The USSR

12.1 The Union of the Gypsies

12.1.1 *The Society for the Organisation of the Proletarian Backward Gypsy Masses*

Протокол No. 1.

Собрания членов учредителей Об[щест]ва по организации пролетарских отсталых цыганских масс гор. Москвы и Московской губернии от 10-го января 1924 г.

На собрании участвуют: 1/ Осипов Степан; 2/ Поляков Сергей; 3/ Лебедев Валентин; 4/ Панин Михаил; 5/ Голубеев Павел; 6/ Поляков Егор; 7/ Юровская Елизавета; 8/ Балашев Егор; 9/ Исаков Дмитрий; 10/ Д. Поляков.

Собрание избран президиум из 3-х лиц: Председателем т. Е. Поляков и т. Д. Исаков, секретарем – А. Поляков.

Слушали:

1. Об учреждении общества.
2. Заслушивание и утверждение Устава, предъявленного тов. Осиповым.

Постановили:

1. Все члены в количестве 10 человек, имеющих право решающего голоса, единогласно постановили учредить Общество по организации пролетарских отсталых цыганских масс.
2. Устав Общества считать приемлемым, который утвердить. Поручить т.т. Осипову и Полякову Сергею, которым поручается ходатайствовать перед соответствующими органами власти об утверждении устава.

Председатель – Е. А. Поляков. Тов. Председателя – Д. Исаков. Секретарь – [А.] Поляков.

Учредитель (подпись).

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Minutes No. 1.

From the meeting of the Founding Members of the Society for the Organisation of Proletarian Backward Gypsy Masses in the City of Moscow and Moscow Province, dated January 10, 1924.

In the meeting participated: 1/ Stepan Osipov; 2/ Sergey Polyakov; 3/ Valentin Lebedev; 4/ Mikhail Panin; 5/ Pavel Golubeyev; 6/ Yegor Polyakov; 7/ Yelizaveta Yurovskaya; 8/ Yegor Balashev; 9/ Dmitriy Isakov; 10/ D. Polyakov.

The Assembly elected a presidium of 3 persons: Chairpersons Comrade E. Polyakov and Comrade D. Isakov, Secretary – A. Polyakov.

[Things] listened:

1. About the founding of the Society.
2. Hearing and approving the Statute, presented by the Comrade Osipov.

[Issues] decided:

1. All members, numbering 10 persons, having the right to cast decisive votes, have unanimously decided to establish the Society for the Organisation of Proletarian Backward [1] Gypsy Masses.

2. The Statute of the Society should be considered as acceptable and should be validated. It should be given to the Comrades Osipov and Sergey Polyakov, who are to intercede before the respective authorities for the approval of the Statute.

Chairman – E. A. Polyakov. Comrade of Chairman – D. Isakov. Secretary – A. Polyakov. Founder – (Signature).

Notes

1. A 'backward' (or 'culturally backward') was a widely used stencil expression in the national politics of the early USSR. In this context, the term does not include offensive connotations, and on the contrary, it defines peoples who were oppressed in tsarist Russia, who were not given a possibility to fulfil their national awakening and for which the Soviet state itself must take special care in order to elevate them to the status of equal Soviet citizens.

Source: GARF, f. P 1235, op. 119, d. 9, l. 3.

Prepared for publication by Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov.

12.1.2 *The Initiative Proletarian Group of the Gypsies*

В Административный Отдел Моссовета.

От общего собрания членов учредителей Общества и членов Профсоюза Цыган, 85 чел[овек].

Заявление

Настоящим Инициативная пролетарская группа цыган в числе 12 человек членов-учредителей Общества и 75 членов Профсоюза Всерабис 25-го января с/г. на общем собрании постановила на смерть т. ЛЕНИНА ответить организацией общества имени ЛЕНИНА и единогласно был принят устав Общества, каковой собрание просит Административный Отдел Моссовета утвердить, причем

Общество будет согласно с тем, что если будут Отделом внесены какие-нибудь поправки изменений, добавления и прочие в Уставе.

Председатель – ... ; Секретарь – 25.01.1924.

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To Administrative Department of Mossovet.

From the General Meeting of the Founding Members of the Society and Members of Professional Union of the Gypsies, 85 people.

Application

With the present, the Initiative Proletarian Group of Gypsies with 12 founding members of the Society and 75 members of the *Vserabis* Trade Union, on January 25, this year, at the General Assembly, decided to respond to the death of Comrade LENIN with the founding of a society named after LENIN and a Statute of the Society was unanimously accepted; the meeting asks the Administrative Department at the Moscow Council to confirm the Statute; at that the Society will accept if any suggested corrections of changes, amendments, etc. were to be made in the Statute.

Chairman – ... ; Secretary – 25.01.1924.

Source: GARF, f. P 1235, op. 119, d. 9, l. 3.

Prepared for publication by Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov.

12.1.3 *Draft Statute*

[Проекто-Устав]

Цели Общества

I. Организационная сторона.

[1.] Организация Общества имеет своей целью объединение отсталых пролетарских цыганских масс на территории Московской губернии в общество коллективного творчества труда.

а/ Члены-учредители Общества ведут агитацию среди цыган за вступление в общество через посылку своих уполномоченных в отдельные районы и письменно посредством воззваний, писем и проч.

2. Общество для поднятия культурно-просветительного политического уровня среди цыган полагает в основу открытие ряда школ по общеобразовательным предметам для детей и взрослых помимо школ ликвидации безграмотности, содержание которых берет на свой счет, но под контролем Наркомпроса.

а/ Открывает клубы, библиотеки и избы читальни, снабдив последние необходимой литературой и руководителями.

3. Общество открывает опытные школы и мастерские по разным отраслям производства и искусства, а равно и подготовке членов О[бщест]ва к культурной обработке земли и ведению сельского хозяйства для перехода к оседлому образу жизни.

А. Общество распространяет свою деятельность в районе всей Московской губернии, правление которого находится в г. Москве.

а/ Членами общества могут быть все цыгане (не исключая и других национальностей) без различия пола, проживающие в районе его деятельности, за исключением лиц, предусмотренных ... в Конституции РСФСР.

[б/] Правом избирать и быть избранными в органы управления и контроля Общества пользуются все члены Общества, имеющие право выбора в Советы.

в/ Желающие вступить в члены Общества вносят членский взнос, размер которого устанавливается Общим собранием (по одному рублю золотом единовременно).

В случае, если потребуются средства, О[бщест]во имеет право временно на необходимые нужды отчислить %% из заработка служащих-членов.

г/ Члены О[бщест]ва, уклонившиеся от уплаты членских взносов без уважительных причин, постановлением Общего Собрания считаются исключенными, а те члены, кои выбывают из предела Общества на не определенное время по своему желанию – считаются механически выбывшими.

д/ Каждому члену Общества выдается членская книжка за подписью Правления и его Президиума.

Б. Управление делами О[бщест]ва.

Управление Делами и руководство ими возлагается на Правление, которое избирается из 3-х лиц и 2-х кандидатов.

Правление избирается Общим собранием, в которое автоматически входят: Президиум из 3-х лиц – член РКП(б) Председатель, Заместит[ель] Председателя и Секретарь. Председатель член ВЦИК РКП. Вся работа ведется под *руководством* ВЦИКа.

В. Члены Правления Общества распределяют обязанности между собой следующим порядком:

Председатель ведет и отвечает за организационную и политическую работу среди цыган; Заместитель Общества; Секретарь канцелярии и денежной отчетности; III-й член культурно-просветительной; IV-й член Правления социальным обеспечением особых поручений Правления. [...]

Е. Правление Общества ведет все дела и представляет его без особой на то доверенности, во всех делах и сношениях со всеми учреждениями и частными лицами. [...]

Члены Правления, нарушившие свои обязанности отвечают совокупно.

Контрольный орган

Общее собрание для контроля работ Правления и его хозяйственной стороны избирает Ревизионную Комиссию из 3-х человек и 2-х кандидатов из лиц, не принадлежащих к Правлению и его служащих. [...]

Ж. Правление созывает очередное Общее собрание всех членов Общества по мере надобности не реже одного раза в месяц, на котором участвуют все члены Правления и Ревизионная Комиссия с одинаковыми правами и полномочиями с членами Общества. [...]

На собрании разрешаются все те вопросы, которые касаются Общества и его строительства в существующем законном порядке.

3. Общество способствует проведению в жизнь среди членов О[бществ]а и их семейств культурно-физического развития и военного обучения и следит за точным выполнением военных распоряжений Республики РСФСР.

4. Общество не преследует своих личных выгод, но заботится об улучшении быта членов Общества, путем открытия общественных столовых, ликвидации безработицы среди членов Общества и проч.

Для извлечения необходимых средств, кроме членских взносов, сумма от которых является недостаточной, чтобы осуществить и провести в жизни коммерческие органы, как-то: открытие коопераций, разных производственных мастерских и сел[ьско]-хоз[яйственных] предприятий, а равно устройство концертов, спектаклей, лекций и издание литературы.

ХОЗЯЙСТВЕННОЙ стороной ведает Член Правления под руководством и наблюдением всего Правления Общества. [...]

Общество может быть закрыто при уклонении членов Общества и по постановлению Общего собрания членов Общества.

В случае закрытия Общества все имущество находящееся в пользовании последнего передается органам Советской власти по инвентарной книге, выделенным на это уполномоченным от Общего Собрания.

Означенный Устав Общество обязуется проводить в жизнь согласно существующих законоположений и распоряжений Советской Власти.

::

[Draft Statute]

Objectives of the Society

I. Organisational aspect.

1. The Organisation of the Society has as its objective the unification of the backward proletarian Gypsy masses on the territory of Moscow Governorate into a society of collective creative labour.

a/ The founding members of the Society are campaigning among Gypsies for joining society by sending their authorised representatives in individual regions and by writing of appeals, letters, etc.

2. In order to raise the cultural-educational and political level of the Gypsies the society bases at its core the opening of a number of schools in general educational subjects for children and adults along with the schools for the liquidation of illiteracy, the maintenance of which it undertakes on its own account, but under the control of Narkompros.

a) The Society Opens clubs, libraries and reading rooms, supplying the latter with the necessary literature and providing them with supervisors.

3. The Society opens experimental schools and craft workshops in various fields of production and art, and also for preparing the members of the Society for advanced land processing and agricultural work for the purpose of a transition to a sedentary lifestyle [1].

A. The Society exercises its activities in the area of the entire Moscow Governorate, whose directorate is located in the city of Moscow.

a/ Members of the Society may be all Gypsies (not excluding other nationalities), regardless of gender, living in the area of its activity, except those envisaged ... in the Constitution of the RSFSR.

b/ The right to vote and to be elected in the management and control bodies of the Society are enjoyed by all members of the Society who have the right to vote for the Soviets (councils).

c/ Those willing to become members of the Society pay membership fee, the amount of which is established by the General Assembly (one gold Russian Ruble to be paid once). In the case when funds are needed, the Society has the right, temporarily, to deduct percentages from the wages of members of staff for the necessary needs.

d/ Members of the Society who have failed to pay their membership fees, without valid reasons, are considered excluded from the Society by a decision of the General Assembly while those members who leave the boundaries of the Society for unknown period of time on their own will, are considered as automatically excluded.

e/ Each member of the Society shall be issued a membership card signed by the Directorate and its Presidium.

B. Administering the Society.

The administration and governing are assigned to a Directorate, which is elected and it is composed by three persons and two candidates.

The Directorate is elected by the General Assembly, which automatically includes: a Presidium of three persons – a Chairperson, who has to be a member of the RKP(b) [2], a Vice-Chairperson, and a Secretary. The Chairperson ought to be a member of VTsIK of RKP(b) [3]. All the work of the Society is done under the guidance [4] of the VTsIK.

C. The Members of the Society's Directorate distribute their mutual duties between each other in the following fashion:

The Chairperson leads and is responsible for the organisational and the political works among the Gypsies; the Vice-Chairperson of Society [5]; the Secretary manages and is responsible for the office and the monetary reporting; the third member of the Directorate manages and is responsible for the cultural and educational activities; the fourth Member of the Directorate manages and is responsible for the social security and performs special orders from the Directorate. [...]

F. The Directorate of the Society carries out all its work and represents it without any special power of attorney in [its areas] in all cases and in contacts with all institutions and private individuals. [...]

Members of the Directorate who have breached their duties have collective responsibility.

Supervisory Authority

The General Assembly for the Control of the Work of the Directorate and its economic party, elect an Audit Commission [composed] of three persons and two candidates from the persons who do not belong to the Directorate and its employees. [...]

G. The Directorate convenes the next General Assembly of all members of the Society according to the degree of necessity, not less frequently than once a month, involving all members of the Directorate and Audit Commission with the same rights and powers as members of the Society. [...]

All these issues concerning the Society and its building legal order are dealt at the Assembly according to the existing legal order.

3. The Society contributes to the conduct of cultural, physical and military training in the lives of its members and their families, and monitors the proper implementation of the military orders of the Republics of the RSFSR.

4. The Society does not pursue its own personal benefits, but takes care of improving the lives of the members of the Society by opening public canteens, the liquidation of the unemployment among the members of the Society, etc.

In order to obtain the necessary funds, besides the membership contributions, insufficient sums needed for the realisation and carrying out in life, there is a need for commercial activities such as: opening of cooperatives, various production workshops and agricultural enterprises, as well as organisation of concerts, performances, lectures and publications of literature.

THE ECONOMIC side of the Society is run by a member of Directorate under the direction and supervision of the Directorate of the Society as a whole. [...]

The society may be closed down in case of non-fulfilment of the obligations by the members of the Society or by a decree of the General Assembly of the members of the Society.

In the event of the Society being closed down, all the property used by the Society shall be transferred to the Soviet authority through an inventory book, by a member who is specially authorised for this by the General Assembly.

The Society is obliged to conduct the presented Statute in accordance with the existing laws and regulations of the Soviet authority.

Notes

1. Here, for the first time, the idea arose that Gypsy nomads should settle down and start farming, a concept that had hitherto not found a place in Soviet national policy within the RSFSR (which was in fact leading the way in the whole of USSR). It is interesting to note, however, that despite the generally accepted practice, according to which management decisions were made at the top of the pyramid, i.e. by the central party and state authorities (which were united into one whole), and from there descended to the instances below (including to the individual Soviet republics), in some specific cases the initiatives may arise at the local level and precede the decisions of the center. Such was the case with the policy of land allocation of nomadic Gypsies with the intention to

move them to a sedentary way of life. The attempt for the implementation of this idea arose initially in the Ukrainian SSR. This is confirmed by a series of similar notes, which are repeated almost literally in a number of local newspapers in 1924 in the Ukrainian SSR (Всероссийская кочегарка, 1924, p. 2; Голос праці, 1924, p. 4; Думка, 1924, p. 1; Красное знамя, 1924, p. 1; Луганская правда, 1924, p. 2; Робітниче-селянська правда, 1924, p. 3; Червоний степ, 1924, p. 2). In other words, these were reprints of an official text prepared by the central Ukrainian authorities. They announced that:

[...]The Department of National Minorities under the Central Committee of the KP(b) of Ukraine, the Central Committee of the Natsmen recognised the undesirability of the existence of groups of Gypsy nomads in Ukraine. It is recognised that it is necessary to allocate special land plots in the Odesa, Yekaterinoslav, and Donetsk provinces to accommodate there Gypsy nomads. To discuss the question of methods of resettlement of nomadic groups, it was decided to convene a meeting of Gypsy elders. (Коммунист, 1924, p. 4).

Unfortunately, thus far no additional material has been found to make it clear whether the authorities have taken any specific measures to implement the decision (e.g. whether a “meeting of Gypsy elders” had taken place).

It seems not very likely that the authorities in Ukraine knew about this initiative of the Gypsy activists in Moscow. In all probability, the need for sedentarisation and for land allocation of the nomadic Gypsies was their own idea.

2. In the first version of this Draft Statute, the text stipulates not only a Chairperson but also a Vice-Chairperson and a Secretary to be members of the Communist Party, which is subsequently scrapped, i.e. this requirement remains valid only for a Chairperson. Apparently, there were not enough Communists among the members of the Association to form a governing body.

3. An Error of the authors of the Draft Statute. From an institutional point of view, the VTsIK is not a body of the RKP(b) but of the Soviet state.

4. The note about the guiding role of the VTsIK is handwritten in a special empty space. As can be seen from Minutes No. 3 of the Meetings of the initiative group of the founding members of the Gypsy proletarian society, on April 3, 1924 (GARF, f. P 1235, op. 119, d. 9, l. 8), S. Osipov submitted the Draft Statute to the TsIK USSR, where its rotating chairman Nariman Narimanov (1870-1925) introduced this amendment. It was adopted unanimously and entered in the text by hand. The draft statute lacks a date. Judging from Minutes No.3 we can suppose it was written in February/March 1924.

5. The functions of the Vice-Chairperson are not defined in the Draft Statute, by default he should assist the Chairperson in his activities and assume his responsibilities as necessary.

Source: GARF, f. P 1235, op. 119, d. 9, l. 4-6.

Prepared for publication by Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov.

12.1.4 *The Minutes No. 4 (Moscow)*

Протокол No. 4

24-го августа 1924 года

Собрания инициативной группы. Присутствовали: тов. тов. Осипов [С.], Поляков Е., Таранов, Поляков С., Лебедев И. и А. Поляков. Председатель: [А.] Таранов. Секретарь: А. Поляков.

Повестка дня: 1. О представлении в Совет Нац[ональных] мен[ьшинств] копии устава, анкет и других материалов по организации Цыганского Общества. 2. О назначении Молодежи в Рабочие и другие учебные заведения. 3. О помещении для Общества. 4. Текущие дела.

Слушали:

1. О представлении в Совет Нацмен копии устава и других материалов (тов. Осипов).

А. Доклад Делегации о посещении Председателя Совета Нац[иональных] Мен[ьшинств] тов. Клингера, где было выяснено о том, что Инициативная группа по возможности должна быть меньше.

3. О помещении для Общества (И. Лебедев).

4. О названии Общества. Из беседы с товарищем Соловьевым выяснилось, что устав будет рассмотрен, но не утвержден, как не отвечающий духу времени.

Постановили:

1. Предлагается тов. И. Лебедеву и тов. Таранову систематизировать и предоставить копии материалов делегации для представления в Совет Нацмен.

А. Единогласно считать членов Инициативной Группы членами учредителями из 7-ми следующих т.т.: 1/ Осипов Степан Иванович; 2/ Поляков Сергей Егорович; 3/ Лебедев Иван Иванович; 4/ Поляков Егор Алексеевич; 5/ Таранов Андрей [Семенович]; 6/ Поляков Александр Егорович; 7/ Болашев [Иван Егорович], и 3 кандидата: 1/ Панин Михаил Васильевич; 2/ Тагарры Николай Андреевич; 3/ Михайлов Дмитрий Александрович, а следующих т.т., ранее состоявших членами учредителями считать выбывшими, в виду влития новых т.т. и сокращения Инициативной группы: 1/ Юревская Е[лизавета] В[ладимировна]; 2/ Голубеев П[авел] Е[горович]; 3/ Лебедев В[алентин] И[ванович]; 4/ Есаков Д[митрий] Л[арионович].

2. Поручить тов. Таранову составить и представить список назначенных т.т. Председателю Совета Нац. Мен[ьшинств] тов. Клингеру.

3. Ходатайствовать перед Председателем Совета Нац[иональных] Мен[ьшинств] о предоставлении помещения Нац[ионального] Общества согласно заключения Инициативной Группы.

4. Просить Отдел Управления Моссовета изменить те детали устава, которые не отвечают духу времени.

Председатель: (Таранов); Секретарь: ... (Поляков).

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Minutes No 4

August 24, 1924

A meeting of the initiative group. Present were: comrades S. Osipov, E. Polyakov, Taranov, S. Polyakov, I. Lebedev and A. Polyakov. Chairman: A. Taranov. Secretary: A. Polyakov.

Agenda:

- 1/ About the submission to the Council of National Minorities [1] of a copy of the Statute, inquiries and other materials related to the organisation of Gypsy Society.
- 2/ About the assignment of the Youth into Workers' and other educational institutions.
- 3/ About the premises of the Society.
- 4/ Ongoing tasks.

Listened:

1. About the submission to Council of National Minorities of a copy of the Statute and other materials (comrade S. Osipov).

A. Report from the delegation about the visit to the Chairman of the Council of National Minorities of comrade Klinger [2], where it was been clarified that the Initiative Group, if possible, should be smaller.

3. About the premises of the Society (I. Lebedev)

4. About the name of the Society. From the talk with comrade Solovyev [3], it became clear that the Statute would be examined, however, it would not be validated as it does not fit with the spirit of time.

Decided:

1. It is proposed that comrade I. Lebedev and comrade A. Taranov should systematise and submit copies of the materials of the Delegation in Council of National Minorities.

A. It has been unanimously agreed that the members of the Initiative Group [4] will be considered founding members from the following 7 comrades: 1) Stepan Ivanovich Osipov; 2) Sergey Egorovich Polyakov; 3) Ivan Ivanovich Lebedev; 4) Egor Alekseevich Polyakov; 5) Andrey Semenovitch Taranov; 6) Aleksander Egorovich Polyakov; 7) Ivan Egorovich Bolashev, and 3 candidates: 1) Mikhail Vasilyevich Panin; 2) Nikolay Andreyevich Tagarry; 3) Dmitriy Aleksandrovich Mikhaylov, and the following comrades who had earlier been founding members should be considered as dropped out, considering the influx of new comrades and the cuts being made in the Initiative Group: 1) Yelizaveta Vladimirovna Yurevskaya; 2) Pavel Egorovich Golubeev; 3) Valentin Ivanovich Lebedev; 4) Dimitriy Larionovich Esakov.

2. To be ordered to comrade Taranov to compile and present the list with the named comrades to Chairman of Council of National Minorities, comrade Klinger.

3. Solicit Council of National Minorities for providing premises of National Society in accordance with the conclusions of the Initiative Group.

4. To ask the Department of Directorate of Moscow Council to amend these details from the Statute that do not fit the spirit of time.

Chairman: ... (Taranov). Secretary: ... (Polyakov).

Notes

1. The Gypsy activists who prepared this document were obviously not well-versed in the Soviet institutions, so instead of the Department of Nationalities of the VTsIK, they wrote the Council of National Minorities, which is part of the Narkompros. In fact, as can be seen from the document itself, the delegation of the initiative group visited the Department of Nationalities of the VTsIK, where it met with its head, G. G. Klinger.
2. Gustav G. Klinger (1876-1937 or 1943) was a Soviet statesman and party leader, at that time Head of the Department of Nationalities of the VTsIK.
3. In the text, the family name Shneerson was originally written, with a handwritten correction to Solov'yev.
4. The List of Members of the Initiative Group is attached to the Minutes (GARF, f. P 1235, op. 119, d. 9, l. 1006-11), 14 people in total (see below).

Source: GARF, f. P 1235, op. 119, d. 9, l. 9-906.

Prepared for publication by Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov.

12.1.5 *The Plenum of the Delegates of the Moscow Gypsies*

Протокол №. 1
делегатского Пленума московских цыган.
6-го августа 1925 г.

Присутствовало 45 делегатов.

Председатель Пленума – С. Поляков; Секретарь Пленума – И. Лебедев.

Повестка дня: 1. О Союзе и его задачах. 2. Выборы в Президиум Союза. 3. Выборы в Центральное правление Союза.

Слушали:

1. Доклад т. Таранова. 2. Выборы в Президиум Союза. 3. Выборы в Центральное Правление Союза.

Постановили:

1. Принять к сведению и приступить к работе по осуществлению задач Союза.
2. Единогласно [выбраны]: Председатель А. С. Таранов. [Заместителем С. Г. Полякова.] Секретарь И. И. Лебедев.
3. Единогласно выбраны: Масальский М., Ильинский Н., Беляков П., Шишкин А., Мерхоленко В., Шишков К., Панков Н., Поляков А., Шишкова О., Сивак, Маштаков М.

Председатель Пленума ... [подпись] (С. Поляков).

Секретарь Пленума ... [подпись] (И. Лебедев).

::

Minutes No. 1
of the Plenum of Delegates of Moscow Gypsies.
6 August, 1925

There were 45 delegates present.

Chair of the Plenum – S. Polyakov; Plenum Secretary – I. Lebedev.

Agenda: 1. About the Union [1] and its tasks. 2. Elections to the Presidium of the Union 3. Elections to the Central Directorate of the Union.

Listened:

1. Report of comrade Taranov
2. Elections to the Presidium of Union. 3. Elections to the Central Directorate of Union.

Decided:

1. Take note of and begin work on the tasks of the Union.
2. Unanimously elected: Chairperson A. S. Taranov. Deputy S. G. Polyakov [2]. Secretary I. I. Lebedev.
3. Unanimously elected: M. Masalskiy, N. Ilinskiy, P. Belyakov, A. Shishkin, V. Merkholenko, K. Shishkov, N. Pankov, A. Polyakov, O. Shishkova, Sivak [3], M. Mashtakov.

Chair of the Plenum ... [signature] (S. Polyakov).

Plenum Secretary – ... [signature] (I. Lebedev).

Notes

1. Here for the first time appears the designation 'Union', without additional explanation. As can be seen from the Statutes published below, the Union is registered under the name 'Union of Gypsies, living on the territory of RSFSR'. All official Union documents (letterheads, letters to the institutions, etc.), as well as its seal, bear the designation 'All-Russian Union of Gypsies', which also we will use further.
2. The original text of the Minutes omits S. G. Polyakov, elected Deputy Chairperson, whose name is entered in an extract from the Minutes (GARF, f. P 393, op. 43A, d. 1763, l. 181).
3. Only the family name is written.

Source: GARF, f. P 393, op. 43A, d. 1763, l. 182.

Prepared for publication by Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov.

12.1.6 *The Statute of the Union of Gypsies, Living on the Territory of RSFSR*

Копия.

Настоящий Устав утвержден Народным Комиссариатом Внутренних Дел. 23 июля 1925 г.

Зам[еститель] Наркомвнудел (подпись).

Нач[альник] Центр[ального] Адм[инистративного] Упр[авления] (подпись).

Устав
Союза цыган, проживающих на территории РСФСР.

I. Общие положения.

§ 1. На основании настоящего Устава учреждается Союз цыган, проживающих на территории РСФСР.

§ 2. Союз распространяет свою деятельность в пределах РСФСР.

§ 3. Центральное Правление Союза имеет место пребывания в гор. Москве.

§ 4. Союз имеет печать со своим наименованием.

II. Цель Союза.

§ 5. Союз имеет целью объединение и организацию цыганских трудящихся масс, проживающих на территории РСФСР, защиту их интересов, поднятие культурного уровня и организацию взаимопомощи.

III. Метод осуществления.

§ 6. Для осуществления указанных в § 5 целей Союз:

а) входит с ходатайством в соответствующие органы власти в тех случаях, когда необходимо содействие их для осуществления того или иного постановления Союза.

б) Открывает с соблюдением существующих правил вечернюю воскресную школу.

в) Устраивает клубы, библиотеки и национальные театры и студии.

г) Оказывает содействие цыганским трудящимся массам в организации касс взаимопомощи, кооперативов, сельско-хоз. артелей и коммун и производственных мастерских.

д) Издает на цыганском языке журналы, газеты, брошюры и учебники, ведет моральную борьбу с общественным злом среди своих членов.

е) Как-то: с пьянством, гаданьем, попрошайничеством, азартными играми, кочевничеством.

ж) Приобретает, отчуждает и арендует имущество, необходимое для целей Союза и заключает договора и сделки непосредственно отвечающие задачам Союза.

Примечание: Все поименованные в п. 6 полномочья осуществляются на основании действующих законов.

IV. Организация и состав Союза.

§ 7. Союз состоит из городских или волостных, уездных, районных и губернских или областных объединений.

§ 8. Основной и наименьшей ячейкой Союза являются его волостное или городское отделение и учреждение с количеством членов не менее 10 человек.

§ 9. Высшим органом управления Союза является Всероссийский Съезд. [...]

V. Состав Союза.

§ 14. Членами Союза могут быть все цыгане, имеющие право избирать и быть избранными в Советы, проживающие на территории РСФСР достигшие 18-ти летнего возраста и признающие настоящий устав.

§ 15. Зачисление в члены производится Правлением Отделения с последующим утверждением на общем собрании Отделения.

§ 16. Выбытие из числа членов Союза может иметь место по личному заявлению выбываемого, или по постановлению двух третей наличного числа членов Отделения Союза по спискам, при чем исключение в последнем случае может иметь место только при наличии уголовно-наказуемого деяния.

Примечание: Члены Союза, не внесшие установленного членского взноса в течении 3-х месяцев, считаются выбывшими из состава Союза, но вступают вновь без нового утверждения по внесению членских взносов за истекшее время.

§ 17. Сведения о личном составе Союза представляются Союзом ежегодно в НКВД и о личном составе отделений Союза в тот губернский Административный Отдел, в котором зарегистрированы эти отделения Союза.

§ 18. Губернский Союз может быть организован при наличии не менее 10-ти чел. членов.

VI. Съезды Союза, Общие собрания Отделений и предметы их ведения.

§ 19. Не реже 1 раза в год по получении соответствующего разрешения от подлежащих органов власти, созывается Всероссийский Съезд. Место Съезда, порядок его созыва и срок определяются Центральным Правлением Союза. [...]

§ 26. Центральное Правление управляет всеми делами Союза.

§ 27. Средства Союза состояются: а) из членских взносов, размер коих устанавливается общим собранием отделений; б) пожертвований, и в) доходов от предприятий, устраиваемых Союзом в соответствии с его задачами.

VII. Ликвидация Союза.

§ 28. Союз может быть закрыт, как по распоряжению правительственных органов, так и по постановлению Общего собрания членов.

§ 29. В случае ликвидации Союза оставшееся имущество направляется по указанию Народного Комиссариата Внутренних Дел.

Настоящий Устав зарегистрирован в Административном Отделе Центр. Адм. Управления НКВД за № 68. 24 июля 1925 г.

Врид. Нач[альник] Адм[инистративного] Отд[ела] (подпись).

::

Copy

This Statute is endorsed by NKVD. July 23, 1925.

Deputy National Commissioner of Internal Affairs (Signature).

Head of Central Administrative Directorate (signature).

Statute of the Union of Gypsies, living on the territory of RSFSR

I. General considerations.

§ 1. The Union of Gypsies, living on the territory of RSFSR, is established on the basis of this Statute.

§ 2. The Union extends its activities within the boundaries of RSFSR.

§ 3. The location of the Central Administration is in the city of Moscow.

§ 4. The Union has its own stamp bearing its name.

II. Aim of the Union.

§ 5. The Union aims at uniting and organising the Gypsy working masses, living on the territory of the RSFSR, protecting their interests, raising their cultural level, and organising mutual assistance.

III. Method of implementation.

§ 6. In order to implement the aims set out in point 5, the Union shall:

(a) Intercede with the relevant authorities in those cases where assistance is required in order to implement one or another decree of the Union.

b) In observance of the existing rules, it will open an evening Sunday school.

c) Organise clubs, libraries and national theatres and studios.

d) Provide support for the Gypsy working masses in organizing units for mutual assistance, cooperatives, agricultural artels, communes, and productions' workshops.

e) Publish in the Gypsy language magazines, newspapers, brochures and textbooks; conduct moral fight against the public evil among the Gypsies.

f) Such as: drunkenness, fortune-telling, begging, gambling, nomadism.

(g) Acquires, expropriates and leases a property required in order to meet the aims of the Union and concludes contracts and deals directly related to the tasks of the Union.

Note: All the powers referred to in point 6 are realised on the basis of the current legislation.

IV. Organisation and composition of the Union.

§ 7. The Union is made up of units on cities or *volost*, *uezd*, *rayon* and governorate (or *oblast*) level.

§ 8. The main and the smallest part of the Union are its *volost* or city units with a minimum of 10 members.

§ 9. The highest governing authority of the Union is the All-Russian Congress. [...]

V. Composition of the Union.

§ 14. Members of the Union may be all Gypsies who have the right to elect and to be elected in the Councils, who live on the territory of the RSFSRs, who have turned the age of 18, and who recognise this Statute.

§ 15. The assignment to membership is made by the Management of the Department with subsequent approval of the General Assembly of the Department.

§ 16. Members of the Union may leave on personal requests, or by a ruling two-thirds of the present number of members in the Department of the Union; the exclusion in the latter case may take place only in the case of a criminal-punishable act.

Note: Members of the Union who have not paid the determined membership fees for three months are deemed to have left the Union, however, they are reinstated in it again without a new confirmation after they have paid the fees for the expired time.

§ 17. Staff reports for members of the Union are presented annually by the Union to the NKVD and for the staff of the Union's departments in that Administrative Section where these Union Departments have been registered.

§ 18. An Union on *Governorate level* may be organised in the presence of no less than 10 members.

VI. Congresses of the Union, General Assemblies of Departments and the ways they take place.

§ 19. Not less than once a year, after receiving the relevant authorisation by the responsible authorities, the All-Russian Congress convened. The venue of the Congress, the order and the terms of the meeting are determined by the Central Directorate of the Union. [...]

§ 26. The Central Directorate manages all activities of the Union.

§ 27. The resources of the Union consist of: (a) membership fees, the amount of which is determined by the General Assemblies of the Departments; (b) donations; and (c) income from events organised by the Union in accordance with its tasks.

VII. Liquidation of the Union.

§ 28. The Union may be closed down both by order of the governmental bodies and by a decree of the General Assembly of the members.

§ 29. In the event of the liquidation of the Union, the remainder of his property shall be directed according to the direction of the National Commissioner for Internal Affairs.

This Statute is registered in the Administrative Division of the Central Administrative Directorate of NKVD under No. 68. July 24, 1925.

Temporary Head of the Administrative Department (Signature).

Source: GARF, f. A 259, op. 106, d. 2253, l. 20-24.

Prepared for publication by Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov.

12.1.7 *The Alphabet of the Gypsy Language*

[Бланк] Р.С.Ф.С.Р. Народный Комиссариат по Просвещению.

10.05.1927 г. № 63807.

Всероссийскому Союзу Цыган.

Б[ольшой] Черкасский пер[еулок], помещение 13.

По вопросу:

Вопрос об алфавите для цыганского языка был проработан по поручению Главнауки Наркомпроса учеными специалистами и обсужден в Учено-Консультационном совещании в составе представителей Главнауки и Совнацмена, ученых специалистов и представителей Всероссийского Союза Цыган. Совещание единогласно высказалось за целесообразность принятия алфавита на основе русского шрифта по соображениям как научного, так и практического характера.

Принятый Совещанием алфавит имеет следующие начертания:

а, б, в, г, ġ (как в русском языке в слове “боги”), д, е, ё, ж, з, и, й, к, л, м, н, о, п, р, с, т, у, ф, х, ц, ч, дж (близкий русскому “ч”, с элементом “ж” вместо “ш”), ш, ь, ы, э, ю, я.

Сравнительно с русским алфавитом:

1. нет русского “щ”.
2. прибавлено “ġ” и “дж”.

Констатируя, что вышеприведенный алфавит выработан с участием специалистов и с привлечением научного Института Этнических Культур Народов Востока, Наркомпрос считает возможным рекомендовать его Цыганскому Союзу для проведения в жизнь.

Нарком по Просвещению ... [подпись] (А. Луначарский).

Зам. Начальник Главнауки ... [подпись]. Секретарь Управления ... [подпись].

∴

[Letterhead] RSFSR People's Commissariat for Education

10.05.1927, № 63807.

To: All-Russian Gypsy Union

Bolshoy Cherkaskiy alley, Premises 13.

On the issue:

The question of the alphabet for the Gypsy language was worked out on behalf of the Glavnauka Narkompros [1] by scholar experts and discussed at the Scientific-Consultative Meeting, consisting of representatives of the Glavnauka and the Sovnatsmen [2], scholar experts and representatives of the All-Russian Union of Gypsies [3]. The meeting unanimously supported the suitability of adopting an alphabet based on the Russian font for reasons of both a scientific and a practical nature.

The Alphabet adopted by the Meeting has the following form:

а, б, в, г, ġ (as in Russian in the word ‘бори’), д, е, ё, ж, з, и, й, к, л, м, н, о, п, р, с, т, у, ф, х, ц, ч, дж (close to Russian ‘ч’, with element of ‘ж’ instead of ‘ш’), ш, ь, ы, э, ю, я.

Compared to the Russian alphabet:

1. there is no Russian ‘щ’.
2. added ‘ġ’ и ‘дж’.

Noting that the above alphabet was developed with the participation of experts and with the involvement of the academic Institute of Ethnic Cultures of the Peoples of the East, Narkompros considers it possible to recommend it to the Gypsy Union for implementation.

The People's Commissar for Education ... [signature] (A. Lunacharskiy).

Deputy Head of Glavnauka ... [signature]. Secretary if Directorate ... [signature].

Notes

1. General Directorate of Scientific, Academic-Artistic and Museum Institutions (*Glavnauka*) at the People's Commissariat of Education of the RSFSR (*Narkompros*).
2. Central Council for the Education of National Minorities of the RSFSR (*Sovnatsmen*) at collegium (1925-29) of Narkompros.
3. The participants in this meeting accepted the proposals of the Committee for creation of the Gypsy language alphabet. Members of the Committee were Prof. Maxim V. Sergievsky from Moscow State University, his assistant Tatiana V. Wentzel, and as representatives of the All-Russian Union of Gypsies – Nikolay A. Pankov, Nina A. Dudarova and Nikolay Rogozhev (Друц & Гецслер, 1990, p. 295).

Source: LANB, f. Николай Панков; a copy of this Instruction is preserved also in OGMLT, f. 29, op. 1, d. 49, l. 33.

Prepared for publication by Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov.

12.1.8 *An Appeal to Gypsy Inhabitants of RSFSR*

Чарорэ свѣтостыр скхэдэнтѣпэ кхэтанэ!

Всероссийский Союз Цыган, проживающих на территории Р. С. Ф. С. Р.
К цыганскому населению Р.С.Ф.С.Р

Дэш бэрш палэ сарэ тыкнэ народы сыр: рома, киргизы, башкиры и ваврэ народы, савэ особенно сыс притасадэ кралѣса и ранса, – пирдал бутяритко власть кэрна пэскиро джибэн, сыр лэнгэ кэмалпэ.

