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*As a manuscript*

Mikhail Pogorelov

**RERORMING PRISON SYSTEM IN RSFSR, 1918–1930**

Dissertation summary

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Igor A. Khristoforov,  
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This dissertation is devoted to the early Soviet prison reform, carried out by the People's Commissariats of Justice and Internal Affairs of RSFSR in the period from 1918 to 1930. This reform, which tried to create an alternative to capitalist prison, paradoxically brought together revolutionary ideology with current penological trends.

### **Relevance of the research topic**

A penal colony is the main type of penitentiary institutions in contemporary Russia. In fact, this institution is dated back to the post-revolutionary prison reform, when the Bolshevik regime sought to replace the old tsarist prisons with new correctional institutions. A colony has survived for a century, but in its current form it is hardly consistent with how it was originally envisioned. As the researchers show, attempts to reform the penitentiary system in post-Soviet Russia have failed. The present-day penal system has a very high level of incarceration and its institutions are, in fact, punitive, not correctional<sup>1</sup>. Thus, the study of early Soviet prison reform is not limited exclusively to historical relevance but is closely related to current situation. The Russian penitentiary system is still facing problems that prison reformers tried to solve in the 1920s – the fight against recidivism, rehabilitation of criminals and gradual transition from imprisonment to alternative sanctions.

At the same time, the study of the early Soviet prison reform could expand our understanding of the NEP. First, the ideology of penal reform shared utopianism, common to other social experiments of this period. The attempt to replace prisons with new correctional institutions and to reeducate criminals was conceptualized in the context of building new socialist society and new man.

Both historiography and public discourse share the stereotype that the OGPU forced labor camps, organized in 1929, became an inevitable consequence of the Bolsheviks' rise to power, the Red Terror, and concentration camps of the Civil War. With this interpretation, the system of common prisons, which was predominant during this period, has been neglected by historians. While the public interest was focused mainly on the political repression, common criminals constituted a majority of prison population during the NEP. This dissertation shows that the transition to the GULAG in the late 1920s has not been «programmed». Rather, it resulted from the Great Break of 1929, when Stalin's leadership preferred to utilize prisoners' labor in mass works for the implementation of the first five-year plan.

Finally, this dissertation considers the early Soviet prison reform in a broader global context. Despite the myth of Soviet exceptionalism, Bolshevik Russia followed in line with current penal trends which were developed by other countries. In the first quarter of the 20th century, governments and experts in many countries, influenced by positivist criminology, tried to introduce new modern practices into their penitentiary systems. Drawing on the experience of the global prison reform movement, early Soviet reformers reinterpreted it through the prism

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<sup>1</sup> Pellot D., "GULAG kak gornilo rossijskoj penitencijarnoj sistemy XXI veka", Fenomen GULAGa: interpretacii, sravneniya i istoričeskij kontekst (SPb, 2000): 542-597; Runova K., *Resocializacija v mestah lišeniya svobody v Rossii. Analitičeskij obzor* (Moskva, 2018): 5, 8.

of Marxist ideology. Positioning itself as an alternative to the «capitalist» prison, the Soviet prison in fact adopted the same institutions, providing it with a new ideological meaning<sup>2</sup>.

### **Literature review**

The re-evaluation of the history of the post-revolutionary prison system is primarily connected with the revisionist historiography. In his article, published in 1980, Peter Solomon challenges the traditional narrative that the penitentiary system before 1929 became just a preparatory phase for the GULAG<sup>3</sup>. As he writes, the progressive policy which was carried out by the NKU and the NKVD remained predominant in these years. Thus, the author refutes the thesis about the «straight line» between the concentration camps of the civil war and the GULAG, emphasizing a sharp break in prison policy before and after the release of the resolution of the SNK of the USSR on July 11, 1929. As Solomon shows, the progressive policy was abandoned not due to its shortcomings, but because of the mass political repression of collectivization and the launch of forced industrialization in the late 1920s.

