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Forced Migration of the Roma to Western Siberia in 1933 as an Element of State Policy of the North Development

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Abstract: The history of the forced migration of Roma in 1933 from Moscow and the Moscow region to Western Siberia and their life in the conditions of a labor settlement was reconstructed. The study was carried out on the basis of correlating the published archival sources identified by the author with memories and testimonies of eyewitnesses and participants in the events recorded in the 1990s – early 2000s. It is shown that the deportation of the Roma to Western Siberia in 1933, despite its ethnic nature, does not fit into the typology of forced ethnic migrations, the “core and defining elements” of which are the total migrations of the “punished peoples.” It is also incorrect to consider that the reason for the deportation of the Roma to Siberia was the recognition of them as a socially harmful and intolerant ethnic group due to their nomadic lifestyle, closed nature, uncontrollability and criminality. It is concluded that the deportation of the Roma to Western Siberia in 1933 should be considered not as a targeted anti-Roma action, but as a failed attempt at forced settlement in the context of general state actions aimed at developing the northern and eastern regions of the country.

Keywords: gypsy studies, repressive politics, labor settlement, Tomsk, Evstigneevka, Taiga Station


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Принудительная миграция цыган в Западную Сибирь в 1933 г. как элемент государственной политики освоения Севера

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Аннотация: Реконструирована история принудительной миграции цыган в 1933 г. из Москвы и Подмоскovie в Западную Сибирь и их жизнь в условиях трудового поселения. Исследование выполнено на основе соотнесения выявленных автором и опубликованных архивных источников с воспоминаниями и свидетельствами очевидцев и участников событий, записанными в 1990-е – начале 2000-х гг. Показано, что депортация цыган в Западную Сибирь в 1933 г., несмотря на ее этнический характер, не вписывается в типологию принудительных этнических миграций, стержневыми и определяющими элементами которой являются тотальные миграции «наказанных народов». Неверно также считать основанием для депортации цыган в Сибирь их признание социально вредной и нетерпимой этнической группой в силу кочевого образа жизни, закрытости, неконтролиру-

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емости и криминальности. Делается вывод, что депортацию цыган в Западную Сибирь в 1933 г. следует рассматривать не как целенаправленную антицыганскую акцию, а как провалившуюся попытку принудительного оседания в контексте общих действий государства, направленных на освоение северных и восточных районов страны.

Ключевые слова: цыгановедение, репрессивная политика, трудовое поселение, Томск, Евстигнеевка, станция Тайга

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Introduction

Relevance. Among the works on Roma issues, there are few publications concerning the history of the appearance and stay of Roma in Siberia in various periods of Russian history¹. A poorly studied area are the issues of the forced migrations of Roma to Western Siberia in the 1930s. Internal forced migrations of the population², carried out by the Soviet state in the 1920s – early 1950s were an integral part of the state migration system caused by complex interweaving of economic and political factors, and until the late 1980s it was considered a taboo subject.

Elaboration of the problem. For the first time, the Russian-speaking scientific community became aware of the deportation of Roma from Moscow and the Moscow region to Western Siberia in 1933 after the publication of the “Black Book” in 1999³. Its authors related the deportation of Roma “to work places in Siberia” to the introduction on December 27, 1932 of the internal passport and the system of residence permits. In 2005, there was published the report of I.I. Pliner, the assistant head of the Gulag to Deputy Chairman of the Joint State Political Directorate (OGPU) G.G. Yagoda about the cleansing of Moscow from Roma in 1933⁴. The fact of Roma deportation to Siberia in 1933 was reflected in the monographs of V.N. Zemskov and V.N. Uimanov, who came to the conclusion that the idea of Roma labor settlements was not successful, since almost all Roma had fled⁵. A.G. Teplyakov considered the deportation of Roma as “the only ethnic community declared by the authorities as socially detrimental and intolerant due to their nomadic life, asociality, uncontrollability and considerable criminalization.”⁶ The issue of the deportation of Roma to Siberia gained wide public attention after the publication in

¹ M. Smirnova-Seslavinskaya, “Tsygane Zapadnoi Sibiri i Urala v istoriko-etnograficheskikh istochnikakh i issledovaniyakh XVIII – nachala XXI vv. [Gypsies of Western Siberia and the Urals in Historical and Ethnographic Sources and Studies of the XVIII – Early XXI Centuries],” in *Tsygane v Orenburgskom sotsiume: materialy kruglogo stola, posvyaschennogo Mezhdunarodnomu dnyu tsygan* (Orenburg: University Publ., 2013), 22–43; V.N. Shaidurov, N.A. Sapronova, Yu.M. Goncharov, and T.A. Novgorodskii, “Gypsies in Siberia (end of the 18th – 20th century),” *Journal of the Belarusian State University. History* 24, no. 4 (2022): 10–29; N.V. Bessonov, “Tsygane v Rossii: prinuditelnoe osedanie [Roma in Russia: the Forced Subsidence],” in *Rossii i eie region v XX veke: territorii – rasselenie – migratsii* (Moscow: OGI Publ., 2005).