Сарэ фэлдытка народы, окочевники кана лэнэ тэ бэшэмпэ пхув, тэзалэмпэ сельско хулаибнаса. Лэнгэ дэнэ сы пхув, енэ кэрдэ пескирэ гава, сэ гава киргизэндэ, башкирэндэ и сарэндэ кон еще на гара псирдя сыр балвал. Сы пэскирэ школы, каждо бэршэса кочевники бутыр и бутыр пириджяна на оседло джибэн, дэ форья и гава, и галев, сыг лэн на удыххэса и лэна только тэ разракирэн ваш лэнгэ сыр дэ сказки.

Оседла народы савэ залэнаспэ дэ форья мэлконэ бутяса пэ кхэр, кустари или соса нибудь таргискирнас, адыка же пириджяна пэ гавитко хулаибэн. Бутяритко, советско государство адасавэн манушэн зоралэс подрикирла, собы локхэдыр адасавэнгэ манушэнгэ сыс тэ залэспэ пэскиро рэндоса, собы сыс лэнгэ пэскиро вэнгло, пэскиро хулаибэн. Пашил адалэстэ советско государство зоралэс камэл сарэн манушэн, кон сы замардо и на сыклякирдо – тэ сыклякирэл. Сыкляибэ кэрла локхэдыр джибэн. Ваш адава откэрнапэ кана разна союзы, общества, комитеты

и ваврэ штэты. Адасаво же штэтоса ваш романэ чавэнгэ сы Всероссийско Союзо Ромэн, саво еще кхарлапэ тыкнэ лавэса В. С. Ц. Адава Союзо кэрла буты ваш сарэ ромэнгэ, савэ дживэна и ладэна пиро Советско, Бутяритко Россия.

Кана еще рома дживэна одолэса, со зумавэна, драбакирна, дорэсэнэ пэ тарго кофоса или чорибнаса. Нэ каждо дэвэсэса романо джиибэн ячэла пхарэдыр и пхарэдыр. Пало зумаибэ и дра[ба]кирибэ, и штрафуют, и обкэдэна и марна. Пэ тарго пашил ромэнца тэрдо гадже лоляса повязка пэ васт, чачо может тэ явэл, со адэлэ гадже кэрна пэскири буты и нагараз шукар, нэ енэ, патянтэ ромалэ, сы сыр перва чирикклэ, пало савэндэ явэна бут ваврэ барэ стаенца. Сарэ рома, – всажэ полэна кана, со ромэскэ нанэ гораз зоралы патин гаджестыр. Чорибэн грэн зоралэс зродэна и кокорэ гадже зоралэс холякирдэ сы пэ ромэндэ пало чорибэн грэн, и сыс на екхва, со гадже и марнас и хачкирнас на манушитко ромэн, напучен сы ли бангэ адэлэ рома дэ чорибэн грэн или на. Адава ракирла пало адава, со ром лэя гаджес пало джидо мас и ев дэла годлы.

Пашил адалэса рома дэ зима, дэ мразы дживэна сыр рува, дэ шилалэ и розмардэ, пхуранэ кхэра, савэ сы зачурдэнэ хуланса, би фрэнчтэнгирэ и бовэнгирэ.

Всероссийско союзо ромэн, саво сы, кэ лав тэ пхэнэс, скэдэна ромэндыр, тховэла сари пэскири зор, собы тэ кэрэс локхэдыр романо джиибэн, саво кана сы зоралэс пхаро. Романо Союзо мангя правительство, собы ев помог амэнгэ тэ роскэдэспэ, сыр фэдэдыр тэ [кэрэс] пирдал комиссия пашил комиссариато, савэстэ сы рэндэ ваше пхувья.

Адая комисия кэрла учето романэнгэ, кон амэндыр закамэл тэ залэлпэ гавитконэ хулаибнаса, дэла адасавэнгэ ромэнгэ пхув и ловэ ко штар шэл состэ пэ хулаибэн.

Каждо семья, сави закамэл тэ обкэрэл пхув (тэ залэлпэ крестьянствовоса), может тэ подэл дэ пэскиро гавитко (земельно) отдело тэ подэл лыл ваш одова, со бы тэ лэс пхув дэ адава штэто, кай дживэла, или дэ вавир штэто, карик закамэн. Пхув дэлапэ би ловэнгиро, би ловэнгиро кэрлапэ и обмеро и ваврэ адасавэ бутя. Ваше форитконэнгэ ромэнгэ, Союзо кэрэла, артели, сыкляибнаскирэ мастерска, кай рома высылена кэ сави нибудь буты. Ваш чавэнгэ, Союзо откэрла школы, сыклякирла кэ грамота и кэ ремесло, собы ёнэ, коли вибарьена, тэ перекэрэн амаро джиибэн фэдэдыр. Ухтылла амарэнгэ тыкно чавэнгэ тэ кхэлэс пэ гэра, пэ улицы пало ясвитка гаспря. Бут сы и тэрнэ чавэндыр, савэ камнэ бы вавир джи-ибэн, нэ темнота и одова со енэ нанэ сыклякирдэ ни кэ грамота, ни кэ ремесло – на дэла лэнгэ зор тэ пирикэрэс пэскиро джиибэн. Союзо ваш адасавэнгэ адякэ же откэрла школы.

Ромалэ и ромнялэ, союзо мангэла тэ прилэ сарэ деса амарэ лава и амари буты. Мэк ей авэла сарэнгэ, кици амэн сы, пэскирьяса, общенаса бутяса. Комиссия пиро землеустройство ромэн лэла тэ выбичавэл и тумэнгэ разна письменна вопросы пиро гавитка и форитка отделы. Чинэнте пэ лэндэ, со треби, и тумэнгэ пиро адалэ вопросники-анкеты лэна тэ дэн пхувья и ловэ. Форитка и сарэ, кон дживэла пэ екх штэто, бичавэнте пэскирэн тыкно чавэн дэ школы. Сыклен и кокорэ грамотакэ.

Сыг выджяла букварё пэ амаро родно чиб. Рипирэнте, со грамотно мануш локхэс кэрла пэскиро джибэн.

Только сыкляибнаса и ремеслоса и оседло джиибнаса газдаса пэс и тэрдеваса и психэса кэ псико ваврэ манушэнца, савэ кэрна советско государство.

САСТЫПЭН ТУМЭНГЭ.

Председатель Всероссийского Союза Цыган А. С. Таранов.

Члены Правления: Н. Панков, Н. Дударова, Д. Поляков.

Секретарь ВСЦ И. Лебедев.

::

Пролетарии всех стран, соединяйтесь!

Всероссийский Союз Цыган, проживающих на территории Р. С. Ф. С. Р.

К цыганскому населению Р.С.Ф.С.Р.

Десять лет тому назад, благодаря Октябрьской Революции, все национальные меньшинства, угнетаемые царским правительством, получили право свободно строить свое благополучие.

Кочующие племена, с помощью Советской власти, начинают садиться на землю, занимаются сельским хозяйством. У них есть своя земля, свои хутора, деревни, села, свои школы. С каждым годом число кочевников уменьшается и скоро их совсем не будет.

Оседлые племена, ранее занимавшиеся кустарничеством, мелкой торговлей и посредничеством, также переходят на сельское хозяйство. Советская власть стремится улучшить жизнь раскрепощенных, малых народностей, дать им возможность свободно и спокойно трудиться, иметь свой угол, свое хозяйство. В первую очередь она старается просветить их, сделать грамотными, чтобы они смогли сами улучшить свою жизнь. Для этого организовываются Союзы, Общества, Комитеты и другие объединения.

Такой организацией для цыганской народности является Всероссийский Союз Цыган, который называется сокращенно В.С.Ц. Союз ведет работу среди бедного и безграмотного цыганского населения, проживающего и кочующего по Советской России.

До сих пор еще большинство цыган добывают себе пропитание гаданием, попрошайничеством, торговлей на конном рынке, а иногда и конокрадством. Но с каждым днем их положение становится все хуже и тяжелее. За гадание штрафуют. На конном рынке появились специалисты от государства, которым крестьяне больше доверяют, чем цыганам.

Конокрадство строго преследуется, да и у самых крестьян оно вызывает озлобление и часто бывают убийства на этой почве. Кочевое население на зиму ютится в холодных и полуразрушенных домах без окон и печей.

Всероссийский Союз Цыган, Правление которого состоит из цыган, стремится помочь им и улучшить их тяжелое положение. По ходатайству Союза Цыган, Советским Правительством, при Переселенческом Отделе Народного Комиссариата Земледелия, создана специальная комиссия по переводу цыган на оседлость и наделение землей.

Эта комиссия берет на учет цыган, которые желают заниматься сельским хозяйством, дает им землю и денежную помощь в размере 400 рублей на каждое хозяйство.

Каждая семья цыган, желающая обрабатывать землю (заниматься крестьянством), может подать в свой местный земельный орган заявку и получить участок земли по месту своего нахождения, а если там свободной земли не найдется, то его могут переселить на свободную государственную землю, куда он захочет.

Земля дается бесплатно. Обмер участков, распределение участков производятся тоже бесплатно.

Для городского населения цыган Союз создает различные трудовые артели, учебно-производственные мастерские, где цыгане могут получить какую-нибудь трудовую специальность.

Для наших детей, которые сейчас по улицам пляшут за копейки или выпрашивают на хлеб, Союз открывает школы, обучает их грамоте, приучает к ремеслу, чтобы они могли в будущем перестроить нашу жизнь по новому, по лучшему.

Много есть и взрослых, которые хотели-бы жить по иному, да мешает им темнота, безграмотность. Для них Союз тоже открывает школы.

Так как цыгане разбросаны по всей России, то Союз, для того чтобы легче было вести работу среди них, объединяет цыган на местах в отделения Союза, которые и проводят в жизнь цели и задачи Союза среди членов своего отделения.

Товарищи цыгане! Союз призывает вас принять горячее участие в работе своего Союза.

Комиссия по землеустройству цыган будет присылать вам специальные анкеты на места, через местные органы. Заполняйте эти анкеты и вам будут, согласно этих анкет, отводиться участки земли и даваться денежные государственная помощь.

Городское, оседлое население цыган! Посылайте детей своих в школы! Обучайтесь сами грамоте! Скоро будет издана азбука на цыганском языке. Помните, что чем человек грамотнее, тем легче он может устроить свою жизнь.

Таким образом, постепенно переводя цыган на сельское хозяйство, изживая неграмотность, обучая их ремеслу, объединяя их в Отделения, Союз поднимет самосознание нашего отсталого народа и поставит его наравне с другими народами, которые участвуют в строительстве нашего Советского государства.

С товарищеским приветом.

Председатель Всероссийского Союза Цыган А. С. Таранов. 1927.

Члены Правления: Н. Панков, Н. Дударова, Д. Поляков.

Секретарь ВСЦ И. Лебедев.

Главлит No. 88.089. Зак[аз] 1643. Тираж 2 000 экз[емпляров].

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Workers of the world, unite!

All-Russian Union of the Gypsies living on the territory of RSFSR
To Gypsy Inhabitants of RSFSR [1].

Ten years ago, thanks to the October Revolution, all national minorities [2] oppressed by the tsarist [3] government received the right to freely build their well-being.

The nomadic tribes, with the help of the Soviet authorities [4], begin to settle on the ground, engaged in agriculture [5]. They have their own stading, their own hamlets, villages, own schools. Every year the number of nomads decreases and soon there will be none at all [6].

The sedentary tribes, who previously were engaged in handicrafts, petty trade and were selling something, also started to engage in agriculture. Soviet power seeks to improve the lives of liberated, small nationalities, to give them the opportunity to work freely and calmly, to have their own corner to dwell, their own household. First of all, she tries to enlighten them, make them literate, so that they can improve their lives themselves. For this, Unions, Societies, Committees and other associations are organised. Such an organisation for the Gypsy people is the All-Russian Union of Gypsies, which is called abbreviated VSTs. The Union is working among the poor and illiterate [7] Gypsy population living and wandering around Soviet Russia.

Until now, the majority of Gypsies is still earning their living from fortune-telling, begging, trading horses on market, and sometimes from horse-stealing. But every day Romani life is getting worse and harder. For fortune-telling [8] is imposed fine [9]. Specialists from the state appeared on the horse market, whom peasants trust more than Gypsies [10]. Horse theft is strictly persecuted, and it causes the peasants themselves to feel hatred, and there are often killings on this basis [11]. Nomadic population, in winter, live [12] in cold and destroyed houses, which are without windows and stoves.

The All-Russian Union of Gypsies, whose Board consists of Gypsies, seeks to help them and improve their difficult situation [13]. At the request of the Union of Roma, the Soviet Government, under the Resettlement Department of the People's Commissariat for Agriculture, created a special commission for the transfer of Gypsies to sedentary life and allotment of land [14]. This commission register the Gypsies who wish to engage in agriculture, gives them land and cash assistance in the amount of 400 rubles per household.

Every Gypsy family, who wish to cultivate the land (to engage in peasantry), may apply to their agricultural department and to obtain land either in the place where they live, or if there is no free land they could be resettled to another free state land, where they want.

Land is given free of charge. Measurement of plots and other procedures are also free of charge.

For the urban Gypsies, the Union of Gypsies creates working artels, training production workshops, where the Gypsies will be taught some worker's profession. For our children, who are now dancing on the streets for a penny or asking for bread, the Union opens schools, teaches them to read and write, teaches them occupation so that in the future they can rebuild our lives in a new, better way.

There are many adults, who want to live a different life, but are hindered by their darkness and lack of literacy. For them the Union also opens schools.

Since the Gypsies are scattered throughout the whole of Russia, the Union, in order to make it easier to carry the work among them, unites the Roma in the regions in the branches of the Union, which carry out the goals and objectives of the Union among the members of a local branch [15].

Comrades Gypsies! The Union calls on you to take an ardent part in the work of your Union [16].

The Gypsy Land Management Commission will send you special questionnaires through local authorities. Fill out these questionnaires and according to these questionnaires you will be allocated land plots and state financial assistance.

Urban settled Gypsies! Send your children to school! Teach yourselves literacy too! Soon to be published is an alphabet book of Romani language. Remember that the more literate a person, the easier it is for him to arrange his life.

Thus, gradually transferring Gypsies to agriculture, eradicating illiteracy, teaching them craft, uniting them into Departments, the Union will raise the self-awareness of our backward people and put them on an equal footing with other peoples who are involved in the construction of our Soviet state [17].

With comradely greetings [18].

Chairperson of All-Russian Union of Gypsies A. S. Taranov.

Members of the Board of Directors: N. Pankov, N. Dudarova, D. Polyakov.

Secretary of VSTs I. Lebedev.

Glavlit No. 88.089. Order 1643. run 2,000 issues.

Notes

1. The text is not a straightforward translation from one language to another, as there are two language versions (Romani and Russian) of the same text. For an easier understanding, the English translation is made from the Russian original. The famous slogan "Workers of the world, unite!" in Romani language version is translated as "The poors of the world, unite". Further differences in the text are outlined below.

2. In the text in Romani language the term national minorities is clarified as: small people, such as the Roma, Kyrgyz, Bashkirs and other peoples.
3. In Romani language, the clarification 'and lords' is added.
4. The phrase "with the help of the Soviet authorities" was dropped from the Romani language text.
5. In the Romani language text, the following sentence is added: They are given with the land, they have built their own villages, there are the own villages of Kyrgyzs, Bashkirs and all peoples, who were just a short time ago wandering like a wind.
6. In the Romani language text: "soon they will not be seen, and [people] will narrate about them, like in fairy-tales".
7. The words "poor and illiterate" was dropped from the Romani language text.
8. The word "charms" is added in the text in Romani.
9. The phrase "are robbed, and beaten" is added to the Romani language text.
10. This sentence is replaced in the Romani language text with following: "In the horse market, *gadže* with a red armband are standing close to Roma; it is possible indeed, that those *gadže* do their job not very well, but – believe, Roma – they are only first swallows, big flocks will follow them".
11. In the Romani language text the following was added: "and it happened not once, when *gadže* either murdered or severely burned Roma, without asking are they guilty in a horse theft or not. This suggests that the Gypsy took the *gadžo* for live meat, and he raises a cry."
12. In the Romani language text the following was added: "as wolves".
13. In the Romani language text, it was also added: "which is now very difficult".
14. In the Romani language text the sentence is changed to "The Union of Gypsies has asked the government to help us to understand what way is better for acting through the Commission, which is in the structure of the People's Commissariat of Agriculture".
15. This sentence was dropped from the Romani language text.
16. This is changed in the Romani language text to: "Roma men and women, the Union asks you to accept openheartedly our words and work. Let it be for everybody, as much as for us, and for our common work".
17. In the Romani language text: "Only education and profession, and sedentary life will help us to raise ourselves and to stand shoulder to shoulder with other peoples who are building our Soviet state."
18. The text in Romani language ended instead with the traditional greeting: "We wish YOU GOOD HEALTH".

Source: GARF, f. P 9550, op. 2, d. 2010, l. 1.

Prepared for publication by Elena Marushiakova, Vesselin Popov and Viktor Shapoval.

12.1.9 *Organising the Gypsy Union in Belarus*

Копия Союзу ВСЦ.

Протокол №. 2

Общего собрания граждан цыган,

состоявшегося в м[есте] Березино 19 августа 1926 года

Присутствовало 25 человек.

Под председательством Пасевича, члена Граховского и секретаря Крючкова, в присутствии секретаря Райкома КПБ т. Ипатова и секретаря Райкома ЛКСМБ т. Громова.

Повестка дня: 1. Цели Всесоюзного Союза Цыган и об организации Союза Цыган по местам. 2. Как вести работу среди цыган по организации Союза. 3. Текущие дела.

Слушали:

1. Доклад уполномоченного по организации Союза Цыган по БССР тов. Граховского, о целях организации Союза Цыган.

Высказались:

Зверович: Мы согласны сесть на оседлость и взяться за физический полезный труд тогда, когда мы получим материальную помощь от наших советских органов.

Пасевич: Высказанное т. Зверовичем поддерживаем, мы просим от наших советских органов помочь нам материально сесть на оседлость и взяться за полезный физический труд, мы просим чтобы вели среди нас культурно-воспитательную работу, чтобы было предоставлено нам место в наши учебные заведения, как-то: семилетки, рабфаки, профшколы и т.д., чтобы нашу молодежь втягивали в производство к общественно-полезному труду и поэтому просим от наших советских органов в лице нашего уполномоченного по организации Союза цыган в Белоруссии, как можно скорее улучшить нашу экономическую жизнь. Мы цыгане желаем заняться полезным физическим трудом и культурно-просветительной работой.

Зверович, Алексей: Мы, благодаря наших тяжелых условий, ведя кочевую бродячую жизнь, мы должны были воровать, гадать, попрошайничать, делать злоупотребления, добывая себе кусок хлеба. Мы такие же граждане советской республики, как остальные нацменьшинства, мы должны идти в ногу с нацменьшинствами за советскую власть. Мы просим советские органы посадить нас на оседлость, приучить нас полезному физическому труду, открыть на кредит на семена и сельскохозяйственной инвентарь. Мы надеемся, что мы в недалеком будущем от наших советских органов получим то, что мной было указано.

Высказался секретарь Райкома КПБ т. Ипатов о национальном вопросе.

Высказался председатель Райисполкома т. Крючков, который охарактеризовал цыганский кочующий быт и к чему должны стремиться цыгане.

Постановили: Мы, собравшиеся цыгане, заслушав доклад уполномоченного Союза Цыган по организации Союза Цыган по БССР т. Граховского, просим советское правительство ускорить мероприятия в отношении нашей оседлости. Мы желаем заниматься общественно-полезным трудом и надеемся, что правительство нам поможет материально. Кроме того, просим уполномоченного по организации союза цыган передать Белорусскому правительству нашу благодарность за мероприятия по улучшению образа жизни путем земледеления и друг.

Текущие дела:

Слушали: Об организации кассы взаимопомощи. Т. Граховский информировал о значении таковой.

Постановили: Все неуступившие в кассу взаимопомощи вступить сейчас.

Председатель: ... (Пасевич). Член ... (Граховский). Секретарь ... (Ключков).
Уполномоченный по работе среди цыган в БССР ... (Граховский).

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Copy to the Union of VSTs.

Minutes No. 2

From the General Assembly of the Gypsy Citizens,
Held in the city of Berezino on August 19, 1926.

25 people were present.

Under the chairmanship of Pasevich, member Grakhovskiy and secretary Kryuchkov, in the presence of Secretary of Raykom KPB, comrade Ipatov, and Secretary of Raykom of LKSMB, comrade Gromov.

Agenda: 1. Goals of the VSTs and the organisation of a Union of Gypsies on the grass-roots. 2. How to do the work with the Gypsies for establishing of the Union. 3. Ongoing tasks.

Listened:

1. A report by the plenipotentiary on the establishment of a Union of Gypsies in BSSR, on the tasks of organising the Union of Gypsies, comrade Grakhovskiy.

Speakers:

Z'verovich: We agree to move to a settled way of life and start dealing with physical labour that is useful for the society, when we receive material help from our Soviet authorities.

Pasevich: We second Comrade Z'verovich, we ask our Soviet authorities to help us materially in order to settle down and start dealing with physical labour that is useful for the society; we ask them to do among us cultural-educational work, we ask for the provision of places in our educational establishments, such as *semiletka*, *rabfaks*, professional school, etc.; in order that our youth becomes attracted to work that is useful for the society, we ask our Soviet authorities, through our plenipotentiary, for the organisation of the Union of Gypsies in BSSR, as quickly as possible, to improve our economic life. We, Gypsies, are willing to start to do physical labour that is useful for the society and culturally-educational work.

Z'verovich, Aleksey: In the past we, due to the hard conditions, leading a nomadic lifestyle, were forced to steal, tell fortunes, to do abuse in order to get a piece of bread. We are citizens of the Soviet Republic, just like the rest of the national minorities, we are obliged to keep up with national minorities in the name of the Soviet power. We ask the Soviet authorities to settle us down, teach us to do physical labour that is useful for the society, to give us a credit for seeds and agricultural equipment. We hope that in the near future we shall get from our Soviet authorities what I have identified.

The Secretary of the Raykom of KPB, Comrade Ipatov, spoke about the national question.

The Chairman of the Regional Executive Committee, Comrade Kryuchkov, spoke and described the Gypsies' travelling lifestyle and revealed what Gypsies should be striving towards.

Decided: We, the gathered Gypsies, hearing the report of the Commissioner of the Union of the Gypsies on the matter for the organisation of Union of Gypsies in BSSR, comrade Grakhovskiy, we ask the Soviet Government to speed up the measures towards our sedentarisation. We want to engage in socially-useful work and we hope that the government will help us materially. In addition, we are asking the plenipotentiary for the organisation of the Union of Gypsies to convey to the Belarussian Government our gratitude for the arrangements seeking to improve the way of life through land allocation and others.

Ongoing tasks:

Listened: For the organising of a unit for mutual aid. Comrade Grakhovskiy informed about its relevance.

Decided: All who have not joined the loan society for mutual aid should join now.

Chairman: ... (Pasevich). Member ... (Grakhovskiy). Secretary ... (Klyuchkov).
Authorised for work with the Gypsies in the BSSR ... (Grakhovskiy).

Source: GARF, f. P 3316, op. 20, d. 653, l. 16-17.

Prepared for publication by Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov.

12.1.10 *The Report by A. F. Grakhovskiy*

В Всероссийский Союз Цыган

Уполномоченный по работе среди цыган БССР т. Граховский А. Ф.

Доклад

1. Когда я приехал в Минск я предъявил свое полномочье, которое мне выдано Союзом Цыган РСФСР, вопрос был поставлен на заседания нацкомиссии при ВЦИКе БССР, где я выступил с докладом и информировал о Союзе Цыган РСФСР и уполномоченных каждой отдельной республики.

2. Нацкомиссия вынесла резолюцию, прежде чем приступить к работе, необходимо выяснить сколько находится цыган на территории БССР, а для этого необходимо связаться с окружными Нацкомиссиями, чтобы получить сведения.

3. Сведения окружные Нацкомиссии дают неточные. Почему. Потому что цыгане не пишут в документах, что они цыгане, а просто белоруссы, но все-таки получены сведения около 300 семей.

4. Из них оседлых почти нет, а квалифицированных работников также не много, как-то: медники, сапожники и шорники. Сельским хозяйством совсем не занимаются.

5. Активистов очень мало, со всех полученных сведения нашлись начетыре человека. Следующие товарищи: 1. Адамов, В. В. – профессор ботаники. 2. Козловский, А[лександр] С. – слушатель военно-морского училища. 3. Туря, [Г. А.] – бухгалтер Наркомзема. 4. Козловский, И[ван] С. – городской житель. 5. Граховский, А. Ф. уполномоченный ВСЦ.

6. Из этих активистов создана инициативная группа по созданию Союза Цыган БССР.

7. Наркомземом отпущены для цыганских артелей 2 совхоза в среднем 500 десятин земли и жилые дома и постройки. В одном совхозе 10 десятин, а другом в среднем 5. Но самый главный вопрос о получении инвентаря для цыганских артелей живого и мертвого. На получение для цыганских оседлых семейств от Сельхозбанка есть предпосылки получить на каждую семью по 200 руб[лей].

8. Предполагается организовать коллектив металлистов в гор. Минск из 17 человек исключительно цыган, которые будут работать только на заказ. На организацию коллектива по смете требуется 2 770 р[ублей]. Но отпускают 500 руб[лей], а остальные деньги неизвестно, где взять. Я прошу Всероссийский Союз Цыган ходатайствовать перед высшими органами об оказании мне матерьяльной помощи в работе и дать указания о дальнейшей работе.

Уполномоченный по работе среди цыган БССР ... (Граховский).

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To the All-Russian Union of the Gypsies.

Authorised to work among the Gypsies in the BSSR, Comrade A. F. Grakhovskiy.

Report

1. When I arrived in Minsk, I presented my letter of attorney which was issued to me by the Union of Gypsies in the RSFSR and the matter was brought in a meeting of the Commission for Nationalities at the VTsIK of BSSR, where I presented a report and informed about the Union of Gypsies in the RSFSR and about the authorised persons in each individual republic [1].

2. The Commission for Nationalities came out with a resolution that, before proceeding to work, it is necessary to clarify how many Gypsies are there in the territory of the BSSR and that is why we need to contact the Commissions for Nationalities of the districts in order to get information.

3. The Commission for Nationalities of the districts give inaccurate information because the Gypsies do not write in the papers that they are Gypsies but simply declare themselves to be Belarussians, but regardless of that, information has been received about 300 families.

4. Among them, there are almost none who are settled while the skilled workers are very few, for example: coppersmiths, shoemakers and saddlers. They do not deal with agriculture at all.

5. There are very few activists; based on all available information four people were found. These are the following comrades: 1. V. V. Adamov – Professor of Botany. 2. Alexander S. Kozlovskiy – a student at the Military-Marine School. 3. G. A. Turya – an accountant at Narkomzem. 4. Ivan S. Kozlovskiy – urban citizen. 5. A. F. Grakhovskiy – plenipotentiary of the VSTs.

6. An initiative group for the establishment of a Union of Gypsies in the BSSR was established by these activists.

7. From Narkomzem are allocated to Gypsy artels in 2 sovkhozs, an average of 500 *desiatin* [2] of land, residential homes and farm buildings. In one of the sovkhozs there is an average of 10 *desiatin* per family, while in the other an average of 5. But the main question is that of receiving the inventory of the Gypsy artels [3], livestock and materials. There are opportunities each settled Gypsy family to receive from Selkhozbank 200 Rubles.

8. It is envisaged a metalworking collective to be organised in the city of Minsk, of 17 people, who are exclusively Gypsies who will work only by orders. According to preliminary estimates, a total of 2,770 Rubles is required for the organisation of the collective, however, only 500 are given, while it is not clear where the rest of the money will come from. I ask the All-Russian Union of the Gypsies to intercede with the bodies in order to provide material assistance for the purpose of organising and further work.

Plenipotentiary for work among the Gypsies in BSSR ... (Grakhovskiy).

Notes

1. There are no reports that there were any other plenipotentiaries for the individual Soviet republics besides the BSSR and the USSR (see below).
2. A *desyatina* is a land measurement used in Russian Empire and early USSR. A *dessiatin* is approximately equivalent to 2.7 acres or 10,926.5 square metres.
3. Reference to agricultural *artels* (associations for joint cultivation of land).

Source: GARF, f. P 3316, op. 20, d. 653, l. 18-19.

Prepared for publication by Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov.

12.1.11 Minutes No. 1 (Minsk)

Протокол No. 1

заседания организационной группы по созданию Союза Цыган по Б.С.С.Р.

от 29.09.1926 г. в гор[оде] Минске

Присутствовали: 1. тов. Граховский, [А. Ф.] 2. т. Козловский, Иван [С]. 3. т. Адамов, [В. В.] 4. т. Туря, [Г. А.] 5. т. Козловский, Александр С.

Председателем Собрания избран тов. Граховский при секретаре тов. Туря.

Повестка дня: Информация уполномоченного по организации Союза Цыган по БССР. Выборы организационной группы для создания Союза Цыган в Белоруссии. Текущие дела.

Слушали:

1. Информацию об организации Союза Цыган в РСФСР, а также ознакомление с устройством такого и с культурно-просветительными достижениями этого Союза. По этому вопросу тов. Туря высказался, что работа для создания Союза Цыган в Белоруссии невидимая, черная, кропотливая, но работа огромной важности, совершаемая перед нашими глазами: трудящимися руками закладывается фундамент нового союза в БССР. Цыганскую нацию, как сказочную спящую красавицу, пробудила от глубокого сна волшебница-революция, для объединения в один общий Союз в правоте своего дела.

2. О выборах. По этому вопросу тов. Граховский высказался, что среди цыган, проживающих в г. Минске, более выдающихся и культурно-просветительных он не знает, кроме предлагаемых следующих товарищей: Козловского, А. С., Адамова, В. В., Туря, Г. А., и Козловского, И. С., которые могли бы справиться с работой по союзной линии.

3. Текущие дела. Тов. Адамов высказался, что он не может принять участие в качестве члена Союза лишь только потому, что он принадлежит к белорусской национальности, хотя мог бы быть полезен в деле издания словаря, грамматики и других культурно-просветит. отношениях. По этому вопросу т. Козловский дал свое следующее заключение: принимая во внимание, что в Белоруссии, в частности в г. Минске, культурные силы среди цыган отсутствуют, а т. Адамов великолепно знает быт, нравы, обычаи и цыганский язык, то считает необходимым ввести его в состав организационной группы, как одного из полезных работников среди цыган.

Постановили:

1. Целиком и полностью присоединяемся к Московскому Союзу Цыган [...] ему полное сочувствие [...] и уполномоченного т. Граховского просим ходатайствовать перед высшими органами Белоруссии об утверждении организационной группы для того, чтобы взяться за проведение в жизнь этого дела на территории Белоруссии.

2. Избрать в организационную группу тов[арищей]: Граховского, А. Ф., Козловского, А. С., Адамова, В. В., Туря, Г. А., и Козловского, И. С.

3. Ходатайствовать перед Белорусскими органами о допуске В. В. Адамова в организационную группу.

Настоящая инициативная группа вышеназванных цыган просит Белорусские советские органы о скорейшем утверждении этой группы, чтобы скорее приступить к планомерной намеченной своей работе.

Председатель ... (Граховский). Секретарь ...(Туря).

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Minutes No. 1

From the meeting of the organisational group for the establishment of Union of Gypsies in BSSR dated 29.09.1926 in the city of Minsk

Present: 1. Comrade Grakhovskiy, A. F. 2. Comrade Ivan S. Kozlovskiy. 3. Comrade V. V. Adamov. 4. The Comrade G. A. Turya. 5. Comrade Aleksander S. Kozlovskiy.

For Chairman of the Meeting is elected comrade Grakhovskiy along with Secretary, comrade Turya.

Agenda: 1. Information from plenipotentiary for the organisation of a Union of the Gypsies for the BSSR. 2. Election of an organisational group for the establishment of a Union of Gypsies in the BSSR. 3. Ongoing tasks.

Listened:

1. Information on the organisation of a Union of Gypsies in the RSFSR, as well as on the organisation and cultural-educational achievements of the Union. On this issue, comrade Turya said that the work of creating the Union of Gypsies in Belarus is invisible, black, painstaking, but it is a matter of great importance which is being done in front of our eyes: with working hands is laid the foundation of the new Union in the BSSR. The Gypsy nation, like Sleeping Beauty from the fairy tales, is awakened from its deep sleep by the fairy-revolution for unity in a common Union, united in the rightness of its work.

2. In relation to the elections. On this question, comrade Grakhovskiy said that among the Gypsies living in Minsk, he did not know, other persons, more prominent and appropriate from a cultural and educational aspect, apart from the proposed following comrades: A. S. Kozlovskiy, V. V. Adamov, G. A. Turya and I. S. Kozlovskiy, who could handle the matter related to the Union.

3. Ongoing tasks. Comrade Adamov said that he could not accept to take part in his capacity as Member of the Union only because he belongs to the Belarusian nationality, although he may be useful in the work around the issuing of a dictionary, grammar book, and in other cultural and educational matters. On this issue, comrade Kozlovskiy gave his next conclusion: given that in Belarussia, and in particular in the city of Minsk, cultural forces among the Gypsies are absent, and comrade Adamov magnificently knows the way of life, habits, customs and the language of the Gypsies, he considers it necessary to incorporate comrade Adamov as part of the organisational group as one of the useful people who work among the Gypsies.

Decided:

1. Fully and thoroughly join the Moscow Union of the Gypsies [...] [1] their full sympathy [...] [2] and ask the plenipotentiary comrade Grakhovskiy to intercede with the Belarusian authorities to endorse an organising group to take up to realise this task on the territory of Belarus.

2. To include in the organisational group the comrades: A. F. Grakhovskiy, A. S. Kozlovskiy, V. V. Adamov, G. A. Turya and I. S. Kozlovskiy.
3. To ask the Belarusian authorities to admit V. V. Adamov in the organising group.

The current initiative group of the above-mentioned Gypsies, asks the Belarussian Soviet authorities for the quick establishment of this group, so that it can proceed faster to the planned implementation of its future work.

Chairman ... (Grakhovskiy). Secretary ... (Turya).

Notes

1. Illegible text.
2. Illegible text.

Source: GARF, f. P 3316, op. 20, d. 653, l. 20-21.

Prepared for publication by Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov.

12.1.12 Organising the Gypsy Union in the Ukraine

г[ород] Глухов, 10 мая 1927 г.

Уважаемый Председатель Совета Национальностей!

Еще с 1924 года я просил СНК об организации Всероссийского Союза Цыган. 1925 годом мне прислал ВСЦ письмо в котором благодарит меня за участие в строительстве самого угнетенного народа цыган; 1926-м году я еду в Москву и получаю полномочие на У[краинскую] ССР. И вот сталкиваюсь со своими врагами в одном из округов (Глуховском) с 1) бывший поручик царской армии Т. Стрелец (Предокрисполкома) и 2) кавалерийский ротмистр Яковлев, который написал отношение ЦКНМ ВЦВК и меня без всякой причины без суда и следствия оттолкнули от своего народа и загнали в подполье. За что?

Я с первых дней революции работал, не был под судом, и пользуюсь правами голоса и пр. В данное время ко мне со всех концов Украины едут цыгане, но я не могу им помочь активно-официально, а больше помогаю подпольно. Всероссийский Союз Цыган также молчит (не смотря на то что они считали меня активным несменным работником ВСЦ).

Я прошу проверить мою работу т. к. я целое дело отослал Пред[седателю] ВСЦ тов[арищу] Таранову. При данных обстоятельствах когда не дают работать среди своей национальности, можно с ума сойти!

Ведь я и брат мой (окончивший Учительский институт в г. Глухове) являемся одними по образованию среди всего 1 000 000 населения цыган в СССР. Желаемо остановить бедствия сего народа. Хотем поставить этот народ в рамках строительства [оседлости], а нам не дают.

Цыгане Украины и части РСФСР знают нас и едут к нам, тогда как мы безсил[ьны].

Я полагаю, что Всероссийский Союз Цыган Вам скажет обо мне свое мнение! И что с уходом от работы на Украине цыгане остались без пастуха – это факт.

Прошу пересмотреть этот вопрос, если для Вас дорога жизнь несчастных кочевников!

Адрес: г[ород] Глухов, бывш[ему] Уполномоченному ВСЦ по У[краинской] ССР Бизеву Н. Т.

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The town of Glukhov, 10.05.1927.

Honourable Chairman of the Council of Nationalities!

Since 1924 I have asked the SNK about the organisation of the All-Russian Union of Gypsies. In 1925, the VSTs sent me a letter in which it thanked me for participating in the construction of the most oppressed Gypsy nation; In 1926, I go to Moscow and receive proxy on the UkrSSR. And here I come across my enemies in one of the *okrug* [1] (Glukhovsky): 1) the former lieutenant of the tsarist army T. Strelets (Predokrispolkoma) [2]; and 2) the cavalry captain Yakovlev, who wrote an application to the TsKNM VTsVK and for no reason and without trial and investigation I was pushed away from my people and driven underground. For what?

From the first days of the revolution I worked, was never on trial and I have the right to vote, etc. At this time, Gypsies from all over Ukraine come to me, but I cannot help them actively, officially, and I help more in underground. The All-Russian Union of Gypsies is also silent (despite the fact that they considered me an active non-replaceable worker of the VSTs).

I ask you to check my work, since I sent the whole dossier to the Chairman of the VSTs comrade Taranov. Under these circumstances, when you are not allowed to work among your own people, you can lose your mind!

After all, I and my brother (who graduated from the Teaching Institute in the town of Glukhov [3]) are among the most educated people among the 1,000,000 Gypsies [4] inhabiting the USSR. It is desirable to stop the distress of this people. We want to put this people in the framework of construction of sedentarism but we are prevented from doing so.

The Gypsies of Ukraine and parts of the RSFSR know us and travel to us, while we are powerless. I believe that the All-Russian Union of Gypsies will tell its opinion about me! And with the departure from work in Ukraine, the Gypsies were left without a shepherd – this is a fact.

Please reconsider this question if the life of the unfortunate nomads is dear to you!

Address: Glukhov, ex-Plenipotentiary of the VSTs for the UkrSSR Bizev N. T.

