branch of the Gargždai District Museum. E-mail: tremties@gargzdumuziejus.lt; tel.: +370 69626175
17. <mailto:markrmuziejus@gmail.com>The Administration of State Cultural Reserve of Kernavė. E-mail: muziejus@kernave.lt; tel.: +370 38247371
18. Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania. E-mail: jolanta.budriuniene@lnb.lt; tel.: +370 (85)2398637
19. Panevėžys Local History Museum. E-mail: informacija@paneveziomuziejus.lt; tel.: +370 45596181

20. Salomėja Nėris Memorial Museum, a branch of the Maironis Lithuanian Literature Museum. E-mail: s.neris@mairioniomuziejus.lt; tel.: +370 (37) 373606
21. Šiauliai Aušra Museum. E-mail: rastine@ausrosmuziejus.lt; tel.: +370 (41) 526933
22. The Wroblewski Library of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences. E-mail: biblioteka@mab.lt; tel.: +370 (85) 2629537
23. Kaunas Ninth Fort Museum. E-mail: muziejus@9fortomuziejus.lt; tel.: +370 68626243
24. Museum of the Second World War in Gdansk, w.lukaszun@muzeum1939.pl, tel.: +48 58 323 75 43
25. Sybir Memorial Museum, k.sliwowska@sybir.bialystok.pl, tel.: +48 795 650 186
26. Archive of the Institute of National Remembrance / Institute of National Remembrance – Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes Against the Polish Nation, + 48 22 581 89 04, Marzena.Kruk@ipn.gov.pl,
27. Congregation of Marian Fathers of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Sanctuary of Our Lady of Licheń, tel.: +48 632708635, muzeum@lichen.pl, marianie@lichen.pl
28. National Museum of the History of Ukraine in the Second World War. E-mail: info@warmuseum.kyiv.ua; tel.: +38(063)855-00-38 and +38(044) 285-94-57
29. The Territory of Terror Memorial Museum. E-mail: territoryterror@gmail.com; tel.: +38(032)261-01-89 and +38(096)25-805-89
30. The Ternopil Regional Museum of Local Lore. E-mail: tokm-1913@ukr.net; tel.: +38(068)733-14-09

4.0 Declaration of Authority

The signed declarations of authority of all nominating organisations have been annexed to the application.

5.0 Legal information

5.1. Name of owner (person or organisation)

The documentary heritage is owned by the 31 nominating institutions.

5.2. Address

Please see the information provided in Section 3.3 for contact details.

5.3. and 5.4 Telephone and email

Please see the information provided in Sections 3.4 to 3.5 for contact details.

5.5 Name and contact details of custodian IF DIFFERENT from the owner.

Two letters on birch bark by Janina Stebnicka, sent from Polovinka in the Urals (Letter 1: 1947, Letter 2 1946), Museum of Fr. Józef Jarzębowski in Lichen Stry, ML/P/200 are owned by The Congregation of Marian Fathers of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Poland, ul. Klasztorna 4 Str., Licheń Stry 62-563; however, the custodian is Museum of Fr. Józef Jarzębowski in Lichen Stry (ul. Klasztorna 4 Str., 62-563 Licheń Stry, Poland; phone +48 632708635, email muzeum@lichen.pl). See point 5.1. In the case of all other items the custodians are the same organisations as owners.

5.6 Legal status

The nominating institutions are owners of the documentary heritage, with full and exclusive legal and administrative responsibilities and rights according to national legislations. The nominating institutions bear full responsibility for the preservation of the documentary heritage in the same manner as for its introduction and popularization in the wider public.

5.7 Copyright status

There are no copyrights registered for the nominated documentary heritage in the nominating countries. The documents are licensed under the creative commons licencing system. The heritage belongs to and the copyright is owned by the nominating institutions. However, some letters contain copyrighted material, which, if used, needs to be licensed according to the national intellectual property legislation.

Please find attached in Annex 6 the copyright agreements granting non-exclusive rights to UNESCO to exploit, publish, reproduce, diffuse and communicate to the public in any form and on any support, including digital, free of charge the images submitted with the nomination 'Letters on birch bark from the Gulag (1940-1965)'.

5.8 Accessibility (note any restrictions, including cultural restrictions)

Manuscripts written on birch bark in the Gulag are accessible in the following memory institutions and their exhibitions:

- Tukums Museum, Latvia
- Vabamu Museum of Occupations and Freedom, Estonia
- Estonian History Museum Foundation, Estonia
- Talsi Regional Museum, Latvia
- Aizkraukle Museum of History and Art, Latvia
- Daugava River Museum, Latvia
- Madona Regional Research and Art Museum, Latvia
- National History Museum of Latvia, Latvia
- Literature and Music Museum of Latvia
- Museum of the Occupation of Latvia
- Jēkabpils History Museum
- Andrejs Pumpurs Lielvārde Museum
- Museum "Jews in Latvia"
- Museum of Occupations and Freedom Fights, Vilnius, Lithuania
- Biržai District Museum Sėla, Biržai, Lithuania
- Freedom Fighting and Exile History Museum, a branch of the Gargždai District Museum, Klaipėda, Lithuania
- The Administration of State Cultural Reserve of Kernavė, Kernavė, Lithuania
- Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania, Vilnius, Lithuania
- Panevėžys Local History Museum, Panevėžys, Lithuania
- Salomėja Nėris Memorial Museum, Kaunas, Lithuania
- Šiauliai Aušra Museum, Šiauliai, Lithuania
- The Wroblewski Library of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences, Vilnius, Lithuania
- Kaunas Ninth Fort Museum, Kaunas, Lithuania
- Museum of the Second World War in Gdańsk, Poland
- Museum of Fr. Józef Jarzębowski in Lichen Stary, Poland
- Sybir Memorial Museum, Poland
- Archive of the Institute of National Remembrance / Institute of National Remembrance – Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes Against the Polish Nation, Poland
- National Museum of the History of Ukraine in the Second World War
- The Territory of Terror Memorial Museum, Ukraine
- The Ternopil Regional Museum of Local Lore, Ukraine

The letters are stored in their respective custodial museums (see Section 3.2.), with the majority being presented and interpreted in permanent and temporary exhibitions. The preservation requirements for such artefacts are carefully followed and monitored in both collections and exhibitions. Access to documents written on birch bark is also provided during various other activities, including educational programmes, organised by memory institutions. The collections can be accessed by all people (exhibitions) and by researchers that have made a special request to view the items (collections). There are no specific legal or cultural constraints that hinder access to the manuscripts in any of the nominating countries.

Due to their extreme fragility, physical access to the manuscripts even by researchers is kept to a minimum. Instead using published research, the digitised and online version of the documents is recommended.

6.0 Identity and description of the documentary heritage

6.1. Name and identification details of the items/collection being nominated

The title of the nomination is ‘Letters on birch bark from the Gulag (1940-1965)’. The collection consists of 148 documentary heritage objects written on birch bark between 1940 and 1965. The uniting criterion for this collection is that all nominated objects were written on birch bark in various Soviet labour camps, prisons and forced relocation settlements (commonly known as the Gulag) by political prisoners and deportees from Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Ukraine, and Poland. The collection contains all such known documents written during the period and located in the memory institutions in the participating countries. The collection is nominated jointly by 31 organisations. The main nominator is Tukums Museum from Latvia with 30 co-nominators from Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Ukraine, and Poland.

1. Tukums Museum
2. Vabamu Museum of Occupations and Freedom
3. Estonian History Museum
4. Madona Regional Research and Art Museum
5. Talsi Regional Museum
6. Aizkraukle Museum of History and Art
7. Daugava River Museum
8. National History Museum of Latvia
9. Museum of the Occupation of Latvia
10. Literature and Music Museum of Latvia
11. Jēkabpils History Museum
12. Andrejs Pumpurs Museum
13. Museum “Jews in Latvia”
14. The Genocide and Resistance Research Centre of Lithuania (GRRCL). Museum of Occupations and Freedom Fights
15. Lithuanian Special Archives
16. Biržai District Museum Sėla
17. Freedom Fighting and Exile History Museum, a branch of the Gargždai District Museum
18. The Administration of State Cultural Reserve of Kernavė
19. Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania
20. Panevėžys Local History Museum
21. Salomėja Nėris Memorial Museum, a branch of the Maironis Lithuanian Literature Museum
22. Šiauliai Aušra Museum
23. The Wroblewski Library of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences
24. Kaunas Ninth Fort Museum
25. Museum of the Second World War

26. Sybir Memorial Museum
27. Archive of the Institute of National Remembrance / Institute of National Remembrance – Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes Against the Polish Nation
28. Congregation of Marian Fathers of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Sanctuary of Our Lady of Licheń
29. National Museum of the History of Ukraine in the Second World War
30. The Territory of Terror Memorial Museum
31. The Ternopil Regional Museum of Local Lore

6.2. Type of document

The collection contains a body of manuscripts on birch bark: letters, postcards, drawings, and other documents of a private nature. These documents were created and written by hand in various Soviet labour camps, prisons and forced relocation settlements by individual deportees and political prisoners. They comprise unique and rare primary source materials that provide first-hand testimonies of individual experiences and emotional, intellectual, and spiritual responses to repression.