² Forced migration refers to the displacement of people under pressure, orders or threats. As a synonym, there is often used the term “deportation.” Deportation is expulsion, exile (from the Latin word “deportatio”).

³ S. Kurtua, and N. Vert, et al. *Chiernaia kniga kommunizma* [The Black Book of Communism] (Moscow: Tri Veka Istori Publ., 1999).

⁴ A.N. Yakovlev, N.L. Pobol, and P.M. Polyan, eds. *Stalinskie deportatsii. 1928–1953* [Stalin’s Deportations. 1928–1953] (Moscow: Materik Publ., 2005).

⁵ V.N. Zemskov, *Spetsposelentsy v SSSR, 1930–1960* [Special Settlers in the USSR, 1930–1960] (Moscow: Nauka Publ., 2003); V.N. Uymanov, *Penitentsiarnaia sistema Zapadnoi Sibiri (1920–1941 gg.)* [Penitentiary system of Western Siberia (1920–1941)] (Tomsk: Tomsk State University Publ., 2011).

⁶ A.G. Teplyakov, *Mashina Terrora: OGPU-NKVD Sibiri v 1929–1941 gg.* [The Terror Machine: Siberian OGPU-NKVD in 1929–1941] (Moscow: Novyi Khronograph Publ., 2008).

2002 of an article by N.V. Bessonov, a researcher of the history and culture of Roma⁷. He described in detail the deportation of Roma according to oral information provided by V. Glodo (Shmatulsky) who was deported from Moscow with his family. Bessonov also cited the story of Roma writer and researcher V. Kalinin about another alleged, but not yet documented deportation of 1,800 Roma to the Taiga station of the Novosibirsk (now Kemerovo) region in 1937. In 2005, Kalinin's book was published in Russia⁸. For the first time, the deportation of Roma to Siberia is considered in the article by Bulgarian ethnographers and researchers of the Roma E. Marushchiakova and V. Popov on the basis of verification of the data from oral history and various groups of historical sources, including archival ones⁹.

The purpose of the study is, firstly, to clarify the reasons, course and typology of the deportation of Roma to Siberia in 1933; secondly, to find out whether all Roma fled from their settlements, and if not, what happened to those who stayed.

The source base was accounts of eyewitnesses of the deportation and stay of Roma in a special settlement collected by Tomsk writer P.A. Barsagaev¹⁰, and memories of V.A. Nevolin¹¹ deported with his family to the same places of special settlement as Roma. The second group of the sources includes published archival materials discovered by the author in the funds of the State Archives of the Novosibirsk Region (F. R-47), the Documentation Center for Contemporary History of the Tomsk Region (F. 27, 80), and the Information Center of the Internal Affairs Directorate of the Tomsk Region (F. 5). The verification of the oral story data with the documentary sources made it possible to reconstruct a reliable picture of the failed attempt by the state to force Roma to settle in Siberia in 1933.

Deportation

The mass deportation of Roma from Moscow and the Moscow region by the OGPU authorities in the summer of 1933 took place as part of the “cleansing” of large cities from social drop-outs due to passportization. After the introduction of the passport system in 1932, most Roma who led a nomadic life and had no residence permit were banned from living in cities, worker’s settlements and state farms. The introduction of the rationing system in 1929 had a negative impact on Roma. It doomed most of them, especially the “nomadic” ones, to an existence outside the state food supply system¹². By the spring of 1933, dozens of tabors of “Chisinau Roma,” Romanian groups (“servs” and “vlachs”), “Crimean Roma” (“crima”), etc., gathered in large cities. According to N.V. Bessonov,

⁷ N.V. Bessonov, “Tsygane: gody ssylok i pobegov [Roma: Years of Exile and Escape],” *October 30*, no. 26 (2002): 10; The “October 30” newspaper is published by the founding company of LLC “Memo,” which in October 2021 was included in the register of media outlets performing the functions of a foreign agent by the Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation.

⁸ V.I. Kalinin, *Zagadka baltiiskikh tsygan. Ocherki istorii, kultury i sotsialnogo razvitiia baltiiskikh tsygan* [Mystery of the Baltic Roma. Essay on History, Culture and Social Development of the Baltic Roma] (Minsk: Logvinov Publ., 2005).