Notes

1. *Okrug* (district) – a unit of administrative-territorial division in the USSR. Introduced in the Ukrainian SSR from 1923 to 1930.
2. The Chairman of the District Executive Committee, the local executive agency.
3. Teacher's institute in Glukhov is a secondary school designed to train teachers for higher elementary schools. It was founded in 1874, and there were three departments – literary-historical, physical-mathematical and natural-geographical. The training was three years.
4. Of course, here the number of Gypsies in the USSR is greatly exaggerated. According to official data of the 1926 All-Union Census, 61,234 Gypsies lived in the USSR as a whole, 13,578 – in the territory of the Ukrainian SSR (Всесоюзная перепись, 1926).

Source: TsDAVO, f. 413, op. 1, spr. 346, ark. 108-10906.

Prepared for publication by Oleksandr Bielikov and Natalia Bielikova.

12.1.13 *The Protest of N. Biz-Labza*

г. Глухов, 10 мая 1927 г.

Высшему Совету Национальностей при ВЦИК СССР.

От: Бывшего уполномоченного по цыганским делам на Украине и бывшего командира партизанских частей, жив[ущего] в г. Глухове Бизь-Лабза Николая Тимофеевича.

Протест

1926 года, в полной и надлежащей мере начал функционировать, с разрешения Совета Народных комиссаров, Всероссийский Союз Цыган. Утвердивший его ЦИК оказал этому союзу материальную поддержку, как в организации, равно также и в рациональном стремлении к объединению самой угнетенной маленькой исторически-странной нации, поголовно безграмотной, самой некультурной, вечно бродячей, бездомной цыганской массы. Кажется только Советская власть может исцелять дух и род самых мелких и ничтожных народностей и что нет более благороднейшей ответственности в работе Советов, как превращение дикого наполовину уголовного, отсталого народа, веками обездоленного, в людей культурных, оседлых, имеющих свою родину, свой язык, свои обычаи, сохранив свой музыкально-поэтический характер, прогрессивно движущихся вперед с паразитической группы к культуре, к искусству, к труду и к социализму. Но я начинаю тревожно смотреть на вышеупомянутый Всероссийский Союз цыган, ибо он, мне кажется, стоит на точке замерзания и прежде чем бросать такое заключение, благоволиите выслушать мой протест дальше.

Третий год существует ВСЦ, но не только на территории Украины, но и в РСФСР мы видим старую печальную картину жизни цыганской; также бродят и кочуют цыганские толпы, испытывая голод и холод, не пользуясь никакими правами, попадая под самосуд кулаков, под нападки административных органов, в особенности милиции.

Никаких вестей от ВСЦ цыганам не слышно, а переселение и оседлость ушла в область преданий и в конце концов эта горсть выроdkов Индии подлежит

вымиранию в свободной стране, ибо среда и обстоятельства социализма все тесней обхватывают эту паразитическую горсть железным кольцом. Таким образом, в виду культурного роста масс СССР от каковых цыгане по своему социальному и низкому культурному уровню далеко отстали, источник существования приемами до революционного метода существования, кончился и необходим самый серьезный переворот жизни сего народа, необходима самая тяжелая операция – это оседлость не в распыленном, а в объединенном виде для более успешного культурного и трудового строительства среди цыган.

Предоставляя вам право судить о действительном положении сего народа, я как цыган, получивший среднее образование, могу присовокупить следующее: что тяжелее жизни нет ни в одной народности, каковой является жизнь цыгана в селе, здесь он живет как может жить овца среди быков!? Малейшее подозрение в «неблагонадежности», как сейчас же тюрьма, ссылка и проч.

К тому же нельзя отрицать в особенности мне, как командиру партизан на Украине, что роль кулаков – “горлохватов” в селе очень увеличилась, судя по методам сельских собраний, где кулаками просто ставится вопрос о высылке лиц, замеченных в мелких кражах и особая ненависть к цыганскому населению, над которым кулаки через посредство “бедных Иуд” совершают самосуд. И так в результате вечное скитание, вечная тюрьма или ссылка на остр[ова] “Соловки”.

Вам известно, что источником существования цыган является барышничество, конечно, горький кусок хлеба, но все же имеет характер спекуляции и пр., а отсюда вывод – обложение, лишение прав голоса, лишение земельного пайка, равно также и участие в общественной деятельности. Когда получаешь газету “Правда” и читаешь, что постановлено выдать 500 руб[лей] семье цыгана с обязательной оседлостью, радуешься, но когда дело до действительности, то тут ни денег, ни земли, никакого совета, ни сведения о цыганском народе и ничего, и – вполне понятно, ибо нет из центра ни литературы, ни инструкций, ни директив.

Когда мне приходилось посещать таборы, то не было слов правды простой толковой беседы на тему оседлости.

На основании сего, от имени цыганских таборов, прошу Высший Совет Национальностей провести все мероприятия в жизнь, как в части переселения, а также содействия переходу на оседлость и протестую на бездействие Всероссийского Союза Цыган, который не оповещает таборы о своем существовании, не рассылает литературы, не дает через Высший Совет национальностей указаний Губисполкомам, УИКа и ОИКа относительно территории переселения, затягивает самое насущное дело – оседлости. Полагаю, что Высший Совет СССР ускорит все, для спасения вымирающей нации и воздействует на ВЦИ.

Проситель: Н. Бизь-Лабза.

г. Глухов, Украина, 25.I.1928 года.

The town of Glukhov. May 10, 1927

To: The Supreme Council of VTsIK of the USSR

From: Former plenipotentiary of Gypsy Affairs in Ukraine and the former commander of the partisan detachments, inhabitant of the town of Glukhov, Nikolay Timofeevich Biz-Labza

Protest

In 1926, All-Russian Union of Gypsies began to function fully and properly, with the permission of the Council of People's Commissars. The TsIK that approved it provided this union with material support, as in the organisation, as well as in a rational desire to unite the most oppressed little historically strange nation, completely illiterate, the most uncultured, forever wandering, homeless Gypsy mass. It seems only the Soviet government can heal the spirit and kind of the smallest and most insignificant nationalities and that there is no more honourable responsibility in the work of the Soviets, as the transformation of a wild half-criminal, backward people, deprived since centuries, into cultural, sedentary people, having their homeland, their language, their customs, retaining their musical and poetic character progressively moving forward from the parasitic groups to culture, to art, to work and to socialism. But I'm starting to look anxiously at the aforementioned All-Russian Union of Gypsies, as it seems to me to be at the freezing point and before throwing such a conclusion, please listen to my protest further.

For the third year, the VSTs exists, but not only in the territory of Ukraine but also in the RSFSR, we see the old sad picture of the Gypsy life; Gypsy crowds continue to roam and to wander, experiencing hunger and cold, without using any rights, falling under the mob of the *kulaks*, under the attacks of administrative bodies, especially the police.

Gypsies do not receive news from the VSTs, and resettlement and sedentarisation have gone into the field of legends, and in the end, this handful of India's geeks is subject to extinction in a free country, because the environment and circumstances of socialism increasingly enclose this parasitic handful with an iron ring. Thus, in view of the cultural growth of the masses of the USSR, from which the Gypsies are far behind because of their low social and cultural level; they earn their living with methods from pre-revolutionary times which is over; and the most serious upheaval in the life of this people is necessary and the most difficult operation is needed – and namely the sedentarisation but not in a dispersed, but in a united form for a more successful cultural and working construction among Gypsies.

Giving you the right to judge the real situation of this people, I, as a Gypsy who received a secondary education, can add the following: that there is no harder life in any nationality, which is like the life of the Gypsy in a village, where he lives in the way a sheep would live among the bulls!? The slightest suspicion of "unreliability", and immediately follow a prison, exile, and so on.

In addition, it is impossible to deny especially for me, as the commander of the partisans in Ukraine [2], that the role of the kulaks – the "gorlokhvatov" [3] in the village has greatly increased, judging by the methods of village assemblies, where the kulaks simply

raise the issue of expulsion of people who are seen in petty theft and a special hatred to the Gypsy population, over whom the kulaks through the “poor Judahs” [4] commit vigilantism. And so as a result is the eternal wandering, the eternal prison or deportation to the islands “Solovki” [5].

You know that horse-dealing is a source of Gypsy's living, of course, a bitter piece of bread, but still has the character of profiteering, etc., and hence the conclusion – taxation, deprivation of voting rights, deprivation of land rations, as well as of participation in social activities. When you get the newspaper *Pravda* [Truth] and read that it was decided to allocate 500 rubles to Gypsy family, who is obliged to settle, you are happy; but when it comes to reality, there is no money, no land, no advice, no information about the Gypsy people and nothing, and it is quite understandable, because there is no literature, no instructions, no directives from the centre.

When I had to attend camps, there were no truth words for a simple sensible conversation on the topic of sedentarisation.

On the basis of this, on behalf of the Gypsy camps, I ask the Supreme Soviet of Nationalities to carry out all the activities, both in terms of resettlement, as well as in facilitating the transition to sedentarisation, and I am protesting against the indolence of the All-Russian Union of Gypsies, which does not notify camps about its existence, does not distribute the literature, does not give instructions through the Supreme Council of Nationalities to the Gubispolkoms, UIKs [6] and OIKs [7] about the resettlement territory and cause delays of the most pressing matter, namely sedentarisation. I believe that the Supreme Soviet of the USSR will accelerate everything in order to save an endangered nation and influences the VSTs.

Petitioner: N. Biz-Labza.

The town of Glukhov, Ukraine, 25.01.1928.

Notes

1. In 1919-1920, in the course of the armed struggle between the Red Army, the White Guards, the troops of the Entente and the Ukrainian Directory on the territory of Ukraine, numerous partisan units, detachments appeared and acted.
2. *Gorlokhvat* – literally throat grabber, Ukrainian designation of people who are rudely seeking something, strive to achieve greater benefits for themselves, at others people's expense.
3. This is a reference to the poor villagers, who were in economic dependence from kulaks. At rural gatherings, during which decisions were made by a majority vote, the corrupted pauperised villagers supported decisions beneficial for well-off peasants.
4. Solovki – at that time the largest labour camp in USSR, which was located on the territory of the Solovetsky Islands in the White Sea, to which “unreliable” Soviet citizens were exiled in the 1920s-1930s.
5. The County (*uezd*) Executive Committee (1918-1923).
6. The District (*okrug*) Executive Committee. In 1923, as a result of administrative reform, the *uezds* and *volosts* were abolished, instead of which *okrugs* were introduced.

Source: TsDAVO, f. 413, op. 2, spr. 9, ark. 38-40.

Prepared for publication by Oleksandr Bielikov and Natalia Bielikova.

Comments

The author of the two documents from Ukraine is Nikolay Timofeevich Bizev (pseudonym Biz-Labza). Little is known about him. He originated from a settled Roma family, lived in the town of Glukhov (Ukraine), received secondary education. Throughout the turbulent 1918 – 1920, he led one of the partisan detachments. From 1919 he was a member of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks). In 1920 Biz-Labza was excluded from the Party during the process of preregistration of Party members (TsDAVO, f. 413, op. 1, spr. 4, ark. 111), in the so-called *Чистка партийных рядов* (Purge of the ranks of the Communist Party) when reviews of members of the Communist Party were conducted by their fellows Party members and the security organs to get rid of elements of non-proletarian origin and other undesirables.

After Biz-Labza's expulsion from the Party, his occupation until 1926 was of a horse-dealer. In June 1926, N. T. Bizev arrived in Kharkiv with the certificate of a plenipotentiary of VSTs for Ukraine. There he made a report about the work of VSTs at the TsKNM VUTsVK. At his own request, he was sent to Konotop, Nezhinsky, and Glukhovsky districts with an aim to gather data about the Gypsy population there and prepared several memoranda based on the information collected. However, as early as September 30, 1926, with the decision of the TsKNM he was suspended from work with Gypsies in connection with allegations of trading with counterfeited money.

During 1926-1928 N. Bizev tried to fight for justice, defending his good name and the right to work with the Gypsy population – he wrote letters to the VSTs, GPU, TsIK of UkrSSR and USSR, to the Secretary of the TsK KP(b)U Lazar Kaganovich, to the chair of VUTsIK Grigoriy Petrovski and others. The charges against Bizev were, most likely, fabricated, because Bizev was not subjected to any criminal prosecution, and his name constantly appeared at the meetings of the TsKNM, which dealt with Gypsy issues. The basis of the planned measures to improve the situation with the Gypsies in the Ukrainian SSR was Bizev's proposal (Белікова & Беліков, 2018, pp. 73-83).

The protest of 25.01.1928 was directed against the All-Russian Union of Gypsies, containing sharp criticism and accusations of inaction with belief that the central organs of the Soviet government will assist the transition of nomadic Gypsies to settled life and thereby finally will resolve the Gypsy issue.

Oleksandr Bielikov and Natalia Bielikova

12.1.14 The First Memorandum

[Бланк] Р.С.Ф.С.Р. Всероссийский Союз Цыган. 21 Декаб[ря] 1927 г. No. 863.

[Секретарю Центрального Исполнительного комитета тов. Енукидзе].

В Совет Национальностей ЦИК СССР.

[Докладная записка]

25-го Июля 1925 года НКВД был утвержден Всероссийский Союз Цыган, положивший начало борьбы за новую культуру среди нашего бродячего темного племени.

Много трудов было положено инициаторами этого Союза на его организацию. Бесперывная агитация среди Цыган, оформление самого устава и разная подготовительная работа, тянулась около трех лет.

Основным и самым обидным для нас фактором, тормозящим его организацию было недоверие к нам Советских и др[угих] органов, которые относились с иронией и недоверием к нашим начинаниям.

Мы конечно знали, что такой взгляд является наследством буржуазного строя, который приучил население смотреть на цыган, как на отпетых бродяг, от которых ничего нельзя ожидать хорошего, кроме воровства, нищенства и всяких других пороков.

Правда, цыгане своим образом жизни, заслужили такое отношение к себе, но не смотря в корень этого, невольно поднимается вопрос: “а можно ли обвинять цыган в том, что они теперь ведут такой образ жизни”.

Цыганская народность на ряду с другими национальностями так-же была гонимая и преследуемая буржуазией. Царские законы являются достоверными документами, которые раскрывают жестокую истину о тяжелом положении цыган в царской России. Как “заботилось” царское правительство об отсталых и неграмотных русских цыган, то об этом свидетельствуют царские законы. [...]

О тяжелом положении цыганской народности при царизме можно написать очень много.

Октябрьская революция, раскрепостившая отсталые народности сказала, что только народ сам может устраивать и улучшать свою жизнь.

Для устройства и улучшения жизни цыган был организован Всероссийский Союз Цыган.

Правление его состоит из простых цыган, а не из царских генералов, которые решали насущные вопросы цыганской народности битьем и доносами полиции.

Как живут цыгане сейчас. Голод, грязь, нищета, холод постоянные спутники их жизни. Влекомые силой вековой привычки, бродят они с места на место, разными путями добывая себе на пропитание. Женщины с кучами грудных ребят, старики, молодежь при переездах без медицинской помощи являются невольными разсадниками разных заболеваний. Так например, школьное обследование показало, что среди детей цыган имеется большой процент заболеваемости туберкулезом, сифилисом и пороком сердца. Все это приводит к вымиранию и вырождению нашей национальности.

Но может-ли Советская Власть допустить такое бесплодное губительное существование почти полумиллионного племени, которое в силу своей неграмотности, замкнутости и темноты, не может само осознать необходимость перемены своего быта.

Кроме вышеизложенных причин, сохранение целой народности от вымирания, есть еще факт говорящий за необходимость неотложной работы среди цыган. Это несоответствие быта Цыган, с современными общественными принципами, где

во главе стоит лозунг: “Кто не работает тот не ест”, и где право гражданина имеет только трудящийся человек. [...]

Ныне существующий Всероссийский Союз Цыган [утвержденный был благодаря Вашей и т. Тэр-Ваганяна, поддержке], имеет цель объединить разбросанных по всему Союзу Цыган, поднять их культурный уровень (среди них 99% неграмотных – Ленин, Собр[ание] сочинений, Том 19), перевод на оседлый образ жизни и привлечь к сельско-хозяйственному труду.

За два года своего существования Союз стал известен не только цыганам, живущим в СССР, но и за границей, так например Союзом получен привет от польских, сербских и болгарских цыган. В одной из болгарских газет была помещена статья о нашем Союзе, в которой было отмечено, что Советская Власть на деле проводит свою национальную политику и что даже такой народ как цыгане имеют свой национальной Союз.

Сейчас каждый цыган чувствует себя членом определенной организации. Он начинает быть активным, он гордится своей книжкой члена Союза и морально чувствует себя равноправным гражданином Советской страны.

Вариант 1:

Приведя ряд тяжелых условий, Всероссийский Союз Цыган не в состоянии без поддержки авторитетных органов встать на твердый путь осуществления Союзом основных задач, как перевод Цыган на оседлость, для занятия сельским хозяйством, приобщение цыган-ремесленников и кустарей к организованному производству и политико-просветительная работа среди них.

Открытие цыганских школ, клубов, ликбезов, издания агитационной литературы для цыганской массы осуществляются с большими трудностями, так как недостаток отпускаемых средств не дает развернуть культурную обработку да и сами заинтересованные учреждения решают этот вопрос между прочим, не вникая с должным вниманием на этот первостепенный вопрос.

Второй вопрос неразрешимый Союзом без участия и содействия Советских учреждений – это посылка через Биржу Труда или создание артелей из беднейшего цыганского населения, которое с давних пор занимается кустарничеством, как медники, жестянники и другие ремесленники.

Но главным третьим вопросом является перевод цыган на землю, дабы дать возможность большинству цыган заняться сельским хозяйством, а не жить нищенским существованием.

Многие цыгане изъявили большое желание перехода на сельское хозяйство. В Союзе с каждым днем получается масса заявлений, приезжают из далеких районов СССР ходоки и умоляют оказать содействие в получении земли.

Всероссийский Союз Цыган провел большую работу путем агитации и разъяснений о переходе к общественному труду, но не смотря на постановление ЦИК и Совнаркома от 1 Октября 1926 года о содействии к переходу кочующих цыган на оседлость и на оделение их земель, однако как на местах, так и в центре указанное

постановление во внимание не принимается, а потому многие цыгане кои обращались на местах за землею были лишены получения таковой, в результате – вся проводимая Союзом работа идет в пустую, а потому – при ЦИК СССР поставить на ближайшее заседание доклад о работе среди цыган с вызовом на такое представителя – Союза.

Вариант 2:

[...] Тов[арищ] Енукидзе, просим Вас обратить внимание соответствующих органов на неправильный шаг НЦ ЦК ВКП(б).

Союз – первую и единственную цыганскую организацию, пользующуюся громадным авторитетом среди цыган, закрывать нельзя, так как [...] это будет большим ударом для цыган, начинающих понимать и ценить свою организацию и за его флагом строить свою новую жизнь. [...]

Наверняка можно сказать, что с закрытием Союза дело возрождения цыган можно считать конченным, по крайней мере на несколько лет. Сейчас каждый цыган чувствует себя членом определенной организации. Он начинает быть активным, он гордится своей книжкой и морально чувствует себя полным гражданином Советской страны. С закрытием Союза, все это разом теряется и цыган остается выброшенным за борт жизни, всеми презираемым, бездомным бродягой. Комиссия – это уже не Союз. Цыган не признает никаких Комиссий, он любит, ценит только свое цыганское и совету только своего Союза он может последовать.

Для примера можно привести несколько фактов. Когда Губисполком и ЦСИ проводили учет цыганского населения, то цыгане заслышав о регистрации, форменным образом бежали в леса, всячески скрывая свою национальность. Результат учета плачевный. Союзом же, через своих уполномоченных, учет цыганского населения ведется успешно, и цыгане, заслышав о существовании уполномоченного со штампом Союза, приходили сами на регистрацию. НКЗ были разосланы анкеты, учитывающие цыган, желающих перейти на оседлость. Цыгане боялись заполнять их и только лишь с помощью Союза эту работу удастся выполнять. Таких фактов можно привести множество.

За свое существование Союзом, принимая во внимания тяжелые условия работы, было все таки проделано многое. [...] Можно было бы сделать еще больше, если бы Советские и Партийные учреждения, к каким нам в процессе работы приходилось обращаться, относились посерьезней и внимательней к нашим запросам, а не с ихними усмешечками и недоверием, какими они нас оделяли.

На основания недоверия к нам, в Союз приклеплялись т.т., которые считали своей обязанностью не помогать нам в нашей работе, почувствовать себя хозяевами в нашем учреждении и кричать на нас как на прислугу. (Такие факты были с прикрепленным от Отд[ела] Нац[иональностей] ВЦИК). Не учтя наших особенностей они своим отношением к нам создали обидную для нас атмосферу и вносили вражду между нами и органами Правления. И конечно, работа этих прикрепленных, для которых работа в нашем Союзе являлась лишней нагрузкой и которым

было наплевать на интересы Союза, приносила несомненный вред. А когда мы пробовали доказывать неправильность их работы в нашем Союзе они “обиженные” тем, что какие-то цыгане могут еще возражать ставят перед Партийными организациями вопрос о закрытии нашего Союза.

Мы со своей стороны считаем такое отношение к Союзу губительным и еще раз говорим, что только нам, наш Цыганский Союз дорог и только через свой Союз мы сможем сделать Цыган такими же гражданами, какими есть остальные национальности.

И лишать нас, цыган, этого права, строить благополучие своего темного, отсталого племени, которое засыпает Союз письмами с просьбой помочь им выбраться из полуголодного, полускотовского существования, никто в Советской стране не может.

Наоборот, нам должны помочь в этой работе и широко пойти навстречу.

Просим Вас, тов. Енукидзе, позаботиться о нашем Союзе, не допустить его закрытия, а раз навсегда заставить соответствующие организации серьезно поставить вопрос о создании условий возможности выполнения нашей работы, приобщения цыган к Советской общественности.

Председатель Союза ... [подпись] (Таранов).

Секретарь ... [подпись] (И. Лебедев).

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[Letterhead] RSFSR. All Russian Union of Gypsies. 21 Decembre 1927. No. 863.

In the Soviet of Nationalities at VTsIK [1].

[To the Secretary of Secretary of Central Executive Committee com. Enukidze] [2].

The Memorandum

On 25 July 1925, the NKVD endorsed the All-Russian Union of Gypsies, which gave the beginning of the struggle for a new culture among our wandering dark tribe.

A lot of work has been put in by the initiators of this Union for its organisation. The continuous agitation among the Gypsies [3], the formalisation of the Statute itself and the diverse preparatory work lasted for about three years.

The main and most insulting factor for us, harassing the organisation, was the mistrust of the Soviet authorities and other institutions who treated us with irony and distrust of our endeavours.

We, of course, knew that such a view is an inheritance of the bourgeois society that has led the population to regard the Gypsies as irremediable vagrants of whom nothing good can be expected except stealing, begging, and all other vices.

Indeed, the Gypsies with their way of life have deserved such an attitude towards themselves, but without looking at the root of this attitude, the question arises unwittingly: “Can the Gypsies be accused of having such a lifestyle”.

The Gypsy nationality, alongside other nationalities, has also been chastised and persecuted by the bourgeoisie. Tsarist laws appear to be credible documents that reveal the cruel truth about the plight of the Gypsies in Tsarist Russia. How did the Tsarist Government “care for” the backward and illiterate Russian Gypsies, the Tsarist laws testify this? [...]

There is too much to write about the plight of the Gypsy nation during the Tsarism.

The October Revolution, which has liberated the backward nationalities, has said that only a people themselves can accommodate and improve their lives.

For the purpose of accommodating and improving the lives of the Gypsies, the All-Russian Union of Gypsies was organised.

The Union's Directorate consists of ordinary Gypsies, not royal generals, who have solved vital questions about the Gypsy nationality through beating and police reports.

How do the Gypsies live now? Hunger, dirt, poverty and cold are constant companions in their lives. Driven by the power of the centuries-old habit, they are wandering from place to place, in various ways they earn their living. Women with several young children, old men, youth – all without medical assistance while in their travels, become unwillingly breeding grounds of various diseases. For example, a medical screening in the schools has shown that among Gypsy children there is a great percentage of tuberculosis, syphilis and valvular heart disease [4]. All this leads to the extinction and the degeneration of our nationality.

But could the Soviet authority allow such fruitless, ruinous existence of a tribe amounting to almost half a million which, due to its illiteracy, isolation and lack of education, cannot realise by itself the need for change in its lifestyle?

Apart from the above-mentioned reasons related to the need to preserve the entire nationality from extinction, there is another fact that speaks about the need for urgent work among the Gypsies. This is the incompatibility of the lifestyle of the Gypsies and the contemporary societal principles that are headed by the slogan “Whoever does not work should not eat”, and where the right to be a citizen can only be enjoyed by the working man.

Today's All-Russian Union of Gypsies, endorsed thanks to yours' and Comrade Ter-Vaganyan's [5] support [6], aims to unite the Gypsies who are spread throughout the whole Soviet Union, to elevate their cultural level (99% of them are illiterate – Lenin, Collected Works, Volume 19) [7], to lead them to a sedentary lifestyle and to attract them to agrarian labour.

For two years of its existence, the Gypsy Union has become renowned not only among Gypsies who live in the USSR but also beyond the Soviet borders; for example, the Union has received greetings from Polish, Serbian and Bulgarian Gypsies. In one of the Bulgarian newspapers, there is an article about our Union which noted that the Soviet Authority, in reality, conducts its national policy and that even such a nation, such as that of the Gypsies, have their own national union.

Now each Gypsy feels a member of a particular organisation. He becomes active, proud of their membership cards of the Union and morally they feel as equal citizens of the Soviet country.

Version 1 [8]:

Going through a number of harsh conditions, it becomes clear that the All-Russian Union of Gypsies is not in a position, without the support of authorities, to stand firmly on the Union's path towards implementing its main tasks, such as sedentarising the Gypsies, so that they work in agriculture and the integration of Gypsy craftsmen and owners of small workshops into an organised production and the conducting of political-educational work among them.

The opening of Gypsy schools, clubs, *likbezs* (courses for abolishment of illiteracy), the publication of propaganda literature for Gypsy masses, is very difficult to realise as the shortage of available funds does not allow for the expanding of cultural work; also the other concerned institutions solve that issue as a last one among other things without paying the necessary attention for this paramount issue.

The second question, inextricable for the Gypsy Union, without the involvement and the assistance of the Soviet institutions – dispatching through the labour market or the creation of *artels* among the poorest Gypsy population, which has long been involved in small-scale production, such as coppersmiths, tinsmiths and other craftsmen.

But the main, third, question is the sedentarisation of Gypsies in order to enable great part of the Gypsies to engage in agriculture and not to live in poverty.

Many Gypsies have expressed great desires to transition to agriculture. In the Union of the Gypsies every day a number of claims are received, arriving *khodoks* [9] from distant areas of the USSR which ask for assistance in the process of obtaining land.

The All-Russian Union of Gypsies has done a great deal of work promoting and clarifying the transition to work that is useful for the society in spite of the decree of TsIK and the Sovnarkom of October 1, 1926 for the assistance of the transition of nomadic Gypsies towards their sedentarisation and of providing land for them; however, both on the local level and in the centre, the mentioned decree is not taken into consideration and that is why there are so many Gypsies who apply for land who have been deprived from receiving it and, as a result, all the work done by the Union has been in vain; and that is why – at the nearest meeting of TsIK of the USSR a report on the work with the Gypsies should be presented by inviting to this meeting a representative of the Union of Gypsies.

Version 2:

Comrade Yenukidze, we ask you to draw the attention of the relevant authorities to the wrong step of the NTs of Central Committee of the VKP(b) [10].

The Union is the first and only Gypsy organisation that enjoys enormous prestige among the Gypsies, it is impossible to close it down, because [...] it will be a big blow for the Gypsies who begin to understand and value their organisation and build their new life behind its flag. [...].

Surely we can say that with the closure of the Union, the cause for the revival of the Gypsies can be considered over for at least a few years. Now every Gypsy feels himself a member of a certain organisation. He begins to be active, he is proud of his membership card and morally feels himself a complete citizen of the Soviet country. With the

closure of the Union, all this is at once lost and the Gypsies remain thrown overboard life, despised by all, a homeless tramp. The Commission is no longer the Union. The Gypsy does not recognise any Commission, they love, value only their own Gypsiness and he can follow only the advice of his Union.

For example, a few facts can be drawn from this. When the Provincial Executive Committee and the Central Statistical Institute conducted a registration of the Gypsy population, then the Gypsies, having heard about the registration, uniformly fled to the forests, hiding their nationality in every way. The census result is deplorable. The Union, through its representatives, carried out the registration of the Gypsy population successfully, and the Gypsies, having heard about the existence of the authorised representative with the stamp of the Union, came to the registration themselves. NKZ questionnaires were sent out for taking into account the Gypsies, who wish to switch to a settled way of life. The Gypsies were afraid to fill them, and only with the help of the Union did they manage to carry out this work. There are numerous such facts that can be pointed to.

For its existence, the Union, taking into account the difficult working conditions, still did a lot. [...] We could have done even more if the Soviet and Party institutions, which we had to turn to during our work, were more serious and attentive to our requests, and not with their grins and distrust, which we were allotted. On the grounds of distrust towards us, comrades were attached to the Union [11], who considered it their duty not to help us in our work, to feel like masters in our institution they started screaming at us as they would at servants. (Such facts appeared with the attached person to the Department of Nationalities of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee). Not taking into account our characteristics, they created an offensive atmosphere with their attitude towards us and brought enmity between us and our Board. And of course, the work of these pinned ones, for whom work in our Union was an extra burden and which spit on the interest of the Union, brought undoubted harm. And when we tried to prove the incorrectness of their work in our Union, they were "offended" by the fact that some Gypsies could still object and raise in front of the Party organisations the question of closing our Union.

For our part, we consider such an attitude to the Union destructive and say once again that only to us, our Gypsy Union is dear and only through our Union can we make Gypsies citizens the same as other nationalities are.

And nobody in the Soviet country can deprive us, Gypsies, of this right, to build the well-being of our dark, backward tribe, which is bombarding the Union with letters asking us to help them get out of our half-starved, half-animal existence.

On the contrary, we should be helped in this work and broadly supported.

We ask you, comrade Enukidze, to take care of our Union, to prevent its closure, and once for all to force the relevant organisations to seriously raise the question of creating the conditions for the possibility of carrying out our work, to integrate the Gypsies to the Soviet society.

Chairman of the Union ... [signature] (Taranov).

Secretary ... [signature] (I. Lebedev).

Notes

1. There are two versions with multiple copies of this memorandum preserved in the archives, that were sent to different addresses, e.g. to the Secretary of TsIK A. Enukidze (GARF, f. P 393, op. 43A, d. 1763; f. P 3316, op. 20, d. 653; f. P 3316, op. 20, d. 698, etc.), and to the Soviet of Nationalities at VTsIK (the published text here).
2. Avel S. Enukidze (1877-1937) was a famous communist activist and Soviet statesman, a close associate of Joseph V. Stalin, from 1922 to 1935 he was secretary of the TsIK USSR.
3. It is interesting to note that here and repeatedly in other places as well, the word 'Gypsies' is written in a capital-case, which is unusual for the Russian language.
4. The medical screening report to which the authors of the memorandum are referring is not known, these results raise doubts in some respects, e.g. the reported widespread of syphilis among Gypsy children is difficult to explain given the closed lifestyle of the Gypsy community at the time.
5. Vagarshak A. Ter-Vaganyan (1893-1936) was a well-known party activist, at that time he was a member of the Central Executive Committee.
6. This passage is missing from the version published here but is present in all others.
7. The authors of the memorandum wanted to emphasise and substantiate the importance of the Gypsy issue by using the authority of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, but the quote is manipulative. The exact quote is quite different from the text: it is mentioning in an article about the national composition of students in the St Petersburg School District, where statistics are given about their mother tongue. Among all listed languages spoken is includes also Gypsy language, which is native only for 4 students (Ленин, 1925, p. 74).
8. Two versions of this Memorandum have been preserved, both with original signatures, and it is not possible to determine which of the two versions was sent as intended.
9. The term 'khodok' (ходок) is a legacy of the Russian Empire and is used also in the early USSR; at that time it designated elected representatives of a rural community who were delegated to visit the authorities and to petition for a decision, for clarification, etc.
10. It is unclear what the abbreviation NTs (НЦ) signifies.
11. These are the delegates of the ON VTsIK who were attached to the VSTs to oversee its activities.

Sources: GARF, f. P 3316, op. 19, d. 588, l. 72-74; f. P 393, op. 43 A, d. 1763.

Prepared for publication by Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov.

12.1.15 *The Second Memorandum*

[Бланк]: РСФСР. Всесоюзный Союз Цыган. 18 февраля 1928 г.
Москва, Гостинный двор, Пом[ещение] 54.

В Совет Народных Комиссаров РСФСР.

Копии: 1) Секретариат ВКП(б) – тов. Сталину; 2) ВЦСПС – тов. Томскому; 3) ЦИК СССР – тов. Калинину, тов. Енукидзе; 4) Совет Национальностей; 5) Наркомпрос – тов. Луначарский; 6) Редакции "Правда" и "Известия ВЦИК".

Докладная записка

I. Три года мытарства, насмешек, издевательств, недоверия, невнимания, полупрезрительного отбрасывания, пока, благодаря тов[аришу] Енукидзе, удалось получить первый устав Всесоюзного Союза Цыган.

Устав дан исключительно в целях культурно-просветительных. Но средств к этому не было отпущено, точно так же, как и из НЕДОВЕРИЯ к цыганам в устав не были включены пути и источники к изысканию и получению средств, необходимых для каких бы то не было целей.

II. Еще ЦЕЛЫЙ ГОД прошел в ходатайствах об изменении устава в смысле получения прав на изыскание средств к существованию самого Союза и для осуществления целей Союза. Для этого пришлось входить дважды в Малый Совнарком. В июле 1925 года был утвержден первый устав, в июле 1926 года был утвержден НКВД второй трафаретный устав. Но Малым Совнаркомом было предписано НКВД утвердить устав еще в октябре 1925 г., утверждение же последовало в июле 1926 года.

III. Уставы “ТАК БЫСТРО” проходили исключительно потому, что мы, цыгане, неотступно не давали покоя своими приставаниями и просьбами – ускорить утверждение. И так, устав утвержден по нашим настояниям и объяснениям, при нашем активном участии.

IV. БЕЗ НАШИХ ОБЪЯСНЕНИЙ, БЕЗ НАШЕГО УЧАСТИЯ, БЕЗ НАШЕГО ВЕДОМА, БЕЗ ПРОВЕРКИ НАШИХ ДЕЛ, БЕЗ ОЗНАКОМЛЕНИЯ С НАШИМ НАСТОЯЩИМ ПОЛОЖЕНИЕМ, ДАЖЕ БЕЗ ПРОСТОГО ЛЮБОПЫТСТВА: “ЧТО МЫ ДЕЛАЕМ И ЧТО ДУМАЕМ ДЕЛАТЬ” – НКВД 13-го февраля 1928 года постановил “ЛИКВИДИРОВАТЬ СОЮЗ ЦЫГАН, ПРОЖИВАЮЩИХ НА ТЕРРИТОРИЯХ РСФСР”.

V. Через два дня, 15-го февраля, Административный Отдел НКВД, за подписью Клокотина “СРОЧНО” предписывает “НЕ ПОЗДНЕЕ” 21-го февраля выделить представителя цыган в Комиссию по ЛИКВИДАЦИИ ДЕЛ СОЮЗА ЦЫГАН; мало этого уже в “Красной Газете” было объявлено о ликвидации ВСЦ.

VI. Загадочная картина: ГДЕ и КТО был ДОКЛАДЧИКОМ ПО ЛИКВИДАЦИИ, когда НИКТО И НОСА НЕ ПОКАЗАЛ в Союзе цыган. Не из цыган ли гадалщиков на бобах.

VII. СВОЕВРЕМЕННОЕ ВНИМАНИЕ И УЧАСТЛИВОСТЬ К ДЕЛАМ СОЮЗА: “Создать Ликвидационную Комиссию с участием Наркомпроса и Отдела Национальностей. УРА, нас хотя и ликвидируя, НКВД хочет просвещать. Лучше поздно, чем никогда. (Когда мы бились над открытием цыганских школ и обивали пороги – представителя от Наркомпроса с нами не было). ДЛЯ ЦЫГАН ОН НУЖЕН ТОЛЬКО ДЛЯ ЛИКВИДАЦИИ. Наконец, браво, и цыган признали НАЦИОНАЛЬНОСТЬЮ.

VIII. Хороня Союз, хотя о покойниках принято или говорить хорошо, или ничего не говорить, НКВД все же попрекнул нас своими “благодетельствами”.

1) “Исключительным вниманием” к Союзу. (Очевидно намек на ликвидацию, потому что к нашей работе внимание было исключено; может быть, впрочем, оно и потому и называется “исключительным”.

2) “Содействием” в деле организации Союза (смотреть выше – темпы “утверждения” и “ликвидация” Союза).

3) Попрекнули и “материальной помощью” (правда, не от ведомства НКВД). На все нужды цыганского народа 1,5 и 4 тысячи рублей по строго определенным статьям: сначала на трех платных сотрудников, всем вместе 285 рублей в месяц и по 30 рублей в месяц на остальные расходы, допуская их только, как канцелярские и разъездные; а затем, на двух платных сотрудников (сократив третьего), и те же 30 рублей в месяц, “БЕЗ СОКРАЩЕНИЯ”. Выдали не на руки, где Союзу Цыган такие большие деньги: не даром цыган мечтал – если бы я был царем, то украл бы сто рублей и удрал бы. Оплачивали работников и цыганскую канцелярию, только по сентябрь, а там прекращали выдачу – цыгане привыкли к подножному корму, а постоянно писать им не пристало.

4) Попрекнули, в целях изыскания средств, “ПРЕДСТАВЛЕНИЕМ ПРАВА ОРГАНИЗАЦИИ СЕЛЬСКО-ХОЗЯЙСТВЕННЫХ АРТЕЛЕЙ” (а земля пока не отведена), “КОММУН” (а за помещение цыгане должны платить, даже за жилплощадь по 9 рублей квадратная сажень, [потому что] “СВОБОДНАЯ ПРОФЕССИЯ”), [и] “ПРОИЗВОДСТВЕННЫХ МАСТЕРСКИХ” (цыганский капитал – нагота, подведенные от голода животы, неграмотность):

а) Эти льготы даны, кстати, не ведомством упрекающим.

б) Союз о них просил и их ценят.

Но нужно же когданибудь подумать и “головой” и понять сложность и трудность использования и проведения в жизни этих льгот – “без копейки средств, без кредитов, в среде цыган, исторически не имеющих навыка в этих отраслях”.