6.3. Catalogue or registration details

Detailed catalogues have been attached to the nomination. The nomination comprises the following documents from the nominating countries:

Estonia – 36 documentary heritage objects:

1. A birthday card made by Liis Salu to her daughter Eha, sent from Mishinsk, 26 October 1942. Vabamu Museum of Occupations and Freedom, 010771/001.
2. A greeting card made by Liis Salu to her daughter Eha, sent from Mishinsk, 1942. Vabamu Museum of Occupations and Freedom, 010771/002.
3. A notebook made of birch bark by Salme Kask (Constable Endel Kask's wife) from Siberia, 1942, 21 pages. Estonian History Museum, AM D 309:1/153, <https://www.muis.ee/museaalview/2493996>
4. A birch-bark note written by Rudolf Aller in Nizhniy-Volym labour camp, Krasnoyarsk District, February 1944. Vabamu Museum of Occupations and Freedom, 001709/001.
5. A birch-bark note written by Rudolf Aller, location unknown, 4 June 1944(?). Vabamu Museum of Occupations and Freedom, 001709/016.
6. A birch-bark note written by Rudolf Aller in Nizhniy-Volym labour camp, Krasnoyarsk District, 6 June 1944. Vabamu Museum of Occupations and Freedom, 001709/026.
7. A birch-bark note written by Rudolf Aller in Nizhniy-Volym labour camp, Krasnoyarsk District, 29 June 1944. Vabamu Museum of Occupations and Freedom, 001709/024.
8. A birch-bark note written by Rudolf Aller in Nizhniy-Volym labour camp, Krasnoyarsk District, 1 July 1944. Vabamu Museum of Occupations and Freedom, 001709/025.
9. A birch-bark note written by Rudolf Aller, location unknown, 10 July 1944(?). Vabamu Museum of Occupations and Freedom, 001709/005.
10. A birch-bark note written by Rudolf Aller in Nizhniy-Volym labour camp, Krasnoyarsk District, 10 July 1944. Vabamu Museum of Occupations and Freedom, 001709/023.
11. A birch-bark note written by Rudolf Aller in Nizhniy-Volym labour camp, Krasnoyarsk District, 17 July 1944(?). Vabamu Museum of Occupations and Freedom, 001709/007.
12. A birch-bark note written by Rudolf Aller in Nizhniy-Volym labour camp, Krasnoyarsk District, 19 July 1944. Vabamu Museum of Occupations and Freedom, 001709/020.
13. A birch-bark note written by Rudolf Aller in Nizhniy-Volym labour camp, Krasnoyarsk District, on 24 July 1944. Vabamu Museum of Occupations and Freedom, 001709/021.
14. A birch-bark note written by Rudolf Aller in Kansk labour camp, Krasnoyarsk District, 29 July and 13 August 1944. Vabamu Museum of Occupations and Freedom, 001709/006.

15. A birch-bark note written by Rudolf Aller in Kansk labour camp, Krasnoyarsk District, 7 August 1944. Vabamu Museum of Occupations and Freedom, 001709/017.
16. A birch-bark note written by Rudolf Aller in Kansk labour camp, Krasnoyarsk District, 20 August 1944. Vabamu Museum of Occupations and Freedom, 001709/022.
17. A birch-bark note written by Rudolf Aller in Kansk labour camp, Krasnoyarsk District, 2 October 1944. Vabamu Museum of Occupations and Freedom, 001709/013.
18. A birch-bark postcard written by Rudolf Aller to Julia Aller, sent from the Kansk labour camp, Krasnoyarsk District to Estonia, 6 December 1944. Vabamu Museum of Occupations and Freedom, 001709/018.
19. A letter on birch bark written by Hans Meisner from a Gulag camp of the Judel District of Sverdlovsk Oblast, 24.12.1944, 1 page. Estonian History Museum, AM D 309:1/160 <https://www.muis.ee/museaalview/4479712>
20. A birch-bark note written by Rudolf Aller, location unknown, 1944(?). Vabamu Museum of Occupations and Freedom, 001709/003.
21. An address card written on birch bark, containing addresses of two men written by Rudolf Aller, location unknown, in 1944(?). Vabamu Museum of Occupations and Freedom, 001709/004.
22. A birch-bark note written by Rudolf Aller, location unknown, 1944(?). Vabamu Museum of Occupations and Freedom, 001709/008.
23. A birch-bark note written by Rudolf Aller, location unknown, 1944(?). Vabamu Museum of Occupations and Freedom, 001709/009.
24. A birch-bark note written by Rudolf Aller, location unknown, 1944(?). Vabamu Museum of Occupations and Freedom, 001709/010.
25. A birch-bark note written by Rudolf Aller, location unknown, 1944(?). Vabamu Museum of Occupations and Freedom, 001709/011.
26. A birch-bark note written by Rudolf Aller, location unknown, 1944(?). Vabamu Museum of Occupations and Freedom, 001709/012.
27. A birch-bark note written by Rudolf Aller, location unknown, 1944(?). Vabamu Museum of Occupations and Freedom, 001709/014.
28. A birch-bark note written by Rudolf Aller, location unknown, 1944(?). Vabamu Museum of Occupations and Freedom, 001709/015.
29. A birch-bark letter (unsent) written by Rudolf Aller to USSR state prosecutor in Kansk labour camp, Krasnoyarsk District, 1944(?). Vabamu Museum of Occupations and Freedom, 001709/019.
30. A postcard from Luule Pruljan to her father Jaan Kullerkupp, sent from Soljanka labour camp, Krasnoyarsk District, date unknown. Vabamu Museum of Occupations and Freedom, 007578/003.
31. A birch-bark album made as a gift by Helju Kingsepp to her mother-in-law Ida Kingsepp, location and date unknown. Vabamu Museum of Occupations and Freedom, 008674/000.
32. Drawings on birch bark by Tõnu Känd, 1944-1945, 7 pages. Estonian History Museum, AM D 309:1/166 <https://www.muis.ee/museaalview/399590>
33. A birch-bark letter written by G(?) F. Pram to Evgenia Ivanovna, sent from Sverdlovsk oblast, Ivdel rayon 232-07, 3rd camp, stamped 15 January 1945. Vabamu Museum of Occupations and Freedom, 021889/000.
34. A birch-bark letter written by G. F. Pram to Aleksander Feodor's son Pram (Aleksander Prahm), sent from Sverdlovsk oblast, Ivdel rayon 3 April 1945. Vabamu Museum of Occupations and Freedom, 021891/000.
35. A birch-bark letter written by G(?) F. Pram to Aleksander Feodor's son Pram (Aleksander Prahm), sent from Sverdlovsk oblast, Ivdel Region 232-05, stamped 27 April 1945. Vabamu Museum of Occupations and Freedom, 021890/000.
36. Letter from Siberia on birch bark (1940-50), 1 page. Estonian History Museum, AM D 309:1/154 <https://www.muis.ee/museaalview/2493997>

Latvia – 52 documentary heritage objects:

1. A letter on birch bark written by Kārlis Roberts Kalēvics (1877-1945) to his wife Vera Kalēvica (1890-1972), sent from Vyatlag Gulag camp, Kirov District to Kazachinsk Region, Krasnoyarsk District, 1 October 1942. Tukums Museum, TMNM 20363/2. <https://www.nmkk.lv/Items/ItemViewForm.aspx?id=288099>
2. A letter on birch bark written by Kārlis Roberts Kalēvics (1877-1945) to his wife Vera Kalēvica (1890-1972), sent from Vyatlag Gulag camp, Kirov District to Kazachinsk Region, Krasnoyarsk District 30 January 1943. Tukums Museum, TMNM 20363/1. <https://www.nmkk.lv/Items/ItemViewForm.aspx?id=288076>
3. A letter on birch bark written by Rasma Kraukle (1927-2008) to her godmother Anna Vanaga, sent from the Mezhdurechye village, Krasnoyarsk District to "Mazskābuļi", Vecumnieki Parish, Bauska District, Latvia, 27 January 1943(?). Daugava River Museum, DoM 12272. <https://www.nmkk.lv/Items/ItemViewForm.aspx?id=773781>
4. A book of poems written on birch bark by Lilija Binava-Binaus about her life from January 1928 to 1 November 1943, 1944. Tukums Museum, TMNM 40827. <https://www.nmkk.lv/Items/ItemViewForm.aspx?id=699240>
5. A letter on birch bark written by Kārlis Roberts Kalēvics (1877-1945) to his wife Vera Kalēvica (1890-1972), sent from Vyatlag Gulag camp, Kirov District to Kazachinsk Region, Krasnoyarsk District, April 1944(?). Museum of the Occupation of Latvia, OMF 332/1. <https://www.nmkk.lv/Items/ItemViewForm.aspx?id=595038>
6. A letter on birch bark written by Kārlis Roberts Kalēvics (1877-1945) to his wife Vera Kalēvica (1890-1972), sent from Vyatlag Gulag camp, Kirov District to Kazachinsk Region, Krasnoyarsk District, 16 October 1944. Museum of the Occupation of Latvia, OMF 332/2. <https://www.nmkk.lv/Items/ItemViewForm.aspx?id=595905>
7. A letter on birch bark written by Rasma Kraukle (1927-2008) to her godmother Anna Vanaga, sent from the Mezhdurechye village, Krasnoyarsk District to "Mazskābuļi", Vecumnieki Parish, Bauska District, Latvia, 23 January 1945. Daugava River Museum, DoM 12273. <https://www.nmkk.lv/Items/ItemViewForm.aspx?id=773787>
8. A letter on birch bark written by Rasma Kraukle (1927-2008) to her godmother Anna Vanaga, sent from the Mezhdurechye village, Krasnoyarsk District to "Mazskābuļi", Vecumnieki Parish, Bauska District, Latvia, 26 March 1945. Daugava River Museum, DoM 12274. <https://www.nmkk.lv/Items/ItemViewForm.aspx?id=773806>
9. A letter on birch bark written by Rasma Kraukle (1927-2008) to her cousin Ilga Silgaile (1924-2011), sent from the Mezhdurechye Village, Krasnoyarsk District to the Lebyazhna Village, Krasnoyarsk District, 19 May 1945. Daugava River Museum, DoM 7301. <https://www.nmkk.lv/Items/ItemViewForm.aspx?id=596266>
10. A Pentecost greeting card on birch bark made by Ernests Ķirķis (1913-1989) to his mother Marija Meijere, sent from a forced labour camp (Gulag camp) Kyzyl, Molotov (Perma) Region, 1947. National History Museum of Latvia, CVVM 230016, PD 4179. <https://www.nmkk.lv/Items/ItemViewForm.aspx?id=368710>
11. A greeting card on birch bark written by Voldemārs Mežaks (1914-1985) to his acquaintance Tekla Rivara, sent from the Taishet Region, Irkutsk District to Rīga, Latvia 29 June 1947. Museum of the Occupation of Latvia, OMF 5159. <https://www.nmkk.lv/Items/ItemViewForm.aspx?id=595970>
12. A greeting card on birch bark written by Voldemārs Mežaks (1914-1985) to his acquaintance Tekla Rivara, sent from the Taishet Region, Irkutsk District to Rīga, Latvia, 7 May 1948. Museum of the Occupation of Latvia, OMF 5160. <https://www.nmkk.lv/Items/ItemViewForm.aspx?id=596014>
13. A Pentecost greeting card on birch bark written by Ernests Ķirķis (1913-1989), to his mother Marija Meijere, sent from a forced labour camp (Gulag camp) Kyzyl, Molotov (Perm) region, 1948. National History Museum of Latvia, CVVM 230021, PD 4184. <https://www.nmkk.lv/Items/ItemViewForm.aspx?id=368766>
14. A greeting card on birch bark written by Auguste Emīlija Jākobsone (1898-1988) to her daughters Ilga (born 1937) and Ausma (1930-2012) on Easter, sent from Gulag camp in Zovodovka forestry,