⁹ E. Marushiakova, and V. Popov, “K voprosu ob ustnoi istorii: na primere nesostoyavsheisya tsynganskoi avtonomnoi respubliki v SSSR [The Question of Oral history: the Case of the Failed Roma autonomous Republic in the USSR],” in *Tsynganskie soobshchestva v sotsiume: adaptatsiya, integratsiya, vzaimodeistviya* (Ser. ‘Biblioteka tsyganovedcheskikh issledovaniy’) (St. Petersburg: Mamatov Publ., 2022).

¹⁰ P.A. Barsagaev, 1) “Drama v taige [Drama in Taiga],” *Za sovetsskuiu nauku*, July 7, 1990; 2) “Kak sozdavali tsynganskii kolkhoz [How the Gypsy Collective Farm Was Created],” *Krasnoe znamia*, February 9–10, 1991; 3) “Chulymskie byli [The Chulymskys Were],” accessed April 15, 2023, https://nkvd.tomsk.ru/content/editor/PUBLIKACII/Hudozestwtno-istoroczeskie/Barsagaev-P-A-Zalomnaya_compressed.pdf; 4) “Iz istorii Chichka-Yul'skogo detskogo doma NKVD [From the History of Chichka-Yul orphanage of the NKVD],” accessed January 1, 2023, <https://nkvd.tomsk.ru/content/editor/DOCUMENTS/Vospominania/BarsagaevPA/Barsagaev-P-A-Istoriya-CHuchka-YUl'kogo-dd.pdf>

¹¹ V.A. Nevolin, *Chelovek, lishonnyi maloi rodiny* [A man deprived of his small motherland] (Krasnoyarsk: RASTR Publ., 2014).

¹² E. Marushiakova, and V. Popov, “K voprosu ob ustnoi istorii,” 103.

“Moscow attracted Roma as there was an opportunity to get food. In the capital there were a lot of new labor sites.” Mass roundups of Roma and arrests were also conducted in other large cities declared “closed.”¹³

“Round-ups” of Roma were conducted along with the “cleansing” of border areas from “social drop-outs” and the “reduction in the number of people” in detention centers and OGPU camps. It was planned to combine these flows into the so-called “new contingent”. Previously created special settlements with a predominantly peasant population were supposed to be transformed into labor settlements with the resettlement of all people – from “kulaks” to “habitual criminals”. It was planned to apply three years of experience in organizing the labor of the “dispossessed kulaks” for the purpose of colonizing the northern and eastern regions of the country – the Naryn north (Western Siberia) and Northern Kazakhstan; up to 2 million people were supposed to be deported there in 1933¹⁴. In the Resolution of the Council of People’s Commissars of the USSR “On the organization of labor settlements of the OGPU” dated April 20, 1933, among other people that were to be sent to labor settlements there were indicated “urban people who refused to leave Moscow and Leningrad due to passportization.”¹⁵ “Nomadic” Roma were not “urban people,” but just at that time, dozens of Roma laborers coincidentally set up their camps in the Moscow region in search of food, and they made a living on the streets of Moscow¹⁶. According to the special resolution of the Council of People’s Commissars of April 26, 1933, the urban social drop-outs and persons deported due to passportization were equated to special settlers¹⁷.

In the report of I.I. Pliner on the “cleansing” of Moscow from Roma sent on July 10, 1933 to G.G. Yagoda, it was noted that from June 28 to July 9, 1933, to the territory of Tomsk and the OGPU labor settlements in Western Siberia, authorities deported 1,008 families, 5,470 “foreign” Roma¹⁸, including 1,449 men, 1,506 women and 2,524 children. Together with those deported, there were sent 338 horses, 2 cows, and a large number of carts and household stuff which belonged to them. There were sent five echelons. All those deported were sanitized; they were given food and fodder for the whole trip; and medical care was organized. During travel the supplies were good, despite occurring during a lean year. The “specified contingent” was supposed to be settled “in separate villages based on nationality,”¹⁹ i.e. initially, it was planned to create in Siberia one or even more Roma labor settlements²⁰.

In an interview with N.V. Bessonov, V. Glodo gave a detailed account of how the “cleansing” of Moscow and the Moscow region from Roma was conducted:

In June 1933, the camp of Chisinau Roma was surrounded by policemen in white tunics. The uninvited guests arrived at dawn, at about 4-5 a.m., and led the crowd to the railway. <...> The carriages already had bunks, but they were clean. There the policemen handed the Roma over to military guards. Soon the huge train was filled with laborers from different parts of Moscow. Since there were 25–30 carriages in the train, and 30-40 people were placed in each, one can approximately say that about 900 Roma became victims of the action²¹.