In his monograph (1993) Michael Jacobson is undertaking a comprehensive study of Soviet camp and prison systems, and their administrative structures from 1917 to 1934<sup>4</sup>. The author describes in detail the organizational structure of Soviet prisons and institutional struggle between commissariats. According to Jacobson, the emergence of the GULAG became the result of the Great Break and collectivization. Written just before the archival revolution, this work is based exclusively on published sources. In her dissertation (1998), E. Wimberg examines the main aspects of penal policy in the 1920s, basing on the wide range of archival documents. She agrees that the GUMZ prison reform had stopped with the beginning of the Great Break and industrialization campaign<sup>5</sup>. At the same time, Wimberg emphasizes that the «utopian» GUMZ policy failed due to «internal» shortcomings inherent in the system: problems of coordination between the center and local branches, the inability of the central administration to control the execution of its circulars on the ground, financial difficulties and limited local budgets, unprofessional personnel and corruption. At the same time, Wimberg's dissertation leaves unanswered a number of questions. It does not address the role of experts and expertise in the reform, does not consider the withdrawal from the progressive policy of the GUMZ in the late 1920s, as well as neglects discussions that took place among administrators and experts during this period. Drawing on a wider range of sources, this dissertation considers those issues that are not examined in Wimberg's dissertation, as well as revises those topics that were already studied in her work.

In post-Soviet historiography, most of the studies was focused on the GULAG, while works on the prisons and penal legislation were made by legal historians (A.S. Smykalin, M.G. Detkov, Yu.A. Reent, S. Garanzha and others)<sup>6</sup>. In the last twenty years, there have been

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<sup>2</sup> P. Holquist, "What's so Revolutionary about the Russian Revolution? State Practices and the New-Style Politics, 1914–21", *Russian Modernity* (London, 2000): 87-111.

<sup>3</sup> P.H. Solomon, "Soviet Penal Policy, 1917-1934: A Reinterpretation" *Slavic Review*. 1980. Vol. 39. No. 2. P. 195-217.

<sup>4</sup> Jakobson M., *Origins of the Gulag: The Soviet Prison Camp System, 1917-1934* (Lexington, 1993).

<sup>5</sup> Wimberg E. M. *Replacing the Shackles: Soviet Penal Theory, Policy and Practice, 1917-1930* (Pittsburgh, 1998).

<sup>6</sup> Kuz'min S.I., *Ispravitel'no-trudovye uchrezhdeniya v SSSR (1917-1953 gg.)* (M., 1991); Struchkov N.A., *Prinyatie Osnov ispravitel'no-trudovogo zakonodatel'stva i dal'nejshee razvitie pravovogo regulirovaniya*

published relatively many dissertations based on regional materials, mainly on the documents of the Ural, Siberia and the Far East regions<sup>7</sup>. Although most of these works is concentrated on the history of the GULAG, some of them deal with penal policy and the functioning of places of detention in the 1920s. These dissertations are extremely valuable since they show the implementation of the penitentiary policy in regional dimensions.

The question of cooperation of criminologists and the new Soviet state has been thoroughly studied in Sh. Kowalski's monograph. As she notes, although criminological institutions existed under the full control of the Soviet state, they managed to organize large-scale research activities. Kowalski emphasizes the main contradiction of this science, which led to its collapse in the late 1920s: on the one hand, criminologists sought to conduct independent research; on the other, they had to work within the state structures.

Without fundamentally challenging Kowalski's narrative, this dissertation proposes several corrections. Kowalski describes early Soviet criminology from the point of view of the classical definition of «liberal professions», when professionals either develop as autonomous from the state or strive for autonomy from it. However, as sources show, criminologists deliberately built criminology within the state institutions. It also seems questionable Kowalski's statement about the complete control of the state over crime research in the 1920s. As the third chapter of this dissertation shows, criminological research remained free from ideological control until 1929. The criminological institutes, although embedded in administrative structures, had relative autonomy in conducting their own scientific policy. The experts were incorporated into local authorities and received resources to realize their goals, and, in the result, became the main beneficiaries of this cooperation with the Bolshevik regime. The fact that in the conditions of the 1920s criminologists were able to build institutions and conduct independent research is the best illustration to confirm this argument. On the contrary, the removal of experts from the penitentiary system after 1929-1930 also indicates that in the new context, a policy based on scientific knowledge was no longer required. The cases of