- Nizhny Ingash Region, Krasnoyarsk District, to Latvia, March 30, 1949. Tukums Museum, TMNM 42323. <https://www.nmkk.lv/Items/ItemViewForm.aspx?id=999395>
15. A greeting card on birch bark written by Lithuanian teacher Gražina Gaidiene (1911-1989) to her neighbour Sofija Milda Meldere (1899-1988) on her Name Day, sent to Novostroika Gulag camp in Zovodovka forestry, 15 May 1949. Tukums Museum, TMNM 21017. <https://www.nmkk.lv/Items/ItemViewForm.aspx?id=288055>
 16. A letter on birch bark written by Gaida Eglīte (1927-2008) to Laura Rozenštrauha (1930-2001) which contains poetry of an unknown author, sent from Asino Region, Tomsk District to Ivanovo Region, Amur District, 24 May 1949. Museum of the Occupation of Latvia, OMF 1121/1. <https://www.nmkk.lv/Items/ItemViewForm.aspx?id=596175>
 17. A letter on birch bark written by Gaida Eglīte (1927-2008) to Laura Rozenštrauha (1930-2001) which contains poetry of an unknown author, sent from Asino Region, Tomsk District to Ivanovo Region, Amur District, 24 May 1949. Museum of the Occupation of Latvia, OMF 1121/2. <https://www.nmkk.lv/Items/ItemViewForm.aspx?id=596188>
 18. A letter on birch bark written by Velta Graudiņa (1921-2008) to Olga Priede (1905-1991), sent from the Asina Region, Tomsk District to Talsi, Latvia, 19 July 1949. Talsi Regional Museum, TNMM 29003.
 19. An Easter greeting card on birch bark written by Elza Trumekalne (1938-) to her aunts Emīlija Zvejniece (1899-1988) and Anna Grozīte (1897-1986), sent from the Ulyanovsk Region, Omsk District to the Bērzaune Parish, Madona District, Latvia, 1950. Madona Regional Research and Art Museum, MNM 37344. <https://www.nmkk.lv/Items/ItemViewForm.aspx?id=355516>
 20. An Easter greeting card on birch bark written by Lizete Vadziņa-Vāciete (1920-2004) to her husband Kārlis (1908-1981), sent from the Lomovick Village, Pishkino-Troick Region, Tomsk District to a Gulag camp in Komi District, 19 March 1950. Talsi Regional Museum, TNMM 21551. <https://www.nmkk.lv/Items/ItemViewForm.aspx?id=779227>
 21. A greeting card for the summer solstice on birch bark made by Matilde Kaktiņa (1882-1956) for the Ancelāni family, sent from Tyukalinsk Region, Omsk District to Daudzevas Parish, Jēkabpils Region, Latvia, 10 June 1951. Aizkraukle Museum of History and Art, AiVMM 19385/2. <https://www.nmkk.lv/Items/ItemViewForm.aspx?id=626335>
 22. A letter on birch bark written by Aleksandrs Pelēcis (1920-1995) to his former student Velta Kalniņa (1926-2006), sent from the Tigda Region, Amur District to "Ezernieki", Dagda Parish, Krāslava Region, Latvia, 19 June 1955. Talsi Regional Museum, TNMM 28403. <https://www.nmkk.lv/Items/ItemViewForm.aspx?id=779249>
 23. A greeting card on birch bark made by Voldemārs Mežaks (1914-1985) for his acquaintance Tekla Rivara, sent from the Taishet Region, Irkutsk District to Rīga, Latvia, 14 July 1955. Museum of the Occupation of Latvia, OMF 5158/1. <https://www.nmkk.lv/Items/ItemViewForm.aspx?id=595956>
 24. A greeting card on birch bark made by Voldemārs Mežaks (1914-1985) for his acquaintance Tekla Rivara, sent from the Taishet Region, Irkutsk District to Rīga, Latvia, 14 October 1955. Museum of the Occupation of Latvia, OMF 5158/2.
 25. A letter on birch bark written by Voldemārs Mežaks (1914-1985) to Hermīne Guds, sent from the Taishet Region, Irkutsk District to Rīga, Latvia, 1956. Tukums Museum, TMNM 40841.
 26. A letter on birch bark written by Arnolds Driķis to his daughter Skaidrīte, sent from the Ozerlag labour camp, Irkutsk District to the Kabile Parish in the Kuldīga District, Latvia, 1956. Tukums Museum, TMNM 40623. <https://www.nmkk.lv/Items/ItemViewForm.aspx?id=630486>
 27. A letter on birch bark written by Voldemārs Mežaks (1914-1985) to Hermīne Guds, sent from the Taishet Region, Irkutsk District to Rīga, Latvia, 2 May 1956. Tukums Museum, TMNM 40845. <https://www.nmkk.lv/Items/ItemViewForm.aspx?id=841018>
 28. A letter on birch bark written by Voldemārs Mežaks (1914-1985) to Hermīne Guds, sent from the Taishet Region, Irkutsk District to Rīga, Latvia, 7 May 1956. Tukums Museum, TMNM 40847.
 29. A letter on birch bark written by Voldemārs Mežaks (1914-1985) to Hermīne Guds, sent from the Taishet Region, Irkutsk District to Rīga, Latvia, 21 May 1956. Tukums Museum, TMNM 40850. <https://www.nmkk.lv/Items/ItemViewForm.aspx?id=841045>

30. A greeting card on birch bark written by Voldemārs Mežaks (1914-1985) to his acquaintance Tekla Rivara, sent from the Taishet Region, Irkutsk District to Rīga, Latvia, January 1956. Museum of the Occupation of Latvia, OMF 5161. <https://www.nmkk.lv/Items/ItemViewForm.aspx?id=596170>
31. A letter on birch bark written by Voldemārs Mežaks (1914-1985) to Hermīne Guds, sent from the Taishet Region, Irkutsk District to Rīga, Latvia, 26 May 1956. Tukums Museum, TMNM 40853. <https://www.nmkk.lv/Items/ItemViewForm.aspx?id=841070>
32. A letter on birch bark written by Voldemārs Mežaks (1914-1985) to Hermīne Guds, sent from the Taishet Region, Irkutsk District to Rīga, Latvia, 22 June 1956. Tukums Museum, TMNM 40858. <https://www.nmkk.lv/Items/ItemViewForm.aspx?id=841387>
33. A letter on birch bark written by Voldemārs Mežaks (1914-1985) to Hermīne Guds, sent from the Taishet Region, Irkutsk District to Rīga, Latvia, 4 July 1956. Tukums Museum, TMNM 40860. <https://www.nmkk.lv/Items/ItemViewForm.aspx?id=841418>
34. A letter on birch bark written by Voldemārs Mežaks (1914-1985) to Hermīne Guds, sent from the Taishet Region, Irkutsk District to Rīga, Latvia, 31 July 1956. Tukums Museum, TMNM 40865. <https://www.nmkk.lv/Items/ItemViewForm.aspx?id=841461>
35. A letter on birch bark written by Aleksandrs Pelēcis (1920-1995) to Rita Severe, sent from the Tigda Region, Amur District, 3 October 1957. Literature and Music Museum of Latvia, RTMM 627409.
36. A letter on birch bark written by Aleksandrs Pelēcis (1920-1995) to Lauma Reinholde, sent from the Tigda Region, Amur District, 15 August 1958. Literature and Music Museum of Latvia, RTMM 405829.
37. A letter on birch bark written by Aleksandrs Pelēcis (1920-1995) to an unknown recipient, sent from the Tigda Region, Amur District, 14 November 1958. Literature and Music Museum of Latvia, RTMM 348054.
38. A letter on birch bark written by Atis Brālītis (1929-1968) to Dzidra Blāķšeniece (born Eiduka), sent from the Strunīķi Village, Nazivajevsk Region, Omsk District to Jēkabpils, Latvia, 1950s. Jēkabpils History Museum, JkNM 16807.
39. A letter on birch bark written by Aleksandrs Pelēcis (1920-1995) to Mārtiņš Zīverts, sent from the Tigda Region, Amur District, 3 March 1960. Literature and Music Museum of Latvia, RTMM 41548.
40. A letter on birch bark written by Aleksandrs Pelēcis (1920-1995) to Lauma Reinholde, sent from the Tigda Region, Amur District, 25 September 1960. Literature and Music Museum of Latvia, RTMM 4050903.
41. A letter on birch bark written by Aleksandrs Pelēcis (1920-1995) to Rita Severe, sent from the Tigda Region, Amur District, 15 October 1960. Literature and Music Museum of Latvia, RTMM 627838.
42. A letter on birch bark written by Aleksandrs Pelēcis (1920-1995) to Margarita Lapiņa, sent from the Tigda Region, Amur District, 13 July 1962. Literature and Music Museum of Latvia, RTMM 383064.
43. A letter on birch bark written by Aleksandrs Pelēcis (1920-1995) to Elizabete Rūmniece, sent from the Tigda Region, Amur District, 6 August 1962. Literature and Music Museum of Latvia, RTMM 469638.
44. A letter on birch bark written by Aleksandrs Pelēcis (1920-1995) to Katrīna Rūmniece, sent from the Tigda Region, Amur District, 6 August 1962. Literature and Music Museum of Latvia, RTMM 469639.
45. A letter on birch bark written by Aleksandrs Pelēcis (1920-1995) to Zuzanna Munce, sent from the Tigda Region, Amur District to Hollywood, USA, 30 April 1965. Aizkraukle Museum of History and Art, AiVMM 23779.
46. An Easter greeting card on birch bark written by Lilija Villa (1904–1996) to her son Gunārs Vills, sent from Zavodovka forest chemistry Novostroika camp, Nizhny Ingash Region, Krasnoyarsk District to Riga, Latvia, 25 March 1949. Museum of the Occupation of Latvia, OMF 20503/11. <https://www.nmkk.lv/Items/ItemViewForm.aspx?id=1352837>
47. A birthday card made by Voldemārs Mežaks (1914–1985) to fellow inmate Andrejs Aizpurs's