¹³ N.V. Bessonov, “Tsygane: gody ssylok i pobegov.”

¹⁴ 1933 g. *Nazinskaia tragediia. Dokumental'noe nauchnoe izdanie* [1933 Nazi tragedy. Documentary scientific publication] (Tomsk: Tomsk University Publ., 2002).

¹⁵ E. Marushiakova, and V. Popov, “K voprosu ob ustnoi istorii,” 103.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ V.N. Zemskov, *Spetsposeleltsy*, 45.

¹⁸ Foreign Roma (mainly Kotlyars and Lovaris) were those who were subjects of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Romania, Serbia, Greece, etc., who migrated in the late XIX – early XX century to the Russian Empire, where they led a semi-nomadic life. The different groups of nomadic Roma deported to Siberia cannot be classified as “foreign.”

¹⁹ A.N. Yakovlev, N.L. Pobol, and P.M. Polyani, eds. *Stalinskiye deportatsii*, 49–50.

²⁰ N.V. Bessonov, “Tsygane: gody ssylok i pobegov.”

²¹ *Ibid.*

Judging by this story, V. Glodo and his family could have been in echelon no. 3 (Table 1).

The trains with Roma arrived at their destination in Tomsk by mid-July (Table 1). In addition to the five trains indicated by Pliner, there was another train with Roma (69 families, 328 people), which had arrived at the Tomsk station almost a week earlier. As a result, by mid-July, 1,051 families and 5,323 people arrived in Tomsk in 6 echelons, 147 people fewer than had been sent. These data coincide with the information from the SibLAG of OGPU submitted on August 7 to the West Siberian Regional Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks), from which it follows that 5,222 Roma arrived at the Tomsk transit commandant's office to be resettled in the north²². The total loss during the trip amounted to 148 people.

Table 1

Information on the movement of trains with deported Roma from Moscow and the Moscow region to the Tomsk transit commandant's office

Echelon number	Date					
	5.07. 1933		11.07.1933		12-14.07.1933	
	Families	People	Families	People	Families	People
Echelon number not specified	69	328	69	328	69	328
1	-	-	313	1525	-	-
2	-	-	394	1446	394	1446
3	-	-	222	972	222	972
4	-	-	123	750	123	750
5	-	-	-	-	86	630
Total	69	328	1121	5021	894	4126

Source: SANR, f. 47, op. 5, d. 180, l. 94, 105, 108.

At that time Tomsk was preparing to celebrate the 45th anniversary of the first university beyond the Urals. For this reason, the concentration of special settlers in the city awaiting departure to their destinations was undesirable. Therefore, on July 22, the bureau of the Tomsk City Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) demanded that the SibLAG commandant's office "immediately" remove from the territory of the Cheremoshnikov district "all booths in which special settlers live" and "all property belonging to special settlers and SibLAG."²³ This demand was apparently satisfied, and the fate of the deported Roma was predestined – they were sent to the disposal of the Novokuskovsk²⁴ commandant's office²⁵.

How Roma got to the place of exile can be judged from the stories of the eyewitnesses of those events recorded by N.V. Bessonov and P.A. Barsagaev. Their way was from Tomsk to the place of deportation, was along the Tomsk-Chulyum railway which was under construction²⁶, ending in a "stub track" not far from Chulyum, they then were taken on carts acquired from local peasants to the Chulyum River and further on barges along the Chulyum and its tributary the Chichka-Yul River to Borisovaya mountain. The trip lasted 2 weeks. The food was good; the only serious episode was when a 10-year-old boy who died from illness after having been being thrown overboard²⁷. P.I. Volkov who was

²² 1933 g., 84.

²³ Tsentr dokumentatsii noveyshey istorii Tomskoy oblasti [Center for Documentation of Contemporary History of the Tomsk Region] (henceforth – TsDNI TO), f. 80, op. 1, d. 305, l. 1.

²⁴ On June 7, 1933, the Novokuskovsky district was renamed Asinovsky, the district center was moved from the village of Novokuskovo to the village of Asino (formerly Ksenyevka) located on the railway under construction.

²⁵ 1933 g., 84.

²⁶ The construction of the Tomsk-Chulyum railway was completed in 1937.