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*ispolneniya nakazaniya* (Ryazan', 1988); Yastrebov A.B., *Pervyj sovetskij Ispravitel'no-trudovoj kodeks* (M., 1987); Detkov M. G., *Tyur'my, lagerya i kolonii Rossii: istoricheskij ocherk* (M., 2009); Smykalin A.S., *Kolonii i tyur'my v Sovetskoj Rossii* (Ekaterinburg, 1997); Smykalin A.S., *Penitenciarnaya sistema sovetskoj Rossii 1917-nachala 60-h gg.: Istoriko-yuridicheskoe issledovanie* (Ekaterinburg, 1998); Hristoforova E.I., *Rezhim v ispravitel'no-trudovyh lageryah NKVD SSSR (1929–1941 gg.)* (M., 2002); Garanzha S.A., *Ispravitel'no-trudovaya politika Sovetskogo gosudarstva (na primere obshchih mest zaklyucheniya RSFSR) v 1917-1934 gg.* (M., 2012); Reent Y., Zhigalev A., *Ispravitel'no-trudovaya sistema Sovetskoj Rossii v dovoennyj period (1921–1940 gg.)* (M., 2018).

<sup>7</sup> Potapov M.G., *Kniga v penitenciarnyh uchrezhdeniyah Sibiri: 20-e gody XX veka* (Novosibirsk, 2003); Shevyrin S.A., *Prinuditel'nyj trud v lageryah i koloniyah na territorii sovremennogo Permskogo kraya, konec 1920-h-seredina 1950-h gg.* (Perm', 2008); Usmanova F.R., *Istoriya stanovleniya i razvitiya sovetskoj penitenciarnoj sistemy v Tyumenskom regione (1918-1956 gg.)* (Tyumen', 2004); Evseev I.V., *Formirovanie i razvitie ispravitel'no-trudovoj sistemy SSSR, 1918 - 1941 gg. (na primere YUzhno-Ural'skogo regiona): istoriko-pravovoj aspekt* (Saratov, 2010); Bykov A.V., *Stanovlenie i razvitie penitenciarnoj sistemy v Zapadnoj Sibiri v 1920-e gg.* (Omsk, 2011); Abdulaev K.M., *Istoriya stanovleniya i razvitiya sistemy ispravitel'nyh uchrezhdenij v Dagestane v 20-30-e gody XIX veka* (Mahachkala, 2005); Sush S.P., *Istoriya ugovolno-ispravitel'noj sistemy Buryat-Mongol'skoj ASSR: nach. 20-h - nach. 50-h gg. XX v.* (Ulan-Ude, 2007); Bobkov M.Y., *Stanovlenie i razvitie sovetskih penitenciarnyh uchrezhdenij Priamur'ya v 20-30 gg. XX veka* (Habarovsk, 2008); Kuz'mina M.A., *Ispol'zovanie prinuditel'nogo truda zaklyuchennyh na «velikih stalinskih strojkah» v Nizhnem Priamur'e (1929-1955 gg.)* (Komsomol'sk-na-Amure, 2004).

institutionalization of criminology and the «intervention» of professionals in the prison system show how scientists used the post-revolutionary situation for their own purposes, building new scientific disciplines and institutions.

**The object** of the research is the corpus of sources related to the Soviet penitentiary system in this period.

**The subject** of the research is the reform of the penitentiary system in Soviet Russia.

**The chronological framework** of the study covers the period from 1918 to 1930: from the first experiments of the People's Commissariat of Justice of the RSFSR, which was the successor of the Main Prison Administration of the Russian Empire and the Main Administration of Places of Detention of the Provisional Government, to the dissolution of the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs of the RSFSR.

**The geographical scope** of the study is the territory of the RSFSR, which was under the jurisdiction of the Main Administration of Places of Detention of the NKVD RSFSR and covered most of the USSR.

**The purpose of the research** is to study the prison reform in 1918–1930 as a comprehensive process, including its background, program and realization.

This research goal determines the following **research tasks**:

- to reveal the ideology of the early Soviet prison reform;
- to consider the prison policy of the People's Commissariat of Justice (1918-1922);
- to analyze the organization of the penitentiary system in 1922-1930: its central office, the local branches, the cadres;
- to make an overview of the functioning of the main institutions of the prison system;
- to show the role of experts and scientific knowledge in reforming the prison system;
- to examine education, self-governments and journalism of prisoners;
- to consider prison labor and production activities in places of detention;
- to reveal the political, institutional and technological reasons for the failure of the early Soviet prison reform in 1928-1930.

**The novelty of the research:**

1) For the first time in historiography, the dissertation shows that the program of early Soviet penitentiary reform was developed in the context and in connection with the global prison reform movement.