- (1908–1998) daughter Ināra Aizpure (1943), sent from a forced labour camp in Chunksy, Chunksy Region, Irkutsk District to settlement in Severo-Yeniseisk, Krasnoyarsk District, beginning of August 1955. Museum of the Occupation of Latvia, OMF 17435/1.
48. An Easter greeting card made by Voldemārs Mežaks (1914–1985) to fellow inmate Andrejs Aizpurs's (1908–1998) daughter Ināra Aizpure (1943), sent from a forced labour camp in Taishet, Taishet Region, Irkutsk District to settlement in Severo-Yeniseisk, Krasnoyarsk District, 20 March 1956. Museum of the Occupation of Latvia, OMF 17435/2
 49. A Pentecost greeting card made by Voldemārs Mežaks (1914–1985) to fellow inmate Andrejs Aizpurs's (1908–1998) daughter Ināra Aizpure (1943), sent from a forced labour camp in Taishet, Taishet Region, Irkutsk District to settlement in Severo-Yeniseisk, Krasnoyarsk District, 20 May 1956. Museum of the Occupation of Latvia, OMF 17435/3.
 50. A greeting card/letter from Voldemārs Virsis to his son Uldis Virsis, sent from Shirokostroya, forced labour camp in Molotov District, Polovinka station, 7 July 1945. Andrejs Pumpurs Lielvārde Museum, PM 3172.
 51. A Pentecost greeting card from Ēriks Apaļais (1919-1980), who was deported on 25 March 1949 to Anna Kauliņa (1926-2020), sent from a settlement in the village of Odesa, Odessky Region, Omsk District to "Kaulaiņi", Jaunpils Parish, Tukums District, second half of May 1949. Tukums Museum, TMNM 43696. <https://www.nmkk.lv/Items/ItemViewForm.aspx?id=1678589>
 52. A letter on birch bark written by timber merchant from Riga Zalmans Gutins (1882-1974), who was deported on 14 June, to his spouse Olga (1900-1985) and other relatives sent from Usollag, Solikamsk, Molotov District to Irbeyskoye, Irbeysky Region, Krasnoyarsk District, 24 March 1945. Property of Jurijs Gutins, grandson of Zalmans Gutins, given to the Riga Jewish Community Museum "Jews in Latvia" for permanent deposit.

Lithuania – 42 documentary heritage objects:

1. A birch-bark letter and envelope written by Kazimieras Šiliūnas to his family, sent from Reshoty, Nizhny Ingash Region, Krasnoyarsk District, to the Pankrushikha Region, Altai District, 1942. GRRCL Museum of Occupations and Freedom Fights, GEK12002 D1595.
2. A letter on birch bark written by Juozas Šiaučiūnas to his wife Teodora and children, sent from the Reshoty railway station, Krasnoyarsk District, to Staro-Bardinsk, Altai District, 20 January 1943. The Administration of State Cultural Reserve of Kernavė, GEK 8283, R-105.
3. A letter on birch bark written by Juozas Šiaučiūnas to his wife Teodora, sent from the Reshoty railway station, Krasnoyarsk District, to Staro-Bardinsk in Altai District, 2 February 2, 1943. The Administration of State Cultural Reserve of Kernavė, GEK 8284, R-106.
4. A letter on birch bark written by Konstantinas Šakenis (the Minister of Education of the Republic of Lithuania, the Auditor General, the Speaker of the Seimas) to his wife doctor Stasė Šakenienė on their son's eleventh birthday, sent from the Reshoty Gulag camp, Krasnoyarsk District, to Parbig, Novosibirsk District, 26 July 1943. Biržai District Museum Sėla, BKM GEK-22657.
5. A letter-envelope on birch bark written by Antanas Baniulis to his daughter Danutė Baniulytė, sent from the Reshoty, Nizhny Ingash Region, Krasnoyarsk District, to Romansyr, Ust-Yansky Region, Yakutia Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR), 1943, GRRCL Museum of Occupations and Freedom Fights, GEK16033 TR424.
6. A postcard on birch bark written by Juozas Rinkevičius to his mother Julija Rinkevičienė, sent from the Reshoty railway station, Krasnoyarsk District, to Panevėžys, Lithuania, 16 July 1944. Panevėžys Local History Museum, GEK 21659 R 9409.
7. A letter-envelope on birch bark written by Juozas Meškauskas to his brother Jonas Meškauskas and his friend Juozas Račkauskas, sent from Reshoty, Nizhny Ingash Region, Krasnoyarsk District, to Lithuania, 1944, GRRCL Museum of Occupations and Freedom Fights, GEK23624 TR1003.
8. A letter on birch bark written by I. A. Mižutovič to Ona Bugailiškienė, sent from the Reshoty railway station (Post Box 235/5), Krasnoyarsk District, to Šiauliai, Lithuania, 9 April 1945. Šiauliai Aušra Museum, ŠAM I–R 6693.

9. A letter-envelope on birch bark written by Benediktas Šumskis to his relatives, sent from Kansk, Kansk Region, Krasnoyarsk District, to Lithuania, ca. 1945-1946. GRRCL Museum of Occupations and Freedom Fights, GEK24820 TR1025.
10. A letter on birch bark (5 pages) written by Antanas Poška to his friend Tadas Adomonis, sent from the Gulag of North Dvina, Velsk, Archangelsk District, to Vilnius, Lithuania, 13 June 1946. The Wroblewski Library of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences, LMAVB RS, F29-1257.
11. A poem written on birch bark by Antanas Poška in Seriogov, Komi ASSR, 16 May 1947. Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania, LNMMB RKRS F182-422.
12. A letter on birch bark written by Antanas Poška to Jeronimas Vinkelis, sent from Seriogov, Komi ASSR, 1947. Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania, LNMMB RKRS F182-424.
13. An essay written on a sheet of birch bark by Antanas Poška in Seriogov Gulag camp, Komi ASSR, 1947. Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania, LNMMB RKRS F182-425.
14. An essay written on a sheet of birch bark by Antanas Poška in Seriogov Gulag camp, Komi ASSR, 1947. Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania, LNMMB RKRS F182-426.
15. An essay written on a sheet of birch bark by Antanas Poška in Seriogov Gulag camp, Komi ASSR, 1947. Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania, LNMMB RKRS F182-427.
16. A set of his own addresses on birch bark written by Antanas Poška in Seriogov Gulag camp, Komi ASSR, 1947. Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania, LNMMB RKRS F182-428.
17. A Christmas greeting card on birch bark made by Anelė Karpavičiūtė for her sister Salomėja Karpavičiūtė, made in Velizhan District, Tyumen Region, 1947. GRRCL Museum of Occupations and Freedom Fights, GEK15786 TR386.
18. A notebook made of eleven birch bark sheets by Antanas Poška in Seriogov Gulag camp, Komi ASSR, 1947. Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania, LNMMB RKRS F182-423.
19. A greeting card on birch bark made by Vytautas for Maryte, sent from Krasnoyarsk District to Lithuania, 21 July 1948. Šiauliai Aušra Museum, ŠAM IK-F 4356.
20. A letter on birch bark written by M. Cibulskytė-Adamonienė to Antanas Kniūkšta, sent from Novostroika, Krasnoyarsk District, to Vorkuta, Komi ASSR, 13 June 1950. Salomėja Nėris Memorial Museum, a branch of the Maironis Lithuanian Literature Museum, SNMM 1047/ER3115.
21. A greeting card on birch bark written by Bronė to her friend Emilija Lunskytė, made in Usensuda, Usinski Region, Buriatij ASSR, 27 August 1950. Šiauliai Aušra Museum, ŠAM T-R 6482.
22. A birch-bark album made by Ona Abariūtė in an intermediate (transit) prison in Krasnoyarsk, 1952(?). GRRCL Museum of Occupations and Freedom Fights, GEK9757 D1318.
23. A name-day greeting card on birch bark written to Stanislava Steponavičiūtė-Ragaišienė from her Gulag camp friend at Irkutsk District, 8 May 1954. Šiauliai Aušra Museum, ŠAM T-R 6028.
24. A greeting card on birch bark written to Stanislava Steponavičiūtė-Ragaišienė from her Gulag camp friends at Irkutsk District, 8 May 1954. Šiauliai Aušra Museum, ŠAM T-R 6029.
25. An Easter greeting card on birch bark from Anatolija Grinevičiūtė to Kostas Kovaliukas, sent from the Inta camp for women, Komi ASSR, to the Inta camp for men, Komi ASSR, 1 April 1956. Lithuanian Special Archives, f. K-1, inv. 58, f. 44495/3, vol. 1, p. 1-14.
26. A colourful drawing on birch bark by Stanislava Kausteklytė to her son Petras Kausteklis, sent from the Inta camp, Komi ASSR, 1950s. Freedom Fighting and Exile History Museum, a branch of the Gargždai District Museum, I-TR 65.
27. A birch-bark album made as a gift by an unknown friend from Ukraine to Valerija Arlauskaitė Petrauskienė, Komi District, 1953. Kaunas Ninth Fort Museum, KDFM GEK 6604 DE 1210 A79 1989.
28. A letter on birch bark by political prisoner Antanas Baniulis to his daughter Danutė Baniulytė, sent from Reshoty Gulag camp in 1943. Kaunas Ninth Fort Museum, KDFM GEK/7740 A97 1990.
29. A Christmas greeting card on birch bark made by Liudas for his friend political prisoner Elytė Navickaitė, made in Mordovia Gulag camp in 1957. Kaunas Ninth Fort Museum, KDFM GEK 1211 5 DE 149 9 A145 1992.
30. An Easter greeting card on birch bark made by Liudas for his friend political prisoner Elytė Navickaitė, made in Mordovia Gulag camp in 1957. Kaunas Ninth Fort Museum, KDFM GEK/1211 4 DE 149 8 A145 1992.