И все же Союз, в течение столь недолгого времени создал очень многое, с чем следовало познакомиться раньше, чем ликвидировать Союз.

XI. Кроме “БЛАГОДЕЯНИЙ” в постановлении указаны и “ПРЕСТУПЛЕНИЯ СОЮЗА”:

1. Первое и главное: (НЕЛЬЗЯ НЕ ПРОЦИТИРОВАТЬ ЭТОГО ШЕДЕВРА): “СОЮЗ ЦЫГАН НЕ ТОЛЬКО НЕ СМОГ ПРИНЯТЬ КАКИЕ ЛИБО КОНКРЕТНЫЕ МЕРЫ В БОРЬБЕ С КОНСЕРВАТИВНЫМИ УКЛАДАМИ ЖИЗНИ ЦЫГАН (гаданием, попрошайничеством, азартными играми, пьянством, и прочими особенностями цыганского населения), ЧТО СОСТАВЛЯЛО ОСНОВНУЮ ЗАДАЧУ СОЮЗА.”

а) ХОРОШЕНЬКИЙ “КОНСЕРВАТИВНЫЙ” УКЛАД и удивительно “ГЛУБОКОЕ” понимание КОНСЕРВАТИЗМА. До великолепия “ГОРДО” звучит “ЦЫГАН-КОНСЕРВАТОР”, не дать не взять “английские лорды”.

б) Тысячелетием гонений, нищеты и др. создались эти пороки и социальные болезни. А мы, Союз цыган, технически “ДВА ПЛАТНЫХ РАБОТНИКА” в один год – “не смогли принять конкретных мер” и болезни эти, к нашему Союзу стыду, очевидно, по нашей “нерадивости” и донныне существуют.

2. “Союз оказался не в состоянии осуществить что либо в деле организации цыганских масс, привлечению их к участие в работе Союза”.

а) По всей необъятной территории СССР рассеяны кочующие цыганские массы. (Даже Центральное Статистическое Управление при могуществе средств и аппарата, не может их уловить). НА 30 РУБЛЕЙ КАНЦЕЛЯРСКИХ И РАЗЪЕЗДНЫХ В

МЕСЯЦ, СОЮЗ, К УЖАСУ И ВОЗМУЩЕНИЮ СОСТАВИТЕЛЕЙ УКАЗА НЕ УЛОВИЛ ЦЫГАНСКИХ МАСС.

б) “Привлечь их к работе Союза”: “БЕЗГРАМОТНЫХ” – к руководству культурно-просветительной работой”, НИЩИХ, ГОЛОДНЫХ к сложному, бесплатному, ответственному труду по организации осуществления всех разнообразных и сложных задач Союза. МАЛО НАПИСАТЬ – НУЖНО, ТОВАРИЩИ, ПОНИМАТЬ СМЫСЛ СЛОВ, КОТОРЫЕ ОНИ ПИШУТ.

3. Преступление – не созыв Всероссийского съезда цыган (§§ 10, 11, 12 и 19 устава), в течение первого года.

а) Средства на созыв и проведение Всероссийского Съезда.

б) Понимают ли они, что значит подготовить первый Всероссийский Съезд цыган, чтобы они приехали, со строго определенными мандатами, наказами, пожеланиями цыганских масс с мест и пр.

в) Понимают ли они всю сложность этой работы, этой подготовки, чтобы был настоящий Всероссийский съезд – выразитель воли и пожеланий всей народности, а не формальность и не фикция.

г) Знают ли они, что эту подготовку должны вести исключительно одни цыгане, так как цыганам все не верят, но и цыгане в массе, в свою очередь, тоже кроме цыган никому не верят.

д) Знают ли они, что эта подготовка должна вестись на цыганском языке. И, что за тысячелетия цыганский алфавит не был создан. И, что мы его теперь у них под носом создали.

е) Понимают ли они, что значит создать алфавит. Знают ли они, что академия наук, лучшими научными, превосходно, сравнительно оплачиваемыми силами, в течении долгого времени, создают и вырабатывают новые алфавиты. А мы голодные, нищие, учившиеся на медные гроши – ценной нашей собственной крови, пота и бессонных ночей, без академии, без денег, без поддержки за это время создали алфавит.

ж) Знают ли они, что впервые в истории и в мире, только у нас, в созданных нами Союзом, школах, повторяем ВПЕРВЫЕ, преподается цыганский язык. И они смеют говорить о нашем консерватизме, о нашей нежизненности ...

Пришли бы они к нам, когда мы мерзли в неотопленном помещении, но горели достижениями, каких им может быть никогда не иметь: радовались новой библиографической справке о цыганах и т.д., приходили в восторг, когда являлась новая цыганка учиться на вязальной машине, а новая цыганская, голодная семья направляла ребенка учиться в нашу школу.

А поинтересовались ли они познакомиться с нашей программой, выработанной и прорабатываемой нами и нашими сотрудниками, идейно и бескорыстно, сочувствующими обездоленным цыганским массам.

Постарались ли они узнать – сколько на это и времени и напряженного труда и мысли потрачено и вложено.

Да, что говорить, ликвидаторы, не ушедшие в своем понимании цыганского вопроса и цыган от Елизаветы, дочери Петра Первого (указом запретившей цыганам на 50 верст подходить к столице). Откуда они явились, ходячие анахронизмы, когда отовсюду рядом с ними раздаются великие торжественные, бодрые жизненные слова, например постановление ЦИК ССР от 20-го Октября 1927 года:

ВМЕСТЕ С ТЕМ, ПОДТВЕРЖДАЯ ПРОВОЗГЛАШЕНИЕ ОКТЯБРЬСКОЙ РЕВОЛЮЦИЕЙ, ПРАВО КАЖДОГО НАРОДА НА САМОСТОЯТЕЛЬНОЕ, КУЛЬТУРНОЕ, НАЦИОНАЛЬНОЕ РАЗВИТИЕ, НАШЕДШЕЕ СВОЕ ВЫРАЖЕНИЕ В КОНСТИТУЦИИ СОЮЗА ССР, ЦЕНТРАЛЬНЫЙ ИСПОЛНИТЕЛЬНЫЙ КОМИТЕТ СОЮЗА ССР ЗАЯВЛЯЕТ, ЧТО И ВПРЕДЬ ДЕЛО РАЗВИТИЯ НАЦИОНАЛЬНОЙ КУЛЬТУРЫ ВСЕХ НАРОДОВ БУДЕТ ОБЕСПЕЧЕНО ВСЕЙ МОЩЬЮ И ПОДДЕРЖКОЙ СОЮЗА ССР.

... в соответствии со всем изложенным Центральный исполнительный комитет Союза ССР постановляет:

3. ПРОДОЛЖАТЬ С НЕОСЛАБЕВАЮЩЕЙ ЭНЕРГИЕЙ РАБОТУ ПО ДАЛЬНЕЙШЕМУ УСИЛЕННОМУ ПОДНЯТИЮ КУЛЬТУРНОГО УРОВНЯ КУЛЬТУРНО-ОТСТАЛЫХ НАРОДОВ.

XII. Далее в постановлении изложены преступления с чужого голоса, иного порядка:

Союз допустил задолженность:

а) Так пусть они ликвидируют весь Союз ССР потому что он выпускает займы, т.е. “допускает задолженность”, закроют всю госторговлю, т.к. она кредитруется, разгонят всю кооперацию, так как она должна ...

б) Без гроша ставились учебно-показательные, промысловые мастерские. Без гроша денег, без сырья. При полной технической безграмотности и неподготовленности цыган. И с Вашей точки зрения в Союзе не должно быть кредита, на Вашем языке “задолженность”. И НКВД вместо помощи, спешит закрыть и ликвидировать Союз, имеющий те высокие цели, о которых он сам пишет, за то, что он – “допустил задолженность”.

в) А знает ли он, что цыганский Союз за последнее время понизил задолженность с 23 до 12 тысяч рублей, урегулировав ее в главных частях и это в первый организационный год. Понимает ли он значение этого факта. Укажите хоть один трест, пользующийся колоссальной поддержкой, средствами, располагающий реальными объектами и пр., где бы в первый организационный год снижение задолженности достигло бы 50%.

Пусть они учатся азам экономики, жизни, производства и т.д.

СОЮЗ ЦЫГАН НЕ МОЖЕТ ПРИЗНАТЬ ПОСТАНОВЛЕНИЕ ОТ 13-ГО ФЕВРАЛЯ ПОСТАНОВЛЕНИЕМ НКВД. Это акт ЛЕГКОМЫСЛИЯ И НЕДОМЫСЛИЯ отдельных чиновников комиссариата, которые СЛУЧАЙНО и ПО ОШИБКЕ получили возможность решать и писать от имени НКВД.

Союз цыган просит Совнарком РСФСР указать НКВД, что ВСЦ единственную цыганскую организацию, пользующуюся громадным авторитетом среди цыган, закрывать нельзя, а что наоборот, нужно помочь СОЮЗУ, который один только во

всем мире и первый раз в истории, работает в целях культурно-экономического, даже не возрождения, РОЖДЕНИЯ цыганского народа, и [эту] работу может предъявить и доказать. [...]

Всероссийский Союз Цыган надеется, что СНК и ВЦИК РСФСР не допустят осуществиться возмутительному насилию над цыганской организацией, так как это явление идет вопреки всей конституцией и национальной политики СССР.

Учредители ВСЦ ... [подписи] (Таранов, Лебедев, [неразборчиво]).

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[Letterhead] RSFSR. All-Russian Union of Gypsies. February 18, 1928.
Moscow, Gostinyi Dvor, Room 54.

To: The Council of the People's Commissars of RSFSR.

Copies: 1) To Secretariat of the VKP(b) – to comrade Stalin; 2) To VTsSPS – comrade Tomskiy; 3) To TsIK SSSR – comrade Kalinin, comrade Enukidze; 4) To Soviet of Nationalities; 5) To Narkompros – comrade Lunacharskiy; 6) To Editorial Office of the newspapers *Pravda* and *Izvestiya VTsIK*.

The Memorandum

I. Three years of ordeal, mockery, violence, recklessness, half-disdained rejection, before, thanks to comrade Enukidze, we were able to obtain the first statute of the All-Russian Union of Gypsies.

The Statute has been prepared exclusively for cultural-educational purposes. However, funds for that have not been allocated, exactly also because of LACK OF TRUST in the Gypsies, in the Statute there were not included the ways and the sources of finding and obtaining the funds needed for any purpose.

II. A WHOLE YEAR of soliciting has passed, amending the Statute in order to include the right to obtain resources for the existence of the Union itself and for the realisation of the objectives of the Union. That is why we had to turn twice to the Little Sovnarkom. In July 1925, the first statute was approved, and in July 1926 the second, cut and dried Statute was approved by the NKVD. However, even though the Little Sovnarkom has instructed the NKVD to approve the Statute as early as October 1925, the approval came only in July 1926.

III. The reason for the Statutes to be “SO SWIFTLY” passed was mainly because of the fact that we, the Gypsies, did not leave them in peace with our pestering – to speed up their approval. So, the Statute is approved by our insistence and explanations in our active participation.

IV. WITHOUT OUR EXPLANATIONS, WITHOUT OUR PARTICIPATION, WITHOUT OUR KNOWLEDGE, WITHOUT CHECKING OUR AFFAIRS, WITHOUT GETTING ACQUAINTED WITH OUR CIRCUMSTANCES, EVEN WITHOUT A MERE CURIOSITY: “WHAT DO WE DO AND WHAT DO WE INTEND TO DO”, the

NKVD on 13 February 1928 ruled “TO LIQUIDATE THE UNION OF THE GYPSIES LIVING IN THE TERRITORY OF THE RSFSR”.

V. Two days later, on 15 February, the Administrative Department of the NKVD, signed by Klokotin, prescribed “URGENT” and “NO LATER” than 21 February, a representative of the Gypsies to be appointed in the Commission for LIQUIDATION OF UNION OF GYPSIES; moreover, in the *Krasnaya Gazeta* (Red Newspaper) it has already been announced about the liquidation of VSTs.

VI. A mysterious picture: WHEN and WHO has been the SPEAKER FOR THE LIQUIDATION PROCESS considering that NOBODY HAS TURNED UP IN THE GYPSY UNION. Has it been a Gypsy of any kind, perhaps telling fortunes on beans?

VII. THE TIMELY ATTENTION AND COMPASSION TO THE WORK OF THE UNION: “To be established a Liquidation Commission with the involvement of Narkompros and the Department of Nationalities. HURRAY, even if we are liquidated the NKVD wants to enlighten us. Better late than never. When we were fighting to open Gypsy schools and were scraping the thresholds of the institutions – no representative from Narkompros was with us. FOR THE GYPSIES, HE IS NEEDED ONLY FOR THE LIQUIDATION of the Union. Finally, bravo, the Gypsies were recognised as a NATIONALITY too.

VIII. Burying the Union of the Gypsies, even though it is customary at a burial to speak about the deceased either good or nothing, the NKVD nevertheless reproached us for its “beneficence”.

1. “Exclusive attention” was paid to the Union – seemingly, a hint of the liquidation, because the NKVD’s attention was excluded from our work; perhaps, by the way, that is why it is called “exclusive”.

2. “Assistance” in the work of the organisation of the Union (see above about the speed of the “affirmation” and the “liquidation” of the Union).

3. We were reproached for receiving “material assistance” (indeed, not by the budget of NKVD). For all the needs of the Gypsy people 1.5 and 4,000 Rubles on strictly defined financial lines: initially for three paid associates all together 285 Rubles per month and 30 Rubles per month for the remaining costs, which covers only the Union’s stationery needs and travel expenses; then, for two paid associates (reduced was the third one) – 30 Rubles per month, “WITHOUT REDUCTION”. They did not give us the money by hand, how could it be possible to give such big sums to the Union of the Gypsies: no wonder that it is a tale, about a Gypsy who dreamed – if I were a king, I was going to steal a hundred Rubles and run away. They paid the working associates and for the activities in the office by the month of September only, and then they ceased to pay – the Gypsies are accustomed to live by grazing, while they are not entitled to write constantly.

4. They reproached us that in order for us to find funds, we have been “GRANTED WITH THE RIGHT TO ORGANISE AGRARIAN ARTELS” (but, no land has yet been given), “COMMUNES” (however, for renting the premises the Gypsies would have to pay themselves even for premises in flats – 9 Rubles per square *sazhen* [1] because their

occupations are considered “FREE-LANCED JOBS”), and “WORKSHOPS” (but all the Gypsy capital is – naked, with bellies bloated out of hunger, illiterate).

- a) These privileges are given to us, by the way, not by the institution of our accusers.
- b) The Union has been asking for them and it appreciates them.

But sometimes, it is also necessary to think “with the heads” in order to perceive the complexity and the difficulty in using and enforcing this privileges – “without financial means, without any credits, among the Gypsies who historically lack experience in these branches.”

Regardless, the Union, in such a short a time, has created a lot that the NKVD should have acquainted themselves with earlier, before liquidating the Union.

XI. Besides “BENEFICENCE” in the decree, there are also mentioned “THE CRIMES OF THE UNION”:

1. The first and main one (THE QUOTE OF THIS MASTERPIECE CANNOT BE LEFT OUT): “THE UNION OF GYPSIES NOT ONLY FAILED TO TAKE ANY MEASURES IN THE FIGHT AGAINST THE CONSERVATIVE WAY OF LIFE OF THE GYPSIES (fortune-telling, begging, gambling, drunkenness and other peculiarities of the Gypsy population), WHICH IS THE MAIN TASK OF THE UNION.”

a) A NICE “CONSERVATIVE” WAY OF LIFE and an amazingly “DEEP” understanding of CONSERVATISM. Splendidly, it PROUDLY states “A CONSERVATIVE GYPSIES”, why don’t we call them instead straightaway “English Lords.”

b) It is due to the thousands of years of persecution, misery, and the like that these vices and social illnesses came about. While we, the Union of the Gypsies, technically “TWO PAID ASSOCIATES”, for one year – “were not able to take concrete measures” and these illnesses, to the shame of us and our Union, obviously, because of our “negligence” continue to exist even today.

2. “The Union turned out to be unable to do anything in organising the Gypsy masses in order to attract them to participate in the works of the Union.”

a) Throughout the vast territory of the USSR, the wandering Gypsy masses have been dispersed. Even the Central Statistical Management with its abundance of funds and administrative apparatus, cannot cover them. AT 30 RUBLES FOR OFFICE WORK AND TRAVEL EXPENSES PER MONTH, THE UNION, FOR THE HORROR AND INDIGNATION OF THE EDITORS OF THE DECREE, THE UNION DID NOT COVER THE GYPSY MASSES.

b) “To attract them for participation in the works of the Union”: the ILLITERATE – should guide the cultural-educational activities; the POOR AND HUNGRY to do the complex, free, responsible work organising and implementing all of the various and complex tasks. IT IS NOT ENOUGH TO PUT IT INTO WRITING – DEAR COMRADES, THE MEANINGS OF THE WORDS THAT ARE BEING WRITTEN MUST BE UNDERSTOOD.

3. Crime – the All-Russian Congress of Gypsies (§§ 10, 11, 12 and 19 of the Statute) is not convened in the first year since its registration.

a) Funds for convening and holding the All-Russian Congress have not been provided.
 b) Do they understand what does it mean to prepare an All-Russian Congress of the Gypsies so that they could come, with strict mandates, orders, wishes gathered from the Gypsy masses on the ground, and so on?

c) Do they understand the whole complexity of this job, of this preparation, so that the All-Russian Congress is a true one – an expression of the will and the desires of the whole nation, not a formality or a fiction.

d) Are they aware that this preparation must be carried out exclusively by Gypsies, because not everybody trusts the Gypsies, but the Gypsies, in turn, in their own masses, also do not trust in anybody else but Gypsies only?

e) Are they aware that this preparation must be conducted in the Gypsy language? And that for millennia, Gypsy alphabet was not created. And that we have now created the alphabet under their noses.

f) Do they understand what it means to create an alphabet? Do they know that this is the Academy of Sciences, the best scientists, comparatively superbly paid forces who, for a long time they create and develop new alphabets. While we, the hungry, poor, who have studied living with petty money – with our own blood, sweat and sleepless nights, without the help of academies, without money, without support, in the meantime we have created our alphabet.

g) Do they know that for the first time in history and in the world, only here, the Gypsy schools were created by us, by the Union of Gypsies, we repeat, for the first time, the Gypsy language is being taught? And they dare talk about our conservatism, our lifeless spirit ...

They should have come to us when we were freezing in the unheated room, but we were burning with the achievements we could never have had: we were enjoying each new bibliographic reference about the Gypsies, etc., we used to be delighted when a new Gypsy woman appeared in order to learn to work on a knitting machine and a new, Gypsy, hungry family, was sending their child to study at our school.

And did they make an effort to acquaint themselves with our programme, designed and worked by us and our associates, ideologically and unselfishly sympathetic to the lacking everything Gypsy masses?

Did they make an effort to find out – how much time, concerted effort and thoughts have been lost and invested?

What should we talk about; the liquidators who have not reached in their understandings of the Gypsy question and of the Gypsies farther from Elizabeth, the daughter of Peter the First (who banned the Gypsies from approaching 50 *versts* [2] in the Capital St Petersburg [3]). Where did they appear from? They are a walking anachronism. How it is possible now, when from everywhere, near to them, great, solemn, fresh, vital speeches were spread out; such as for example the Decree of the TsIK USSR of 20 October 1927:

TOGETHER WITH THAT, CONFIRMING THE PROCLAIMED RIGHT BY THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION, EACH NATION TO HAVE THE RIGHT OF THEIR OWN CULTURAL, NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT WHICH HAS FOUND ITS EXPRESSION

IN THE SOVIET CONSTITUTION, THE CENTRAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE USSR STATES THAT IN THE FUTURE THE DEVELOPMENTAL WORK OF THE NATIONAL CULTURES OF ALL NATIONS WILL BE FUNDED WITH ALL POWER AND SUPPORT OF THE USSR

... and in accordance with everything said, the TsIK of the USSR decrees:

3. IT CONTINUES, WITH CEASLESS ENERGY, ITS WORK FOR THE FURTHER RAISING OF THE CULTURAL LEVELS OF THE CULTURALLY-BACKWARD NATIONS.

XII. Further on, in the Decree on the Liquidation of the VSTs, offences of a different order are presented, this time using a different tone:

1. The Union has allowed indebtedness.

a) Then let them, in turn, liquidate the whole USSR because it issues government loans, that is, "allows indebtedness," they should close down all state trade enterprises because they are being credited by the state; they should dissolve all cooperatives because they are debtors ...

b) Without a penny, exemplary workshops for small-scale production were created. Without money, without raw materials; given the complete technical illiteracy and unpreparedness of the Gypsies. And according to your point of view, in the Union of Gypsies it was not supposed to exist without credit, in your language "indebtedness". And NKVD, instead of giving aid, is quick to liquidate and close down the Union which has these high goals, which it writes about itself and because it "has allowed indebtedness".

c) And does he know that the Gypsy Union has lately reduced its indebtedness from 23 to 14 thousand Rubles, regulating them in its main parts and also in its first year of existing? Does he understand the meaning of this fact? Show us at least one Trust that enjoys colossal support, means, having real estate assets, and so on, whose indebtedness, in its first year of operation, has reached at least 50%.

Let them learn the alphabet of economics, life, production, etc.

THE UNION OF GYPSIES CANNOT ACCEPT THE DECREE OF THE NKVD FROM 13 FEBRUARY. This act of FRIVOLITY and THOUGHTLESSNESS of individual officials from the Commissariat who accidentally and by mistake have been given the opportunity to decide and write on behalf of the NKVD.

The Union of the Gypsies asks Sovnarkom of RSFSR to point out to NKVD that the VSTs is the only Gypsy organisation that enjoys tremendous authority among the Gypsies; it should not be closed down but on the contrary, THE UNION ought to be helped as is the only one all over the world and for the first time in history it works for the cultural and economic, not even the revival, but THE BIRTH of the Gypsy people and this work can be done and proved. [...]

The All-Russian Union of the Gypsies hopes that SNK and VTsIK of RSFSR will not allow the outrageous violence against the Gypsy organisation, as this phenomenon runs counter to the entire Constitution and national policy of the USSR.

Founding Members of VSTs ... [signatures] (Taranov, Lebedev, [illegibly]).

Notes

1. *Sazhen'* (сажень) – a unit of length in the Russian Empire and the early USSR, equal to 213.36 cm.
2. *Versta* (верста) – a unit of length in the Russian Empire and the early USSR, equal to 1.067 km.
3. Reference to Decree of Empress Elisabeth from 1759 (See Introduction).

Source: GARF, f. P 393, op. 43A, d. 1763, l. 102-108.

Prepared for publication by Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov.

12.1.16 *Third Memorandum*

В Совет Национальностей при ЦИК СССР. Тов[арищу] Кульбищерову.

[Резолюция]: тов. Буткевичу. Прошу ознакомиться и доложить мне. 03.IV.1928 г. Кульбешеров.

От членов ВКП(б) и ВЛКСМ Цыган.

Докладная записка

Нам известно, как остро стоит вопрос о культурной работе среди национальных меньшинств. Особенно трудно его разрешение среди бродячего племени цыган с их таинственным происхождением, тяжелым историческим прошлым и необыкновенной способностью сохранять свою самобытность.

Почти поголовная неграмотность, полное отсутствие квалифицированных педагогов, бродячий образ жизни, следствием чего нищета и паразитическое существование, все это ставило работу среди цыган в наитягчайшие условия, по своей специфичности выделяло ее из ряда ей аналогичных работ.

Десять лет революции прошли незамеченными в истории цыганского народа и до сих пор цыганский вопрос остается вне сферы внимания Правительства и Общественности.

А между тем много есть серьезных, глубоких по содержанию, экономических и идеологических предпосылок, для того, чтобы уделить цыганскому вопросу соответствующее внимание.

Исторические данные о цыганах гласят о том, что цыгане имели когда-то свою культуру. Не желая быть рабами у завоевавшего их территорию царя, они бежали из Индии и с тех пор кочевничество стало их бытом.

Страницы дальнейшей истории этого свободного племени сплошь залиты кровью, которую они проливали в борьбе за свою независимость. Много времени прошло с тех пор и век за веком вкоренялось в них кочевничество, вызванное вечной травлей и гонениями “высоко-культурных” Европейских стран. [...]

По данным разных авторов, интересующихся цыганами, общее количество цыган на земном шаре, в прошлом столетии, колеблется от 1-го до 5-ти миллионов. В среднем 3 миллиона человек. Большая часть цыган приходится на Россию. Известный языковед Миклошич (1873) писал, что в России цыган до 1.500.000 ч. Конечно, эта сумма преувеличена.

ЦСУ [Центральному Статистическому Управлению] удалось учесть около 50.000 цыган, принимая во внимание с одной стороны, что бродячий быт цыган исключает

возможность, хотя-бы приблизительного их учета, и с другой стороны, что цыгане по личным соображениям, скрывают свое происхождение, называя себя русскими, сербами, болгарами, румынами или греками.

По данным бывшего Всероссийского Союза Цыган общее количество цыган, находящихся в СССР, достигает 200.000 ч. Из них около 50.000 ч. оседлого образа жизни и около 150.000 ведут бродячую жизнь. В подавляющем своем большинстве кочевые цыгане не производители, а только лишь потребляющие. Существовая за счет окружающего их населения и взамен ничем его не компенсируя, они являются, как бы паразитам общества. [...]

Основным методом поднятия культурного и экономического состояния цыганских масс является перевод их на оседлость и привлечение к сельско-хозяйственному труду. В нашей стране сельское хозяйство требует коренной реорганизации. Переход к сельской кооперации, к товариществам, артелям и коммунаам вопрос сегодняшнего дня.

В самом таборе, как бытовой организационной форме, у цыган имеется зачатки коммунизма и переходящих на сельское хозяйство цыган легко можно ввести в нужные формы сельско-хозяйственных объединений.

На этих началах землеустройство цыган может послужить полезным примером и для окружающего их крестьянства, плохо воспринимающего идею необходимости реорганизации своего хозяйства. [...] Необходимо так-же упомянуть, что среди кочевых цыган около 80% мелких кустарей (кузнецов, лудильщиков и т.п.), которые объединятся также и в производственные кооперации. Если мы говорим, что каждая вновь выстроенная фабрика или вновь организованный сельско-хозяйственный коллектив есть шаг к социализму, то землеустройство цыган – большое постижение в приближении к социализму.

Теперь перейдем к идеологическим предпосылкам, толкающим цыганский вопрос к его разрешению.

По социальному положению цыгане являются неимущим классом. Они представители беднейшей части нашего населения. Никогда, в продолжении всей своей истории, не были эксплуататорами и даже в своей среде не имели буржуазии. Наоборот, прошлое цыган полно насилия, издевательства, бесчинств полицейского произвола, травли и сжигания на кострах.

Наша конституция и политика национальных меньшинств гласит о самоопределении нации, о содействии культурно-экономическому развитию нацменьшинств.

В подтверждение этого ЦИК С.С.С.Р., в своем постановлении от 20.XI.1927 года говорит, ЧТО И ВПРЕДЬ ДЕЛО РАЗВИТИЯ НАЦИОНАЛЬНОЙ КУЛЬТУРЫ ВСЕХ НАРОДОВ, БУДЕТ ОБЕСПЕЧЕНО ВСЕЙ МОЩЬЮ И ПОДДЕРЖКОЙ СОЮЗА ССР.

Что не сделано для цыган.

Мало того, что они лишены государственной заботы, но это полуголодное нищенское племя лишено даже права гражданства, и за 10 лет Октябрьской Революции ни партийные органы, ни советские не сделали ничего реального для цыган.

В то же время газеты, лозунги и вся общественность кричит о ликвидации беспризорности, для борьбы с каковой выделяются особые фонды, проводятся лотереи, ставятся концерты, собирается пожертвования и т.д., тогда как беспризорная, кочующая целая национальность находится вне всякого внимания и продолжает бродить незамеченной под носом у нашей общественности, тщетно взывая о помощи, о желании переменить свой антиобщественный быт.

И за ДЕСЯТЬ лет их голоса остаются гласом вопиющего в пустыне.

Вот, что пишут сами цыгане об этом:

Письмо от цыган Дорогобужского уезда: ... Мы считаем себя равноправными членами Рабоче-Крестьянского Государства и решили перейти к оседлой жизни и трудовому землепользованию ...

Из деревни Перховичи, Смоленской губ.: Просим наш родной Союз помочь нам кредитом, хоть 600 руб[лей] для поддержки хозяйства на более большой срок, дабы мы могли почувствовать себя и узнать наше КОЛЛЕКТИВНОЕ ХОЗЯЙСТВО и показать, что мы цыгане можем вести хозяйство также наравне с крестьянами ...

От уполномоченного ВСЦ по Сев[ер]о-Кав[казскому] Краю: ... Мною зарегистрировано 100 чел[овек] цыган румынских, сербских, желающих перейти на оседлое положение на предмет занятия садоводством, т.к. это их специальность ...

От цыган Тульской губернии: ... Мы цыгане-крестьяне желаем получить землю в запасном фонде Тульской губернии, ввиду того, что мы цыгане не имеем своей земли и по сие время нам приходится кочевать с места на место ...

А вот письмо от цыганки, живущей в Черни, Тульской губ.: ... Можно ли мне цыганке – гражданке получить на мое семейство земли. Десять лет, как живу вдовою, в эти годы, когда осталась вдовою, то я старалась спасти своих детей от воровства, от гадания и что-бы они не ходили по улицам, не плясали [за] копейку, а также и сама, чтоб не ходить, а работать на честный труд ...

Такие письма Союз получал ежедневно с разных мест и они служат доказательством того, как выросло и растет самосознание цыганского народа.

Как же реагирует общественность на запросы цыган.

Прибегнем опять к письмам, как документам, отражающим и жизнь цыган на местах, и их положение среди нашей общественности.

Из письма к тов. Калинину: От цыган Смоленской губ[ернии], д[еревня] Клоково ... Мы ничего не поймем и будем дикарями и опять останемся угнетенными, такими, как были раньше, а может быть и хуже, потому что больше и больше крестьянство стало смотреть на цыган с ненавистью, а именно Советская Власть совсем забыла про нас и защиты мы никакой не находим, нас бьют, колотят, увечат и никто за нас не заступится. Тов. Калинин помогите нам вытащить нас из лесу. Дайте нам жизнь. Уже десять лет Сов[етской] власти, пора подумать о цыганах ...

От цыган Минской области: ... Мы живем, как заблудившиеся волки, не знаем ничего и с нами считаются хуже, чем с собаками ...

От цыган Псковской губернии: ... И не знает Высшая Советская Власть об отношении местных властей к цыганам и их желанию к оседлости и попыткам заниматься

сельским хозяйством, на каковые получают только насмешки и издевательства. Мы семижды подавали заявления о наделении нас землей из запасного фонда и на каждое заявление получаем отказ и личные насмешки, после каковых опускаются руки, теряются все надежды и снова влачим жалкое существования ...

От цыган гор[ода] Кременчуг: ... Ведь у нас почти в каждом селе и деревне есть не мало цыган и между ними никакой работы не проводится и они тянутся в хвосте, забытие всеми гражданами. Но это же неправильно, пора провести кампанию более сплоченную ... [...]

Обобщая вышеизложенный материал необходимо отметить следующее:

Столетия и тысячелетия истории и культуры прошли мимо цыганского народа, не дав ему ничего, кроме страданий и оставив его обойденным пасынком в человечестве. Нищета, граничащая с постоянной угрозой голодной смерти. Бездомность всего народа, в смысле отсутствия собственной территории и жилого угла для отдельных его членов. Полное бесправие, в смысле отсутствия правовых норм, определяющих правовое положение всего народа и отдельных цыган, а так же отсутствие собственных органов защиты и потому непрерывные притеснения и гонения, насилия и самосуды над цыганами, вплоть до сжигания их на кострах, даже в наше время ... Беспросветная темнота в смысле культуры, просвещения и даже простой грамотности... Исторически отрицательное отношение к цыганскому народу власти и окружающей среды.

Проблемски возможно лучшей жизни внесла Советская Власть своей политикой в национальных вопросах вообще и проявив, в частности, доброжелательство к цыганам, например, в декрете о землеустройстве.

Но фактически, реально, никаких улучшений в жизни цыганского народа не внесено, это объясняется: Во первых, той титанической борьбой, которую пришлось выдержать Советской Власти на фронте войн внешних и гражданских, на фронте экономических кризисов и катастроф, грандиозной работой по государственному и народному строительству и т.д. Во вторых, [в] безразличности к цыганскому вопросу общественности. В третьих, беспросветной темнотой цыганских масс.

Всероссийский Союз Цыган, ликвидирующийся в настоящее время был, как бы оазисом активности в пустыне общей пассивности к цыганским делам. Его работа, при малочисленности активных работников, при полном отсутствии средств, при отсутствии государственной поддержки, при общем недоверии к цыганам и, наоборот, недоверчивости цыган ко всему окружающему миру, от которого они, на протяжении всей истории, видели одни притеснения и гонения, была тяжелым мученичеством для горсти идейных работников и Всероссийский Союз Цыган не в силах был выполнить взятую на себя задачу культурно-экономического подъема цыганских масс и постановлением НКВД от 13/II - 1928 г. ВСЦ был закрыт.

Партийный и Комсомольский Актив цыган, веря в то, что Советская Власть, провозгласившая равенство всех народов, должна обратить внимание на недопустимое, ни с идеологической, ни с экономической стороны положение цыган и придти на помощь цыганам в деле их культурно-экономического возрождения,

считает, что изложенные в настоящем докладе экономические и идеологические предпосылки, доказывающие необходимость культурной и просветительной и хозяйственной работы среди цыган, будут приняты Советским Правительством во внимание и актив цыган входит с ходатайством в Правительство о создании для цыган такой организации, которая могла бы:

I. Прорабатывать вопросы, волнующие цыганский народ, могла бы формулировать цыганские нужды и в центре и на местах перед соответствующими правительственными и партийными органами, которая была бы в состоянии и технически и материально придти на помощь пробуждающейся активности цыганских масс.

II. Могла бы провести национальную культурно-просветную работу, путем создания и в центре и на местах сети клубов, детских и школьных интернатов, яслей, учебных мастерских, издательств, театров и пр.

III. Могла бы помогать и, до известной степени, руководить переходом цыганских масс с кочевого образа жизни на оседлый.

IV. Могла бы иметь техническую и материальную возможность развить кооперативное жилищное строительство, так как если повсеместно остро обстоит жилищный вопрос, то для цыганского народа он просто переходит в трагедию.

V. Могла бы содействовать созданию ряда кустарных ремесленных торгово-промышленных объединений, мастерских, небольших фабрик, путем субсидий, возвратных и безвозвратных ссуд, кредитов и налоговых льгот.

Со своей [стороны], мы члены ВКП(б) и ВЛКСМ цыган, предоставляя при сем проект положения Комитета содействия хозяйственному, культурному и земельному устройству цыган, проживающих на территории С.С.С.Р. считаем необходимым создание таковой организации как единственной, имеющей возможности разрешить цыганские вопросы в плоскости Советской политики национальных меньшинств.

Члены ВКП(б): Таранов, чл. ВКП(б), № 0034775.

Члены ВЛКСМ: Свистунова, чл. ВЛКСМ, № 31417.

Бараневце [?], чл. ВЛКСМ, № 15999.

Мурачковская, чл. ВЛКСМ, № 10654.

Грушина, член В.К.П.(б), № 0037719.

Грушин А. А., член В.К.П.(б), № 003033, чл. ВЛКСМ № 7452.

Лавина А. С., член В.К.П.(б), № 234.

Лавина Д. С., член В.К.П.(б), № 0042673.

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In the Soviet of Nationalities at TsIK USSR. To comrade Kulbisherov.

[Resolution] To comrade Butkevich. I ask you to get acquainted and to report to me.
03.04.1928. Kulbesharov.

From the Gypsies, members of the VKP(b) and VLKSM.

The Memorandum

We know how pertinent the issue of cultural work among national minorities is. It is particularly difficult to solve it among the wandering tribe of the Gypsies with their mysterious origins, a difficult historical past and their extraordinary ability to preserve their ethnic particularity.

Almost the entirety of the Gypsies being illiterate, the complete absence of qualified pedagogues, the wandering lifestyle, and as a consequence of this misery and the parasitic existence – all of these make the work with the Gypsies among the most difficult and in these factors distinguishes the Gypsies from a number of other similar cases.

Ten years after the Revolution have gone unnoticed in the history of the Gypsy people and until now, the Gypsy question remains outside the sphere of attention of the Government and the Society.

And by the way, there are many serious, deep in their meanings, economic and ideological premises so that the Gypsy question receives the necessary attention.

The historical data on the Gypsies suggests that Gypsies once had their own culture. Unwilling to be slaves to the king who has conquered their territory, they have escaped from India and since then nomadism has become their way of life.

The pages of the history of this free tribe that followed are completely flooded with the blood they have shed in the struggle for their independence. A long time has passed since then and with the passing centuries nomadism has thus become rooted in them, caused by the unending victimisation and persecution of the Gypsies in the “high-cultured” European countries. [...]

According to the data of various authors interested in the Gypsies, their total amount in the world over the past century fluctuates from 1 to 5 million. That makes an average of 3 million people. A large part of the Gypsies are in Russia. The famous linguist Miklosich (1873) wrote that in Russia, the Gypsies are up to 1,500,000. Of course, this number is exaggerated.

The Central Statistical Administration has managed to report about 50,000 Gypsies, taking into account on the one hand, that the nomadic lifestyle of the Gypsies does not allow the possibility of at least an approximate count; and on the other hand, the Gypsies for personal reasons conceal their origins, naming themselves Russians, Serbs, Bulgarians, Romanians or Greeks. According to data from the former All-Russian Union of the Gypsies, the total amount of Gypsies in the USSR reaches 200,000 people. Of these, around 50,000 lead a sedentary lifestyle and about 150,000 lead a nomadic way of life [1]. In its majority, the nomadic Gypsies are not producers but only consumers. They exist at the expense of the surrounding population and, in return, without compensating for it, they appear to be as parasites of society. [...]

The main method for raising the cultural and economic situation of the Gypsy masses is their transition to a settled way of life and their attraction to agricultural labour. In our country, agriculture requires a radical reorganisation. The transition towards rural cooperatives, associations, artels and communes is the matter of the day.