3) It is considered in detail how the first projects of penitentiary reform were developed in Moscow and Petrograd immediately after the revolution, in 1918-1919.

4) The participation of experts in prison reform is shown. The non-Marxist scientists (jurists, psychiatrists and representatives of other specialties) had been involved in cooperation with the GUMZ, thanks to which they had opportunities to organize criminological institutions and research. This made it possible to organize criminology in an unprecedented short time in the 1920s. The activities of some of the criminological institutions are described for the first time in historiography based on archival documents. In addition, the dissertation presents previously unknown facts and details about the interaction of scientists and their patrons in the Soviet People's Commissariats.

5) The dissertation is based on archival documents, most of which have not been analyzed by researchers before, as well as many published sources that were not previously in demand by historians.

### **Theoretical and practical significance of the research**

The research problem of this dissertation research is at the intersection of several research fields – the history of expert knowledge, the history of prisons and penitentiary policy. Accordingly, the theoretical significance of the work lies in the fact that the connection between scientific knowledge and penitentiary policy is shown. For practical purposes, the results of the dissertation research can be used in the preparation of textbooks, lecture courses and historiographical works on Soviet history.

**The source base of the research** consists of a collection of different types of documents, first of all – archival files. Most of those archival collections are stored at the State Archive of the Russian Federation in Moscow (GARF). The dissertation is based on the documents of the Main Administration of Places of Detention of the NKVD RSFSR (f. R-4042), the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs of the RSFSR (f. R-393), the People's Commissariat of Health (f. A-482) and the People's Commissariat of Justice (f. A-353). In addition, materials from the funds of the Main Prison Administration of the Russian Empire (f. 122), the Main Administration of Places of Detention of the Provisional Government (f. 7420), the Main Directorate of Scientific and Museum Institutions (*Glavnauka*) of the People's Commissariat of Education of the RSFSR were used. The dissertation is also based on the files from the Central Saint-Petersburg State Archive (f. 4301, f. R-2895) as well as on the documents of the Institute of Soviet Construction and Law (f. 360) from the Archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences.

An important place among the sources is occupied by personal archives, including documents of M.N. Gernet (1874-1953) from the Fund of Manuscripts of the Russian State Library (f. 603), A.A. Zhizhilenko (1873-1930) and P.I. Lyublinsky (1882-1938) from the Department of Manuscripts of the Russian National Library (funds 223 and 448). In addition, these are documents from the fund of psychologist A.E. Petrova (GARF, f. A-624). These documents include personal and work correspondence, notes and drafts of publications, autobiographies. The dissertation is also based on published memoirs of jurists and former prisoners.

Periodicals, which were used in this research, could be divided in three categories: academic journals, departmental press and prisoners' press

Another category of sources includes scientific works related to the institutionalization and development of criminological research: monographs, dissertations, articles, reports, minutes of scientific meetings and congresses and other genres of scientific works.

Positions submitted for defense:

- 1) The early Soviet prison reform reflected global trends in current penal theory and practice. Despite the rhetoric of exclusivity, in many aspects the Soviet penal policy of the 1920s was similar to other countries. The ideology of the early Soviet prison reform stemmed not only from Marxist tradition but was based on criminological theories which had been actively developed in this period.
- 2) The early Soviet prison reform adopted so-called «progressive system», which implied an individual approach to each offender and division of inmates into

categories based on the degree of «social danger», social and psychological profiles. In order to implement this approach, a framework of new institutions was introduced: system of ranks, different categories of penitentiaries, distributing and observing committees, criminological laboratories, prisoners' aid committees. The GUMZ faced critical obstacles to the realization of «progressive system»: lack of professional personnel and sufficient funding; problems with management and coordination. In fact, the administration of places of detention turned out to be unable to impose discipline and regime envisaged by the penal code.