31. An album of poems written on sheets of paper by political prisoner Ona Jurgelienė Svetikaitė in Lithuania and Siberia (Mordovia, Krasnoyarsk), in 1949-1955. The album cover is made from birch bark. The album was made as a gift by unknown friends to political prisoner Ona Jurgelienė Svetikaitė. Kaunas Ninth Fort Museum, KDFM GEK 6776 DE 1230 A112 1989.
32. A letter on birch bark by political prisoner Budrevičius to Laima Žasinaitė Brazdeikienė, sent from Reshoty Gulag camp (Krasnoyarsk) in 1946. Kaunas Ninth Fort Museum, KDFM 6702 DE 1226 A9 6 1 989.
33. A Christmas greeting card on birch bark made by Aldona Birutė Grigalevičienė (Mikšraitytė) to her father. Mordovia, 24.12.1949. Kaunas Ninth Fort Museum, KDFM GEK23388 DE 1824 A30 1998.
34. A Christmas greeting card on birch bark made by political prisoner Algirdas Petrusevičius to his parents. Tayshet, Russia, 25.12.1957. Kaunas Ninth Fort Museum, KDFM GEK/DE 3187 A 37 2016.
35. A birch-bark album made by exile Jūratė Papečkaitė in Biysk, Altai region, 1941. Kaunas Ninth Fort Museum, KDFM GEK/6794 DE 1232 A65 1990.
36. A poetry booklet in the shape of a heart made by exile Leonora Jankauskaitė. Magadan, 1953. KDFM Kaunas Ninth Fort Museum. GEK-6498 S-4177
37. A postcard/greeting card for Christmas and New Year on birch bark, written to political prisoner Marija Mačionyte by her friend Eugenia. Tayshet camp, Siberia. KDFM Kaunas Ninth Fort Museum. GEK-6505 S-4179.
38. A postcard/Christmas greeting card on birch bark, made and inscribed to exile Teofelija by her friend Aldona (surname unknown). Mordavia camp, 1951. KDFM Kaunas Ninth Fort Museum. GEK-11014 DE-1479.
39. A postcard on birch bark, made, inscribed and presented to exile Edvardas Burokas by his friend Albinas (surname unknown). Vichorovka camp, 1956. KDFM Kaunas Ninth Fort Museum. GEK-27422 DE-2151.
40. A Christmas greeting card on birch bark, made and written by exile Stasys Zavistanavičius. Krasnoyarsk District, Russia, 1949. KDFM Kaunas Ninth Fort Museum. GEK-36105.
41. A birthday greeting postcard on birch bark, made and inscribed by the exile Stasys Zavistanavičius, addressed to his friend Laura Mačiokaite. Krasnoyarsk District, Russia, 1949. KDFM Kaunas Ninth Fort Museum. GEK-36106
42. A postcard greeting on the occasion of the name day on birch bark, made and written by the exile Stasys Zavistanavičius, addressed to his friend Laura Mačiokaite. Krasnoyarsk District, Russia, 1950. KDFM Kaunas Ninth Fort Museum. GEK-36107.

Poland – 12 documentary heritage objects

1. A drawing made on birch bark by Antoni Jagielski while in exile, Oktyabrsky (Novosibirsk District, Tisulsky Region), 1940. Museum of the Second World War, MIIWS/A/1715/1.
2. A drawing made on birch bark by Antoni Jagielski with a note made by the author "Siberia 1940/1941". Museum of the Second World War, MIIWS/A/1715/2.
3. A drawing made on birch bark by Antoni Jagielski, 1941. Museum of the Second World War, MIIWS/RD/9162.
4. A Friendship Book from Siberia written on birch bark belonging to Janina Broszkiewicz (Krzeczkowska), total: 18 cards, including 16 written, 1941. The Archive of the Institute of National Remembrance, IPN BU 4220.
5. A poem by Adam Mickiewicz "[In Prince Golitsyn's Album]" on birch bark by Stanisław Cyliw while in exile, Tayshetsky District, Irkutsk Oblast, 20.02.1942, Sybir Memorial Museum, MPS/718.
6. A letter on birch bark written by Jan Zdanowski to Kunegunda Malewska, sent from the Gulag in Reszoty (Krasnoyarsk Region), April 1945. Museum of the Second World War, MIIWS/F/1244/1.
7. A letter on birch bark written by Jan Zdanowski to Kunegunda Malewska, sent from the Gulag in Reszoty (Krasnoyarsk Region), May 1945. Museum of the Second World War, MIIWS/F/1244/2.
8. A letter on birch bark written by Lucjan Lisiecki to his grandmother Irena Lisiecka, sent from the railway station of Rieszotka (Rieshotka) in the posiolek of Nizhna Poyma (Nizhny Ingash Region, Krasnoyarsk District), August 1945, Sybir Memorial Museum, MPS/554.

9. A letter on birch bark by Janina Stebnicka, sent from Polovinka in the Urals, 1946. Museum of Fr. Józef Jarzębowski in Lichen Stary, ML/P/200/2.
10. A letter on birch bark by Janina Stebnicka, sent from Polovinka in the Urals, 1947. Museum of Fr. Józef Jarzębowski in Lichen Stary, ML/P/200/1.
11. A prayer book on birch bark made by Janina Bielewicz (prayer book made of 14 pieces of birch bark, folded in half and sewn together with twine; it contains 28 pages). Time and place of creation: 1940-1943, the specposiolek of Zielenoborskij (Wożegod Region, Vologda Oblast) and Sielce by Oka (Ryazan Oblast), last entry June 13, 1965, Legnica (Poland). Sybir Memorial Museum, MPS/969.
12. A birch-bark notebook with songs and poems copied by Maria Górniak, Ozerki, Sverdlovsk Oblast (a notebook with no cover, consisting of 10 cards and fragments, stitching on the back, poems and songs written in ink on the sheets), 1940-1945. Sybir Memorial Museum, MPS/974.

Ukraine – 6 documentary heritage objects

1. A birch-bark letter from Maria Humenyuk to her older sister Paraska, written on November 8, 1946, in the Intyn correctional labor camp, in the Republic of Komi. National Museum of the History of Ukraine in the Second World War. Memorial complex. NMIUDSV. KN-272637, D-69819.
2. A birch-bark letter from Yaroslava Senkivska (Onuferko) to her brother Myron, written on June 21, 1948, in the Abez settlement (Abez concentration camp – one of the units of the IntLulag structure in the Republic of Komi). The Ternopil Regional Museum of Local Lore. TOKM RD-2954(5).
3. A birch-bark letter from Yaroslava Senkivska (Onuferko) to her relatives in Ukraine, written on July 21, 1948, in the Abez settlement (Abez concentration camp – one of the units of the IntLulag structure in the Republic of Komi). The Ternopil Regional Museum of Local Lore. TOKM RD [1]12955(2).
4. A birch-bark letter from Yaroslava Senkivska (Onuferko) to her sisters, written in 1949 in the Abez settlement (Abez concentration camp – one of the units of the IntLulag structure in the Republic of Komi). The Ternopil Regional Museum of Local Lore. TOKM RD-12955(3).
5. A birch-bark letter from Yaroslava Senkivska (Onuferko) to Polazya and Dariyka, written on July 7, 1948, in the Abez settlement (Abez concentration camp – one of the units of the IntLulag structure in the Republic of Komi). The Ternopil Regional Museum of Local Lore. TOKM RD-20894.
6. A small birch-bark album (or, as the imprisoned girls called it «pamyatnyk», a memorial) of Maria Sekunda, made in one of the Soviet concentration camps in Kazakhstan in the first half of the 1950s. Memorial Museum of Totalitarian Regimes "Territory of Terror". TT KN-189/RP[1]5.

6.4. Visual documentation (if available and appropriate)

A selection of photos of manuscripts on birch bark from the Gulag submitted by Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Ukraine and Poland have been attached to the nomination.

The following visual documentation is available online:

- <https://www.loc.gov/search/?fa=partof:national+library+of+latvia> – 19 letters from the collections of Tukums Museum, National History Museum of Latvia, Latvia, Museum of Occupation of Latvia, Talsi Regional Museum, Latvia, Aizkraukle Museum of History and Art, Latvia, Daugava River Museum, Latvia, Madona Regional Research and Art Museum in Latvia are digitized and available in the Library of Congress.
- www.tukumamuzejs.lv/virtuala-ekspozicija – virtual exhibition “Letters for the Future” prepared by Tukums Museum, Latvia, in 2011. The interactive exhibition “Letters for the Future” includes digitised letters sent from the Gulag and written on birch bark. The exhibition offers information about the authors and recipients of the letters as well as a full transcript and translation of their content. The virtual exhibition also provides brief information about the historical events and geographical locations of the prisons, labour camps and forced settlements from where the letters were sent.

- <https://vabamu.entu.ee/public-fond> – a web-based database of the Vabamu Museum of Occupations and Freedom in Tallinn, Estonia. All items have been scanned, measured, documented and included in this publicly accessible database available in Estonian only.
- www.genocid.lt/muziejus/en/807/c – virtual exhibition of letters at the Museum of Genocide Victims of the Memorial department of the Genocide and Resistance Research Centre of Lithuania.
- <http://zbiory.sybir.bialystok.pl/zbiory/> – Sybir Memorial Museum’s birch-bark items have been digitised and can be viewed in the online collection catalogue (without MPS/974).
- http://lnvm.lv/?page_id=714 – letter on birch bark from the National History Museum of Latvia can be viewed on the web page of the National History Museum of Latvia devoted to all the items inscribed in the National “Memory of the World” Register.
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pOKkhTm2tUQ&feature=emb_logo [9:38 – 11:05] – Ukrainian birch-bark letter from the collection of the National Museum of the History of Ukraine in the Second World War. Memorial Complex is digitised and can be viewed online.
- <https://tokm.com.ua/novyny/berestovi-lystivky-u-fondah-muzeyu.html> – Ukrainian birch-bark letters from the collection of Ternopil Regional Museum of Local Lore are digitised and can be viewed in an online collection.
- <https://muzealnictworocznik.com/resources/html/article/details?id=614013> for download, contains photos of two letters kept in the Museum
- <https://archiwumpamieci.pl/okrucy/pamietnik-na-korze-brzozowej/> The whole Friendship Book from Siberia is available on the website.
- https://www.muis.ee/en_GB/ – Estonian History Museum’s birch-bark items are accessible through Estonian Museums Public Portal
- https://www.muis.ee/en_GB/museaalview/2493996
https://www.muis.ee/en_GB/museaalview/4479712,
https://www.muis.ee/en_GB/museaalview/399590,
https://www.muis.ee/en_GB/museaalview/2493997
- National History Museum of Latvia – is available on the Latvian Joint Catalogue of National Museum Holdings of Museums:
<https://www.nmkk.lv/Search/SearchResultForm.aspx?SearchObjectId=0&SearchType=0&q=CVVM+230021>
and
<https://www.nmkk.lv/Search/SearchResultForm.aspx?SearchObjectId=0&SearchType=0&q=CVVM+230016>

6.5. History/provenance

The Soviet network of forced labour camps commonly referred to as ‘The Gulag’ (an acronym for Glavnoye Upravleniye LAGerey, or Main Camp Administration) was the Soviet repressive system, denoting the prisons and internment camps in the Soviet Union. This network covered a vast territory in the Soviet Union, from the northwestern areas to contemporary Kazakhstan and the far east regions on the shores of the Pacific and Arctic Oceans, commonly often called ‘Siberia’, especially in everyday use. The repression system lasted throughout the existence of the Soviet Union, reaching its peak during Joseph Stalin's rule. It is estimated that around 14-25 million people were sent to Gulag since its establishment in the end of 1920s until Stalin’s death in 1953, which marked the end of the most brutal repressions. The number of people who directly suffered under repression from the nominating countries in the era is estimated to be about 1,500,000.