The Gypsy tabor [2] itself, as a form of organisation of a way of life, the embryo of Communism, exists in the Gypsies and their transition towards agriculture could easily be introduced into the necessary forms of the agrarian unions. On this basis, the settlement of the Gypsies could serve as a useful example also to the peasants around them who do not easily accept the idea that there is a need of re-organising their agricultural economy. [...] It is also necessary to note that among the wandering Gypsies around 80% of them are small producers (blacksmiths, tinsmiths, etc.), who could also be united in production cooperatives.

If we say that each newly-built factory or newly organised agrarian collective is a step towards socialism, then the land allocation for Gypsies is a great achievement on the road to getting closer to socialism.

We will now move on to the ideological preconditions that push the Gypsy issue towards its solution.

In their social status, the Gypsies are a class without property. They are representatives of the poorest part of our population. Never, for the duration of their whole history, have they been exploiters and have never even had bourgeoisie in their environment. On the contrary, the past of the Gypsies is full of violence, harassment, outrages of police arbitrariness, persecutions, and burnings on the stake.

Our Constitution and politics towards the national minorities promote the self-determination of the nations and the cooperation for the cultural and economic development of national minorities.

In confirmation of this, the TsIK USSR, in its Decree of 20 November 1927, declares that IN THE FUTURE TOO, THE DEED OF DEVELOPMENT OF THE NATIONAL CULTURES OF ALL NATIONS WILL BE ASSISTED WITH ALL THE POWER AND SUPPORT OF THE USSR.

Which has not been done for the Gypsies.

It is not enough that they are deprived of state care, but this half-starving, begging tribe is even devoid of the right of citizenship, and for 10 years after the October Revolution, neither Party nor the Soviet authorities have done anything real for the Gypsies.

At the same time, newspapers, slogans and the general society scream for the liquidation of homelessness, a struggle for which a considerable amount of funds are put aside, there are lotteries, concerts are being organised, charities are collected and so on; then, when the whole neglected, wandering nationality does not get any attention and continues to wander unnoticed under the nose of our society, in vain does it call for help in its desire to change its anti-social lifestyle.

And for TEN years their voices remain a voice screaming in the wilderness.

Here is what the Gypsies themselves write about.

A letter from the Dorogobuzhskiy Uezd: ... We consider ourselves equal members of the Workers' and Peasant State and have decided to move towards a settled life, and labour land use ...

From the village of Perkhovich, Smolenskaya Governorate: ... We ask our native Union to help us with a credit, at least 600 Rubles for the support of economy for a longer period

of time so that we can feel better and to get to know better our collective economy, and in order to show that we, the Gypsies, can lead agriculture just like the peasants ...

From the Plenipotentiary of the VSTs for the North-Caucasus Region: ... I have been registered 100 persons, Romanian, Serbian Gypsies who are willing to transit towards sedentarisation and to deal with gardening as this is their speciality ...

From the Gypsies from Tula Governorate: ... We, the Gypsy-peasants, want to get land from the Reserve Fund of Tula Governorate, given that we the Gypsies do not have our own land and till now we had to wander from place to place ...

And here is a letter from a Gypsy woman who lives in Cherni, Tula Governorate: ... Could I, a Gypsy woman and citizen, get land for my family. It has been ten years since I became a widow, and in those years when I have been a widow, I have been trying to save my children from thefts, fortune-telling and not to roam the streets, not to dance for a kopeykas, but also myself, in order not to roam but to do an honest work ...

The Union of the Gypsies has been receiving such letters daily from different places and they serve as evidence of how the Gypsy nation's self-consciousness has grown and how it continues to grow.

How does society react to the demands of the Gypsies?

We will again use the letters, as documents that reflect the lives of the Gypsies on the ground and their situation among our society.

From a letter to Comrade Kalinin: From the Gypsies from Smolensk Governorate, the village of Klokovo. ... We will not understand anything and we will be savages, and we will still remain oppressed, such as we have been earlier and perhaps worse, because more and more peasants look at the Gypsies with hatred, and namely the Soviet Authority has completely forgotten about us and we do not find any protection; they beat us, hit us, cripple us and no one takes our side. Comrade Kalinin, help us get out of the woods. Give us life. For ten years now there is a Soviet Authority, it's time to think about the Gypsies ...

From Gypsies from the Minsk Governorate: ... We live like lost wolves, we do not know anything and they treat us worse than dogs ...

From Gypsies from Pskov Governorate: ... And the Supreme Soviet Authority is not aware of the attitudes of the local authorities towards the Gypsies and their desire to settle down and they attempt to deal with agriculture for which they receive only mockery and harassment. We have applied seven times to get dedicated land from the Reserve Fund and to each application we received denials and personal mockery and harassment after which we lost courage, lost all hope, and we again carry on with our miserable existence ...

From Gypsies from the town of Kremenchuk: ... Isn't it that there are in each village and small town many Gypsies and there is no work done with them; so, they trail behind, forgotten by all citizens. But this is not right, it is time to conduct a more cohesive campaign ... [...]

Summarising the above, it is necessary to note the following:

Centuries and millennia of history and culture have gone unnoticed by the Gypsy people, giving them nothing but suffering and leaving the Gypsies as a neglected orphan

amongst humanity. Destitution that borders with a constant threat of starvation. Homelessness for the whole nation, meaning no home territory and a sweet corner dedicated as living space for its individual members. Complete injustice, in the sense of the absence of legal norms that define the legal situation of each nation and the individual Gypsies, as well as the absence of its own organs for protection and therefore constant burnings on fires, even in our times ... Complete darkness in the sense of lack of culture, education, and even simple literacy. Historically negative attitudes towards the Gypsy people by the authorities and the surrounding population.

Glimpses of possibly a better life were brought by the Soviet Authority with its policy on national affairs in general, and showing in honesty, goodwill towards the Gypsies, for example in the field of land allocation.

But in reality, no improvements in the life of the Gypsy people have been made, and this is explained by the following reasons: First, this titanic struggle, which had to withstand the Soviet Authorities on the front of the external and civil wars, on the front of economic crises and catastrophes, given the spectacular work on the construction of the state, the nation and so on. Second, the indifference of the society towards the Gypsy issue. Third, the illiterate darkness of the Gypsy masses.

The All-Russian Union of Gypsies, currently being liquidated, seemed as if to serve as an oasis of the activity in a desert of total passivity towards Gypsy deeds. Its work, in the low number of active employees, in the complete absence of funds, in the absence of state support, in the general distrust of the Gypsies and, on the other hand, the mistrust of the Gypsies towards the whole world around them from which, throughout their history, they have experienced only tortures and persecutions, it was a hard work for the handful of ideological workers; and the All-Russian Union of the Gypsies did not have the power to fulfil its own task of cultural and economic uplifting of the Gypsy masses, and with the NKVD Decree of 13.02.1928 the All-Russian Union of the Gypsies was closed down.

The Party and Komsomol Activists of the Gypsies, believe that the Soviet Authorities, which proclaimed the equality of all peoples, should pay attention to the unacceptable, neither ideologically nor economically, situation of the Gypsies, and will help the Gypsies in the struggle for their cultural and economic revival. We believe that the economic and ideological prerequisites presented in this report, proving the necessity of cultural, educational and economic work among the Gypsies, will be taken into consideration by the Soviet Government and therefore the Gypsy activists are turning with an intercession to the Government for the creation of such an organisation, which could:

I. Address the issues that are relevant to the Gypsy people, which could formulate the needs of the Gypsies, both in the centres and throughout the country, in front of the respective governmental and party organs, which would be able to serve both technically and materially the nascent activities of the Gypsy masses.

II. It could carry out national, cultural and educational work for the creation, both in centres and throughout the country, of a network of clubs, children's and boarding schools, nurseries, workshops, publishing houses, theatres and so on.

III. It could help, and to a certain extent, lead the transition of the Gypsy masses from a nomadic way of life to a sedentary lifestyle.

IV. It could have the technical and material opportunities to develop the co-operative construction of housing, as the housing issue is all too acute for everybody, and for the Gypsy people it is simply tragic.

V. It could contribute to the creation of a number of trade and industrial associations of small producers and craftsmen, workshops and small factories by subsidies, repayable and non-refundable loans, credits and tax reliefs.

For our part, we, the Gypsies, members of the VKP(b) and VLKSM, providing a draft of proposal for a Committee for the Assistance of the Economic, Cultural and Land Allocations of the Gypsies Living in the Territory of USSR, we consider as necessary to establish such an organisation as the only one, which could be able to solve the Gypsy issues in line of the Soviet policy for national minorities.

Members of the VKP(b): ... Taranov, member of the VKP(b), [Party Card] No. 0034775.

Members of the VLKSM: ... Svistunova, member of VLKSM, [Komsomol Card] No. 31417.

Baranevetse, member of the VLKSM, [Komsomol Card] No. 15999.

Murachkovskaya, member of the VLKSM, [Komsomol Card] No. 10654.

Grushina, member of the VKP(b), [Party Card] No. 0037719.

A. A. Grushin, Member of the VKP (b), No. 003033, member of VLKSM No 7452.

A. S. Lavina, member of the VKP (b), [Party Card] No 234.

D. S. Lavina, member of the VKP(b), [Party Card] No 0042673 [3].

Notes

1. The total number of Gypsies in the USSR is, according to the estimates of Gypsy activists, highly exaggerated, but otherwise, the estimate of the ratio between the nomadic (a quarter) and sedentary (three-quarters) Gypsies is impressively accurate.

2. *Tabor* (табор) is the name of a separate unit (of usually several related Gypsy families) in the Russian Empire and the USSR.

3. It is noteworthy that the last four names are not of Gypsies. They may have been attracted as party members to give further weight to the Memorandum.

Source: GARF, f. P 1235, op. 120, d. 27, l. 4-14.

Prepared for publication by Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov.

Comments

The emergence of the All-Russian Union of Gypsies and its relatively rapid end can only be understood correctly if placed in the general socio-political context of the era (the 1920s). This was the time when the USSR was created (formally in 1922) and the first Constitution of the new state was adopted in 1924. A fundamental principle of USSR national policy at the time was to support the development of all nationalities inhabiting the former Empire. All nationalities were given the opportunity to create their own national structures at different territorial and/or administrative levels (soviet and

autonomous republics, rayons, village councils, public organisations, schools, etc., and even individual labour production units). There are no set criteria as to which nationalities of what exactly national structures are entitled. Each case is decided individually, but in general, the leading line in national politics in the early USSR was its ideology of affirmative action with respect to individual nationalities, including Gypsies (Martin, 2001).

The All-Russian Union of Gypsies emerges in the midst of the so-called Gypsy music elite. It originated with the creation of the first Gypsy choirs at the end of the 18th century. After several generations, Gypsy musicians and performers with their families and relatives gradually formed a separate stratum, based mainly in the two metropolises (St. Petersburg and Moscow), and became registered in urban estates of merchants and tradesmen and *meschchane* (мещане), the latter including mostly small producers. This Gypsy elite had relatively high social positions; its representatives were in constant interactions with the highest social and cultural strata – the highest aristocracy and the bourgeoisie, the most famous poets, writers, musicians, etc. This unique social position of the Gypsy music elite was noticed by George Borrow (a famous English writer of novels, travel books and Bible translator) who, in 1833, wrote: “Those who have been accustomed to consider these people as wandering barbarians, incapable of civilisation and unable to appreciate the blessings of a quiet and settled life, will be surprised at learning that many of those in Moscow inhabit large and handsome houses, appear abroad in elegant equipages, and if distinguishable from the genteel class of the Russians [are] only so by superior personal advantages and mental accomplishments”. (Borrow, 1911).

The October Revolution and the creation of the Soviet state radically change the life and social position of the Gypsy music elite. One part left the country along with the so-called White emigration, and those who remained were looking for new ways of reaching achievements in the context of the Soviet realities.

After 1921, when the so-called war communism was replaced with the New Economic Policy (NEP) and a gradual recovery of the economy, social and cultural life started, also the Gypsy music ensembles (called Gypsy choirs, according to an established tradition) were revived. It was exactly in this environment, namely in the famous Gypsy choir of Yegor Polyakov in Moscow, where the beginning of an organised Gypsy movement in the USSR could be set.

It started with the creation of a Gypsy Communist cell in January 1923, headed by Ivan G. Lebedev (who later adopted the pseudonym Rom-Lebedev). Its members were Sergey Polyakov, Georgiy Lebedev, Dmitriy Mikhailov, and Karpetsky (GARF, f. A 259, op. 96, d. 4233, l. 21; f. 3316, op. 17, d. 188, l. 1). The first public action of the young Gypsy Komsomol members was to organise a Gypsy group to participate in the 1st of May Parade on Red Square in the same year, raising the slogan “Gypsies of the world, unite!” (GARF, f. A 259, op. 96, d. 4233, l. 21), which is a paraphrase of the famous slogan “Proletarians of the world, unite!” from The Communist Manifesto.

From the Minutes Nr.1 from 10th of January 1924 published above the names of the founders of the Initiative Group become clear: a total of 11 people, of which one woman. The group’s main task was “the organisation of the proletarian backward Gypsy masses”.

This wording shows that the founders fit into the spirit of the era and the prevailing ideological norms of the time, and used its phraseology. It is interesting to note that among the founders is not included Ivan Lebedev, who appears in Union documents only in Minutes No.4 of 24th of August 1924, together with Andrey S. Taranov, who was inscribed as Chairman of the Initiative Group.

A list of the Initiative Group which is attached to this Minutes (GARF, f. P 1235, op. 119, d. 9, l. 10-11) allows for further analysis. In this list of 14 people, all with the exception of the first three (Stepan Osipov, Andrey Taranov, and Ivan Balashev), lived near Petrovskiy Park. This was the main settlement of the so-called choir Gypsies and ten people from this list wrote that they are “actors” by profession. As a “social status”, they all define themselves as a “proletariat”, which indicates that they had taken into account the new Soviet realities in which the most preferred social origin was the proletarian one (to what extent Gypsy artists can be considered proletarians is a separate question).

The case of Stepan Osipov is somehow obscure. He held leading positions in the first Union documents. The last mention of his name was in a statement of the Initiative Group to the Presidium of the SN of the VTsIK of 23.09.1924, which was signed by Stepan Osipov, but his name was scratched and in its place, the name of Andrey Taranov was written by hand (GARF, f. P 1235, op. 119, d. 10, l. 14). Judging by the List of the Initiative Group, Osipov had been a member of the VKP(b) since 1918, a participant in the Civil War, and his profession was ‘Soviet service’, i.e. managerial staff. It is unlikely that a Gypsy with such biographical details would stay away from the Gypsy movement, so it seems more likely that it was a non-Rom, attracted by the Union’s founders, to demonstrate a leading party presence in it until a Rom Party member was found.

From the other members of the Initiative Group, members of the Party were Andrey Taranov and Ivan Balashev, the latter being the only one whose profession was that of a ‘worker’. The other three from the Initiative Group were Komsomol members, namely I. Lebedev, S. Polyakov, and D. Mikhailov (GARF, f. P 1235, op. 119, d. 9, l. 10-11). The emergence of A. Taranov and I. Lebedev into leading positions in the new Union can be explained by the desire to strengthen the Party and Komsomol members’ presence in the newly created Gypsy Union what was also a requirement of the Soviet apparatus.

One of the first things that the newly formed Union decided on 25.01.1924 (GARF, f. P 1235, op. 119, d. 10, l. 3) was to ask the party and Soviet institutions for approval and support for its legal registration. There is a need to clarify here the administrative procedures regarding the registration of the Gypsy Union. According to the legal norms of that time, this registration was performed by the NKVD of RSFSR. However, this was not the notorious NKVD of the 1930s, known as the main executor of mass repressions. In the 1920s, the ‘sword of revolution’, called upon to fight the enemies of the Soviet state, was the All-Russian Extraordinary Commission for Combating Counter-Revolution and Sabotage (VChK) created in 1917 and headed by Felix Dzerzhinsky, later renamed the State Political Directorate (GPU), and then in 1924 to the Joint State Political Directorate (OGPU) at the SNK USSR. The NKVD of the RSFSR at that time was assigned to take care of public order, which included control over public organisations to which VSTs also

belonged. Indicative of the lack of special interest to the NKVD in the Gypsy Union is the fact that the case for registration is located in a folder between the cases of the Society for the Study of Russian Manor and Kazan Society of Beekeepers (GARF, f. P 393, op. 43 A, d. 1770).

The leading Party and Soviet institutions, however, have clearly expressed their support for the establishment of a Gypsy Union. In a letter to the NKVD of 30.05.1925 ON VTSIK defines this organisation as “extremely suitable” and asks to accelerate as much as possible the process of its registration (GARF, f. P 393, op. 43 A, d. 1763, l. 12). Particularly impressive is the letter on this occasion from the sub-section National Minorities, APO at TsK VKP(b) of 12.06.1925, part of it worth of quoting:

In view of the fact that the Gypsies for the first time are trying to create a Soviet public organisation among themselves and so far we have not had any approach to them, I consider it proper to register their statute. We will follow their work and maybe we can find among them quite suitable elements for introducing their masses to a new life. (Ibid., l. 17).

As the letter shows, the top Party leadership itself is surprised by the initiative of Gypsies to engage in civic activities, and it is timidly hoping that the necessary staff will be found to run the new organisation in accordance with the Party line in order to integrate the Gypsies into the ‘new life’. It is also revealing that the letter was signed by the Deputy Head of the Department, Semyon Dimanstein, who was one of the leading theorists of Soviet national politics during this period (see Martin, 2001).

The crucial role of Party institutions in building the structure of VSTs is beyond any doubt. A letter from the Moscow Committee of the VKP(b) dated 10.07.1925 to the NKVD agreed that the members of the VKP(b) and the VLKSM participating in the Initiative Group would be joining the new organisation, emphasizing that “Comrade Taranov was commissioned to lead the work in this union” (GARF, f. P 393, op. 43 A, d. 1763, l. 20-21). The logical consequence of this letter are the results of the Plenum of the Moscow Gypsies, held on August 6, 1925 (see Minutes No. 1, published above), where Andrey Taranov was elected Chair of the Union, Sergey Polyakov became Vice-President, and Ivan Lebedev – Secretary (members of the VLKSM).

After a long process of coordination between the institutions, the NKVD registered the VSTs on 23.07.1925. There are some significant differences between the Draft-Statute of January 1924 and the Registered Statute, which reflect the differences between the founders of the Union and the Soviet State in their views on the objectives and tasks of the Union. In the Society’s Draft-Statute (society was a term used in defining the newly created organisation) from 1924, its primary purpose is:

the unification of the backward proletarian Gypsy masses on the territory of Moscow Governorate into a society of collective creative labour.

In the Statute from 1925, however, the name of the organisation is already *the Union of Gypsies living on the territory of the RSFSR*, and its main purpose is

uniting and organising the Gypsy working masses, living on the territory of the RSFSR, protecting their interests, raising their cultural level, and organising mutual assistance.

There are also differences in the methods of implementation of the planned activities of the Union in both versions. According to the first version, the Society only conducts the main activities of the organisation, whereas, in the second version, it is displayed an opportunity that the Union intercedes with Soviet authorities for the implementation of its provisions, and it is explicitly stressed that “all work is done under the guidance of VTsIK”.

The membership of the Union had grown rapidly since the registration of VSTs, and in 1927 and 1928 640 people were counted as its members (Вся Москва, 1927, p. 233; 1928, p. 211). In 1927 a check of the documentation of VSTs was conducted, which found that there were 674 filled membership questionnaires, and of them 417 members were living in Moscow (GARF, f. P 1235, op. 140, d. 752, l. 3-4). Of the Union members, 80% were horse dealers in Moscow and 1% rural inhabitants; 19% were estrade artists; 5% were workers. Of these, however, only 82 people paid the membership dues, i.e. according to the rules only they can be considered full members of the Union (GARF, f. P 393, op. 43 A, d. 1763, l. 76).

Interestingly, in the VSTs membership cards on the cover page is written in Russian the slogan “Proletarians of all countries and oppressed peoples of the world, unite!” (a paraphrase of the famous slogan from The Communist Manifesto). Nevertheless, on the inside page of the card the same slogan is written in Romani language, but with quite different content: “Рома сарэ свѣтостыр скэндэнтипэ кхэтане” (Roma of all world, unite!).

The Soviet state quickly provided VSTs official premises in the centre of Moscow and a salary for his three leaders. It is interesting to note that the first issue of the journal *Romany zorya* (Gypsy Dawn) presents a photo of the leadership of the VSTs, namely A. Taranov, I. Lebedev, S. Polyakov, and Nina Dudarova (Романы зоря, 1927, No. 1, p. 3). The latter, however, does not occupy a leading position in the Union, i.e. she is presented there in order to demonstrate the equal position of a Gypsy woman. Moreover, after the election of the Union Presidium by the end of the year, its composition had already changed and consisted of five members – A. Taranov, I. Lebedev, S. Polyakov, M. Bezlyudsky, N. Pankov – and three candidate-members – A. Polyakov, G. Lebedev, and a woman, Leontyeva (GARF, f. P 1235, op. 120, d. 27, l. 182).

An organisational department, a cultural department, an ethnographic academic section for the study of the language of the Gypsies, the management of training and production workshops were established at the Central Board of the VSTs. Plenipotentiaries of the Union for different districts of Moscow were also designated (Вся Москва, 1927, p. 233; 1928, p. 211). In addition, Plenipotentiaries were appointed to work in the different regions of the RSFSR too.

In 1927, there were five such Plenipotentiaries – for the North Caucasus Kray, Leningrad Governorate, Tula Governorate, and Pochevsky Uezd in the Bryansk oblast (GARF, f. P 393, op. 43 A, d. 1763, l. 173). Soon after, another Commissioner appeared – Ilya Gerasimov for

Smolensk oblast (GARF, f. P 1235, op. 120, d. 27). Plenipotentiaries for other Soviet republics were also determined, particularly for Byelorussian SSR and Ukrainian SSR.

In Byelorussia, VSTs plenipotentiary Alexander Grakhovsky prepared the Statute of Union of Gypsies living in the territory of the BSSR (an adapted version of the Statute of VSTs) and presented it for registration before the Republican NKVD on 05.03.1927 (NARB, f. 34/133c, op. 1, d. 727, l. 1). The Statute, however, remained in the archives of the NKVD (Ibid., l. 2-7), without the new Union receiving the registration (in all probability, because of the interim liquidation of the VSTs).

The situation in Ukraine turns out to be more complicated because of the controversial status of the Plenipotentiary of VSTs for the USSR Nikolay Bizev.

At a meeting of the TsKNM VTsUIK of June 16, 1926, it was decided that the question of a possible organisation of the All-Ukrainian Union of Gypsies should be raised. Until the issue was clarified, Saveliy Yali and N. Bizev were tasked with developing a plan of work among Gypsies (NARB, f. 701, op. 1, d. 14, l. 35-3506). Shortly afterwards, an article by N. Bizev (Бизь-Либзи, 1926, p. 3) was published in the local press outlining the activities of the Soviet state and the VSTs for improving the situation of the Gypsies. On July 22, 1926, a new meeting of TsKNM was convened at the VTsUIK, stating that N. Bizev should not go beyond the powers granted to him by TsKNM, and VSTs was informed about the case (NARB, f. 701, op. 1, d. 14, l. 37-38). With this, activities towards the establishment of the Gypsy Union in Ukraine were exhausted, despite N. Bizev's protests to the central authorities in Moscow. This does not mean that the Ukrainian authorities distanced themselves from the problems of the Gypsies. On the contrary, they continued to work actively in this direction, especially for allocating land to those who wished to settle down.

Of interest is the question of whether the Soviet authorities and the Gypsy activists were thinking of unifying the Gypsy Unions existing in the RSFSR, the BSSR, and the USSR at that time into one common for the entire USSR, namely to create an All-Union Gypsy Union. There are no documented confirmations of the existence of such plans, but they cannot be ruled out; on the contrary, it is logical to assume that they existed, at least at the level of ideas. What is certain is that the authorities in the three Soviet republics have constantly exchanged information with each other about Gypsy politics and about the Gypsy unions, which is confirmed by the available archival materials preserved in Belarus (NARB, f. 6, op. 1, d. 1195; f. 701, op. 1, d. 14).

Immediately after its official registration, the VSTs became actively involved in the Soviet policy towards Gypsies. In September 1925 the Central Board of the VSTs appointed Ivan Lebedev as its representative in the ON VTsIK (GARF, f. P 1235, op. 120, d. 27); good relationships were also established with Narkompros and Narkomzem (GARF, f. P 3260, op. 6, d. 44).

In early 1926, the VSTs leadership adopted an ambitious Union Work Plan during the year, as well as a detailed Work Plan for its Cultural Department (GARF, f. P 1235, op. 120, d. 27). In these documents, Gypsy activists outlined their vision concerning the main lines of the state policy regarding Gypsies, including a number of specific ideas. It will not be an exaggeration to say that the main elements of this policy were proposed by the

Gypsy leaders themselves and implemented by the Soviet institutions with the active participation of Gypsy activists.

At first glance, the co-operation between the VSTs and the Soviet state appeared to be successful and the right balance had been found in relations between the two countries. At the same time, however, the leadership of the VSTs was spending a great deal of time and making considerable efforts in another, additional direction – they tried to go ahead with the development of their own economic and commercial activity – which ultimately turned out to be fatal to the very existence of the Union.

One of the first actions taken by the Presidium of the VSTs after the registration of the Union Statute was the submission of an Application to the VTsIK dated 05.09.1925, which contained a request for an amendment of the just registered Statute. A new Draft Statute has been prepared with amendments that aimed at “giving the union the opportunity to organise production workshops and other enterprises” (GARF, f. A 259, op. 96, d. 4233, l. 5), i.e. to develop their own economic activity.

This was the beginning of a huge official correspondence, which lasted nearly two and a half years, and which, apart from VSTs, included a number of Soviet leading institutions and their internal structures – VTsIK, TsIK, TsK VKP(b), SNK, NKVD, Moscow authorities, etc. The presentation of this whole epistolary saga could be done in several volumes. It can be said very briefly that some institutions supported the request for amendments to the Statute, others opposed them, and others changed their opinion several times (GARF, f. A 259, op. 96, d. 4233; f. P 1235, op. 120, d. 27; f. A 259, op. 106, d. 2253, 39 l.; f. P 393, op. 43 A, d. 1763). In turn, VSTs not only rapidly began to develop a number of economic activities through the so-called production workshops, but continued to make new requests to institutions, e.g. for providing tax benefits to commercial enterprises of the Gypsy Union, for permission to set up a mutual aid fund, to open a cinema, to run a theatrical lottery, etc. (GARF, f. P 1235, op. 120, d. 27; f. A 259, op. 106, d. 1924; f. P 393, op. 43 A, d. 1763, 136 l.). The new version of the Statute of the VSTs was approved by the NKVD on July 15, 1926 (GARF, f. P 393, op. 43A, d. 1763, l. 111-116), and the development of economic and commercial activity by the Union had already been formally resolved. Nevertheless, the problems did not end here but, on the contrary, they widened and deepened further. At the end of the same year, a full audit of the activities of VSTs on behalf of ON VTsIK was executed (GARF, f. P 1235, op. 140, d. 498), followed in the subsequent year by new inspections made by the Moscow Workers and Peasants' Inspectorate (GARF, f. P 393, op. 43 A, d. 1763). The audit found numerous financial violations and even frauds, such as using fake stamps and letter-heads with the misuse of the ON VTsIK abbreviation. By using these fake documents, and hiding behind the authority of the institution, loans and deficient materials were obtained, which were then sold on the private market for higher prices, not paying loan interests, non-payment of salaries and insurances, the default of contracts and many other profiteering activities, mainly performed by suspicious ‘experts’ employed by the VSTs (Ibid.). Because of all these violations, the Chairman of VSTs A. Taranov and Secretary I. Lebedev were sentenced to forced labour for a period of six months,

but the sentence was not enforced, and A. Taranov also received a party punishment (GARF, f. P 1235, op. 140, d. 498, l. 7-8).

Individual Gypsy activists were also involved in this endless official correspondence, sending memos to different institutions about the problems existing in VSTs, for which they blamed its leaders. The most active in this regard being Mikhail Bezlyudskiy (while serving as an agent at the Moscow Criminal Investigation Department) and Trofim Gerasimov (GARF, f. P 1235, op. 120, d. 27; f. P 1235, op. 140, d. 498; f. P 393, op. 43 A, d. 1763).

Eventually, on May 3, 1927, a decision was made to liquidate the VSTs by APO at TsK VKP(b), but the action was subsequently repeatedly terminated (GARF, f. P 1235, op. 140, d. 498; f. P 1235, op. 140, d. 752). Solutions for continuing the operation of VSTs in other forms were sought, e.g. ON at VTsIK proposed to replace VSTs Chairman A. Taranov with M. Bezlyudskiy (GARF, f. P 1235, op. 140, d. 498). The VSTs, for their part, have made unsuccessful attempts to re-register by replacing the VSTs Presidium with the Board of Founders, which would register as a subsidiary of the VSTs the Society for the Attraction of Gypsies in Labour, which would take over the Union's economic activities (GARF, f. P 393, op. 43 A, d. 1763, 136; f. P 1235, op. 140, d. 498). Meanwhile, NKVD discussed whether to bring the leadership of VSTs to justice (GARF, f. P 393, op. 43 A, d. 1763).

This whole epic concludes with the NKVD Decree of 13th February 1928 to close down the Union of Gypsies living on the territory of the RSFSR. The main reason for its closure was that the Union not only failed to take any steps towards to fulfill its core tasks and was unable to do anything in its work to organise the Gypsy masses; it had also fostered indebtedness to government agencies, organisations and individuals (GARF, f. A 2306, op. 69, d. 1357, l. 9-906).

Both the Memorandums signed by the heads of VSTs, Andrey Taranov, and Ivan Lebedev, which are published above, constitute the last attempts to stop the liquidation of the Union (the first memorandum) and to create a new Gypsy organisation (the second one). But they did not lead to any changes in the decision made and no new Gypsy organisation was actually created. This may seem surprising, but the VSTs leaders were not subjected to any persecution. On the contrary, all of them received positions at the lowest levels of the Soviet nomenclature – especially in the national sections of various publishing houses and in the newly created Gypsy Theatre *Romen*.

An interesting question is the one concerning the reasons for the liquidation of VSTs and whether the allegations of wrongdoing in its activities were not, in fact, a mere pretence for its closure. In its Memorandum, the leadership of the VSTs does not deny any wrongdoing but tries to justify it by emphasizing the Union's need for funds for the development of its activities. The persuasiveness of these justifications and explanations is difficult to assess, but it is undoubtedly a fact that the VSTs did not, in practice, invest any funds earned from its economic and commercial activities for its activities as a public organisation.

Viewed in the discourse of anti-Gypsyism, the liquidation of the VSTs was a repressive measure of the Soviet debt against the Gypsies in the USSR and their activists. The analysis of historical material, however, offers a very different interpretation. The case here is not a change in the strategy of the Affirmative State Policy towards the Gypsies, but only

a change of the tactics in its implementation. In fact, after the liquidation of the VSTs, the Soviet state took the Gypsy policy entirely in its own hands, and this is when its most impressive results were achieved.

In the late 1920s and early 1930s, Gypsy kolkhozes and artels were established, and Gypsy schools were opened (including a teacher training high school); Gypsy journals and newspapers were published; more than 250 books have been printed in the Romani language (textbooks and various other publications, including works by Gypsy poets, writers, and playwrights); the famous Gypsy Theatre Romen was created, as well as other Gypsy music and dance groups, etc.

Again, Gypsy activists did not stay away from the implementation of this state policy on Gypsies. On the contrary, they continued to be active participants in it. Ivan Tokmakov was attracted to work in ON VTsIK, and he became the central figure of Roma activism; through him, all Gypsy policies were implemented and controlled. In other words, Gypsy activism, and the movement for Roma civic emancipation in general, continued to develop, but in new forms.

Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov

12.2 Publications

12.2.1 *The Gypsies Are Awakening*

Цыгане просыпаются

Вот уже скоро 8-м лет, как все национальные меньшинства, пользуясь правом, добытым пролетарской революцией, строят свою культуру и благополучие.

Но есть одна национальность, которой до сих пор не было уделено должного внимания, это – цыгане. Оборванные, темные, грязные, не видя ни в ком участия, бродят они с места на место, тяжелыми путями добывая себе средства к существованию.

Необходимо уяснить основные причины, вызвавшие такую обособленность этого народа. Являясь выходцами из северо-восточной части Индии, цыгане появились в Европе в 1645 году. Страницы истории их пребывания в Европе говорят о сплошной кровавой расправе, которой подвергались кочующее цыганские племена.

Началом исторической Голгофы цыган является Испания, где за черный цвет лица и [за то, что] умели бегло говорить на нескольких языках их тысячами сжигали на кострах инквизиции в угоду господствующей религии.

“Просвещенное” французское правительство издавало декреты, предписывавшие истребление цыган “огнем и мечем”.

По указу прусского короля предавался немедленной смерти каждый из цыган, вступивший на границу его государства.

В Австро-Венгрии цыгане были обращены в рабство и, работая в рудниках Моравии, на всю жизнь заковывались в цепи, как преступники. Примерам

“культурных стран” последовала и царская Россия, в которой цыгане появились в 1700 годах. Помещики изощрялись здесь в искусстве травли цыган собаками, а “христолюбивое” духовенство, не уступая испанской инквизиции, сжигало их на кострах, как еретиков и колдунов.

Ничего, следовательно, мудреного нет в том, что эти люди стали кочевать и замкнулись в своей среде.

Целыми столетиями вкоренилось в их быт кочевничество, а кочевой образ жизни, лишавший их возможности заниматься обычным трудом, заставлял попрошайничать, в крайнем же случае изыскивать средства хотя бы гаданьем, или даже воровством.

Октябрьская революция 1917 года мало отразилась на психологии цыган, внесла лишь существенные изменения в их материальное положение. Лишь только на 6-м году революции всеобщий рост самосознания масс, захвативший самые широкие отсталые слои, коснулся и небольшого количества рожденных революцией застрельщиков новой жизни среди цыганского племени.

Впервые, два года назад, была организована ячейка РЛКСМ цыган, несшая на себе всю тяжесть борьбы за новую жизнь. И уже [в] 1925 году утвержден всероссийский союз цыган, поставивший целью вовлечение цыганских масс в общественную жизнь и уничтожение фактического неравенства, в котором находится наша национальность среди других национальных меньшинств как в политическом, так и культурном, и экономическом отношениях. Впервые за сотни лет именно теперь для цыган настала пора развернуть свои силы, таланты и, как другие нации, проявить все свои дарования в труде и искусстве.

Цыгане просыпаются. Московские цыгане уже проснулись: они открывают всевозможные студии, объединяют все сознательное население цыган и задавшись целью вовлечь в него и всех темных братьев.

Надо помочь цыганам стать народом, равным во всех отношениях с другими народностями, населяющими СССР.

Председатель союза цыган [Андрей] Таранов.

Секретарь Союза [Иван] Лебедев.

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The Gypsies Are Awakening

It is already 8 years now that all national minorities, using the right gained by the proletarian revolution, are building their culture and well-being.

But there is one nationality, which until now has not been given due attention, these are Gypsies. Dangling, dark, dirty, not seeing empathy from anyone, they wander from place to place, earning their livelihood in hard ways.

It is necessary to clarify the main reasons that caused this isolation of this people.

Being originally from the North-Eastern part of India, the Gypsies appeared in Europe in 1645 [1]. The pages of the history of their stay in Europe speak of the continuous massacre that plagued the Gypsy tribes.

The beginning of the historical Golgotha of Gypsies is in Spain, where for their black complexion and for being able to speak several languages fluently, thousands of them were burned at the inquisition bonfires to please the dominant religion.

The “enlightened” French government issued decrees ordering the extermination of Gypsies by “fire and sword.”

According to the decree of the Prussian king, each of the Gypsies who entered the border of his state was sentenced to death immediately.

In Austria-Hungary, the Gypsies were enslaved and, working in the mines of Moravia, were chained for life, like criminals. Tsarist Russia followed examples of “cultural countries”. The Gypsies there appeared in 1700. Landlords here excelled in the art to persecute Gypsies with baiting dogs, and the “Christ-loving” clergy, not yielding to the Spanish Inquisition, burned them at the bonfires as heretics and witches [2].

Therefore, there is nothing surprising in the fact that these people began to wander and become isolated in their midst.

For centuries, nomadism has rooted in their everyday lives, and the nomadic way of life, which deprived them of the opportunity to do normal work, forced them to beg, in the worst case, to find means at least by fortune-telling, or even theft.

The October Revolution of 1917 had little effect on the psychology of the Gypsies, making only significant changes in their economic situation. Only in the 6th year of the revolution, the overall growth of mass consciousness, which seized the widest backward sections, touched them a little too and the revolution also gave birth to the pioneers of a new life among the Gypsy tribe.

For the first time, two years ago, a Gypsy RLKSM cell was organised, bearing the brunt of the struggle for a new life. And already in 1925, the All-Russian Union of Gypsies was endorsed. Its aim was involving the Gypsy masses in public life and eliminating the actual inequality in which our nationality is located among other national minorities, both politically, culturally and economically. For the first time in hundreds of years, it is now time for the Gypsies to deploy their forces, talents and, like other nations, to display all their talents in work and art.

The Gypsies are awakening. Moscow Gypsies have already woken up: they open all kinds of studios, unite the entire conscious population of Gypsies and aim to draw into them also all the dark brothers.

Gypsies must be helped to become a people equal in all respects with other nationalities inhabiting the USSR.

Chairman of the Union of Gypsies [Andrey] Taranov.

Secretary of the Union [Ivan] Lebedev

Notes

1. It is not clear what historical information about Gypsies the author is referring to. In any case, the emergence of Gypsies in Europe has been historically documented centuries earlier.
2. There is no historical record of the burning of Gypsies at the stake in Tsarist Russia.

Source: [Таранов, А. & Лебедев, И.] (1925). Цыгане просыпаются. *Известия ЦИК СССР*, Ан. 9, No. 207 (2540), 1925, September 11, p. 6.

Prepared for publication by Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov.

12.2.2 *About the Work among the Gypsies*

О работе среди цыган

Вот уже скоро 8-м лет, как все национальные меньшинства, пользуясь правом, добытым пролетарской революцией, строят свою культуру и благополучие, стремясь встать наравне с революционным кадром страны.