- 3) A key role in the development of the early Soviet prison reform was played by non-Marxist experts (lawyers, psychiatrists and representatives of other disciplines), involved in cooperation with the prison administration. The role of experts manifested itself in different ways: in contribution to the discourse of criminality, preparing legislative documents and circulars, projecting new penitentiary institutions. Scientists turned out to be the main beneficiaries in these negotiations with the Bolshevik regime, as they received opportunities to build a new science, conduct large-scale criminological research and influence penitentiary policy.
- 4) Prison education was supposed to be the basic mean of rehabilitation in the new Soviet penitentiary. In this sense, education of prisoners became a part of the cultural revolution and aimed to transform criminals into Soviet citizens. By the late 1920s education, self-government and the press were no longer considered as self-valuable elements of rehabilitation but have been mobilized as propaganda tools.
- 5) The GUMZ saw prison labor primarily as an instrument of «rehabilitation», as a way to give inmates professional skills. However, this approach from the very beginning was incompatible with the task of self-sufficiency of prison industries. The decision of GUMZ to develop small workshops in places of detention proved unsuccessful. After 1928, when the first five-year plan started, the GUMZ carried out a new reform to consolidate prison production, preparing a plan for the transition to self-sufficiency. It changed the function of prison labor from criminals' rehabilitation to production tasks.
- 6) The Stalin's Great Break and the waves of mass repression in the late 1920s undermined the GUMZ prison reform. Despite the growing criticism from competing departments in 1928-1930, the GUMZ leadership continued to defend «progressive system». However, the situation radically changed when the Stalinist group launched campaign for forced industrialization. The resolution of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR on July 11, 1929, when the OGPU labor camps system started to grow, marked a great break in prison policy. The beginning of forced collectivization drawn GUMZ into political repression and institutional conflict with competing departments (NKYU, OGPU) and political struggle finally led to the liquidation of the NKVD, the transfer of places of detention to the People's Commissariat of Justice and, in fact, the end of reform. As has been shown, the emergence of the system of forced labor camps did not follow from the prior evolution of the prison system but became the result of the political leadership's decisions in the summer of 1929.

### **The research approbation**

The results of the dissertation have been presented at eight conferences, seminars and colloquiums.

### **The structure and outline of the dissertation**

The dissertation consists of introduction, six chapters, conclusion, a list of sources and literature.

In the **introduction**, the relevance of the dissertation research is substantiated, a historiographical review is given, the subject and object of research are designated, the purpose is posed and the tasks of the work, the territorial and chronological frameworks of the study, and the source base are defined.

The **first chapter** examines the initial stage of the prison reform carried out by the Central Penal Department of the People's Commissariat of Justice in 1918-1922.

The *first section* shows that Bolshevik penal policy was based on global movement for prison reform, formed on the eve of the First World War. The “progressive system” adopted by the Soviet prison administration after the revolution, became the result of criticism of solitary confinement, attempts to abandon a unified approach to a prisoner and find alternatives to imprisonment. The *second section* analyzes the sources of the ideology of the early Soviet prison reform. It demonstrates that they embraced not only the Marxist tradition but also deterministic criminological theories which had been actively developed in the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The *second section* provides an overview of the prison reform during the Civil War. Until the autumn of 1918, the new prison administration believed that it would be possible to close down old tsarist prisons and replace them by new penal colonies. However, the civil war led to an increase in incarceration rates and made the prison administration put former places of detention back into operation. With a lack of resources, a shortage of personnel, and weak support on the ground, the Central Penal Department failed to implement an ambitious program of prison reform. As has been shown, the involvement of experts in prison administration in 1918 played an important role in the designing of the project of prison reform.

The **second chapter** analyzes the prison reform of the Main Administration of Places of Detention (GUMZ) in 1922-1930.

The *first section* is devoted to the prison administration and the cadres of the GUMZ. It is shown that the central office of the GUMZ during the 1920s did not have control over the local branches, which administratively and financially depended on the local executive committees (*ispolkomy*). Places of detention operated in a permanent state of underfunding: most of them were financed by the local budget and received money on a residual principle. One of the key factors hindering the implementation of the reform was the personnel issue. On the one hand, the sources demonstrate professionalization of the GUMZ central office. On the other, the cadres on the ground were radically different from the personnel in Moscow in level of training. The middle- and higher-level administrators (prison chiefs and provincial inspectors, as well as heads of republican GUMZ) did not have specialized training and experience, they were usually recruited from the Red Army or the militia and owed their new assignment to party membership and participation in the civil war.