²⁷ N.V. Bessonov, "Tsygane: gody ssylok i pobegov."

a school teacher in the village of Rozhdestvensky said that at the end of July 1933 he was returning from a summer session at Tomsk University where he studied by correspondence. At the Uspenskaya ferry crossing across the Chulyim, near the village of Borisovaya mountain, which did not exist then, he was “stuck” for 6 hours, as at least a thousand carts loaded with Roma belongings, old people and children had accumulated on the left bank. They were transported to the right bank and unloaded on Borisovaya mountain:

The carts were unharnessed and were pulled onto the ferry, and then the horses were led to the ferry. Well, they were typical Roma. They were shouting and trying to out-shout each other: “Come on, come on.” But no one was pushing; only the ferrymen were straining...²⁸

Roma spent the rest of the summer and almost the entire fall of 1933 on Borisovaya mountain. By the end of September 1933, only part of the “new contingent,” 600 people, lived in huts and tents that were unfit for wintering. The rest were transferred to the resettlement sites, but were not provided with housing. There were built 3 two-apartment houses and 28 single-family dugouts. The remaining houses were completed from 70 to 40%. Only 4% of people were provided with shoes and clothing. In the run up to the winter, all this could not but cause displeasure, especially among the temperamental Roma who reportedly “attacked” the staff of the commandant’s office, the guards (“shooters”), and the nurses who did not grant releases from work obligations. At the same time, there were cases of rude attitude of the employees towards the new special contingent²⁹. The conflicts were supposed to be caused by the “lack of coordination” of the camp leadership – the commandant and his two deputies. There was particularly noted “lack of coordination” of the heads of the special commandant’s office towards Roma. A decision was made to place people in warm residential accommodation within 3 days, and “to transfer the rest of the contingent on Borisovaya mountain to the resettlement site within 5 days and immediately provide them with residential accommodation.”³⁰ It is clear from the document that along with Roma there were other special settlers on Borisovaya mountain, but according to R.A. Istigechev, another old-timer, “there were so many Roma, that the guards could not keep track of everyone.” Roma “scattered around the nearby villages to steal chickens or tell fortunes.” To help the commandant’s office, the local authorities engaged young people, provided them with combat rifles and ammunition, “placed them in a chain around Borisovaya mountain” and ordered not to let anyone out, until Roma were taken to the taiga³¹. P.I. Volkov also noted that Roma were sent from Borisovaya mountain in late autumn to the taiga; 100 kilometers from Chulyim there was built the village of Evstigneevka³², which was intended as a labor village specifically for Roma.

According to A.I. Selevich who lived nearby on the Lomovitsky farms, that summer on Borisovaya mountain hundreds of Roma died of hunger³³. To transport them, many carts were taken from the neighboring villages, stretching 90 miles from Borisovaya mountain to Evstigneevka. A.I. Selevich told his son:

Roma arrived, but they didn’t want to get off. The men said:
“Dear friend, sell the foal.” You see, the kids are very hungry.
“Yes, take it for free,” answered the father. – Just feed the children. And let me go: it is hard for me to see hungry children...³⁴

²⁸ P.A. Barsagaev, 1) “Iz istorii Chichka-Yul’skogo detskogo doma”; 2) “Chulymskiye byli,” 15.

²⁹ TsDNI TO, f. 27, op. 1, d. 132, l. 65.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ P.A. Barsagaev, 1) “Drama v taige”; 2) “Kak sozdavali tsyganskii kolkhoz”; 3) “Chulymskiye byli,” 17.

³² P.A. Barsagaev, “Chulymskiye byli,” 15.

³³ Ibid., 18.

³⁴ P.A. Barsagaev, 1) “Drama v taiga”; 2) “Kak sozdavali tsyganskii kolkhoz”; 3) “Chulymskiye byli,” 18.

Introducing to work

The special settlement of the Novokuskovsky district commandant's office was created in the “dense swampy taiga” 15–20 km from the local villages of Bogdanovka and Monastyrka and 110 km from the district center. The special settlement consisted of three sections located 10 km from each other. The distance between the villages was 1.5–2 km (Table 2).

Table 2

Special settlement of Novokuskovsky district commandant's office of Siberian camp administration (1931–1948)

Sites	Labor settlements
Site 1	Chichka-Yulsky, Karatuzsky, Labor Colony, Evstigneevsky (for Roma)
Site 2	Berezovsky, Kuraginsky, Osinovsky
Site 3	Usinsky, Birilyusky, Askizsky Kedrovyy (new contingent of 1933–1934)

Source: V.A. Nevolin, *Chelovek, lishonnyi maloi rodiny*, 37 (in Russian).