Восемь лет тяжелой, бесперывной борьбы с вековыми традициями, унаследованными от царского правительства, произвели большой перелом в жизни отсталых кочевых и полукочевых народов. С каждым годом растет самосознание отсталых народностей и в тех степях, где еще так недавно бродили племена кочевников, теперь выросли громадные земледельческие поселки. И там, где до сих пор не было ни одной школы сейчас уже открываются высшие учебные заведения – рабфаки и т.д.

Политический, культурный и хозяйственный рост общества, несомненно, влечет за собой рост его отдельных элементов. Но есть еще один элемент общества, еще одна национальность, которой до сих пор не было уделено должного внимания. Это – цыгане. [...] [1]

Сущность Советской власти, как Союза рабочих и крестьян всех национальностей, требует равного участия всех национальностей в строительстве хозяйства и государства. Цыгане своим бытом вносят некоторый излом в принцип нашего строительства, а потому, исходя с точки зрения национальной политики, в основе которой лежит: признание равенства и суверенности народов в деле устройства своей судьбы и оказания реальной помощи и в деле хозяйственного и культурного развития отсталых народов необходимо поддержать данную организацию в ее устремлениях, т.к. она является пока еще единственным проводником, могущим выравнивать тот излом, вносящий такое несоответствие с национальной политикой Союза ССР.

... [подпись] (И[ван] Лебедев).

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About the work among the Gypsies

It is already 8 years now since all national minorities, using the right gained by the proletarian revolution, have been building their culture and well-being, striving to stand on a par with the country's revolutionary cadre.

Eight years of hard, uninterrupted struggle with centuries-old traditions inherited from the tsarist government made a great turning point in the lives of backward nomadic and semi-nomadic peoples. Every year, the self-awareness of backward peoples is growing and in the steps where nomadic tribes roamed until recently, huge agricultural settlements have now grown. And where until now there has not been a single school, higher educational institutions are already opening up – rabfaks and so on.

The political, cultural and economic growth of society, of course, entails the growth of its individual elements. But there is another element of society, another nationality, which until now has not been given due attention. These are the Gypsies. [...] [1]

The essence of Soviet rule, as a Union of workers and peasants of all nationalities, requires the equal participation of all nationalities in the construction of the economy and state.

Gypsies, by their way of life, make some break in the principle of our construction, and therefore, based on the point of view of the national policy, which is based on the recognition of the equality and sovereignty of peoples in the matter of arranging their destiny and providing real assistance also in the economic and cultural development of backward peoples, it is needed to support this organisation in its aspirations, as it is so far the only conductor capable of levelling out the kink that introduces such a discrepancy with the national policies of the USSR.

... [signature] (Ivan Lebedev) [2].

Notes

1. Here are omitted the passages which are literally repeated in the article published, namely parts about the inadmissibility in the conditions of USSR of Gypsies' distress, the persecution of Gypsies in Western Europe, the October Revolution and the emergence of the Union of Gypsies.
2. The text is not dated, but judging by its content and its place in the chronological ordering of the archival folder, it is likely to be from the autumn of 1925.

Source: GARF, f. P 1235, op. 120, d. 27, l. 183-184.

Prepared for publication by Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov.

12.2.3 *About the Land for Romanyčhave*

A. C. Таранов

Вашо пхув романычявэнгэ

Насыклякирдэ рома сы расчюрдынэ пиро саро свэто тагаренса и ранса. Бут романычявэ и акана лыджяна чёро ро и бибахтало джибэн. На екх шэла бэрш притасада сы рома тагаренса и ранса и саро адава времё рома пролыджинэ пэскиро джибэн пиро фэлды дэ чёро ribэн, бокх и шилалыпэ и чястэс куско маро приджяла тэ рэсэс налачеса дромэса, сыр: тэ вымангэс, тэ выхохавэс, тэ дылнякирэс и тэ чёрес. Нэ, бангэ ли дро адава рома? Логко-ли ромэнгэ тэ пирилыджяс адасаво джибэн – тэ пролыджяс джибэн дэ дром, дэ мэл, дэ шыл и дрэ мэлалэ шатры? Кицы ясва и

дёскиро дукх пирильдзяна би састыпнаскирэнгэ (докторэнгэ) ромня колыныт-конэнца чаворэнца дэ барэ дрома? сарэ джинэн сыр поджяна тагари и рая кэ сарэ тыкнэ мануша (рома, киргизы, башкиры и ваврэ.

Кана взрипираса набутка оистория ваш ромэнгэ дэ Европа? Ёй сыкавэла, саво джиибэн сыс ромэскэ, сыр приявяпэ тэ кэрэс пэскиро джиибэн. Трин шэл бэрш палэ дэ Моравия пиро тагарискиро лав каждонэ ромэс, кон закамэл тэ пириджал штэтостыр пэ вавир штэто, тэлэс и тэ умарэс убладяа. Адыкэ же дэ адава ж моло тагари прусско Вильгельмо I издыя указо – сарэн чявэн и ромэн пхурыдыр 18 бэршэстыр, коли явэна дэ лэскири пхув, – тэ лэс и тэ ублавэс. Сыс и адасаво указо, собы рома тэ накхарэн пэс романэчявэнса, а Нэво-Венгерценса. Надэнас ромэнгэ тэ лэс пало ром романэчяен, а чяенгэ надэнас тэ джяс палором. Отлэнас тыкночявэн и пиридэнас лэн европейцэнгэ; сыс указы, пиро савэ надэнас тэ ракирес пэ пэскири родны чиб и кон проракирэла пэ романы чиб одолэс хачкирэнас прэ яг, гожонэн чяен выльджяна прэ тарго и бикнэнас или же парувэнас прэ джюклэндэ, – ракирэнас со рома джинэнапэ бэнгэнца. Адыкэ ваш амаро пхаро джиибэн можно тэ чинэс кицы ками.

Тагари и рая присыклякирдэ хэладэн и ваврэ чибэнгирэн манушэн тэ дыкхэн прэ ромэндэ сыр на прэ манушэндэ Рома сыс ачядэ пэ мэрибэ, – собы тэ хасёл романо корнё ...

Ромэнгэ надэнас тэ залэспэ ни савьяса бутяса. Насыс ромэстэ и пэскиро штэто.

Окэ катыр сы адава, со рома дживэна на бутяритконэ джиибнаса и чястэс джяна на чячюнэ дромэса, а хохаибнаса, драбакирибнаса и чёрибнаса. Нэ кай ромэнца обджянаспэ шукар, сыр манушэнса, одой ёнэ адасавэ же, сыр и ваврэ мануша. Адыкэ сыс дэ Испания шэл дэша панч бэрш палэ. Одой ромэнгэ дынэ тэ ячавэс фэлдытко джиибэн и тэ пириджас ко буты. Одой тогда пирьячнэ тэ тэсавэн ромэн и рома сарэ лынэ оправо касаво же сыр и ваврэ мануша испаниякэ. Нэ, адава сыс же ясвин дэ паны – кэжо дадывэс и дэ Испания и дэ ваврэ сарэ пхувья капиталистэнца (барэранса) рома сы притасадэ.

Только дэ Россия Осоветско власть тходя концо рангэ дэ лэнгино рындо тэ тасавэс сарэ дуэчибэнгирэн манушэн. Только Советско власть пригалыя пало ромэндэ адасаво же право, сыр и палэ гачканэ манушэндэ. Советско власть прикхарла сарэн кэ буты ваш пэскэ кэ буты тэ кэрэс Нэви Россия.

Бутяритко власть на обгыя амэн, ромэн, ёй дыя ромэнгэ адасавэ же правы, сыр и ваврэ чибэнгирэнгэ манушэнгэ. Нэ рома амарэ тёмна и на сыклякирдэ (На сыклякирдэн ромэн почти 99%). Амарэ рома на полэна, со дэла Советско власть ромэнгэ. Ешше бут ромэн лыджяна фэлдытко джиибэн. Адава джиибэн каждонэ дывэсостыр ячёла пхарыдыр. Дыкхэнте: пэ тарго государственна грэнгирэ кооперативы вытасавэна таргостыр понабут ромэн – кофарьен. Ромнэн пало драбакирибэн и зумаибэн, закэдэна и штрафуэт. Пэ фабрики и заводы рома на могискирна тэ кэрэн буты, – лэндэ нанэ квалификация, ёнэ сы на сыклякирдэ. Адава и кокорэ шукир полэна. Сожэ тэ кэрэс и сыр дурыдыр тэ дживэн ромэнгэ? Требинэ тэ тховэс

оконцо адоләскэ, собы рома джиндлэ адыкэ, сыр ваврэ мануша. Бутяритко власть надомэкэла, собы рома ячнэпэ дэ нишшэта, чёrorибэн и насыклякирибэн. Амэнгэ же требинэ кокорэнгэ тэ полэс, со сы пэстыр амаро маро и палсо лэс кхарна “локхо маро”. Требинэ, собы ром перигыя пэ бутяритко джибэн.

15 Мая бэрш одолэскэ палэ Центральнo Исполнительно Комитеты (ЦИК) и Совето Народнoнэн Комиссарэн тхoдя, собы пхувитка отдели лынэпэ тэ пириден, ромэнгэ, кон камэл лэндыр, пхув вашо осёдло джибэн и гавитко хулаибэн.

Адалэ ромэнгэ дэнапэ сарэ льготы, сыр то: тэ переджяс пиро састурно железно дром, кредито (ловэ дэ длуго) пэ бут бэрш – оссуды пэ семяны; вэш и вавир инвентаре и ешше отмэкэнапэ ловэ штар шэл састэ пэ кажно семья пэ хулаибэн; злэна сарэ налоги пэ бут бэрш, налэна-тэ лэн дэ хэладэ, саро адава кэрлапэ ваш адава, собы ром-нэво хулай закэдыя дэ пэстэ зор. Ваш саро адава кэрды дэ Наркомземо Комиссия вашо пхувитко кэраибэн, савыятэ сы буты ваш адава сыр фэдыдыр тэ кэрэс романэчывэскэ джибэн пэ гавитко пхув.

Адая комиссия кэрды ромэндыр союзостыр. Адая комиссия кана же пучела лылэнса сарэ штэты, кон ромэндыр камэл тэ лэл пхув вашо хулаибэн. Бут рома выбичывэна лыла ваше камаибэ тэ залэспэ гавитконэ хулаибнаса. Всероссийско Романо Союзо рикирла лав кэ сарэ рома, сыр кэ пэскирэ пшала тэ парувэс фэлдытко джибэн пэ оседло, сыр кэрдэ уже рома хутороскирэ дэ Сальско округо. Ёнэ перегынэ бэрш одолэскэ палэ пэ пхув. Кэрдэ пэскирэ кхэра, обзальджинэпэ грэнса и сарэса со требинэ вашо хулаибэн. Адалэ рома чинэна дэ романо союзо лыл, кай ракирна сыр буткэрла ваш ромэнгэ бутяритко власть и мангэна пэскирэн пшалэн сарэн ромэн тэ кэрэн, сыр кэрдэ ёнэ. Бут ромэндыр думинэна а со ёнэ лэна тэ кэрэн пхувьяса, коли бут ромэндыр джинэн гавитко хулаибэн пиро шунаибэн (шундлэ ракирибэн, – окэ и саро). Кана амэ пучяса ромэн, кон дарэла тэ залэлпэ гавитконэ хулаибнаса, сыр же рома хуторостыр скэдынэпэ и кэрна буты дрэ гав? Кон же на патяла дрэ адава, со ром могискирла тэ кэрэл буты, одолэнгэ мэ пхэнава, со бутяритко власть джяла пэ помошшь ромэнгэ – ёй бичывэла агрономэн агрономы сыклякирна сыр треби тэ залэспэ пэ пхув. Коли рома авэна скэдэнэ кхэтанэ вашо буты, сыр рома хуторостыр, тогда налэна тэ дыкхэн пэ ромэндэ сыр пэ лишнбнэндэ, савэндыр нанэ нисави польза. Амэнгэ требинэ тэ кэрэс адыкэ, собы амаро лав “романочяво” насыс кошыбнаскирэса лавэса, ваш со амэнгэ требинэ тэ ячес савэ нибудь бутяренса, амэнгэ требинэ тэ кэрэс буты кхэтанэ гадженса вашо социалистическо госуарство. Бутярискэ локхыдыр тэ борисос тёмнотаса и локхыдыр тэ сыклякирэс и тэ газдэс чяворэн. Только осёдлостяса амэ зласа мэлалыпэ пэстыр, саво сыс тхoдо пэ амэндэ барэранса.

Романо Союзо мангэла сарэн ромэн тэ чинэс лыла ваш адава: со надэла ромэскэ тэ ачывэс фэлдытко джибэн, сыр тэ пириджяс пэ осёдлость. – Пэ сарэ лыла Романо Союзо лэла тэ дэл ответы.

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A. S. Taranov

About the Land for Romanyčhave [1]

Illiterate Roma have been scattered all over the world by kings and lords. Many Romanečhave still lead their poor and miserable lives. For several centuries, Roma people were oppressed by kings and lords; and all that time Roma spent their lives in the fields suffering from poverty, hunger and cold; and it is often necessary to get a piece of bread in illegal ways, such as: to beg, to get something by deceit and trick and to steal. But are the Roma guilty of that? Is it easy for Roma to endure such a life – to spend life on the road, in the mud, in the cold and in their dirty tents? How many tears and heartache do the Roma women with their nursing babies suffer on long roads without physicians (doctors)? Everyone knows how the Tsar and lords treat all small Nations (Roma, Kyrgyz, Bashkirs and others).

Now let's remember a little from the history of Roma in Europe? It teaches us what life was like for any Rom, how he had to live his life. Three hundred years ago, in Moravia, by a Royal order, every Roma person who wanted to move from one place to another was detained and executed on the gallows. Also in a similar case, king William I of Prussia issued a decree – all Roma boys and men – aged over 18 years, if they arrive on his land, were to be detained and hung. There was such a decree that Roma shouldn't call themselves Romanečhave, but new-Hungarians. Roma were not allowed to marry Roma girls, and Roma girls were not allowed to marry them. Small children were taken from and delivered them to the Europeans; there were the decrees which were not allowed to speak their native language, and those who spoke in the Romani language, were burned in the fire; beautiful Roma girls were taken to market and sold or exchanged for dogs, – it was said that Roma are acquainted with devils. Thus, about our hard life, you can write as much as necessary.

The Tsar and the lords taught Russians and people who spoke other languages to regard Roma as not human beings. Roma were given to the slaughter – to perish the Roma root ...

Roma were not allowed to do any business. There was no place to call his own for a Rom.

Here is where the fact that Roma do not live working lives and often do not go by a legal way, but by deception, fortune-telling and theft comes from. But in places where Gypsies were treated as human beings, they were just as good as other people. This was the case in Spain, a hundred and fifty years ago. There Roma were allowed either to continue their nomadic life or go to work. The Roma were then no longer oppressed, and all Roma got the same right as the rest of the Spanish people. But, it was just one teardrop in the ocean – until today in Spain and in all other lands Roma are still oppressed by the capitalists (big masters).

Only in Russia, the Soviet government put an end to the lords in keeping up the oppression of all bilingual people. Only the Soviet authorities recognised Roma as having the same right as non-Roma people. The Soviet government calls on everyone to work for themselves, to work to create a New Russia.

The workers' power has not bypassed us, Roma, it has given Roma the same rights as people who speak other languages. But our Roma are ignorant and illiterate (illiterate Roma are almost 99%). Our Roma do not understand what the Soviet government gives the Roma. Many more Roma are leading a nomadic life. This life is getting harder every day. Let's have a look: in the market, the state horse-trading cooperatives little by little push the Roma horsedealers out of the market. Roma women are detained and fined for divination and fortune-telling. In factories and plants Roma cannot work – they have no qualifications, they are uneducated. They themselves would also do well to understand it. What do Roma have to do and how can they continue their lives? It is necessary to put an end to that, and make the Roma live a life much like that of other people. The workers' power will not allow Roma to remain in the practice of begging, in poverty and in ignorance. We ourselves, Roma, have to understand what our bread really is and why it is called "easy bread". It is necessary that a Rom will transit to the worker's life.

On the 15th of May, a year ago, the TsIK and the SNK decided that the land departments should give land for settled life and agriculture to Roma – to those who wished to do so.

These Roma are given all the benefits, such as: moving by railway, credit (money in debt) for many years – loans for seeds; wood [2] and other equipment and even released money of 400 rubles for each family on the farm; removed all taxes for many years, not taking them as soldiers, all this is offered to Roma – the new owners – in order to help them gain strength. For all this, a Commission on land management was established in the Narkomzem, whose work concerns making the Romani life on rural land better.

This Commission is created from the Roma of the Union. This Commission is now requesting letters from all regional places where Roma want to get land for farming. Many Roma send their letters about their desire to practice agriculture. The all-Russian Roma Union appeals to all Roma, as their brothers, to change the nomadic life to a settled one, much like the Roma that have already settled on the khutor in the Salskiy Okrug [3]. They moved to land a year ago. They built their homes, got horses and all that is necessary for agriculture. These Roma wrote a letter to the Roma Union saying how much the workers' power is doing for Roma and asking all their Roma brothers to do the same as they did. Many of the Roma think of what they will do with the land, as many of the Roma do not know agriculture firsthand (they have heard of it in conversation – that's all). Now we ask Roma who are afraid to practice agriculture: how do the Roma from the khutor manage to gather and succeed to work in the village? To those who do not believe that the Rom can work, to them I will say that the workers' power goes to help the Roma – it sends agronomists; agronomists teach how to work on the land. When the Roma are gathered together for labour, like the Roma from the khutor, then they will look at the Roma as superfluous/unnecessary men, from whom there is no benefit. We need to make sure that our name *romanočavo* is not an abusive word, it is why we need to become some sort of workers, we need to work together with *gadže* for the socialist state. It is easier for the worker to fight the darkness and it is easier to teach and raise children. Only being sedentary will they be able to remove from themselves the filth that was thrown on us by the great lords.

The Roma Union asks all Roma to write letters about what prevents Roma to give up nomadic life, and to move to a sedentary way of life. – All letters will be answered by the Roma Union.

Notes

1. The author used the term Roma along with word *Romanyčhave* (children of Roma) as designation of his own people. The latter term is used in the title of the article and later it reflects a nuance which underlines that Roma are a nation. It is worth noting here that this and similar variants of community designation could be found in Crimea (Marushiakova & Popov, 2004, p. 155), and also in other parts of the world (Piasere, 2019, pp. 85-118).
2. It means timber for housing and outbuildings.
3. Reference to the collective agricultural unit in the khutor Krikunovo (see later). *Khutor* is term used for designation of type of rural settlement, unit composed by several homesteads. In Cossaks land with this term refers to describe new settlements detached from stanitsas.

Source: Таранов, А. С. (1927). Вашю пхув романычявэнгэ. *Романы зоря*, Ап. 1, No. 1, pp. 4-6.
Prepared for publication by Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov.
Translated by Viktor Shapoval.

12.2.4 What to Do with the Gypsies?

Что делать с цыганами?

Немного цыганской истории

В продолжение тысячелетнего странствования цыгане были настоящими париями (бесправными, презираемыми). Их изгоняли из городов, запрещали им приобретать землю, обращали в рабство, воспрещали браки между собой, отбирали детей и передавали их на воспитание духовенству и даже не позволяли им говорить на родном языке.

Средневековая Европа подвергала цыган самым жестоким пыткам: сожжение на кострах, колесование, вырывание ноздрей и ряд всевозможных мук, изобретенных благочестивыми инквизиторами.

Это все было в далеком прошлом. Обратимся теперь к примеру наших дней. В 1927 году в Чехо-Словакии устроили суд над цыганами, заподозренными в ... людоедстве. Хотя суд и не нашел никаких улик, однако осудил цыган, но уже за бродяжничество. А вот еще свежий пример в словацкой деревни Победим в сентябре прошлого года кулаки во главе с бургомистром предприняли "карательную экспедицию" против цыганского табора, заподозренного в конокрадстве. "Карательная экспедиция" истребила около 25 мужчин, женщин и детей, а в заключение подожгла со всех сторон табор.

Корни антицыганизма

Ненависть к цыганам переходит из рода в род. Их называют "проклятым племенем" Почему же создалось такое отношение к ним?

Вернемся коротко к средневековью, когда цыгане впервые явились из Индии в Европу.

Легкий заработок, добываемый гаданием, лечебой и театральными представлениями, не располагал цыган к труду. Переезды из одной местности в другую зарабатывали у них еще и другие отличительные черты характера: непостоянство, лень и беспечность. Вот почему шаг за шагом остывало и радушное отношение к ним: ворожба и лечеба не помогали, гадание не оправдывалось, однообразные представления приелись.

Терпя постоянную нужду и голод, цыгане занялись попрошайничеством, надувательством и конокрадством. Тогда их стали ненавидеть и гнать повсюду.

В чем же обвиняют теперь цыган? Говорят по-старинке, что все они – конокрады и воры.

Но нельзя бросать огульные обвинения всей цыганской народности.

И если существуют таборы конокрадов, то имеются и таборы, состоящие из тружеников: медников, лудильщиков и кузнецов. Таборы барышников, торговцев лошадьми сами не могут ужиться с таборами конокрадов, из-за соседства с ними они часто меняют стоянки.

Угнетение и преследование цыган во все времена и всюду оттолкнули их от организованного населения, лишили тех преимуществ, которые имели люди оседлой культуры. И в результате, большая часть цыган даже в наших, советских условиях до сих пор не может выйти из того тупика, в который их загнала история.

Мероприятия советской власти

Октябрьская революция, освободившая все малые народности, поставила перед нами задачу – включить цыган в семью трудящихся, вовлечь их в производство и строительство социалистического общества.

Одним из мероприятий в этом направлении является землеустройство цыган. 20 февраля прошлого года было издано постановление ВЦИК и СНК РСФСР о наделении земель цыган переходящих к трудовому оседлому образу жизни.

Наркомземом разослана инструкция на места – земельными органам, которым вменяется в обязанность особые заботы уделять землеустройству цыган и оказывать им в этом всевозможное содействие.

Цыгане, устраивающиеся в порядке расселения, получают ссуду и иные виды помощи от государства за счет сметы по землеустройству.

За последнее время в земельные органы поступает большое количество писем-заявлений и являются цыгане-ходоки. Это свидетельствует о большой тяге цыган к оседлому образу жизни.

По скудным газетным сообщениям из Ленинграда, Воронежа, Твери, Калуги, Смоленска, Читы и других городов можно отметить, что почти во всех районах СССР на выделенных земельных участках таборные цыгане уже строят сельские поселения. В Молдавской республике почти тысяча цыган перешла на

оседлость. Отведенные крупные участки на Украине заселяются цыганами. Около Харькова, Запорожья, Мариуполя, Армавира и Витебска цыгане основали колхозы. Образцовое ведения хозяйства на цыганском хуторе в Северо-Кавказском крае говорит о том, что цыгане садятся на землю крепко и надолго.

Наблюдается тяга таборных цыган и к производству. На биржу труда являются цыгане с предложением рабочей силы. На заводах Москвы можно встретить квалифицированных рабочих и работниц из цыган. В Москве и в провинции организовываются производственные артели. Отметим большую заботу, которую уделяют цыганам горсоветы Симферополя и Самарканда. Благодаря им цыгане имеют школы на родном языке, ликбезы, красные уголки, производственные артели, кооперативные курсы и т.д. Между прочим в Симферополе цыгане во время перевыборов советов имели свой национальный избирательный участок.

Особое внимание уделяет цыганам комиссия по работе среди нацменьшинств Рогожско-Симоновского райкома в Москве. Благодаря ей за короткое время был основан цыганский клуб, где работает ряд кружков, открыты школа, ликбез, организованы звенья пионеров и т.п. Следовало бы Краснопресненскому райкому равняться по Рогожско-Симоновскому. Краснопресненский райком до сих пор не уделил этому должного внимания, несмотря на то, что в его районе проживает значительное количество русских, болгарских и румынских цыган, требующих культурной работы.

Отметим одно знаменательное явление: странствующий народ, не имевший до сих пор писанность, обрел в 1927 году свой печатный орган-журнал на родном языке "Романы зоря". Издание журнала на цыганском языке сплотило коллектив начинающих писателей из цыган, и уже имеется ряд произведений, являющихся началом подлинной цыганской художественной литературы.

Сучки и задоринки

Кочевые цыгане знают хорошо, что царизм и сменившая его керенщина не особенно интересовалась их нищенским положением и что советская власть по самой природе вспомнила обо всех обездоленных цыганах. Но мало того, что вспомнила: советская власть приняла ряд мер по улучшению их положения, по оздоровлению их быта.

Одна беда: на местах еще не отказались от дикого представления о цыганах и бессознательного враждебного отношения к ним, как это было в Софиевском районе, где кулаки, стремясь воспрепятствовать основанию цыганского колхоза, пытались пустить в ход дубинки против цыган ("Красное Запорожье", 26 мая 1928 г.).

Цыган всюду преследует гнилой царский антицыганизм, несмотря на то, что имеются теперь факты, которые служат доказательством того, что цыгане становятся образцовыми хлеборобами и хорошими соседями. Так, в Сальском округе цыгане-хуторяне так сдружились с крестьянами ближних деревень, что породнились и помогают друг другу в обработке полей.

Еще одна беда. Существует у цыган кочевой телеграф, служащий с давних времен ради самозащиты, для передачи от табора к табору самых разнообразных тревожных вестей. И если пронесется по таборам весть о грубом и даже невнимательном отношении местных органов к ходатайству цыган об отводе земли, то после не помогут никакие увещания возобновить свои хлопоты.

Наблюдается еще и такое явление. Земельные органы, чтоб установить количество цыган, желающих перейти на оседлость, сговариваются с районной милицией, которая явившись в табор, административным порядком переписывает всех цыган. Недоверчивые цыгане тотчас после опроса откочевывают в другую губернию, опасаясь ареста. Пережиток таково недоверия цыган к “начальству” укоренился с царских времен.

Нужно принять все меры к тому, чтобы изжить эти недочеты и избавиться от дикой антицыганщины, зная, что на наших глазах целая народность, имеющая наравне с другими права на трудовую жизнь, отказывается навсегда от прошлого бродяжничества.

Институт уполномоченных и разъяснительная кампания

Следует широко повести разъяснительную работу среди цыган, объяснять им мероприятия советской власти. Эту работу надо возложить на избачей, заведующих домами крестьянина, агрономов и сельские ячейки. На постоянном дворе, в чайной, избе-читальне, сельсовете должен быть плакат на родном языке цыган, разъясняющий вопросы перехода их на оседлость. Нужны плакаты и для населения, чтобы не было ложного представления о народе, многовековое бродяжничество которого требует широкой помощи.

Помимо этого, ценным будет создание института уполномоченных.

В каждом более или менее крупном цыганском поселке было бы весьма целесообразно избирать из среды цыган уполномоченного, пользующегося доверием среди цыган. Таких уполномоченных необходимо снабжать инструкциями, справками и агитационной литературой. Кочевой телеграф быстро разнесет весть об организации уполномоченных, и цыгане охотно, без всякой боязни и недоверия, будут останавливаться у выборного цыгана, который на родном языке даст им совет, в затруднительном случае явится для них проводником и связующим звеном с местными учреждениями.

Наболевший вопрос – централизация

С учреждением института уполномоченных потребуются централизация их. Создание цыганского центра является наболевшим вопросом для кочевых и даже оседлых цыган. Можно было бы привести большое количество мелких вопросов, которые тормозят советизацию цыган и требуют срочного разрешения.

Бывший союз цыган, вследствие ряда неблагоприятных причин, должен был ликвидироваться: он не оправдал поставленных им перед собой целей и задач

отчасти из-за отсутствия средств, отчасти из-за неумелой постановки массовой работы. Однако надо признать, что, несмотря на его несостоятельность, он являлся для цыган, обнадеживающим центром, как родной орган, цель которого – приобщить беспомощных цыган к новой жизни.

Отсутствие такого центра весьма заметно. Разнообразная переписка цыган распыляется по различным учреждениям. Не понимая особенностей кочевого народа, учреждения не глубоко подходят при разрешении возникающих вопросов и решают по-своему. Сговориться же по какому-либо бытовому явлению этим учреждениям не с кем, и получается, что один и тот же случай получает различное разрешение в однородных учреждениях.

Или вот. Издается журнал. Центроиздат не знает как его распределить. Запрашивает Наркомпрос, а Наркомпрос тоже не знает. И в результате цыгане живущие в Марьиной роще в Москве, только недавно узнали с наших слов, что имеются и журнал, и букварь и выпускаются книжки на цыганском языке. Для чего же тратятся средства, если вся продукция издательства лежит и пылится на складе?

Во многих местах раздаются голоса об открытии цыганских школ, организации артелей и ряде экономических и культурных начинаний, но местные учреждения, несмотря на заметки в провинциальной прессе, еле шевелятся или совершенно остаются глухи.

Невнимательное и небрежное отношение на местах, отсутствие центрального руководства самих цыган – все это тормозит проведение мероприятий советской власти, отталкивает цыган от оседлой жизни, и они ради пропитания, ради мало-мальски сносного существования возвращаются к таким средствам, как попрошайничество, конокрадство, воровство, гадание и всевозможные надувательства.

Нужна широкая общественная и государственная помощь.

Проходить мимо цыганского вопроса нельзя. Пора соответствующим органам поставить немедленно во всей полноте цыганский вопрос, чтобы раз навсегда установить твердые организационные формы для выкорчевывания исторических корней жизни и быта цыган.

Г. Лебедев и А. Герман

От редакции. Редакция считает вполне своевременным широко поставить вопрос о жизни и быте цыган в СССР. Предложения гг. Лебедева и Герман далеко не исчерпывают всего возможного и в ряде случаев еще являются спорными (цыганский центр). Редакция обращается ко всем нацменработникам и к трудящимся цыганам высказаться по затронутым вопросам.

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What to Do with the Gypsies?

A bit of Gypsy history

Throughout the thousand-year wandering, the Gypsies were real pariahs (disenfranchised, despised). They were expelled from the cities, they were forbidden to acquire land, they were enslaved, they forbade marriages among them, they took away their children and passed them on to the clergy, and did not even allow them to speak their native language.

Medieval Europe subjected the Gypsies to the cruelest tortures: burning at the stake, wheeling, tearing out the nostrils and a number of all kinds of torments invented by the pious inquisitors.

It was all in the distant past. Let us turn now to the example of our days. In 1927, a trial was conducted in Czechoslovakia over Gypsies suspected of ... cannibalism [1]. Although the court did not find any evidence, he condemned the Gypsies, but already for vagrancy. And here is a fresh example from the Slovak village of Pobedim in September, last year, when kulaks led by the mayor launched a "punitive expedition" against a Gypsy camp suspected of horse-stealing. The "Punitive Expedition" annihilated about 25 men, women and children, and finally burned the camp from all sides [2].

The roots of anti-Gypsyism

Hatred of the Gypsies passes from generation to generation. They are called the "damned tribe." Why was such an attitude be created towards them? Let us return briefly to the Middle Ages, when Gypsies first appeared from India to Europe. Light income, received from fortune-telling, healing and theatrical performances, did not push Gypsies to work. Moving from one locality to another they also developed other distinctive character traits: inconstancy, laziness and carelessness. That is why, step by step, the cordial attitude towards them was cooling down: magic and healing did not help, fortune-telling did not come true, uniform repetitions of performances became boring. Suffering constant need and hunger, the Gypsies engaged in begging, swindle and horse-stealing. Then they began to be hated and driven out from everywhere.

What are the Gypsies now accused of? They say in the old way that they are all horse thieves and thieves. But you can not throw such sweeping accusations over the entire Gypsy nation.

And if there are camps of horse thieves, then there are also camps consisting of workers: cupper-makers, tinkers and blacksmiths. The tabora of merchants, horse-dealers cannot get along with encampments of horse thieves, and because of the proximity to their camps, they often need to change their stopping sides.

The oppression and persecution of Gypsies in all times and everywhere pushed them away from the organised population, deprived them of the advantages that people of a settled culture had. And as a result, most of the Gypsies, even in our Soviet conditions, still cannot get out of the deadlock into which history has driven them.

Actions of the Soviet government

The October Revolution, which liberated all small nationalities, set a task for us – to include Gypsies in the family of workers, to involve them in the production and construction of a socialist society.

One of the activities in this direction is solving the Gypsies' land issue. On February 20 last year, a decree was issued by the VTsIK and the SNK of the RSFSR on the allocation of land to Gypsies who are transitioning to a settled way of life.

Narkomzem sent an instruction to localities – to the land authorities, which are charged with the duty of giving special care to the land allocation for Gypsies and to provide them with all possible assistance.

Gypsies, in order to arrange settlement receive loans and other assistance from the state budget at the expense of land management.

Recently, a large number of application letters have come to the land authorities and are coming from the Gypsy *khodoki*. This indicates a great attraction of the Gypsies to a sedentary lifestyle.

According to scarce newspaper reports from Leningrad, Voronezh, Tver, Kaluga, Smolensk, Chita and other cities, it can be noted that in almost all areas of the USSR on the allocated land plots, the nomadic Gypsies are already building rural settlements [3]. In the Republic of Moldova [4], almost a thousand Gypsies became settled. Allocated large areas in Ukraine are populated by Gypsies. Near Kharkov, Zaporozhye, Mariupol, Armavir and Vitebsk, Gypsies founded kolkhozes [5]. An exemplary Gypsy agricultural hamlet in the North Caucasus region suggests that Gypsies settled on the ground firmly and permanently.

There is a craving of Tabor Gypsies for production. Gypsies with a supply of labour are on the labour exchange. At the factories in Moscow, you can meet skilled workers men and women from the Gypsies. Production artels are organised in Moscow and in the provinces. We should note the great care that the city councils of Simferopol and Samarkand devote to Gypsies. Thanks to them, Gypsies have schools in their native language, educational programs, red corners, artels, cooperative courses, etc. By the way, in Simferopol, Gypsies during the re-election of the soviets had their own national polling station.

Special attention is paid to the Gypsies by the commission for work among the national minorities of the Rogozh-Simonovsk Raykom in Moscow. Thanks to it, a Gypsy club was founded in a short time, with a number of workshops, a school, likbez, pioneer groups are organised, etc. Krasnopresnensky raykom should follow the example of the Rogozhsko-Simonovks. Krasnopresnensky raykom has not yet paid due attention to this, despite the fact that a significant number of Russian, Bulgarian and Romanian Gypsies [6] who require cultural work live in its district.

We note one significant phenomenon: the wandering people, who until now did not have a written language, founded in 1927 their own printed organ – a journal in their native language *Romany zorya*. The publication of the magazine in the Gypsy language rallied a team of aspiring Gypsy writers, and there are already a number of works that are the beginning of genuine Gypsy literature.

Complications and problems

Nomadic Gypsies are well aware that the tsarist government and his successor Kerenshchina [7] are not particularly interested in their miserable situation, and that the Soviet power, because of its character, has thought about all the disadvantaged Gypsies. But not only that, the Soviet government took a number of measures to improve their situation, to improve their life.

One misfortune: the localities have not yet abandoned the wild perception of Gypsies and unconscious hostility towards them, as was the case in the Sofyevsky rayon, where the kulaks, trying to prevent the founding of the Gypsy kolkhoz, tried to use bludgeons against the Gypsies (Красное Запорожье, 1928, p. 3).

Gypsies everywhere are persecuted by rotten tsarist anti-Gypsyism, despite the fact that there is now evidence that proves that Gypsies become exemplary good growers and good neighbours. So, in the Salsky district, Gypsies from the khutor became so friendly with the peasants of neighbouring villages that they became related and help each other in cultivating the fields.

Another misfortune.

Gypsies have a nomadic telegraph, which has been serving since ancient times for the sake of self-defence, for transmitting from camp to camp a wide variety of troubling news. And if the news of the gross and even inattentive attitude of local authorities to the Gypsies' request for land allotment runs through the camps, then no exhortations will help further.

There is also such a thing. The land authorities, in order to establish the number of Gypsies who wish to settle down, collaborate with the district police, who, having appeared on the camp, administratively count all Roma. The incredulous Gypsies immediately after the poll migrate to another province, fearing arrest. A relic of such a distrust of the Gypsies towards the "authorities" has been rooted since imperial times.

We must take all measures to get rid of these shortcomings and get rid of the wild anti-Gypsyism, knowing that before our eyes a whole nation, which, along with others, has the right to toiling life, forever refuses the past vagrancy.

Institute of Plenipotentiaries and Explanatory Campaign.

Explanatory work among the Gypsies should be widely carried out, and the actions of the Soviet government should be explained to them. This work should be assigned to the heads of reading rooms, to the heads of the houses of the peasant, agronomists and rural units. There should be a poster in Gypsy mother tongue at the inn, in the tea house, in the reading room, at the village council, explaining the issues of their transition to a settled way of life. Posters are also needed for the population so that there is no false perception of a nation whose centuries-old vagrancy requires widespread assistance.

In addition, the creation of an institution of plenipotentiaries will be valuable.

In each more or less large Gypsy settlement, it would be very advisable to elect from among the Gypsies an authorised person who is trusted among Gypsies. Such authorised persons must be provided with instructions, informational leaflets and propaganda

literature. The nomadic telegraph will quickly spread the word about the organisation of the plenipotentiaries, and the Gypsies will willingly, without any fear or mistrust, approach the elected Gypsy, who will give them advice in their native language, and in a difficult case they will be guided and a linked with local institutions.

A sore point – centralisation.

With the establishment of the institution of plenipotentiaries, its centralisation will be required. The creation of a Gypsy centre is a sore point for nomadic and even sedentary Gypsies. One could cite a large number of small issues that impede the sovietisation of Gypsies and require urgent resolution. The former union of Gypsies, due to a number of unfavourable reasons, had to be liquidated: it did not justify its goals and objectives, partly due to lack of funds, partly due to the inept staging of mass work. However, it must be admitted that, despite its failure, it was for the Gypsies an encouraging centre, as a native organ, whose goal was to introduce the helpless Gypsies to a new life.

The absence of such a centre is very noticeable. A diverse correspondence of Gypsies is sprayed across various institutions. Not understanding the features of the nomadic people, institutions are not deeply suited to resolve issues and decide in their own way. There is no one to talk about any domestic phenomenon with these institutions, and it turns out that the same case gets different permission in institutions of the same rank.