The collection consists of letters and other documents written on birch bark by political prisoners and deportees in the Gulag. They were often created under the restrictions on writing and correspondence, i.e. no access to paper or pen, to bypass censorship. The various drawings and short allegorical and

symbolical sayings or poems created and preserved memory and hope. The documents cover a period from 1940 to 1965, marking the beginning and the gradual end of the brutal repressions of the era. The documents are authored by ordinary men and women, both imprisoned and deported, from several locations in the Gulag system. These items express a desperate attempt to connect with their loved ones and their homeland, overcome grief and maintain memory and cultural values, even when communication was not allowed or was heavily restricted. At the beginning of 1940s, it was allowed to send only two letters home annually and attempting to smuggle letters out was considered a crime. Thus, the documents are authentic in the true sense of the term.

During the Soviet era they were saved privately and kept hidden from the authorities by their recipients and owners. Their safeguarding by the recipients is remarkable, as storing them could be seen as turning against the Soviet regime and was thus unfavourable, in addition to being a potential risk for the recipient. Some letters written on birch bark created in the Gulag were also preserved by the deportees themselves during their period of deportation and often travelled with them back to their homeland as tokens of strength and unity.

Since the second half of the 1980s, they have been donated individually to local, state and private museums. All letters have clear and traceable provenance, often accompanied by oral testimonies by their authors, recipients or owners. All letters are identifiable, and it is known when, where and by whom they were created.

Despite the fragility of the material, thanks to the active and thorough work of memory institutions (museums, archives, libraries) and their curiosity in these unique documents on birch bark, they have been increasingly discovered in private and museum storage. The focus given to the letters and documents written on birch bark has led to a growing recognition of the importance of memory institutions in society and their pivotal role in reckoning with painful histories. The memory institutions act as change agents, retaining the initial value and importance of the birch-bark manuscripts while also promoting and enabling their new and innovative application. The communicative character of the collection allows memory institutions to bring together members of local communities as well as reveal the manifold values and layers of historical events and the people related to them.

This nomination to the Memory of the World Register is the result of work, initiated in 2009 by the Tukums Museum in Latvia. Its work has increased research and public interest in this very unique documentary heritage as well as succeeded to promote international cooperation. In 2009, a collection of 19 letters written on birch bark in Siberia was inscribed on the Memory of the World Latvian National Register. In 2014, the inscription was augmented with 24 new letters. In 2015, a nomination of six documents written on birch bark in Siberia was included in the Memory of the World Lithuanian National Register. The cooperation between the nominating countries on the topic of letters on birch bark has been quite intense during the last decade, resulting in this joint nomination.

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6.7. Names, qualifications and contact details of up to three independent people or organisations with expert knowledge on the values and provenance of the nominated material

Name	Qualifications	Contact details(email)
Alexander Etkind	Professor, Department of International Relations at the Central European University	etkindA@ceu.edu
Alain Blum	Professor at the Centre for Russian, Caucasian and Central European Studies at the School of Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences in Paris, France	blum@ehess.fr
Timothy Snyder	Richard C. Levin Professor of History, Yale University, Department of History	timothy.snyder@yale.edu

7.0 Assessment against the selection criteria

7.1. Primary criteria – significant value to the world. Comment on one or more of the following significance criteria

7.1.1. Historical significance.

The collection of letters on birch bark from the Gulag is clearly of world significance due to its universal character and uniqueness, its testimony to human strength and resilience, its strong sense of cultural roots, belonging and memory despite the mass deportations as well as the Gulag system itself that formed an intrinsic part of the repression mechanism of Soviet totalitarianism. The letters testify to the strength of the human spirit that continued to demonstrate independent thought, love of life and care for loved ones even in the fierce conditions brought about by repression and deprivation of human rights. Created within, or rather despite the Gulag system, on a unique and unusual material for communication in the 20th century (the bark of a tree), they show the system of repression from the perspective of ordinary people. Thus, they constitute an exclusive testimony to both the realities of life under totalitarian regime and its nature as a system of organised terror and repression as well as a historical source of unique virtue for humanity.

The birch-bark letters, friendship books, prayer books, poems and postcards form a collection that is indispensable in elucidating the tragedy of the repression carried out by the Soviet regime. An important part of the collection comes from the period of the Second World War, when the Soviet invasion and occupation of the territories of the nominating countries took place. The collection of documents demonstrates a push back against the totalitarian disdain for human life, human rights and international law. It sheds light on the tragic course of life of people subjected to the repression of the Soviet Union from all five countries concerned (estimated at about 1,5 million). The content on the birch-bark documents is highly individual: directed to specific recipients by specific senders, and at the same time universal: embodying the shared experiences of people who suffered under Soviet repression. An important aspect of these missives is the wish to let the recipient (the family, community) know that the sender was still alive. Thus, often these letters contain just short messages, a signature or a drawing. These personal messages emphasise the importance of individual experience over propaganda presented by the official sources that aimed to shape the memories of the people. They transmit the traumatic memories and reveal the totality of Soviet repression, which the Soviet regime tried to erase deliberately.

The Gulag system embodies crimes against humanity and the collective trauma that people were not able to talk about openly for several decades during the communist era. Yet history is complex, and the past cannot be erased, as difficult histories can come haunting when their complexity is neither acknowledged nor openly discussed. In response to that, the collection offers possibilities to reflect on the collective trauma and strive for the culture of remembrance that is reflexive, giving a multi-perspective view of the past, helping others to learn from it—a process that can have therapeutic effect.

There is significant unity in the history of the five countries submitting the nomination that is illustrated by the presented collection. The birch-bark letters demonstrate that these shared historical experiences embody the cultural significance given to birch bark as an information carrier, the act of writing as a means of surviving and the mental strength of the people who suffered Soviet repression. The items are a physical representation of spiritual strength despite the traumatic history of the 20th century in Central and Eastern Europe from an individual human perspective.

The significance, exceptionality and uniqueness of the manuscripts in global history are vested in themselves: they constitute a unique primary source of information due to the moment and place of their creation. The letters on birch bark by actual victims of the Gulag were created during the time of events they concern. This demonstrates their significance as historical sources and distinguishes them from later memoirs that reflect the ex-post perspective, distorted by time. The manuscripts illuminate the realities of the Gulag system, but more importantly the prisoners' and deportees' striving to preserve their dignity, identities, interests, creativity and human bonds. The very existence of these letters is a testimony to the struggle against and opposition to the Gulag repression system, which itself was of worldwide significance by its scale and role, and thus of world-altering impact.

The opposition to dictatorship and oppression was in the context of birch-bark communication not expressed as a movement or organised activity but through individual human emotions, attitudes and experiences, presented in the content of the nominated manuscripts. Although often dealing with daily matters and opposing the system directly to a limited extent, the sentiment behind each line reveals what dictatorship means for a particular person. Even the individual expressions used in the correspondence contain a yearning for freedom. The act of writing, creating, sending and receiving these letters sustained hope and faith for both those detained in the Gulag camps or exiled by force to the eastern parts of the Soviet Union as well as for their recipients. They expressed hope for a better and fairer world and sustained courage in the nominating countries for overthrowing the Soviet regime.

The letters were written in various locations of the vast Gulag system in the Soviet Union, with geographical coverage from the north-western areas to contemporary Kazakhstan and the far east regions on the shores of the Pacific and Arctic oceans. The geographical area of the Gulag system in the nominating countries is commonly referred to as 'Siberia', originating before the First World War in the Russian Empire to designate all remote places of imprisonment, labour camps and forced settlements. Famous Russian writer and political prisoner Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn called Siberia metaphorically The Gulag Archipelago, designating the labour camps and forced settlements as a group of islands formed in the huge, distant, sparsely populated territory of the Soviet Union. This reference is still valid and important in the nominating countries, as it depicts a horrid, inhumane, despotic system and topography of oppression, persecution and repression and the territories of imprisonment and forced exile.

The authors of these letters and documents written on birch bark came from various places. The letters link prisons, labour camps and forced settlements in Siberia to the homelands of the authors. Due to their nature, pointed out above, they speak often of 'Siberia' or 'Gulag' as a place – a vast territory of repression.

The manuscripts are valuable documents that reveal the diversity of the people repressed and sent to the Gulag. They comprised not only the wealthy – as Soviet propaganda used to depict them – but men, women and children from a variety of backgrounds.

The letters prove this fact through their diverse content: from high-quality elaborate drawings to mere scraps of information, from badly written mother tongue (or Russian due to censorship rules) to highly literate and creative poems. The senders were conscious of what they were doing, not necessarily being in resistance but simply being patriots and humans.

This collection of letters earmarks three main axes of the network:

- Siberia–home (those at home had the knowledge that the sender of the letter was still alive; a response from home gave strong moral support to the victim in the Gulag), as only a certain number of letters were allowed for communication annually. In the strictest camps, this number was limited to two per year.
- Among the deported and imprisoned people, this was best expressed by providing the information of your peers in the communication (“X sends greetings” – thus X is alive). The brotherhood of the deported in Siberia and the compassion the fellow victims had for each other transcended ethnic, linguistic, religious or other barriers. Often, this companionship was retained after the Gulag system collapsed.
- Documents to self; letters retaining a sense of self and cultural belonging. Several documents are written either as diaries or notebooks or to children. This enabled people to express feelings and sentiments in their mother tongue, but also to record the experience and memory.

The victims of the Gulag were not only from the former Soviet Union, but also from other countries across many ethnic groups. Letters demonstrate the friendships and compassion that developed among peoples of different cultures and languages, which often also lasted after the return from the Gulag.

This nomination brings together 31 memory institutions from five countries (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Ukraine). Cooperation in preparing this nomination signifies the interconnected pasts and stories. Manuscripts on birch bark have served to enhance the role of memory institutions and open many new cooperation and communication channels with society. Hence this unique collection of documentary heritage further embodies how such a collection enhances the awareness of and support for the preservation of documentary heritage in general.