Evstigneevka intended for a labor settlement of Roma was built on site 1 in a beautiful pine forest 5–7 km from the village of Zimovskoye and 90–100 km from the district village of Pyshkino-Troitskoye (now the village of Pervomaiskoye, the center of the Pervomaisky district), beyond the Chichka-Yul river which was difficult to cross without a boat³⁵. Evstigneevka was built by special settlers “driven” from the surrounding villages and settlements. In one summer, there were built barracks on three large streets³⁶. Roma “flatly” refused to participate in the construction. They were moved into ready-made barrack type houses almost by force. “New Roma settlers turned out to be no good.”³⁷ In winter Roma brought to Evstigneevka in late autumn burned the floors and ceilings of the barracks (fires were lit right inside the houses) and began to scatter, but they got lost in the taiga, wandered close to the village and froze. A.T. Erokhin who worked in an orphanage for Roma children said that later “huge piles of bones were found in the taiga. Most Roma died.”³⁸

According to R.A. Istegchev, “they wanted to create a Roma collective farm there, to accustom them to a settled life. One thought that they would not escape from such wilderness.”³⁹ However, Roma did not intend to engage in agriculture, as they were supposed to. “First of all they cut their horses and scattered throughout all the surrounding settlements, despite strict prohibitions.” They were caught and brought again to Evstigneevka at gunpoint. Roma “roasted the grain given out for sowing on large iron baking sheets and ate it with pleasure.”⁴⁰ “They planted potatoes at one end of the field, dug them up on the other, baked them over a fire and ate them.”⁴¹ “They never had enough food (they ate everything at once...), so the distribution of rationed bread was in the presence of riflemen and guards.”⁴²

Roma were also resettled in other villages. Some worked at a logging site, and most of them were clearing out burnt areas for the future collective farm. According to A.T. Erokhin who worked as a teacher in the orphanage in Evstigneevka,

³⁵ V.A. Nevolin, *Chelovek, lishonnyi maloi rodiny*, 37, 44; P.A. Barsagaev, 1) “Drama v taige...; 2) “Kak sozdavali tsynganskii kolkhoz”; 3) “Chulymskiye byli,” 18.

³⁶ P.A. Barsagaev, 1) “Drama v taige”; 3) “Kak sozdavali tsynganskii kolkhoz”; 3) “Chulymskiye byli,” 17.

³⁷ V.A. Nevolin, *Chelovek, lishonnyi maloi rodiny*, 45.

³⁸ P.A. Barsagaev, “Iz istorii Chichka-Yulskogo detskogo doma NKVD.”

³⁹ P.A. Barsagaev, 1) “Drama v taiga”; 2) “Kak sozdavali tsynganskii kolkhoz”; 3) “Chulymskiye byli,” 17.

⁴⁰ V.A. Nevolin, *Chelovek, lishonnyi maloi rodiny*, 44–45.

⁴¹ P.A. Barsagaev, “Iz istorii Chichka-Yulskogo detskogo doma NKVD.”

⁴² V.A. Nevolin, *Chelovek, lishonnyi maloi rodiny*, 44.

they began to work together, pulling brushwood and snags into the fires. But as soon as the fire flared up, there was no more zeal to work, and they began singing and dancing around the fires. They went on until the end of the working day...⁴³

All eyewitnesses noted that despite the hopeless situation, Roma never lost heart; they sang songs and danced, gathered at the club almost every day and gave concerts. V.A. Nevolin remembered Shakera who danced “amazingly”, often by order of the authorities, but

on the condition that he should be given someone else's shoes to dance with, because he danced so that the soles came off⁴⁴.

Nevolin noted another feature:

[Roma] obeyed their leaders unquestioningly, and the leaders behaved independently towards their tormentors; they were incorruptible and did not succumb to any temptations from the administration which tried to establish personal contacts with them⁴⁵.

There were also attempts to influence the authorities with threats and force:

The elder of Roma was Petrenko. Arrogant and impudent, he influenced Commandant Evdokimov, sometimes with cunning, and sometimes with threat:

– Chief, you should hear what Roma are saying about you. They threaten to break your ribs, to bite your head off and break your legs if you don't give us flour. Don't get mixed up with the bandits, give them five kilograms of flour, and they'll leave you in peace. Your life is worth more than flour...

But not so much because of threats, but out of kindness, Evdokimov gave an additional three kilograms of flour for each adult and two kilograms for each child. During the inspection, excessive consumption of flour was revealed, Evdokimov was arrested and convicted. Afterwards, Ivan Zheba became the commandant <...> He was a solid man. Petrenko came to him with his usual threats. The commandant listened to him. Then he took a revolver out of one pocket and a browning out of another pocket and warned:

– First I'll empty everything into you, and I'll leave the last bullet for myself.”

The next day, a crowd of Roma armed with sticks, axes, and crowbars approached the commandant's house:

– Chief, give us some bread, the kids are dying from hunger.” If you don't give us bread, we'll destroy you and your house.

Zheba went out onto the porch and said sternly:

– You will receive in full everything that is included in the bread ration. Dismiss!