Or look. A journal is being published. The central publisher does not know how to distribute it. Asks Narkompros, but Narkompros also does not know. As a result, the Gypsies living in the Marina Roshcha in Moscow, only recently learned from our words, that there are journal and ABC and that books are produced in the Romani language. Why is the money spent if all the publishing house's products lie and gather dust in the warehouse?

In many places, voices are heard about the opening of Gypsy schools, the organisation of artels and a number of economic and cultural undertakings, but local institutions, despite notes in the provincial press, barely move or are completely deaf.

The inattentive and careless attitude on the ground, the lack of a central leadership of the Gypsies themselves – all this impedes the conduct of the activities of the Soviet government, pushes the Gypsies away from a settled life, and for the sake of food, for the sake of a bearable existence, they should return to such means as begging, horse-stealing, witchcraft, fortune-telling and all kinds of tricks. We need widespread public and state assistance.

It is impossible to pass by the Gypsy question. It is time for the relevant authorities to immediately raise the Gypsy question in its entirety in order to establish firm organisational forms for uprooting the historical roots of the economy and of the Gypsy mode of life.

G. Lebedev and A. German

From the journal. The journal considers it quite timely to raise widely the question of economy and the mode of life of Gypsies in the USSR. The proposals of comrades Lebedev and German are far from exhausting everything possible and in some cases are

still controversial (Gypsy centre). The editors appeal to all natsmen-workers [8] and to toiling Gypsies and asks them to say their opinion on the raised questions.

Notes

1. It refers to the trial in Košice (then in Czechoslovakia), which began in 1924, in which 19 Gypsies were accused of cannibalism; the process had been going on for almost five years and in the end the defendants were acquitted.
2. It refers to the Anti-Gypsy pogrom in Pobedim (then in Czechoslovakia) on the 1st of October 1928, in which local Slovak villagers killed four adults and two children.
3. Hereinafter reference is to successes achieved by the Soviet state in land allocation and sedentarisation of Gypsies. However, their pointed achievements are rather exaggerated. Such processes did take place in fact, but the results obtained were quite modest.
4. It is referring to the Moldovan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (MASSR), which was part of the Ukrainian SSR, which existed from 1924 to 1940.
5. The umbrella term 'kolkhoz' here (hereinafter) means any form of agricultural collective. In the 1920s, there were three such types of collective land cultivation, with some differences between them – *tovarishchestvo* (from *товарищ* – 'comrade', 'comradeness'), *artel* and *communa*; in the 1930s in the process of mass collectivization of agriculture there are only *artels* that begin to be called *kolkhozes*.
6. The mentioned Russian, Bulgarian and Romanian Gypsies, refers to internal group division of Roma people, as Russian Gypsies means *Ruska Roma* groups and Bulgarian and Romanian Gypsies means subgroups of the *Kelderari* group, which arrive through different routes to the Russian lands from Bulgaria and Romania.
6. *Kerenshchina* (*Керенщина*) – this term refers to the Russian Provisional government headed by Alexander Fyodorovich Kerensky being in power from February to October revolution 1917.
7. A 'natsmen-worker' (*нацменработник*) is a Soviet official working on the problems of national minorities.

Source: Лебедев, Г. & Герман, А. (1929). Что делать с цыганами? *Комсомольская правда*, Ап. 5, No. 209 (1296), 1929, September 11, p. 4.

Prepared for publication by Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov.

12.2.5 About the Political-Educational Work

Г. Лебедево

Ваше полит-воспитаательно буты

Дрэ амари партия вчивэнапэ нэвэ тысенцы тэрнэн пролетариен. Адалэ тэрнэ Ленинцы бангэ тэгаздэн адалэ задачи, савэ тходя ангил пэстэ амари партия, амари страна.

Амари беда, – чиндя Ленино – сы дро адава, со амэ думинаса саро тэкэрас пэскирэ зорьяса.

Амэндэ баро наухтылыбэ; – наухтыла бутярен, а амэ наджинас сыр лэн тэлэс бутяритконэ и гавитконэ рядэндыр, а дрэ адалэ ряды раххэнапэ бут таланты административна и организаторска.

Адыкэ ракирдя Ленино пэскирэ партиякэ еньке дрэ пора, коли амэндэ насыс 5 бэршытко плано, кана дрэ пора 5 бэршытконэ планос партия адая задача тховэла

ангил пэстэ. Ваш адава собы тэпролыджяс адава плано ангил сарэстыр сы треби мануша и адасавэ мануша, савэ сы чячюнэс придынэ бутяритконэ классоскэ, савэ полэна кэ со лыджяла партия. Баро, сыр николи, ни дрэ сави строа, соцыалистическо строительство, баро колхозно фронто заухтылдя сарэ народности, сарэ учястки, адай заухтылдо и романо учястко. Рома бэшэна прэ пхув вчивэнапэ дрэ коммуны и колхозы, – ваврэ лавэнца тэ пхэнэс – организуются дрэ кхэтанэ коллективна гавитка хулаибэ; рома на джяна прэ екхджинытко розчюрдынэ гавитко хулаибэ, а адасаво коллективно хулаибэн ужэ поджяла ко соцыалистическо форма.

Паладава рома, савэ сы организована дро адасавэ кхэтаниякирдэ хулаибэ, поджяна близко ко пролетариато и интересо пролетариатос кэрлапэ лэнгирэ интересоса. Адыкэ жэ и дро форо забиянэлапэ и формируются романо пролетариато.

Чячэ нашты тэпхэнэс со бут ромэн вчидэпэ дро заводско и фабрично производство, нэ ёнэ джяна дрэ коммуны, кооперация и артель и адава вылыджяла ромэн про нэво коммунистическо дром, пшалакирла лэн гаджчканэ пролетариатоса.

Нэ треби тэнабистрэс, со машкир ромэндэ, сыр и гаджендэ сы барвалюки сы и чёrorэ; кулаки и чёrorэ, и, адава классово расслоение машкир ромэндэ моги-скирла тэзарикирэл адава движение и тэнасвалякирэл одолэ достижения савэ амэндэ исы дро обшшэ романо строительство.

Николи еньке рома, сыр народо, надыхнэ и напириджиндлэ адасавэ тасаибэ пэскирэ и гаджканэ кулакэндэр сыр адава, машкир гаджендэ сыс, а дрэ ваврэ пхувья сы и акана эксплоатаця. Эксплоатацяса кхарлапэ одова, коли екх мануш сы дрэ васта ваврэстэ и кэрла буты на ваш пэскэ, а ваш одолэскэ, конэстыр ёв лэла на одова, со лэскэ пригинэлапэ, а кичы лэскэ выдэлапэ хуласа. Так окэ адасави эксплоатаця может тэ явэл машкир ромэндэ, машкир амэндэ нанэ бутярэн и ран, нэ сатаки и машкир амэндэ сы чёrorэ рома сы и барвалюки и нанэ пхарэс тэ удыххэс сыр екх ром тасавэла ваврэс пэскирэ кысыкаса, – кай кысык одой и зор.

Адая зависимость сы дыкхны дрэ адава со чёrorипэ лыджялас про тарго напэскирэс грэс, а грэн, савэн дэлэс барвало ром. Сы адая зависимость и дрэ барэ амэрэ таборы, кай еньке рикирнапэ пэскирэ бурмистры акана же эксплоатацяя прилэла ваврэ формы и адалэ формы эксплоататорэнгэ янэна кофо бутыдыр сыр адава сыс дро пхуранэ бэрша и лэнгиро скэмпима барьёла бутыдыр. Кулаки сарэ зорьяса прилэнапэ тэтасавэн романо гавитко бутяритко чёrorипэ. Амэ дыкхаса сыр рома вчивэнапэ дро пролетариатоскиро классо, нэ кхэтанэ адалэса дыкхаса сыр пхурано романо барвалыпэ и нэвэ фрэнта мануша барьякирна ряды кулакэн-эксплоататорэн.

Амэ ласа ваш о примеро романэ колхозы и сожэ амэ дыкхаса одой. Амэ дыкхаса сыр адалэ кулаки тасавэна чёrorипэ; скэдэнапэ трин-штар барвалэ семьи и тасавэна саро колхозо, саро закэдэна дро пэскирэ васта и кэрнапэ хуланца дрэ колхозо.

Адасавэ примеры сыр хулаибэн дрэ васта романэ кулакэн ракирна ваш адава, со романэ колхозы на бияндэна, налэна тэбарьён, а адалэ колхозы, савэ амэндэ

исы ададывэс могискирна тэрозпэрэнпэ. Ваш адава, собы тэтховэс строительство романэ колхозэн прэ чячэпнытко дром, ангил сарэстыр треби тэбарыакирэс сознательность чёrorэн и середнякэн и сарэ зорьяса тэвылыджяс кулакос сыр классо.

Тов. Сталино ракирла: вылыджа кулакэн сыр классо и колхозно строительство лэла тэбарьел и тэзорьякирэлпэ.

Нэ соб тэподжяс кэ адая ликвидацыя кулакэн сыр тэподжяс кэ адава, собы тэгаздэс сознательность машкир чёrorипэ и тэмыкэс пиро чячепнытко дром строительство романэ колхозэн.

Ваш адава ангил сарэстыр треби мануша, организаторы, руководители. Ада савэ организаторэнца могискирна тэавэн романычявэ, савэ сы дрэ партия, савэ, пролыджяна партийна решения и бутякирна тэло лакиро руководство.

Паладава рома коммунисты и комсомольцы ангил сарэстыр, бангэ тэтховэн ангил пэстэ задача тэпролыджян буты пиро скэдибэн дрэ партия гавитконэ и форитконэ романэ-чявэн.

Нэво Ленинско наборо сы ударно, адава наборо банго тэзаухтылэл и романо бутяритко населениё и тэдэл ромэнгэ лачен манушэн-руководителен, савэ барыакирна романэ колхозы, фэдырякирна буты колхозэн, савэ исы и вылыджяна ромэн про нэво бутяритко дром. Баро проценто ромэн еньке на джинэл и напололэла одолэ задачи, савэ сы тэрдэ ангил амэндэ. Паладава буты пиро вовлечениё ромэн дрэ партия треби тэпролыджяс машкир ромэндэ, савэ сы спхандлэ одолэса или ваврэса производства, и ангил сарэстыр тэвытырдэс романо бутяритко тэрныпэ, саво выбария дро революционна бэрша. Буты адая треби тэпролыджяс адякэ: Рома-коммунисты и комсомольцы бангэ тэ зракирэнпэ губкомэнца, райкомэнца, ваврэ партийнонэ и комсомольсконэ организацыенца собы, адалэ организации, дро штэты, кай сы бут ромэн, пролыджинэ полит-воспитательно буты машкир бутяритконэ ромэндэ и втырдынэ-бы лэн дрэ партия.

Тэпролыджяс адая бари задача значит тэпролыджяс и обеспечить романэ народоскэ историческо задача. Переходо кэ нэво джибэн пэ нэвэ формы, савэ налэна выделять ромэн обшшёнэ бутяритконэ семьятыр, а на оборот пшалакирна лэс адалэ семьяса сарэ народэнгирэ пролетариатоса и нэвэ рома залэна адасаво-жэ штэто дрэ бутяритко семья сыр и ваврэ народности, савэ вджяна дро амаро союзо Советсконэ республикэн...

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G. Lebedevo

About the Political-Educational Work

New thousands of young proletarians are being enlisted in our party. These young Leninists must solve the tasks that our party and our country have set for themselves.

Our problem, – Lenin wrote – is that we think to do everything with our own strength.

We have a great shortage – there are not enough workers, and we do not know, how to recruit them from the ranks of workers and peasants, and in these ranks, there are many administrative and organisational talents.

That is what Lenin said to his party at a time when we did not have a five-year plan, now, at the time of the five-year plan, the party sets itself this task. In order to carry out this plan, first of all, we need people, and people who are truly devoted to the working class, who understand where the party is going. Our Socialist construction is greater than ever in any country, the great front for organizing kolkhozes has seized all nationalities, all sectors, and the Romani sector is seized with it too. Roma become sedentary, enlist into communes and kolkhozes – in other words, organised in collective village economy; Roma won't take an individual scattered agricultural work; and this collective economy is heading close to the socialist form.

Therefore, the Roma, who are organised in such a collective work, come close to the proletariat and the proletariat interest became their interest. In the same way, the Roma proletariat is emerging and forming in the cities.

However, it is impossible to say that many Roma included in the plants and factories' work, however, they go to the communes, trading cooperation and artels, and it turns Roma to the new communist way, makes them brothers with the non-Roma proletariat.

But we must not forget that among the Roma, as among gadže (non-Gypsies), there are the rich, there are the poor; the kulaks [1] and the poor, and this class stratification among the Roma can slow down this movement and affect the achievements that we have in the General Roma construction.

Never before have the Roma, as a nation, seen and experienced such oppression from their own and from *gadže* kulaks, as it was among the gadže, and in other lands, there is even now exploitation. Exploitation is when one person is in the hands of another and does not work for himself, but for the one from whom he receives not what is owed to him, but as much as the owner will pay to him. So, such exploitation can be among the Roma, among us there are no workers and masters, but still among us there are poor Roma, there are also rich, and it is not difficult to see how one Rom oppresses another with his wallet – where the wallet is, there is strength.

This dependence is seen in the fact that poverty led to the market not their own horse, but horses, which are given by a rich Rom. There is this dependence and in our big camps where the *burmisters* [2] still rule, now exploitation takes other forms, and these forms bear to exploiters a larger profit than it was the case in former years, and their avarice also grows. Kulaks with all the power started to push rural working poor Roma. We see Roma come into the proletarian class, but at the same time, we see how the former Roma wealth and the new deceiving persons contribute to the growth of the ranks of the exploiting kulaks.

We will take for example the Roma kolkhozes, and what we see there. We see how these kulaks oppress the poor; three or four rich families gather and oppress the whole kolkhoz, take everything into their own hands and become owners in the kolkhoz.

Such examples, when the farm is in the hands of the Romani kulaks, say that the Roma kolkhozes are not appearing, will not grow, and these kolkhozes, which we have today, can be destroyed. In order to turn the construction of Romani kolkhozes on the right path, first of all, it is necessary to increase the consciousness of the poor and the middle-class Roma and with all the force to withdraw the kulaks as a class.

Comrade Stalin orders the withdrawal of the kulaks as a class [3] and kolkhozes' construction will grow and become strong.

But in order to approach this elimination of kulaks, how to approach to raise consciousness among the poor and put on the right path the construction of the Roma kolkhozes?

To do this, first of all, we need people, organizers, leaders. Such organizers may be *Romanečhaven*, who are members of the party, who carry out party decisions and work under its leadership.

Therefore, Roma, Communists and Komsomol members should first of all set themselves the task of organizing rural and urban Roma.

The new Lenin Enrollment [4] is shock-working, this enrollment has to involve also the Roma working population and to give to Roma good leading persons who will increase the Roma kolkhozes, will improve work of the existing kolkhozes and will bring Roma to a new working way. A large percentage of Roma do not yet know and do not understand the tasks that face us. Therefore, work on the involvement of Roma in the party should be carried out among the Roma, who are associated with a particular productive work, and above all to involve the Roma working youth, who grew up in the revolutionary years. This work has to be done in the following way: Roma-Communists and Komsomol members must reach an agreement with gubkoms, raykoms, and other party and Komsomol organisations according to which these organisations in regional places where there are a lot of Roma, may carry out political-educational work among the working Roma and involve them in the party.

To carry out this big task means to conduct and to support the Roma nation in this historic task. This means the transition to a new life, to new forms that will not separate Roma from the common working family, but rather take them into brotherhood in this family of the proletariat of all nationalities, and the new Roma will take the same place in the working family as other nationalities that are part of our Union of Soviet republics ...

Notes

1. In the 1920s and 1930s kulaks were declared major class enemies of the Soviet state in the conduct of Soviet policy in the village. In this case, this model is also transmitted to the Gypsies as a community, within which class contradictions are also "discovered".
2. *Burmistr* (from German Burgmeister) was a designation in Romani language referring to the heads of the Roma Moscow choirs in the first half of 19th century.
3. The main slogan of Soviet politics during the mass collectivization of agriculture in the 1920s and 1930s was to conduct the "liquidation of the kulaks as a class".
4. The Lenin Enrollment was an effort which started after the death of Lenin on 21st of January 1924 to enrol more members into the Communist Party and incite them to become active in party affairs.

Source: Лебедево, Г. (1930a). Ваше полит-воспитаательно быты. *Романы зоря*, Ап. 3, No.No. 3-4, pp. 3-5.

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12.2.6 *Bonfires Go Out*

[Александр Германо]

Гаснут костры

Октябрьская революция освободившая все малые народности, поставила перед нами заботу: включить цыган в семью трудящихся, вовлечь их в строительство социалистического общества.

В январе 1923 г. в Москве была организована из цыган ячейка РКСМ. Ячейка повела работу по вовлечению цыганской молодежи в русло Октябрьских завоеваний. И в первый раз за 6 лет советской власти, в день Международного праздника труда 1 мая, с лозунгом “Цыгане-трудящиеся всех стран, соединяйтесь” – в кибитках, с детьми и стариками, молодежь выступила в демонстрации наряду с трудящимися других народностей. Этим выступлением цыгане показали свое стремление стать в организованные ряды раскрепощенных народностей.

Первой задачей ячейки цыганской молодежи было разъяснить массе вред и позор одурачивания населения гаданием, заниматься попрошайничеством, непродуктивность работы одиночек-кустарей (медников, кузнецов, слесарей и т.д.), которым для улучшения своего материального положения являлась необходимость объединиться в коллективные производства.

В январе месяце 1925 г. был ячейкой организован красный уголок в Петровском парке, который послужил началом для широкой культурно-просветительной работы.

Но массовая работа не могла ограничиваться только московскими цыганами, необходимо было повести работу по улучшению материального положения всех цыган, разбросанных по СССР, как кочующих так и оседлых, для чего надо было создать более мощный орган, могущий охватить самые отсталые слои цыганского народа, и 23 июля 1925 г. возник на добровольных началах Всероссийский союз цыган (ВСЦ), поставивший своей целью организацию цыганских масс, защиту их экономических, правовых интересов, поднятие культурного и политического уровня, борьбу с кочевничеством и перевод кочевников на сельское хозяйство и производство.

Весть о возникновении союза цыган проникла в кочующие таборы. С мест стали поступать письма, приезжать делегации в союз с просьбой о помощи и защите.

Австрийские, венгерские и сербские цыгане, перебравшиеся в СССР, выразили глубокую радость по поводу организации союза.

С поставленными широкими целями союз цыган едва ли мог сам справиться, вследствие неподготовленности к руководству самого цыганского ядра, а поэтому

в феврале 1928 г. союз был вынужден ликвидироваться, и функции его отошли к соответствующим отделам Наркозема и Наркомпроса [Примечание 1].

Но, несмотря на слабую подготовку к массовой работе, союз цыган за время своего существования сумел бросить в цыганскую массу новое семя, которое расшевелило, заставило цыган призадуматься о дальнейшем своем положении. Было выпущено воззвание к цыганскому населению, изданы два плаката в красках, призывающие бросить кочевой образ жизни, и цыгане целыми таборами потянулись к оседлости.

В цыганских массах, особенно за последние годы, происходит брожение в лучшую сторону. Соприкасаясь с организованным населением, они невольно воспринимают новшества, которые немало вносят разлада внутри таборных семейств. Старики, твердо стоящие за традиционные кочевые обычаи, не могут согласиться с молодым и требуют полного его повиновения. На почве неподчинения кочевым законам, послушания или неуважения таборных вожаков – богатеев, случались драки и даже со смертными исходами.

Однако кочевой уклад жизни рушится. Меньше шлют старики проклятий оторвавшимся от кочевой жизни цыганам. Женщина – цыганка становится равноправной в таборе. Целые табора тянутся к оседлости.

Жалкое нищенское прозябание кочевых цыган вынуждает их призадуматься о дальнейшем своем существовании.

Занятие большинства цыган, покупка и продажа лошадей, перешло к конным заводам, которые дают гарантию на хорошую, здоровую лошадь, а поэтому большинство крестьян уклоняется от конной сделки с цыганами. В районах сплошной коллективизации барышничество сошло на нет. Введение паспортной системы для лошадей и строгая наказуемость за увод их вынуждает цыган бросить конокрадство. Гадание преследуется, да и само население в большинстве своем скептически уже относится к этому явному обману. С коллективизацией районов и рациональным использованием пустопорожних земельных участков уменьшились “беспризорные” полянки для стоянок таборов, да и трудности пропитания, в связи с брошенным с первых дней Октябрьской революции лозунгом: “Кто не работает, тот не ест”, – все это заставляет пренебречь кочевкой, да и нет смысла к кочеванию, если отсутствуют в СССР преследование и угнетение, которые принуждали в прошлом ради самосохранения бежать в поля и леса, следовательно отталкиваться от культурной жизни господствующих народов.

Современные условия для нацменьшинств СССР дают возможность советским цыганам бросить кочевой образ жизни, легко прикрепиться к земле и стать в ряды организованного населения.

Союзное правительство специальными декретами от 1 октября 1926 г. и 20 февраля 1928 г. обязало земельные органы наделять во внеочередном порядке цыган, желающих перейти к оседлому образу жизни и занятиям сельскохозяйственными промыслами, – землей из свободного земельного фонда, по местной трудовой норме, как для обработки, так и для устройства усадебной оседлости.

Во всех случаях отвода цыганам земли для сельскохозяйственной обработки на них распространяются льготы, установленные для переселенцев. Землеустройство участков, отводимых переходящим к оседлости цыганам, производится за государственный счет.

По инструкции, изданной Наркомземом в июле 1928 г., земорганы обязаны незамедлительно удовлетворить коллективные ходатайства цыган о наделении землей для товарищеской общественной обработки.

Цыгане, образующие коллективы, наделяются землей предпочтительно перед другими гражданами, кроме военнослужащих, объединяющихся в товарищества.

Цыгане, желающие вести единоличное хозяйство, наделяются землей лишь по удовлетворении землей всех военнослужащих и граждан, желающих организовать коллективное хозяйство.

Если на месте нет свободных земель, цыгане могут получить землю из переселенческого фонда. В районах водворения переселенческие управления обязаны в неотложном порядке оказывать все виды содействия цыганам-переселенцам. [...].

В настоящее время тысячи трудящихся цыган объединены в колхозах. Со всех концов Союза тянутся кибитки к местам концентрации цыган.

Первый колхоз был создан в 1927 году в Витебском районе на земле бывшего помещика.

В то же время создан цыганский колхоз на Украине, в Софийском районе. Колхоз получил 196 с половиной гектаров из фонда раскулаченной земли. Создание цыганского колхоза вызвало живейший интерес окрестного населения.

Узнав об организации колхоза, цыгане Одесщины и других мест стали присылать в Софийский район своих ходоков, чтобы выяснить возможность вхождения в колхоз.

В 1928 г. из Армавирского округа на [реке] Терек переехал организованный цыганом Лебедевым цыганский конный завод, товарищество “Зоря Романэс” [Заря по цыгански] и колхоз по совместной обработке “Лебедевский”. Оба товарищества получили по 750 гектаров земли (хут[ор] Рождественский, близ станции Суворовской). Крайсоюз отпустил этим колхозам 120 тысяч рублей кредита. В обоих колхозах около 400 едоков.

Кон[ный] завод занимается выращиванием верховой кабардинской лошади. Уж в первый год было сдано военведу 27 кобылиц. Заготовлено сена 30 тысяч пудов, посеяли 162 гектара ярового посева и 471 гектар озими. В яровом клину посеяли овес, кукурузу, бахчи, сою, которую они впервые в жизни видят, и др.

Цыгане имеют “Фордзон”, сеялки, веялки, плуги и другие машины. Они решили бороться за высокие урожаи хлебов, за лучшее качество скота.

Там же на Северном Кавказе, в Вешенском районе создан цыганский колхоз “Красный шатер”, в котором насчитывается около 500 человек.

В колхозе “Нацмен”, Котельниковского района, объединены около ста цыганских семей. Колхоз находится в отобранных кулацких домах. Цыгане быстро освоились

с сельскохозяйственной жизнью. Было время, над цыганами подшучивали казаки, но теперь прекратили, видя, как они отлично справились с плантацией и зерновыми посевами. Недавно активистку-комсомолку Полю Педанову колхоз командировал на курсы трактористов. Имеется ликпункт, куда ходят как молодые так и старые цыгане. Все женщины, в том числе 50-летняя мать Педановой, научились читать и писать. На окружной конференции женщин-колхозниц Педанова делала доклад о колхозной работе, отчитывалась в деятельности “Нацмена”, излагала четкий производственный план подготовки к весенней кампании.

В Покровском районе, Оренбургского округа, на землях развалившейся лжекоммуны, под вывеской которой скрывались сектанты, цыгане организовали колхоз с животноводческо-конеvodческим уклоном. Вошло до тридцати семей. От полсотни семей, находящихся в разных районах СССР, были присланы заявления с просьбой принять их в колхоз.

Цыганский колхоз в Великолуцком округе принимал участие в конкурсе на лучшее проведение подготовки к весеннему севу.

Колхозное движение все больше и больше захватывает кочевых цыган. Колхозцентр еще не учел количества цыганских колхозов, но судя по письмам, присылаемым из разных районов в редакцию цыганского журнала, можно сказать, что цыганских колхозов насчитывается около полсотни.

Цыгане селятся и в городах. Горсоветы отводят участки земли для организации поселков и предоставляют кредиты на жил[ищное] строительство. В количестве 10-15 семейств создаются кооперативные жилищно-строительные товарищества. Так осели цыгане в Марьиной Роще (Москве), Харькове, Симферополе и других городах.

Наблюдается тяга таборных цыган к производству. На биржу труда являются цыгане с предложением рабочей силы. На фабриках и заводах Москвы, Харькова, Севастополя и других городов уже работают квалифицированные рабочие и работницы из цыган. В бригадное ученичество, как например в Брянске, привлекают и цыганскую молодежь. На Украине подростки размещаются среди кустарей.

В целях вовлечения цыган в производство и приобщения их к производственному труду, биржа труда принимает безработных цыган на учет, не требуя от них установленного стажа работы по найму.

Ранее осевшие в городах цыгане организовываются в различные производственные артели и мастерские.

В 1926 г. в Москве организовались производственные артели: мебельно-обивная, трикотажная, платочно-набивная, фасовочная (химическая), игрушечная, москательная и др. Основан в Москве первый цыганский завод – производство глауберовой соли. В Москве одна цыганская артель как “Цыгхимлабор” объединила свыше 150 человек, другая артель “Цыгпищепром” – 120 человек. В Самарканде кустарно-промысловый союз объединил 30 мастеров-цыган и создал артель, которая производит решета и сита для “Азияхлеба”.

Грамотность цыган находится на самом низком уровне.

По последней переписи 1926 г. цыган в СССР – 61 215 человек [Примечание 2], 30 227 мужчин и 30 988 женщин, из них грамотных мужчин 3 418 и женщин 2 009. Очевидно большой процент грамотности падает на ничтожную численность оседлого населения.

В Самарканде по инициативе городского исполкома были приняты мероприятия по улучшению бытовых условий и поднятию культурного уровня оседлых цыган. Хорошо поставлена массовая работа в Псковском округе. Там, во время перехода цыган-кочевников на зимовье в села и деревни, была проведена культурно-просветительная работа: вовлечение их в избы-читальни, детей в школы, а взрослых в ликбезы. Своей активностью отличались цыгане в г. Острове. На первом общем собрании записалось в ликбезы 50 человек. В день освобождения от белых цыгане г. Острова приняли участие в демонстрации и выступали на митинге.

Дети цыган учатся в своих школах. Первая школа возникла осенью 1925 г., в Рогожско-Симоновском районе Москвы. В том же году была устроена в Москве детская площадка. В вузах и на рабфаках учатся таборные цыгане.

Есть у цыган свои клубы и красные уголки как например в Москве, Симферополе, Пскове, Смоленске и других городах.

Можно встретить цыган членов ВКП, ВЛКСМ, профсоюзов, Моссовета, МОПРа, Автодора и других организаций и учреждений.

Шатры и кочевка уходят в прошлое.

Гаснут костры ...

Цыгане переключают свои силы на социалистическую стройку.

Раскрепощенная отсталая цыганская народность приближается к советской социалистической культуре, как равная среди равных.

XVI парт[ийный] съезд полным основанием отметил, что правильная ленинская политика ЦК привела к дальнейшему укреплению братского сотрудничества народов СССР на основе ленинской национальной политики.

[Примечание] 1. Вопрос о создании цыганского центра находится в порядке обсуждения. По сему поводу была статья Г[еоргия] Лебедева и Ал[ександра] Германа “Что делать с цыганами” в “Комсомольской правде” от 11 сент[ября] 1929 г. Ввиду спорности этого вопроса, по инициативе “Комсомольской правды” было устроено 7 окт[ября] 1929 г. в стенах редакции первое совещание с широким участием цыганских трудовых масс г. Москвы.

[Примечание] 2. Предполагают, что в пределах СССР цыган гораздо больше (свыше 200 000 чел[овек]), но едва ли можно было бы дать точную цифру их, так как они зачастую выдают себя то за молдован, то за румын, то за сербов. Причиной этому является страх, который исходит от дореволюционного времени, когда после регистрации цыгане подвергались преследованию. В Крыму цыгане магометане считают еще позорным называться “цыганом” и выдают себя за татар. В Закавказье же

цыгане (армянские боша) называют себя армянами. В одной только Москве насчитывается до 4 000 цыган.

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[Alexander Germano]

Bonfires Go Out

The October Revolution, which liberated all small nationalities, set before us a task: to include Roma in the family of working people, to involve them in the construction of a socialist society.

In January 1923, the RKSM cell was organised from Gypsies in Moscow [1]. The cell led work to engage Roma youth in the mainstream of the October achievements. And for the first time in 6 years of Soviet rule, on the day of the International Labour Festival on May 1, with the slogan “Gypsies of the world, unite” – in wagons, with children and the elderly, youth spoke in demonstrations along with workers of other nationalities [2]. With this performance, the Gypsies showed their desire to join the organised ranks of liberated peoples.

The first task of the Gypsy youth cell was to explain to the masses the harm and disgrace of fooling the population with fortune-telling, to beg, the unproductive work of single handicraftsmen (coppersmiths, blacksmiths, locksmiths, etc.), who, in order to improve their material situation, need to unite in collective production.

In January 1925, a red corner was organised by the cell in Petrovsky Park, which served as the beginning of a wide cultural and educational work.

But mass work could not be limited only to Moscow Gypsies, it was necessary to carry out work for improving the economic situation of all Gypsies scattered throughout the USSR, both nomadic and settled, for which it was necessary to create a more powerful body that could reach the most backward sections of the Gypsy people, and on the 23rd of July 1925, the All-Russian Union of Gypsies (VSTs) appeared on a voluntary basis, with the goal of organizing the Gypsy masses, protecting their economic, legal interests, raising the cultural and political level, and combating nomadism and transfer of nomads to agriculture and industrial production.

The news of establishing the union of the Gypsies penetrated the nomad camps. Letters began to come from the countryside, delegations came to the union with a request for help and protection.

The Austrian, Hungarian and Serbian Gypsies who moved to the USSR [3] expressed deep joy over the organisation of the union.

Having set broad objectives, the Roma Union itself could hardly cope, due to lack of preparation for the management of its leaders, and so in February 1928 the union was forced to be liquidated, and its functions moved to the relevant departments and the Narkozem and Narkompros [Note 1].

But, despite the poor preparation for mass work, the Union of Gypsies during its existence managed to throw a new seed into the Gypsy mass, which stirred up, made the

Gypsies think about their future situation. An appeal was issued to the Gypsy population, two posters in paints were issued calling for the abandonment of a nomadic way of life, and the Gypsies wholeheartedly were pulled to sedentarisation.

Among the Gypsy masses, especially in recent years, ongoing positive processes are taking place. In contact with the organised population, they involuntarily perceive innovations that make a lot of discord inside the tabor families. The old people, who are firmly behind the traditional nomadic customs, cannot agree with the young and demand their complete obedience. Because of disobedience to the nomadic laws, disobedience or disrespect for the tabor leaders – the rich, there were fights and even deaths.

However, the nomadic way of life is crumbling. The old people send fewer curses to Gypsies who have torn themselves off from the nomadic life. A Gypsy woman becomes equal in the camp. Whole camps gravitate towards sedentarisation.

The miserable beggarly living of nomadic Gypsies makes them think about their continuing existence.

The occupation of most Gypsies, the purchase and sale of horses, went to the stud farms, which give a guarantee for a good, healthy horse, and therefore most peasants shy away from equestrian deals with Gypsies. In areas of continuous collectivisation, horse-dealing came to nought. The introduction of the passport system for horses and strict punishment for horse-stealing forces Roma to avoid it. Fortune-telling is persecuted, and the population itself is already mostly sceptical in regards of this obvious deception. Collectivisation of areas and rational use of empty land decreased “ownerless spots” which were used before for encampments; and the difficulties of earning a living in that way, in connection with the slogan thrown up from the first days of the October Revolution: “Who does not work does not eat,” all this makes the nomads neglect wandering; and there is no sense in the continuation of nomadism if there is no persecution and oppression in the USSR that forced them to do so in the past, for the sake of self-preservation, flee to the fields and forests, and therefore to be distanced from the cultural life of the dominant peoples. Modern conditions for the national minorities of the USSR enable Soviet Gypsies to abandon the nomadic way of life, easily attach themselves to the process of sedentarisation and join the ranks of the organised population.

The Union Government, by special decrees of October 1, 1926 and February 20, 1928 [4], obliged the land authorities to allocate land to the Gypsies, who want to switch to a settled lifestyle and engage in agricultural activities, as the land is allocated from a free land fund according to local labour standards, both for the processing and for the building of homestead settlements.

In all cases of the allocation of land for Gypsies for agricultural cultivation, the benefits established for resettled people will apply to them [5]. Land management of the plots allocated to Gypsies passing to a settled way of life is carried out at the state expense.

According to the instructions issued by the Narkomzem in July 1928, the agricultural authorities are obliged to immediately satisfy the collective applications of the Gypsies for land allotment for comradely societal land cultivation.

Gypsies who form collectives, are endowed with land in preference to other citizens, except military personnel, who are united in a collective partnership.

Gypsies who want to run an individual, one-man agriculture are allocated with land only when all the military personnel and citizens who want to organize a collective economy are satisfied with the land.

If there is no free land on the spot, Gypsies can get land from the resettlement fund. In resettlement areas, resettlement departments are obliged to urgently provide all kinds of assistance to resettled Gypsies. [...] [6].

Currently, thousands of Gypsy workers are united on kolkhozes. From all ends of the Union, tents are drawn to places with a concentration of Gypsies.

The first kolkhoz was created in 1927 in the Vitebsk region [7] on the land of a former landowner.

At the same time, a Gypsy kolkhoz was created in Ukraine, in the Sofiysk rayon [8]. The kolkhoz received 196 and a half hectares from the dispossessed from kulaks land fund. The creation of a Gypsy kolkhoz aroused the lively interest of the surrounding population.

Having learned about the organisation of the kolkhoz, the Gypsies of the Odessa region and other places began to send their khodoks to the Sofiysk rayon to find out the possibility to be enrolled in the kolkhoz.

In 1928, the Gypsy stud farm moved from the Armavir District on the river Terek, organised by Lebedev, the comrade collective *Zorya Romanes* (Dawn in Roma way) and kolkhoz named after Lebedev. Both comrade collectives received 750 hectares of land each (in khutor Rozhdestvensky, near Suvorovskaya station) [9]. The Regional Union of Cooperatives released 120 thousand rubles of credit to these kolkhozes. There are about 400 eaters on both kolkhozes.

The stud farm is breeding a Kabardian riding horses. Already in the first year, 27 mares were handed over to the military institution. Hay of 30 thousand pounds was harvested, 162 hectares of spring sowing and 471 hectares of winter crops were sown. In the spring wedge sowed oats, corn, melons, soybeans, which they see for the first time in their lives, etc.

Gypsies have Fordson [10], seeders, winders, ploughs and other machines. They decided to fight for high grain yields, for the best quality of livestock [11].

There, in the North Caucasus, in the Veshensky rayon, a Gypsy kolkhoz "Red Tent" [12] was created, in which there are about 500 people.

In the kolkhoz "Natsmen", Kotelnikovskiy district [13], about a hundred Gypsy families are united. The kolkhoz is located in expropriated kulak houses. Gypsies quickly got comfortable with agricultural life. It was time that the Cossacks made fun of the Gypsies, but now they have stopped, seeing how they coped well with the plantation and grain crops. Recently, the Komsomol activist Poly Pedanova was sent by the kolkhoz for tractor driver courses. There is a booth for the abolishment of illiteracy where both young and old Gypsies go to learn. All women, including the 50-year-old mother of Pedanova, learned

to read and write. At the regional conference of women kolkhoz workers, Pedanova made a report on kolkhoz work, reported on the activities of the “Natsmen”, outlined a clear production plan for preparing for the spring campaign.

In the Pokrovsky rayon, the Orenburg okrug, on the lands of a crumbling false commune, under the guise of which sectarians were hiding, the Gypsies organised a kolkhoz with a livestock-horse breeding specialisation [14]. Up to thirty families have entered. From fifty families located in different regions of the USSR, applications were sent with a request to take them into the kolkhoz.

Gypsy kolkhoz in Velikiy Lutsokrug [15] took part in the competition for the best preparation for spring sowing.

The kolkhoz movement attracts more and more nomadic Gypsies. The kolkhoz centre has not yet made a census of the number of Gypsy kolkhozes, but judging by the letters sent from different regions to the editorial office of the Gypsy journal, we can say that there are about fifty Gypsy kolkhozes.

Gypsies also settle in cities. City Councils allot plots of land for the organisation of settlements and provide loans for housing construction. In the amount of 10-15 families, cooperative housing partnerships are created. So the Gypsies settled in Maryina Roshcha (Moscow), Kharkov, Simferopol and other cities.

There is a craving for Tabor Gypsies for production. Gypsies offering their labour are on the labour exchange. The factories and plants in Moscow, Kharkov, Sevastopol and other cities already employ skilled Gypsy men and womenworkers. Gypsy youth are also attracted to brigade apprenticeships, such as in Bryansk. In Ukraine, teenagers are placed among artisans.

In order to involve Gypsies in production and bring them to production work, the labour exchange accepts unemployed Gypsies for registration, without requiring them to have established work experience.

Gypsies, previously settled in cities, are organised into various artels and workshops.