7.1.2 Form and style

The documentary heritage proposed for inscription is unique in terms of carrier. In the 20th century, the use of birch bark as writing material is a phenomenon in itself. Prisoners and deportees were often sentenced to hard labour in forests, which provided them with direct access to birch bark and the means to create this information carrier.

Various techniques were used to prepare the birch bark for writing, and for writing on it. Assorted plants were used as ink and even for the creation of colourful images; later also pencils and pens were used. The inscription of some letters was scraped and many were decorated with artistic cuts or engravings of traditional folk motives. The size, form, shape and texture of these documents are differ greatly. Some of the birch-bark sheets are very thin, some very rough, some very small, some very uneven, some polished, some light, some dark and some knotty. The form of the available piece of birch bark was often used to reinforce the message, for example by creating a drawing around a knot in the bark or using a very small piece to send only one or two words.

The form and style of the letters were also influenced by censorship. Censorship rules were strict; the possibilities for communication were usually limited and not all post was delivered. Thus, while being

small in size and concise in content, they are emotionally loaded, containing hidden meanings behind each written word. In some cases, there is a lot of text written in tiny letters so as to make the most of all possible space to express love and care.

The manuscripts sometimes quote famous national poets or contain original poetry, they elaborate on various folk motifs and they are rich in cultural and historical references. They reveal the very rich cultural memory and traditions of the nations which were actively continued and transmitted by these missives. Quoting various poems or songs was a way to express thoughts and feelings and exercise active thinking, as the time and the repressive system required high eloquence of expressions to transmit multiple meanings of messages which would have otherwise been censored.

Some letters, especially in the first years after the imprisonment or relocation, are written in Russian as required by censorship. Yet most of the manuscripts are written in native languages.

While during the first years of repression, the choice of birch bark as a material to write on was more pragmatic and a matter of availability; during the later years, birch bark was often deliberately selected in order to evoke certain messages (as proven, for example, in the Latvian letters by Aleksandrs Pelēcis) and underline the contrast between dictatorship and individual agency.

7.1.3 Social, community or spiritual significance

Letters written on birch bark in the Gulag are individual messages of a personal nature, which were often smuggled out of the camps and later secretly stored by the recipients. Many have perished, but those that have survived and have been included in museum collections also have a contemporary and very receptive modern audience. The messages they carry exercise a great emotional hold on the people of today and have a particular social significance because of their very personal nature and content as well as their rarity. This is not limited to smaller societal groups (the repressed and their families, their descendants, etc.) but has much wider significance.

The letters are often written in the first person, so they are grouped with egodocuments. They are a valuable resource not only for national and local research but also for global studies. These manuscripts contribute to our understanding of the events combining two separate but interlinked approaches to relate to the past – history and memory – and bring together disciplines such as cultural anthropology, linguistics, sociolinguistics, identity studies, communication sciences and cultural heritage studies. Through personal experience, they allow one to understand the experience of the nominating countries under the repressive Soviet system and it is therefore a truly communicative collection that deserves to be shared with the world and passed on to future generations. The mass repressions and deportations have had an effect on the development of civil society in the nominating countries, as organisations and communities of deported persons and their relatives are active in every nominating country. Alongside other civil society organisations and with active support from authorities, regular events are organised to commemorate the deportations. By now, these events are an important part of public memory in these countries in general. Each year, memorial events are organised, research work is carried out and more.

This contemporary social significance is further expressed by the various activities of the nominating institutions and other memory and heritage organisations that continue to better introduce the birch-bark letters and the message they convey. These include workshops and exhibitions, but this painful heritage of the past is also actively studied by contemporary writers, film makers and artists. The memory institutions act as change agents to sustain and develop the collective memories related to the deportations. Due to their active work, the deportations have not vanished from individual or collective memory in the nominating countries. The joint nature of this nomination demonstrates the social significance and emotional value these manuscripts embody in the five countries concerned.

Contemporary to the events they concern and distinguished by their overall scarcity – in total numbering 148 in the five nominating countries – the manuscripts are a unique primary source of information. Some of them were sent officially (with censorship marks), while others were smuggled out of the camps to avoid the censorship of the Gulag system. This also explains the differences in their style, content and respective information value. Their authenticity due to their moment of creation and especially the medium used distinguishes them from later memoirs (even if the letters' content was quite politically neutral), which reflect the ex-post perspective, distorted by time.

7.1.4 Gender equality

This collection testifies the importance of feminist epistemologies in history. As most of the documents in the collection are created by women, it highlights the role of women in persisting and standing up against the Soviet repression system. Through these documents, women gain a strong voice and are silent survivors no longer. Their voices in these documents clearly remember and dare to tell of both atrocities and withstanding them, while preserving humanity and dignity and sharing how to ensure transmission of culture and memory to the next generations. It signifies the worth of women in maintaining cultural identity, memory, language, sense of belonging, connection to homeland and hope, despite deprivation of everything.

Yet this collection also reveals a lot about the women's traumas from the atrocities of repression and the Soviet doctrine of apparent equality, which entailed women being sent to hard labour together with men and put under unimaginable suffering. These traumas are hard to address and reckon with directly because of sensitivity and pain. This collection of letters thus serves as a vessel for these painful pasts and ensures that women's recollections of Soviet repression are validated, believed and trusted.

7.2. Comparative criteria. Comment on one or more of the following comparative criteria:

7.2.1. Rarity

Although the collection contains 148 items in total, each item is rare in itself due to its individual nature and the measures it has had to endure to survive, making the collection as a whole a rarity. Though, the collection is more than a rarity: it is unique. Its close links to a specific historical process in the world make it a unique collection (the only one of its kind ever created). There was nothing similar before and nothing after; a competitive collection of this nature could not have been developed anywhere else.

During and immediately after the Second World War, inmates of Soviet labour camps and settlements often had no access to common writing materials (paper, pen). If they were allowed to write to their relatives, birch bark was the material they most often used as an often-available substitute. Survivor testimonies demonstrate that deportees were very active in trying to communicate with their close ones at home, including by writing letters. However, due to censorship and other circumstances (like fragility of the material itself), many birch-bark items either never reached their addressees or have not been preserved. It is known that some letters were destroyed by their recipients or by time because of inadequate preservation conditions and fading of the messages. Even more, it often required bravery and spiritual independence for people back home to keep and preserve them, which was a difficult task under the conditions of the time.

While writing on birch bark was quite common during the years immediately after imprisonment and deportation (such as in 1941 and 1949 in the Baltic countries or from 1940-1941 and 1944-1946 in the case of Poland), it is exceptional that some of the letters written on birch bark were created after 1953, during the so-called de-Stalinisation period, and even after 1956, when the Gulag system officially ceased to exist. These items were created on birch bark more as a matter of principle than due to a lack of paper.

The collection of manuscripts written on birch bark in the Gulag provides a unique and rare source of information about many unknown and withheld personal histories. Considering the extremely sensitive, emotional and often painful memories they invoke as artefacts and as visual symbols of times of repressions as well as their fragility, it is highly significant that so many have survived.

7.2.2. Integrity, completeness, condition

The nominated documents are unchanged originals; some of them bear original censorship marks. The collection is complete as it consists of all known documents (letters, diaries, greeting cards, other types of information carriers, etc.) that were written on birch bark during this period in the Gulag and that can be found and accessed in the memory institutions of the nominating countries.

The conditions of individual items differ from good to poor. However, all the nominated manuscripts are fully documented and preserved according to international archive and museum standards (air quality, temperature, humidity, shelving, security, etc.) to prevent their further deterioration (see respective sections below).

7.3. Statement of significance

The collection of letters on birch bark from the Gulag (1940-1965) is important for the memory of the world, as it highlights the individual experiences of the ways in which to persevere and resist Soviet repression embodied by the Gulag system—a system of forced labour camps and mass deportations in the former Soviet Union.

Through individual voices, this collection of birch-bark letters, friendship books, prayer books, poems and postcards from the Gulag submitted by 31 memory institutions of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Ukraine tells a story of prevailing humanism in the face of the enduring atrocities and honours the mental strength of the people who confronted and withstood such repression. These personal testimonies on birch bark constitute a unique primary source of information, emphasising the importance of individual experience over propaganda that aimed to shape the memory of the people.

The unique carrier –birch bark – enables the collection to consolidate the significance given to birch bark as an information carrier, the act of writing as a means of survival and the mental strength of the people who suffered from repression and deprivation of human rights.

The collection's impact goes beyond the boundaries of the nominating states and is firmly anchored in global history. It is relevant to our common humanity and solidarity. It provides possibilities for research and gives us a better understanding of how people all over the world have reacted to totalitarian regimes. While their experiences differ according to the context, the need to share difficult histories and to discuss trauma openly is a universal way to overcome it, thus creating new futures for all.

8.0. Consultation with stakeholders

8.1. Provide details of consultation with relevant stakeholders about this nomination

In order to develop the nomination, a common nomination team was established involving the nominating institutions, National Commissions for UNESCO, National Memory of the World Committees/Focal Point as well as individual experts in documentary heritage, restoration, history, archival studies and museology. In Latvia and Lithuania, the proposed documents had already undergone detailed elaboration and expert consultation for the purpose of inclusion in Memory of the World National Registers, thus providing for valuable expert insights. The Lithuanian Museum Association, the Lithuanian Institute of History and the Faculty of History and Faculty of Communication at Vilnius University actively

participated in this process. All the experts consulted have been very favourable towards and supportive of nominating the collection to the Memory of the World International Register.

Furthermore, stakeholders with a direct social and spiritual connection to the nomination, such as the authors, recipients or owners of these documents, have been closely involved and consulted during the process of developing this nomination. The community of these people and their relatives is one of the most important factors that has served to locate new documents and has aided their arrival at memory institutions over time. Furthermore, they have directly informed researchers by recollecting their experiences and sharing their memories, including explaining various details of how the documents on birch bark were created, what was used as ink and how they were ironed, sewed together or preserved. Development of the nomination was also accompanied by the growing interest of researchers outside the nominating countries in this unique collection, including growing recognition of the heritage value of these documents when interpreting them. It has resulted in several scientific seminars as well as an international scientific conference 'Letters from the Gulag: Writings and material traces of the Soviet concentration camp experience' organised by the University of Strasbourg and Strasbourg National and University Library in September 2023.

9.0. Risk assessment

9.1. Detail the nature and scope of threats to the nominated material

Nominated documentary heritage is kept in the respective museums, which provide for their preservation, risk management, display and access according to each museum's normative policies, guidelines and principles. In each nominating institution there is a preservation plan in place to evaluate and assess possible risks as well as the need for future restoration.