However, Roma continued to threaten and demand. Then the commandant fired upward. People ran away. Thus ended the only Roma riot in Evstigneevka⁴⁶.

Escapes

Roma fled from the special settlements with their whole families or alone. They were caught and taken back; and it all started all over again⁴⁷. The change in their lives was too drastic. Roma did not want to put up with the attempts to force them to engage in logging and agriculture that were not typical of them. The desire to break free was natural for Roma who were accustomed to nomadism; fortunately, it was easier to escape from labor settlements than from prison or a camp. In the immediate vicinity of the labor settlements one could move quite freely. The guards were positioned at a distance making a cordon to intercept from ambush those who tried to leave the place of exile. The vigilance of the guards was not supported by the “heartlessness of the authorities” – instead

⁴³ P.A. Barsagaev, 1) “Drama v taige; 2) “Kak sozdavali tsynganskii kolkhoz”; 3) “Chulymskie byli,” 17.

⁴⁴ V.A. Nevolin, *Chelovek, lishonnyi maloi rodiny*, 45.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ P.A. Barsagaev, 1) “Kak sozdavali tsynganskii kolkhoz”; 2) “Chulymskiye byli,” 17–18.

⁴⁷ Nevolin, V.A. *Chelovek, lishonnyi maloi rodiny...*, 44.

of being convicted for escapes, Roma were just given a “strict” warning, which meant for them a chance for a new attempt⁴⁸. V. Glodo’s family managed to get past the cordon unnoticed on the third attempt. Eating rusks and wild berries, and overwhelmed by mosquitoes and ticks, the fugitives were lucky to come across a hunting hut in the taiga, where, according to the Siberian custom, a supply of food was left. When they reached the Chichka-Yul River, a tributary of the Chulym, they were again lucky to reach a village where former exiled Moldovans lived; they were from the same region as the fugitives. They were given a large boat and guides to sail to Chulym. The fugitives were lucky again – a boatman was found who transported them across this wide Siberian river. Further the path lay along the railway. They walked all summer and all fall – from Chulym to Kozlov (now Michurinsk), 3 thousand kilometers along rail sleepers and gravel, due to which barefoot women and children injured their feet badly. They slept on the ground, in roadside forests, and tried not to be seen at the stations⁴⁹. The farther they went, the safer it was for them to be among people – in their eyes they became ordinary nomadic Roma.

But there were few such successful escapes as described by V. Glodo. According to the memories of V.A. Nevolin,

in the end, Roma began to die in great numbers. They were dying, but still didn’t want to work... And no communist slogans could persuade them to work.⁵⁰

Eyewitness accounts written by P.A. Barsagaev also recorded high mortality among Roma labor settlers:

In winter they hardly managed to dig graves for Roma. The commandant ordered that the bodies of the dead be taken away from the village and covered with snow. In the spring, an epidemic began in the village...⁵¹

As a result of the narrative of P.A. Barsagaev and V.A. Nevolin, the following conclusion is drawn:

In general, the fate of all Roma was tragic. They were freedom-loving people; in the first two winters in the Trans-Chulym region, when the frosts were below fifty degrees, almost all of them died⁵².

Yet, judging by archival sources, it is clear that not all Roma fled. Some of them stayed in Evstigneevka for some time, and after its disappearance they stayed in other special settlements. I will give an example from the personal file of Maria Mikhailovna Litovchenko⁵³, of the “nomadic” Roma⁵⁴, deported with her family in 1933 to the disposal of the Novokuskovsky commandant’s office. In 1934, her father Mikhail Vasilyevich Vingilevsky died in Evstigneevka⁵⁵. In 1935, Maria decided to escape, for which she was sentenced to 3 years. She served her sentence in Dallag until May 15, 1938. After early release, “for good work”⁵⁶ she was sent back to the village of Baturino of the Asinovsky district, where she worked as a laundress at a medical center. In 1940, she made another escape, again unsuccessful, but this time without repressive consequences⁵⁷. She got mar-

⁴⁸ Nevolin, V.A. *Chelovek, lishonnyi maloi rodiny...*, 44.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ P.A. Barsagaev, 1) “Kak sozdavali tsynganskii kolkhoz”; 2) “Chulymskiye byli,” 18.

⁵² P.A. Barsagaev, “Chulymskiye byli...”, 17.

⁵³ Tomsk Region ATC Information Center (henceforth – ITs UVD TO), f. 5. d. P-16698.