The *second section* examines the main institutions of the early Soviet prison reform. Initially designed as expert institutions, distributing and observing committee gradually transformed into bureaucratic bodies that «stamped» decisions and were supposed to empty the

prison of the surplus population. The criminological study of prisoners pursued the goals of classifying inmates into different categories and preparing information for distributing and observing committees. But in practice, criminological bureaus were opened only in a few places of detention, while in other penitentiary institutions, due to a shortage of professional staff (psychologists, psychiatrists, etc.), examinations of prisoners were shifted to prison educators. While some the prisoners' aid committees became relatively successful (Leningrad, Moscow, Saratov), most of them, in the absence of regular funding, were unable to build a stable infrastructure of support for released prisoners. For this reason, post-release support usually was limited to material support and assistance in employment. The archival documents demonstrate a high level of mutual violence between wardens and inmates. Riots and hunger strikes became a part of everyday life of prison world. At the same time, the administration, which did not have sufficiently effective disciplinary levers in its hands, was unable to completely suppress the resistance of prisoners.

The **third chapter** is devoted to the institutionalization of criminological research in Soviet Russia in the period from 1918 to 1930. It shows that in the 1920s psychiatrists and jurists, who made the key contribution to the formation of criminological research, became the main beneficiaries of cooperation with Bolsheviks and were given the opportunity to implement their projects. The *first section* provides an overview of early Soviet criminology as a science. It is shown that criminology as an interdisciplinary enterprise brought together representatives from different social and biomedical sciences. The *second section* examines the criminological centers established in Soviet Russia in 1918-1930: the Diagnostic Institute of Forensic Psychiatry in Petrograd (1918); the Criminal Psychology Division of the Psychoneurological Institute (1921); the State Institute for the Study of Crime and the Criminal (1925); regional criminological bureaus (Saratov, Moscow, Leningrad, Rostov-on-Don, Irkutsk and Kazan). In the *third section* the role of psychiatrists in the Soviet prison reform is shown: their participation in the establishment of forensic psychiatric expertise and elaboration of projects for the organization of institutions for criminal psychopaths. The *fourth section* analyzes the causes of the liquidation of Soviet criminology in the late 1920s. The Great Break in the late 1920s predetermined the dissolution of criminology and expulsion of experts from the penitentiary system.

The **fourth chapter** considers the cultural and educational policy in places of detention. The *first section* is devoted to the education of prisoners, which included not only basic literacy, but also professional education, as well as different kinds of recreational activities (lectures, clubs, theaters, sports, etc.). The *second section* analyses the self-governments of prisoners: cultural and educational committees, cultural workers and comrades' courts. The *third section* deals with the prison press, mainly relying on the newspaper of Tagansky prison "*K trudovomu obshezhituu*". As has been shown, the main function of the press was self-criticism: prisoners had a relatively free opportunity to denounce violations of the regime by the administration and their cellmates. By mastering the Soviet public language, prisoners were able to use it to their advantage. GUMZ supported the policy of self-criticism, because it served as a tool to combat criminal subcultures and corruption and arbitrariness of local prison chiefs.

The **fifth chapter** considers labor in Soviet prisons. From the very beginning, the policy of prison labor carried out by the Central Penal Department and the Main Administration of Places of Detention of the NKVD contained a controversy: on the one hand, the "penitentiary

ideal" (labor was supposed to give prisoners professional skills), on the other, the task of building prison production on the principle of self-sufficiency. The *first section* demonstrates that the GUMZ's attempt to turn labor without deprivation of freedom into the main criminal sanction (replacing, at least partially, imprisonment) failed. The *second section* considers workshops and factories in places of detention during the years of the NEP. While GUMZ sought to rely on large mechanized workshops, such production facilities were built only in the big cities (Moscow, Leningrad, Rostov-on-Don and some others), while in the rest prisoners worked in small workshops. At best, half of all the prisoners were involved in work. Attempts were made to use mass prisoners labor in large-scale projects, but in the conditions of the NEP they were not profitable for GUMZ, nor for departments or organizations that acted as employers of these works. The *third section* shows the transition of the prison factories to self-sufficiency in 1928-1930, after the beginning of the first five-year plan.