Being a natural material, birch bark is a vulnerable information carrier because it deteriorates naturally and undergoes various changes dependant on age and climatic conditions (e.g. acquiring cracks, crumbling, peeling). The preservation conditions are similar to those for paper, hence the standards for paper preservation can be applied to birch-bark preservation. Currently, the nominated documents are well preserved and, where necessary, restored. However, because of the possible fading of the texts as well as their general fragility, these documents remain at high risk. This risk is reduced by ensuring regular monitoring of the documents.

During the period of collection of the items, memory institutions undertook restoration, where required, by reconstructing the text or conserving the letter itself. This experience secures the nomination because we possess the necessary knowledge of how to preserve birch bark as an information carrier and of its required preservation conditions.

Due to their extreme fragility, physical access to the items, even by researchers, is kept to a minimum. Instead, using published research, especially the digitised and online version of the documents, is recommended.

No other issues (such as climatic or economic issues, poor storage possibilities or political interference) affect the collections in any of the countries, except Ukraine. The collections in Ukraine are in an unpredictable situation, where the war might directly or indirectly affect them negatively.

10.0. Preservation and access management plan

10.1. Describe, or attach as a scanned document, any existing plans. If no plans exist, provide details about proposed conservation, storage and access strategies

All the nominated documents are fully documented and preserved according to international archive and museum standards (air quality, temperature, humidity, shelving, security, etc.). As the items are located across five countries, there is no common preservation and access management plan, but the nominating institutions share common international and national standards. They also share good practices in respect to the restoration and presentation to audiences of the items (including the use of new and emerging technologies) in a way that will not harm the original documents.

National policies for the preservation of the documentary heritage exist in all five countries; all nominating institutions are guided by these policies.

Estonia

The Vabamu Museum of Occupations and Freedom and The Estonian History Museum operate on the basis of the [Museum Act](#). The procedure for marking and preserving a museum object and a thing accepted on deposit with the museum is established by a regulation of the minister in charge within the policy sector. Upon organising the museum collections, they proceed from the regulations developed by the Ministry of Culture.

The museums follow the ICOM Code of Ethics. The disaster management plan in both museums is under development and will be completed by the end of 2023 at the latest. In cooperation with various institutions, practical tabletop exercises to handle different emergencies are organised. The collection evacuation priorities are defined.

No physical access limitation for the documents publicly displayed in museum expositions is in place. Consulting the documentary heritage held in museum storage is possible upon request. Museums use the functionalities of the MuIS – a museum information system in a web-based environment – to manage museum collections and keep track of the artefacts (documentary heritage included). It is a valuable tool for making the information kept in the museums accessible to the public.

Latvia

The preservation of the nominated documentary heritage held in eleven museums in Latvia is prescribed by the institutional regulations and by-laws of these institutions, national legal acts as well as international specific standards. All nominated documentary heritage is part of the Latvian National Holdings of Museums and is managed appropriately. All nominating museums are accredited memory institutions according to the Law on Museums and Regulations on Museum Accreditation.

The following national legal acts form the preservation context for the documentary heritage in museums:

- Law on Museums (2005) – regulates principles and conditions of the functioning of museums in Latvia, prescribing necessary provisions for the preservation of documentary heritage in their collections. It strictly defines the accreditation requirements for museums, their maintenance as well as their obligations towards objects in their collections and limits for their alienation or withdrawal from the museum holdings.
- Regulations Regarding the National Holdings of Museums (2006) – prescribes the establishment, supplementation, registration and preservation principles of the National Holding. According to these Regulations museums must ensure the conformity of standards in the premises for the storage of the National Holdings objects as well as specific preservation standards for different types of objects. Furthermore, they guide risk and emergency management systems that are then developed by each museum individually.

All nominating museums from Latvia work in conformity with standards of professional practice and performance for museums and their staff as developed by the International Council of Museums.

Every nominating museum has developed a detailed management system for their collections, including the letters written on birch bark held in their collections. Each museum develops their medium-term development strategy, which elaborates on the functioning of the museum, preservation conditions and

standards, research and exhibition strategy, human resource policies, risk preparedness, communication work and other essential aspects of the museum work. Letters written on birch bark are specifically addressed in these planning documents. All eleven nominating museums from Latvia have recently updated or are currently in the process of updating their mid-term planning documents (available in Latvian only). The following museums have updated their mid-term strategies:

1. Aizkraukle Museum of History and Art Mid-Term Strategy (2023-2027)
2. Madona Regional Research and Art Museum Operation and development strategy (2020-2024)
3. Andrejs Pumpurs Lielvārde Museum mid-term Strategy (2021-2025)
4. Development strategy of the Latvian Occupation Museum 2022-2027

Lithuania

All eleven institutions from Lithuania nominating letters on birch bark manage the documentary heritage under their custody following the Law on Museums of the Republic of Lithuania (1995, No. I-930), the Law on Libraries (1995, No. I-920), the Law on Protection of Movable Cultural Property (1996, No. I-1179), a document setting forth storage, maintenance, restoration, protection and use requirements for a specific item of movable cultural property. They also observe the Law of the Republic of Lithuania on Copyright and Neighbouring Rights (1999, No. 50-1598) as well as the Guidelines for Management and Accounting of Museum Collections issued in 2023 by the order of the Minister of Culture. All nominating museums are members of the Lithuanian Museum Association, a voluntary non-profit organisation implementing large-scale socially oriented projects aimed at developing the competences of museum personnel and developing tight connections between museum and education institutions.

There are no access limitations for the nominated documents held in museums if they are publicly displayed in museum expositions. In the case of heritage stored in museum storage, libraries and archives, these are available after submitting a request. A request is also necessary in order to obtain digital copies of the heritage objects. Access to documents is regulated by the Law on Documents and Archives of the Republic of Lithuania (2010 – No. XI-917).

Every nominating institution has established its own risk and emergency management systems that are developed individually in conformity with the national Law on Fire Safety (2010, No. IX-1225) and the related legislation.

Poland

In Poland, the nominating institutions manage their documentary heritage, as appropriate, under the Act on Museums (1997, No. 5-24, with later amendments), Act on the National Archival Resources and Archives (1983, No. 38-173, with later amendments) and the Act on The Institute of National Remembrance – Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes Against the Polish Nation (1998, No. 155-1016, with later amendments).

The obligation of each institution collecting and storing archival materials is to store files in an archival storage room, in appropriate, certified protective packaging protecting the documents against destruction, which meets the requirements of the PN-EN ISO 9706:2001 standard Information and documentation – Paper intended for documents – Durability requirements. The appropriately prepared storage room's structure, equipment and environmental conditions meet the requirements of the PN-ISO 11799:2006 Information and documentation standard – Requirements for the storage conditions of archival and library materials.

In museums, the materials are stored and exhibited in accordance with the regulations of the Polish law on museums, and the building and exhibition standards are in accordance with guidelines of the National Institute for Museums (NIM) and ICOM.

Ukraine

All three institutions from Ukraine nominating manuscripts on birch bark manage the documentary heritage under their custody following the Law of Ukraine on Safeguarding Cultural Heritage (08.06.2000 No. 1805-III with later amendments), the Law of Ukraine on Museums and Museum Work (29.06.1995 No. 249/95-BP with later amendments), a document setting forth storage, maintenance, restoration, protection and use requirements for a specific item of movable cultural property. They also observe the Law of Ukraine on access to repressive agencies of totalitarian Communist regime of 1917-1991 (09.04.2015, No. 316-VIII), the Law of Ukraine on Copyright and Neighbouring Rights (23.12.1993 No. 3792-XII) as well as the Decree on the Regulation on Endorsement of the Museum fund of Ukraine (20.07.2000, No. 1147).

All Ukrainian nominating institutions have established their own risk and emergency management systems that are developed individually in conformity with the national Civil Protection Code (2013, No. 34-35) and related legislation.

11.0. Any other information that may support the nomination

11.1. Note below or attach scanned documents as appropriate

The decision to create a joint collection of documents written on birch bark in the Gulag is of significance itself. The cooperation has enabled the nominators to not merely record facts but to highlight deep-rooted commitment to justice, liberty, equity, solidarity as well as to the principles of moral strength and a firm stance for values, respect and dignity. Furthermore, it has contributed to the promotion of shared respect and increased ownership towards individual memories that reveal and represent greater narratives.

It is already evident within the nominating countries, the positive effects this documentary heritage and the Memory of the World programme framework has had on museums and society. Uncovering so many great narratives and stories that communicate emotions and values, which would have otherwise remained hidden or untold, enables the development of new anchors of memory. Moreover, this serves as grounds for future mutual endeavours to enlighten and enliven these memories and stories.

The nominators see this nomination as an opportunity to enhance cooperation among the nominating memory institutions, National Commissions for UNESCO, National Memory of the World Committees/Focal Point and academic institutions. It is also a means to facilitate the employment of various new approaches to the interpretation, presentation, study and preservation of documentary heritage. The collaborative process of this nomination has already established many good cooperative practices among memory institutions, such as collection management, promotion and awareness-raising strategies about documentary heritage, which benefit the Memory of the World programme.

Building on our established cooperation, the foreseen joint activities related to the nomination in the future include:

- Partnerships with higher education institutions to promote research of this documentary heritage and the related topics and personalities. Further study of letters written on birch bark, including the development of scientific publications in nominating countries as well as in internationally known scientific journals with a special focus on young researchers.
- Preparation and publishing of a mutual album of these testimonies with commentaries on the collection in all five languages and English.

- Making the full collection accessible across various sites and online platforms.
- Developing a series of popular and scientific events outside the nominating countries to tell the stories of the individuals under the Soviet repression system through this collection.
- Organisation of public lectures, discussions, presentations, special education programmes about this collection in schools, local libraries, local cultural centres and memory institutions.
- Production of animated shorts for children to learn history and create new memories.
- Joint exhibitions, for instance touching also on such issues as unique cultural spaces created in camps and settlements by people of different nationalities; artistic design of the letters and the links to authors' cultural roots; cultural significance of birch bark as a material for the nominating countries.
- Building capacities of museum staff and exchange of good practices, for instance practical trainings on the advantages of keeping birch bark letters in special boxes instead of envelopes to ensure better conservation.

A letter of endorsement by the Ukrainian National Commission for UNESCO has been attached to the nomination.