⁵⁴ In the questionnaires there were also indicated other options for nationality: Roma, nomadic Roma, Russian Roma. “Serbiia.” See: ITs UVD TO, f. 5, d. P-16698, l. 2, 25, 30.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, l. 32.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, l. 21, 23, 32.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, l. 35.

ried and gave birth to two sons. Shortly before the birth of her second son, her husband, who worked at the Baturinsky chemical forestry enterprise, died while “fulfilling the production plan”⁵⁸. By that time, Maria was already suffering from an open form of tuberculosis and in 1948 she died in the Novo-Kuskovo regional hospital, not having achieved removal from the special settlement regime for health reasons⁵⁹.

Orphanage for Roma children

Due to the mass mortality of special settlers in the areas and, especially, Roma in Evstigneevka, there were a lot of orphans there. The Pyshkino-Troitsk district commandant's office of the NKVD faced the question: what should they do with these children? They decided not to take them anywhere, but to open orphanages on the spot and keep them under control, “not making it public.” Initially, two orphanages were opened: for Roma children in the deserted barracks of Evstigneevka, and for the rest – in the village of Fevral'sky, completely freed from the Khakass who had built it; they were resettled to other areas. At the same time, in the center between three villages – Maysky, Fevral'sky and Chichka-Yul, there began the construction of a two-story building for an orphanage⁶⁰. A.T. Erokhin, who worked as a teacher in the “Roma” orphanage in Evstigneevka, said that the orphanage was located in several barracks, from which adult Roma fled and abandoned their children⁶¹.

By the order of February 16, 1937, the orphanage in Evstigneevka was closed. Its staff and older children were transferred to the Chichka-Yul'sky orphanage in the village of Fevral'sky. There were about 200 children, of different nationalities, including from the “Roma Evstigneevka”; they were mostly orphans, “whose parents had died in the early years, only some of Roma children had parents who had abandoned them due to a successful escape.”⁶²

A letter from teacher F. Alafutova-Zaozerskaya notes:

Roma children wished only to sing and dance, they always asked for more breaks to sing and dance; they learned, but reluctantly. I remember Roma children: Fedya Shishkov, Nyura Fedorova, Vanya Vertulov, Kolya Slichenko, the Bobrov brothers – they were dancers. Where are these children now?⁶³

V.A. Nevolin characterized Roma children in a similar way:

Roma children are very active. They are fidgety; they can neither stand still calmly, nor sit calmly at the table. They constantly dance or beat out some rhythm. They are loyal friends and are not greedy. Among the orphanage children, two Roma ones stood out – Vanya Shabanov and Grisha Kozlovsky. How wonderfully they danced! They took part in all the concerts of the orphanage. Then they were taken to the Roma ensemble in Novosibirsk⁶⁴.

The transfer of the Roma orphanage from Evstigneevka to the Chichka-Yul'sky orphanage is the last mention of the existence of this labor settlement intended as a place of forced settlement of Roma deported to Siberia for the purpose of “developing the north.”

V.A. Nevolin wrote about this as follows:

There are no roads anymore along which the Roma carts went to exile. The barracks in which the Bolsheviks wanted to force the freedom-loving people to lead a different life collapsed and rotted. The graves overgrown with grass in the forest remained nameless. All this is a thing of the past, and no one remembers the tragedy of the hasty introduction of labor people to socialism...⁶⁵

⁵⁸ UVD TO, f. 5, d. P-16698, l. 4, 7, 8.

⁵⁹ Ibid., l. 4–5.

⁶⁰ P.A. Barsagaev, “Iz istorii Chichka-Yul'skogo detskogo doma NKVD.”

⁶¹ P.A. Barsagaev, “Chulymskiye byli,” 24.

⁶² Ibid., 19, 25.

⁶³ Ibid., 25.

⁶⁴ V.A. Nevolin, *Chelovek, lishonnyi maloi rodiny*, 46.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

Conclusion

The reconstruction of the forced migration of Roma in 1933 to Western Siberia presented in the article allows us to draw the obvious conclusion that this was an attempt of forced settling undertaken in the context of the state's general actions aimed at developing the northern and eastern regions of the country by social drop-outs or “vagrant” people. The creation of a Roma labor settlement in Evstigneevka should hardly be considered an attempt to create a Roma collective farm. However, the opinion shared by some authors that the deportation of Roma in 1933 should be regarded in the context of the repressive policies of the state is erroneous. It is incorrect to consider the deportation of 1933, as noted in the literature, as well as the deportation of Roma from Crimea in 1944⁶⁶, as targeted anti-Roma actions. Also, the deportation of Roma to Siberia does not fit into the typology of internal ethnic deportations, which includes the deportations of “punished peoples” (since it was not total), as well as the number of deportations carried out for foreign policy reasons, including foreign ethnic contingents (Poles, Germans, Finns, Romanians).

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