The **sixth chapter** examines the reasons for the closure the GUMZ reform in 1929-1930. The *first section* shows that the resolution of the Central Executive Committee and the Council of People's Commissars of the RSFSR on March 26, 1928 "On penal policy" was a response to the "prison crisis" of the mid-1920s and was based on plan of the GUMZ and the State Institute for the Study of Crime and the Criminal, which proposed to reduce the number of prisoners and expand non-custodial measures, such as forced labor without detention. The actions taken by the government show that it sought to decongest prisons and prioritize non-custodial sanctions. The resolution of the Central Executive Committee and the SNK on March 26, 1928, as well as the fact that the GUMZ and the government sought to implement its main provisions, shows that there were no radical changes in prison policy until the spring of 1929. The *second section* examines the institutional conflict that broke out between the NKVD and the NKU. In particular, one of the main issues of disagreement concerned the question of the "softness" of the GUMZ policy and that the prison agency neglected the "class approach". If the representatives of the NKU argued for a tougher policy towards "class enemies", the GUMZ defended the progressive system and denied the formal class approach. The *third section* analyzes how the changed political context of 1929-1930 had resulted in the abandonment of the "progressive system".

In **conclusion**, the results of the research are summarized.

The slogans of the spring of 1917, modern deterministic criminological theories and Marxist theory, which considered prisons as part of the class apparatus of suppression, formed the basis of the ideology of early Soviet prison reform. The Bolsheviks shared the belief that in classless society, along with the disappearance of classes, class struggle and crime, a prison would no longer be needed. While the Bolsheviks did not have any program of their own for the transformation of the penitentiary system, non-Marxist experts from criminal law and psychiatry were involved in the preparation and development of new legislation and reform. In fact, the prison reform program consisted of a set of globally recognized ideas. The alliance of the new regime with the professionals could be explained by their common negative attitude towards the tsarist regime. Russian specialists (jurists and psychiatrists) agreed with the Bolsheviks that the tsarist regime was the main cause of crimes and degeneration.

Thus, the new penal reform became the result of the collaboration between Bolshevik administrators and academics who used this situation to expand their professional jurisdictions beyond the traditional areas of their disciplines. Ideologically, the Bolsheviks positioned the

new Soviet penitentiary system as an alternative to capitalist prisons. However, the Soviet reform embodied the ideas of the global prison reform movement, which were discussed by lawyers and prison reformers long before the revolution. The prison reform assumed an adoption of “progressive system” and the integration of criminological knowledge into the prison system. The principle of rehabilitation (*ispravleniya*) implied education, work and obtaining professional skills, as well as social and material support after release.

However, the implementation of this reform has faced a number of difficulties. In the second half of the 1920s, the GUMZ prison system entered a period of ongoing crisis. At the same time, criminologists found an increase of recidivism in places of detention. Basing on the expertise of the State Institute for the Study of Crime and the Criminal, the Central Executive Committee and the SNK of the RSFSR issued the resolution "On Penal Policy" on March 26, 1928. The resolution implied a reduction in the number of prisoners and an emphasis on non-custodial sanctions, while imprisonment was preserved only for professional criminals and "class enemies". Thus, the government, at least until March 1929, supported the GUMZ policy.

However, the events of 1929 had resulted in a radical change in prison policy. In accordance with the resolution of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR of July 11, 1929, forced labor camps were organized under the aegis of the OGPU. At the same time, the prisons of the GUMZ were subjected to serious institutional reform. The "closed-type" detention facilities (correctional labor houses) were shut down, while colonies became the main type of institutions. This shift on the penal policy caused the expansion of the camps system and an explosive increase in the number of prisoners after the beginning of coercive collectivization and repression in countryside. This became a direct result of Stalin's Great Break and a conscious decision of the political leadership, which relied on the camp model of the OGPU. The departmental rivalry for the control of places of detention ended with the defeat and liquidation of the NKVD of the RSFSR on December 30, 1930, which automatically meant the abolition of the GUMZ and the final abandonment of the prison reform of the 1920s. The successor of GUMZ, the Main Directorate of Correctional Labor Institutions of the NKU completely rejected the "progressive system" and adopted a rigid class approach.

#### **The list of published papers on the topic of the dissertation:**

***Publications in journals included in the Higher School of Economics' list of high-level journals, and in journals indexed in the Scopus and Web of Science:***

- 1) Mikhail Pogorelov, “The Medicalization of Criminality in Soviet Forensic Psychiatry, 1918–1936”, *The Journal of Social Policy Studies*, no 2 (2018): 205-220.
- 2) Mikhail Pogorelov, “Prison Museums in Soviet Russia in the 1920s”, *Forum for Anthropology and Culture*, no 50 (2021): 103-130.
- 3) Mikhail Pogorelov, “Field Research in early Soviet Criminology in the 1920s”, *Sociology of Power*, no 33 (2021): 254-281.