In 1926, production artels were organised in Moscow: for furniture and upholstery, knitted, handkerchief-stuffed, packing (chemical), toy, household chemicals, etc. The first Gypsy factory was founded in Moscow – for the production of glauber salt.

In Moscow, one Gypsy artel as “Tsygkhimlabor” united more than 150 people, another artel “Tsygpushcheprom” – 120 people [16]. In Samarkand, the artisanal union brought together 30 Gypsy masters and created an artel that produces cullenders and sieves for “Asian bread”.

Roma literacy is at its lowest level.

According to the last census of 1926, there were 61,215 Gypsies in the USSR [Note 2], 30,227 men and 30,988 women, of whom 3,418 were literate men and 2,009 women. Obviously, a large percentage of literacy falls on an insignificant number of the settled population.

In Samarkand, on the initiative of the city executive committee, measures were taken to improve living conditions and raise the cultural level of settled Gypsies. The mass work in the Pskov okrug is well organised. There, during the settling of the Gypsy nomads in

the hamlets and villages for the winter pass, cultural and educational work was carried out: involving them in the reading room, the children in schools, and adults in likbez. Gypsies in the city of Ostrov could be distinguished by their activity. At the first general meeting, 50 people enrolled in likbez. On the day of the liberation from the Whites [17], the Gypsies from Ostrov took part in a demonstration and spoke at a rally.

Gypsy children go to their own schools. The first school arose in the fall of 1925, in the Rogozh-Simonovsky district of Moscow. In the same year, a children's group was arranged in Moscow. In universities and rabfaks, the Tabor Gypsies are studying.

Gypsies have their own clubs and red corners [18] for example in Moscow, Simferopol, Pskov, Smolensk and other cities. One can meet Gypsies members of the VKP, the Komsomol, trade unions, the Moscow Soviet, MOPR [19], the Society for the Promotion of Motorism and the Improvement of Roads and other organisations and institutions.

Tents and wanderings are becoming a thing of the past.

Bonfires go out ...

Gypsies are switching their forces towards socialist construction.

The liberated backward Gypsy people are approaching Soviet socialist culture as equal among equals.

The 16th Party Congress [20] justifiably noted that the correct Leninist policy of the Central Committee led to the further strengthening of fraternal cooperation among the peoples of the USSR on the basis of Leninist national policy.

[Note] 1. The issue of creating a Gypsy centre is under discussion. On this occasion, there was an article by Georgiy Lebedev and Alexander German titled "What to do with Gypsies" in "Komsomolskaya Pravda" (Komsomol's Truth), dated September 11, 1929. Due to the controversy of this issue, on the initiative of the "Komsomolskaya Pravda" on October 7th, 1929 was arranged in the journal office the first meeting with wide participation of the Gypsy working masses of Moscow [21].

[Note] 2. It is believed that within the Soviet Union the number of Gypsies is much larger (more than 200 000 people), but one could hardly give their exact number, as they often present themselves for Moldovans, or Romanians and Serbs. The reason for this is a fear, which comes from pre-revolutionary times when, after registration, Roma were persecuted [22]. In Crimea, the Muslim Gypsies still consider it shameful to be called a "Gypsy" and present themselves as Tatars. In Transcaucasia, Gypsies (Armenian *Bosha*) call themselves Armenians. In Moscow alone, there are up to 4,000 Gypsies.

Notes

1. This refers to the creation of a Komsomol *yacheyka* headed by Ivan Lebedev and Sergey Polyakov in 1923 among the participants in the Gypsy choir headed by Yegor Polyakov (see above).
2. The participation of a group of Gypsies in the solemn manifestation of 1st of May, 1923 made a great impression and was reflected even in the Western press (Kisch, 1977, p. 123).
3. This refers to the Gypsy groups of *Kelderari* and *Lovari*, who settled in the Russian Empire before the First World War but kept their passports of subjects of Austro-Hungary, Romania,

Serbia, Greece, etc. which made the travel around the country financially advantageous for them, because, as foreign subjects, they were exempt from a number of taxes and fees.

4. This refers to the Decree of TsIK USSR and SNK USSR from 01.10.1926 *On measures to facilitate the transition of nomadic Gypsies to a settled lifestyle* and Decree of VTsIK and SNK RSFSR from 20.06.1928 *On the allocating land for Gypsies who are transitioning to a sedentary working way of life*.

5. *Переселенцы* (Resettled people or Resettlers) – since the times of the Russian Empire, this was the designation of a special category of people who have been encouraged, through numerous privileges, to settle in economically undeveloped territories. This practice has been preserved and further developed in the early USSR; the inclusion of the Gypsies, who wish to settle, into this category means that in this way they are given the opportunity to enjoy all these privileges.

6. A passage is omitted here that almost literally repeats what was written above about the results of policy for encouraging the Gypsies to sedentarise and receive land (as already stated, these results are presented as very successful, although the realities are more modest).

7. Here, A. Germano relies on a press release (Беднота, 1927, p. 4) about the creation of an agricultural artel in the Vitebsk District, Belarussian SSR. According to some contemporary publications, the name of this kolkhoz is *New Life*, but no sources are cited (Калинин, 2005, p. 89). In the archives were not discovered evidence about this kolkhoz yet, so probably it survived only a short time.

8. Here, A. Germano quoted a press release (Экономическая жизнь, 1928, p. 4) about the creation of a Gypsy kolkhoz in the Sofievskiy rayon, Dnepropetrovsk oblast, Ukrainian SSR. In the archives evidence about this kolkhoz have not yet been discovered, so it is probable that it survived only a short time too.

9. Probably a typo. This should be read not as a railway station (станция), but as a *станица* – an administrative rural unit in the regions, populated by Cossacks, i.e. stanitsa Suvorovskaya in the Stavropol Kray.

10. It refers to Fordson, a brand name of tractors and trucks. The *Fordson-Putilovets* was a wheel tractor produced in the period between 1924-1932 in the factory *Красный Путиловец* (The Red Putilovets) in Leningrad, licensed by Ford.

11. The situation with this Gypsy kolkhoz was not without problems, so it was necessary to send Mikhail Bezlyudskiy from Moscow there in 1933 to become its chairman (see below).

12. There is no historical evidence about this kolkhoz other than A. Germano's texts, but on the other hand, the memory of it is preserved in oral history (Бессонов, 2011, p. 65), i.e. it actually existed, albeit for a relatively short time (until 1930).

13. Herein refers to the Gypsy kolkhoz *Natsmen Tsygan* (Gypsy Natsmen) in Kotelnikovsky rayon, Stalingrad oblast.

14. This refers to the *Novaya zarya* (New Dawn) Gypsy kolkhoz, which was disbanded in 1930 (GARF, f. P 1235, op. 123, d. 27, l. 239-242).

15. No other historical evidence about this kolkhoz has been discovered yet, other than A. Germano's texts.

16. The important-sounding titles, such as 'Tsygkhimlabor' (Gypsy Chemical Laboratory), 'Tsygkhimprom' (Gypsy Chemical Industry) and 'Tsygishcheprom' (Gypsy Food Industry) should not mislead the reader; these were artels for unskilled labour (mainly women, many of them non-Gypsies) in which those who were involved as artels' workers, cut up and packed and re-packed basic household products (dyes, laundry detergents, salt, tea, coffee, etc.).

17. 'Whites' is a generic name for enemies of the Soviet power and 'the Reds' were called the Red Army and communist supporters during the Civil War (1917-1922).

18. *Krasnyy ugolok* (красный уголок) – literally 'little red corner', originally used for designation of a small worship place in Orthodox homes, in Soviet times this was a designation of space, most often a special room used for cultural and propaganda activities.

19. *Международная организация помощи революционерам* (International Red Aid Service), known under abbreviation MOPR (МОПР) was an 'International Political Red Cross', organisation established in 1922 by the Komintern.

20. This is a reference to 16th Congress of VKP(b), that took place in Moscow from 26 June to 13 July 1930.

21. From the Minutes of the mentioned consultancy meeting (GARF, f. P 1235, op. 121, d. 31, l. 334-348) it can be seen that it was attended by representatives of various Soviet institutions and many Gypsy activists; discussed were numerous different issues that the Gypsies in the USSR were facing.

22. There is no doubt that the official Census of 1926 did not present the actual number of Gypsies in the USSR, but the explanation offered is rather naive and illogical, though ideologically justified. During the second half of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, no legal or administrative acts specifically targeting the Gypsies were adopted in the Russian Empire, i.e. whether or not Gypsies would be subject to repression by state or local authorities was in no way related to how they were registered with the Census.

Source: Герман, А. В. (1931). *Цыгане вчера и сегодня*. Москва: Учпедгиз, pp. 44-53.

Prepared for publication by Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov.

12.2.7 *War against anti-Gypsyism*

Марибэ антицыганизмоса

Тагарискири Россия сыр амэ джинас сыс тюрьмаса ваш тыкнэ нацыональностенгэ.

Тагарискири нацыонально политика сыс дрэ адава; собы тэ влыджас холы машкир трудяшшёнэ нацыональностендэ, тэ рикирэс дро насыкляибэн.

Кхэтанэ адалэса сарэ трудяшшёнэ нацыональностендэ на сыс ни савэ политическа правы, лэн надомэкэнас тэ дживэн дрэ барэ форья (кэ примеро евреи и ваврэ), на домэкэнас кэ буты дрэ государственна учреждении.

Тагарискиро правительство розтходя пэскирэн руссконэн чиновникнэн дрэ нацыональна штэты.

Сари адая нацыональна политика лыджия кэ одова, собы тэ рикирэс дрэ пэскирэ васта отачнэ нацыональности, собы ёнэ на газдынэпэ прэ тагарискиро правительство. Адава треби сыс ваш буглы эксплуатация трудяшшёнэ нацыональностен, треби сыс тэ пролыджас машкир лэндэ руссификация, ваврэ лавэнса ёнэ камнэ тэ кэрэн манушэн на руссконэ нацыональностендыр руссконэнца.

Тагарискиро правительство на пригалыя тыкнэ нацыональности пало манушэндэ и присыклякирдэ руссконэ манушэн тэ дыкхэн прэ тыкнэ нацыональностендэ прэ ромэндэ, евреендэ и ад. дурыдыр сыр на прэ манушэндэ.

Русска помешшики и буржуазия рикирдэ пэс хуланса пири сари Россия, кэ адава жэ присыклякирдэ сарэн тёмнонэн руссконэн манушэн тэ дыкхэн прэ ромэндэ сыр на прэ манушэндэ, а сыр прэ чёрэндэ. Буржуазия бандякирдя ромэн, со ёнэ на кэрна буты и лыджяна фэлдытко джибэн и дживэна хохаибнаса чёрибнаса и ад. дурыдыр. Банги жэ дрэ адава, со кой савэ рома догынэ кэ адасаво джибэн кокори жэ буржуазия, – ёй на домэкья ромэн тэ дживэс прэ екх штэто и тэ залэспэ бутяса.

Адыкэ жэ буржуазия отлыджияпэ кэ сарэ трудяшшы нацыональности. Буржуазиякэ дрэ адава дрэван помогискирдэ рашая, школы и печать. Енэ пэскирьяса буржуазнонэ печатяса замакхнэ якха трудяшшёнэн, ракирдэ, со тагарискиро правительство заботисалыя ваш сарэ нацыональностенгэ.

Буржуазно печать прикхардя тэ шунэс тагарис. Ёй ракирдэ, со тагари сы тходо дэвлэса, со треби тэ шунэс барвалэн и ад. дурыдыр и адай жэ зорьяса отлэлэса само лачи пхув Башкирэндыр, Киргизэндыр, и ад. дур. и пиридэлэса руссконэ помещикэнгэ и кулакэнгэ. Вэрипираса сыр тагарискиро правительство пэскирэнса хэладэнса тасадя одолэ нацыональности, савэ на камнэ тагарискиро тасаибэ и лыджинэ нацыонально освободительно марибэ: тагарискирэ хэладэ умарнас трудяшшёнэн, схачькирнас нацыональна гава.

Акана кажнонэс бэршэса уса тыкныдыр и тыкныдыр тэрдэла налылварэн ромэн, машир лэндэ лыджялапэ дрэван бари культурно просветительно буты.

Трудяшшы рома зоралэс тэрдэ пало соцыалистическо строительство, бут машир ромэндэ сы марибнытка, пролыджялапэ соцсоревнованийэ и ад. дурыдыр. Прэ ромэндэ ужэ на дыкхэна сыр прэ чэрэндэ, бутяритко классо прилэла трудяшшёнэн ромэн пало пэскирэндэ пшалэндэ, машир савэндэ тэрдэ екх задэибэна – тэ кэрэс соцыалистическо общество.

Акана коли бутитко классо и сарэ трудяшшы СССР пирикэрна пэскиро хулаибэ прэ соцыалистическо ладо, адава кэрибэ пролыджяла амэн кэ классово марибэ амарэнца врагэнца. Амарэ классово враги шукир полэна, со соцыалистическо строительство вытасавэла клас совонэ врагэн зорьятыр. Кажно амаро нэво колхозо, совхозо, машыно-тракторно станция сы мулыпэ ваш кулакоскэ. Акэ пало адава амарэ классово враги лыджяна амэнца марибэ, ёнэ камэн тэ зарикирэн амаро соцыалистическо строительство.

Собы тэ зарикирэс соцстроительство амарэ классово враги камэн тэ пролыджяна нацыонально кошыбэ. Ёнэ пришунэнапэ кэ ракирибэна отдельнонэ партийнонэ членэн, савэ ракирна, со акана пригыя времё, коли на треби тэ лыджяс буты прэ нацыонально чиб. Сыр примеро прэ Украина, кай пролыджялапэ сари буты прэ украинско чиб, кай школы сыклёна прэ украинско чиб. Нэ сы мануша дрэ амари партия, савэ на камэн адава тэ пролыджяс. Адалэн манушэн амэ кхараса великоруссконэ шовинистэнца. Адалэ коммунисты на полынэ чячюны ленинско нацыональна политика, акэ пал адава ёнэ змардэпэ чячюнэ дромэстыр. Ёнэ доракирдэпэ жыко адава, со пир лэнгирос треби тэ обпарусэв нацыональна области и республики школы и адыкэ дурыдыр.

XVI партийно с'езде тходя задыбэ тэ лыджяс марибэ адалэнса, кон лэла тэ лыджял адасави начячюны нацполитика.

Адасавэ начячюнэ ракирибэ помогискирла прэ васт амарэ классовонэ врагэнгэ, савэ лэна тэ лыджяна адасаво ракирибэ машир отачнэ манушэндэ. Сы адасавэ факты: дрэ Витебско районо, школьно сыкляибнаскиро ракирла гавитконэ манушэнгэ, со рома сы амарэ враги. Дрэ Сталинградско газета сыс нагара чиндло, со одой прэ тарго спекулянтка ракирдэ, со хай ёй дыкхэя, сыр рома улыджинэ тыкнэчяворэн

кэ пэ и одой лэн чинэна прэ сапуни ... Дро адава жэ бэрш дрэ Средне-Волжско крае прэ романэ колхозы русска кулаки лыджинэ нацыональна травля, ёнэ подракирдэ гавитконэ манушэн тэ на дэс ромэнгэ тэ правительство [?] [...]

Ласа ваш примеро евреев. Тагари трудяшшёнэ евреевгэ на дэлэс тэ дживэл дрэ барэ форья, а барвалэ джидлэ и дрэван пашыл тагариса. Нацыональнэ буржуазиятэ адякэ жэ сыр и руссконэ помещикэндэ, фабрикантэнгэ, заводчикэндэ сы екх – тэ заухтылэс дрэ пхэрды эксплоатацыя трудяшшёнэн и и бутыдыр тэ рикирэс лэн дро пэскирэ васта и тэ лыджяс машкир манушэндэ нацыональна рознь. Саро адава кэрдяпэ ваш адава, собы тэ отлыджяс трудяшшёнэн классовонэ марибна-стыр, собы тэ на дэс трудяшшёнэ нацыональностенгэ тэ пшалакирэспэ машкир пэстэ. Дрэ адава сыс тагарискири нацыональна политика. И амэ джинас, адасавьяса нацыональнэ политикаса тагарискиро правительство бут домардяпэ ваш пэстэ, бут разна нацыональности лыджинэ машкир пэстэ нацыональна марибэ. Адалэ нацыональности на дыкхнэ дрэ ваврэ нацыональности пэскирэн пшалэн, савэн адякэ жэ тасавэла буржуазия. Адякэ отлыджияпэ русско буржуазия кэ разна тыкнэ нацыональности и присыклякирдя руссконэ бутитконэ манушэн тэ дыкхэс адякэ прэ разна нацыональности. Адава кхарлапэ великоруссконэ шовинизмоса.

Октябрьско революция тходя трушыл прэ нацыонально рознь, прэ привилегии екхэ нацыональности. Октябрьски революция дья екх право сарэнгэ трудяшшён[эн]гэ, сави бы нацыональностяса ёнэ на сыс. Коммунистическо партия и советско власть дрэван бут помогискирдэ отачнэ нацыональностенгэ тэ ғаздэс лэнгиро джибэн.

Амэ дыкхаса сыр ғаздэлапэ хулаибэ дрэ нацыональна штэты, кхэтанэ адалэса барьёла нацыонально культура.

Ласа кэ примеро ромэн. Дрэ тагарискирэ бэрша ромэнгэ пригыяпэ тэ лыджяс фэлдытко джибэн, а акана советско власть и коммунистическо партия помогискирэла ромэнгэ тэ чюрдэс фэлдытко джибэн и тэ залэспэ бутяса. Кажнонэса бэршэса трудяшша рома бутыдыр чюрдэна фэлдытко джибэн, джяна тэ кэрэн буты пиро фабрики, заводы, откэрнапэ романэ колхозы и адякэ дурыдыр.

Прэ XVI партийно с'езде тов. Сталино ракирдя ваш нацыонально пучибэ, со акана дрэ СССР отачнэ нацыональности барьёна сыр дрэ хулаибэ, адякэ жэ и дрэ культура, со дрэ СССР тыкнэ нацыональности на чюрдэна и на отпхэнэнапэ нацыональнэ признакэндэр. Барьёна дрэ нацыональна штэты хулаибэ и барьёла культура пиро форма нацыональна и пиро содержания соцыалистическо.

Октябрьско революция заухтылдя бут нацыональности налилварэн, бутэндэ нацыональстендэ, сыр кэ примеро ромэндэ, на сыс пэскирэ школы, печать и ад дур.

Только советско власть дья тэ откэрэл нацыональна школы, клубы лолэ вэнг[лы]. [...]

Партия и советско власть зоралэс марэла адасавэн, савэ лыджяна холы прэ нацмено. Партия и советско власть шукир джидлэ состыр кой савэ рома на ачядэ инке фэлдытко джибэн и хохаибэн; партия джидлэ, со дрэ адава банго тагарискиро

правительствон. Партия и советско власть тходя задыбэн тэ выльджяс ромэн прэ нэво бутяритко джиибэн, тэ утховэс ромэн дрэ бутяритко организованно семья, тэ газдэс культурно уровнё, тэ кэрэс ромэн активнэ строителенса дрэ социалистическо страна. Нэ танго, со сы машир комунистэндэ и беспартийнонэндэ мануша, савэ на полэна одова со ёнэ бангэ ты лыджян буты машир ромэндэ. Ёнэ бангэ сыс тэ присыклякирэн лэн кэ буты. Нэ бут сы машир коммунистэндэ и беспартийнонэндэ, савч лыджяна антицыганизмо.

Дрэ адава бэрш дрэ Тверь сыс откэрдо сэндо. Руссконэ бутярен, савэ лыджинэ антицыганизмо машир бутярендэ сэндыскирдэ. Рэндо сыс дрэ адава, со дрэ форо Тверь бут прэ буты ромэн, буты лэндэ пхари. Енэ пролыджинэ мосто, рома на отачнэ руссконэ бутярендыр. Пиро пхурано слядо, саво ачядя тагарискиро строё, прэ ромэндэ дыкхнэ сыр дрэ тагарискиро строё, сыр на прэ манушэндэ, сарэ зорьяса камнэ тэ выдживэн ромэн бутятыр. Бутяри ром т. Пронино ракирдя прэ сэндо, со кхардэ лэн “калэ рома”, “бэнганэ рома”, “чёра” и ад. дурыдыр, ромэнгэ дэнас само пхари буты. Ромэнгэ отпхэндлэ дрэ фуражо, дрэ хабэ манушэнгэ; машир лэндэ на пролыджяна культурно интернационально буты.

Адасаво отношение откэрдяпэ прэ сэндо. Пролетарско сэндо екхатыр страна-тыр осэндыскирдя бангэ манушэн и ваврэ стронатыр адалэ сэндостыр выльджинэ, со треби ромэнгэ тэ помогискирэс и тэ облогхирэс бутярикхо дром, тэ аздэс культурно уровнё, помогискирэс ромэнгэ тэ чюрдэс фэлдытка джиибэн.

Партия и советско власть лыджяла и лэла лыджял марибэ антицыганизмоса, ни сави привилегия нанэ екхакэ национальностякэ. Антицыганизмо кхэлэла прэ васт амарэ классовонэ врагэнгэ.

А. Таранов

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War against anti-Gypsyism

Tsarist Russia, as we know, was a prison for small nationalities.

The Tsarist national policy was to bring hatred among the working nationalities, to keep them in illiteracy.

Along with that, all working nationalities had no political rights, they were not allowed to live in big cities (for example, Jews and others), were not allowed to work in state institutions.

The Tsarist government used to send the Russian officials into national regions.

All this national policy led to the aim to keep in their hands “backward” nationalities so that they did not rise up against the Tsarist government. For the broad exploitation of working nationalities, it was necessary to carry out among them a process of Russification, in other words, they wanted to make Russian people of those who were not of Russian nationality.

The Tsarist government did not recognise small nationalities as human beings and accustomed Russian people not to look at small nationalities, at Roma, Jews as human beings.

Russian landowners and the bourgeoisie kept themselves as high masters throughout Russia, they taught all “ignorant” Russian people to look at the Roma – in the same way – not as human beings, but as thieves. The bourgeoisie accused the Roma that they do not do any work, but lead a nomadic life and earn their livelihood by fraud, theft and so on. The bourgeoisie itself is guilty of this situation, that some of Roma have led such a poor life, – the bourgeoisie did not allow the Roma to live in one place and to engage in some job [1].

The bourgeoisie treated all working nationalities in the same way. In this the bourgeoisie was helped to a large extent by priests, schools and the press. They, with the help of their press, were closing the eyes of the workers, saying that the Tsarist government takes care of all nationalities.

The bourgeois press called on people to obey the Tsar. She told that the Tsar is ordained by God, that it is necessary to obey the rich and so on, and at the same time, they took away the best lands of the Bashkirs, Kyrgyz, and so on, and gave them to Russian landowners and kulaks. Let us recall how the Tsarist government oppressed with the gendarmes those nationalities that did not want to bear the Tsarist oppression and they conducted a national liberation struggle: the Tsarist soldiers killed workers, burned national villages.

Now every year there are fewer and fewer illiterate Roma, there is a very large cultural and educational work taking place among them.

Working Roma are strongly standing for the socialist construction, there are many *udarniks* [2] among the Roma, the socialist competition is carried out and so on. The Roma are no longer considered thieves, the working class accepts the working Roma as their brothers, among whom there are the same goals – to build a socialist society.

Now, when the working class and all the workers of the USSR are rebuilding their economy in a socialist way, this work is leading us to a class struggle against our enemies. Our class enemies are well aware that socialist construction deprives those class enemies of power. Each of our new kolkhoz, sovkhoz, machine-tractor station is the death for a kulak. That's why our class enemies are fighting against us, they want to delay our socialist construction.

To delay social construction, our class enemies want to spread national discord. They listen to the conversations of some members of the party, who say that now is not the time when it is necessary to carry out work in the national language. As an example, in Ukraine, where all work is carried out in Ukrainian, where schools use Ukrainian. But there are people in our party who don't want to carry it out. We call such people Great Russian chauvinists [3]. These Communists did not understand the real Leninist national policy and because of this they lost the right path. Their talks get to the point in which, in their opinion, it is necessary to cancel national areas and republics, schools and so on.

The XVI Communist Party Congress set the task of struggling against those who will run such kind of wrongful national policy.

Such negative talk becomes an aid in the hands of our class enemies, who will repeat that talk among the backward people. There are such facts: in the Vitebsk rayon a school teacher tells villagers that Roma are our enemies. In a Stalingrad's newspaper, they had recently written that there is a woman, a market profiteer, who told that she very likely saw how Roma steal little children and slaughtered them and turned them into soap [4] ... In the current year, in the Middle Volga region, Russian kulaks had held a national persecution [against Roma kolkhozes], they had provoked the rural residents not to give Roma [...] [5].

Take the Jews as an example. The Tsar did not allow working Jews to dwell in big cities, and the rich ones lived very close to the Tsar. The national bourgeoisie in the same way as Russian landowners, factory owners, plants owners, needs only one thing – to keep the workers in full exploitation, to hold them stronger in their hands and spread national discord among the people. All this was done in order to divert the workers from the class struggle, in order not to allow the working nationalities to be brothers among their own. This was the Tsarist national policy. And we know that the Tsarist government has achieved a lot for itself with such a national policy, many different nationalities fought among themselves. These nationalities did not consider other nationalities as their brothers, who were also oppressed by the bourgeoisie. This was the attitude of the Russian bourgeoisie toward different small nationalities, and the bourgeoisie taught Russian working people to look at different nationalities in the same way. This is called Great Russian chauvinism.

The October revolution put an end to national discord, to the privileges of certain nationalities. The October revolution gave an equal right to all workers, whatever nationality they belonged to. The Communist Party and the Soviet government helped the “backward” nationalities very much to raise their lives.

We see how the economy is growing in the national regions; along with this, the national culture is growing too.

Take, for example, the Roma. In the Tsarist years, the Roma had to lead a nomadic life, and now the Soviet power and the Communist party help the Roma to give up the nomadic life and to engage in work. Every year more Roma workers leave their nomadic life, go to work in plants, factories, to open Roma kolkhozes and so on.

At the XVI Party Congress comrade Stalin has reported on the national question, that now in the USSR backward nationalities are growing both in the economy and in culture, that in the USSR small nationalities do not give up their peculiar national signs, and will not. The economy is growing in the national regions, and the culture is growing in its national form, and its socialist content.

The October revolution found many nationalities illiterate, many nationalities, such as the Roma, did not have their own schools, press and so on.

Only the Soviet government allowed them to open national schools, clubs, red corners [...] [6]. The party and the Soviet government severely punish those who spread

hatred towards national minorities. The party and the Soviet government are well aware of the reasons why some Roma have not yet given up nomadic life and deception; the party knows that the Tsarist government is guilty of this. The party and the Soviet government set the task to bring Roma to a new working life, to introduce Roma into a working organised family, to raise their cultural level, to make Roma active builders in a socialist country. But it is a pity that among the Communists and non-party people there are those who do not understand that they should keep working among the Roma. They should help them to accustom themselves to work. But there are many among the Communists and non-party people who carry out anti-Gypsyism.

This year in Tver there was an open court. Russian workers, who had carried out anti-Gypsyism among workers, were condemned. It was the fact that in Tver there is a lot of working Roma, they used to work hard. They had constructed the bridge, and the Roma did not lag behind the Russian workers. Following the path, which was left after the Tsarist regime, Roma were considered, as under the Tsarist system, worse than other human beings, their colleagues using all their tricks wanting to drive Roma out from the working places. Working Roma, the comrade Pronin has told the court, were being called “black Roma”, “damn Roma”, “thieves” and so on, and the Roma were given the hardest work. The Roma were not supplied with food for their horses, food for people; there was no cultural and international work carried out among them.

This attitude was revealed at the trial. The proletarian court, on the one hand, condemned the guilty people; on the other hand, the conclusion of the court was also that it was necessary to help Roma and facilitate their way to the work, to raise their cultural level, to help Roma give up their nomadic life.

The Party and the Soviet power are fighting and will continue to fight against anti-Gypsyism; there are no privileges of any nationality. Anti-Gypsyism plays into the hands of our class enemies.

A. Taranov

Notes

1. It is not clear to what the author is referring in this statement – there have never been any prohibitions on Gypsies from settling in or working in the Russian Empire. Moreover, as has already been said, this is how the groups of *Kelderari* and *Lovari* settled in the Russian Empire in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, coming from Austria-Hungary, Romania, Serbia, Greece, etc.
2. *Ударник*, shortened from *Ударник коммунистического труда*, in Russian means – shock-worker of Communist labour. This was an official title of honour for exceptional workers. In original Romani language text the word is given as a newly forged word *марибнытко*.
3. One should not be surprised by the sharp words of the author – the fight against the so-called Great Russian chauvinism was a major trend in national politics in the early USSR (see Martin, 2001).
4. This refers to the trial in Stalingrad, where four people were accused of spreading anti-Gypsy rumors. This was categorised as anti-Soviet propaganda, and the accused were sentenced to between 2 and 3 years in prison (Борьба, 1931, p. 4).
5. Missing snippet of text when printing the journal.
6. Missing snippet of text when printing the journal.

Source: Таранов, А. (1931h). Марибэ антицыганизмса. *Нэво дром*, An. 2, No.No. 9-10, pp. 1-3.
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12.2.8 *About the Work among the Roma*

Калыш

Ваш буты машкир ромэндэ

Екх само бари задача советсконэ властя дрэ нацполитика сы дро адава, собы сыгыдыр тэ доджяс кэ учё культурно и хулаибнаскиро развитиё дрэ отачнэ нацыональна штэты. А ваш адава треби англыдыр сарэстыр тэ газдэс производительно зор дрэ нацыональна штэты, тэ газдэс производительно зор дрэ нацыональна штэты, тэ газдэс нацыонально промышленность и кофитко гавитко хулаибэ. Ваш адава, собы тэ газдэс хулаибэ дрэ нацыональна штэты, амари коммунистическо партия и советско власть дрэван бут кэрдя. Откэрдэ нэвэ фабрики, заводы, электро-станции, саструнэ дрома, совхозы, колхозы и машинно-тракторна станции, – саро адава лыджяла кэ адава, со парувэлапэ джиибэ нацыональнэ манушэс.

Панджбэршытко плано народнэ хулаибэн откэрла дром ваш газдыпэ дрэ нацыональна штэты СССР. Кхэтанэ одолэса, со барьёла промышленность, барьёла нацыонально пролетариато, выкэдэла машкир пэстыр кадры, савэ лэна тэ пирикэрэн нацыональна штэты прэ соцыалистическо джиибэ.

Саро адава ракирла ваш адава, со пролыджялапэ баро ленинско лозунго ваш равноправиё нацыональностен. Отачнэ тыкнэ нацыональности, савэн подрикирла культурно пролетариато советсконэ союзос, екх пало екх барьёна кэ нэво джиибэ.

Кхэтанэ адалэса, со барьёла амаро хулаибэ – барьёла и нацыонально культура.

Расцвето дрэ нацыонально культура газдэла пролетарско диктатура и уса учедыр и учедыр газдэла кэ нэво джиибэ нэвэ миллионэн трудяшшёнэн манушэн СССР.

Тыкнэ народности дрэ условия пролетарскона диктатура лэна пэскири забистырды чиб, кэрна пэскири литература, искусство пиро “форма нацыонально и соцыалистическо пиро содержания”.

Саро адава са влыджялапэ бутыдыр и бутыдыр дро джиибэ и кэрла манушэн нэвэнца, савэ и прилэнапэ зоралэс палэ нацыональна культура.

Амэ пэскирьяса нацыональнэ культураса лыджяса адая же екх задача: тэ кэрэс нэвэн трудяшшёнэн манушэн, собы ёнэ тэ дживэн коммунистическонэ духоса собы тэ лыджян классово марибэ амарэ врагэнца, собы тэ кэрэс сыгыдыр соцыалистическо строительство.

Амари нацыонально художественно и музыкально культура банги тэ выкхарэл марибэ нацыональнэ кулакоса, тэ кэрэл сарэ нацыональна кашукэ (глуха) вэнглы советсконэнца, банги тэ пхагирэл феодально-родово дикибэ, и тэ лыджял марибэ ваш раскрепощение джювлен – саро адава лыджяла прэ дром соцыалистическо строительство.

Дро ададывэсытко этапо амэ зоралэс лыджяса марибэ пал соцыалистическо гавитко хулаибэ, пал сплошно коллективизацыя, пал марибэ кулакоса, савэн амэ бангэ тэ вычюрдэс сыр классо и ваш адава, собы учедыр тэ газдэс прэ нэво учипэ нацыонально культура отачнэн манушэн советсконэ союзос. И акэ прэ пэскирэ якха амэ дыкхаса сыр рома и ваврэ нацыональности савэндэ насыс пэскири книги дрэ тагарискирэ бэрша, акана высястякирэна пэскиро чиб, пэскиро лыл.

На треби тэ досыкавэс, со адалэ барэ достижения нацыональнэ политика пар-тии рикирна дрэван баро значениё ваш дуратуно культурно-политическо развитиё ромэн.

Сыр бы амарэ романэ кулаки тэ накамэн, собы тэнабарёла романы культура, уса же чёрорэ и середняцка рома джяна пиро соцыалистическо дром и вычюрдэна кулакос сы классор.

Амаро задэибэ сы тэ лыджяс марибэ адалэнца, кон на камэл чячюны ленинско нацыонально политика и дро пэрво шэро тэ лыджяс марибэ великодержавнэ шовинизмоса адыкэ жэ и штэтытконэ национализмоса.

Треби тэ помогискирэс нацыональнэ культуракэ, сави зорьякирла пролетарско диктатура и помогискирла тэ кэрэс соцыалистическо обшщество.

Амари обшшэ ададывэсатуно задэибэ – тэ придэс бутыдыр вниманиё прэ культурно буты машкир ромэндэ би адалэскиро амэ на могискираса тэ дотрадэс адалэ нацыональности, савэ угынгэ дур ангил.

На дыкхи прэ адава, со амари партия бут ракирдя ваш буты машкир тыкнэ неор-ганизованна нацыональности, нэ усаже лыджялапэ прэ штэто адава на пролыджя-лапэ адыкэ, сыр адава треби. Особенно налыджялапэ ни сави буты машкир ромэндэ. Чячес машкир ромэндэ тэ лыджяс сави нибуть буты пхаро, нэ покицы амари задача тэ присыклякирэс ромэн кэ обшщественно-полезно буты, собы тэ тховэс лэн дро екх бутитка семья и кхэтанэ тэ кэрэс соцыалистическо строительство, – амэ бангэ тэ пролыджяс буты и пролыджяса коли амэ сыр треби приласапэ. Треби только шукир тэ продуминэс и тэ выкэрэс плано сыр тэ лыджяс буты.

Ангил сарэстыр, собы тэ лыджяс культурно-политико-воспитательно буты маш-кир ромэндэ, треби тэ джинэс, кай рома дживэна и соса ёнэ залэнпэ.

Ромэн саро прэ саро дрэ советско союзо гинэлапэ бутыдыр дуй шэл тысенцы, ёнэ расчюрдынэ пиро саро СССР нэ исы барэ романэ гава, а адыкэ жэ барэ семянца дживэна дрэ форья. Одой логкхо бы тэ лыджяс машкир ромэндэ буты, нэ адава над-жинэн ни Наркомпросо, ни штэтытка организацыи, со паш лэндэ дживэна рома и со ни сави буты машкир лэндэ на лыджялапэ.

Надыкхи про адава, со сы придыкхно дро панджбэрштыко плано ваш культурно буты машкир тыкнэ нацыональностендэ, исы правительственно постановлениё ваш всеобшшэ сыклярибэ, нэ адава напролыджялпэ машкир ромэндэ.

Состыр адава адыкэ?

Екхатыр стронатыр налыджялапэ буты машкир ромэндэ адыкэ сыр треби одол-эстыр, со нанэ нисаво статистическо учёто, кай дживэн рома, кицы лэн и соса

ёна залэнапэ, дро адава бангэ Наркомпросо и статистическа органы. – Вавратыр стронатыр бангэ кокорэ рома, ёна надэна ваш пэскэ тэ джинэс, собы машкир лэндэ тэ лыджян буты штэтытка организацыи.

Амэ джинас, со амаро соцыалистическо хулаибэ и культурно революция барьёла дрэ амари страна адалэстыр, со дро адава прилэна активнэ участиё кокорэ бутитка мануша.

Акэ коли тэ лэс адасавэ отачнэ нацыональности савэ атася чюрдынэ фэлдытка джикибэ, сыр киргизы, калмыки, башкиры, то прэ пэскирэ якха амэ дыкхаса сыр лэндэ барьёла пэскири культура и адава адалэстыр, со ёна дро адава кокорэ заинтересована.

Треби тэ пхэнэс, со сы достижения и машкир ромэндэ, если тэ лэс романэ школы, кай сыклэна прэ романы чиб, клубы, театры, печать, артели, колхозы и ваврэ организации, нэ адава инке набарэ достижения, адасавэ достижения авэнас бы барыдыр тунче (тогда), коли дро адава рэндо тэ явэн заинтересована сарэ сознательны романэ мануша.

Бутитконэ и сарэ трудяшшёнэ ромэнгэ треби тэ полэс, со коли амэ влэджяса обшшэ-обязательно обучение прэ родно чиб, акана кажнонэ бэршэса уса бутыдыр и бутыдыр оформляются сыр нацыональности. Баро значениё ваш адава сы коли лыджялпэ буты прэ романы чиб.

Акэ коли тэ лэс примеро дрэ Москва лыджялпэ буты машкир ромэндэ прэ фабрики, заводы дро клубы, театро и дрэ школы прэ романо чиб.

Саро адава пролыджялпэ пиро чячюнэс, пиро ленинско нацыонально политика.

Те лыджяс буты машкир ромэндэ прэ романы чиб – адава обарвалякирла амари чиб, газдэла амаро культурно уровнё и ад. дурыдыр.

Треби зоралэс тэ лыджяс марибэ адалэ манушэнца, савэ ракирна, со на треби тэ ракирэс прэ скэдыибэ доклады, на треби тэ откэрэс ликбезы прэ романы чиб. Кон адыкэ думинэла, со на треби тэ лыджяс буты прэ романы чиб, адава помогискирла амарэ классовонэ врагэнгэ.

Ваврэ рома состыр-то дарна тэ ракирэс прэ романы чиб прэ обшшэ собраниё, ёна думинэна со лэн ваш адава лэна тэбандякирэн, нэ адава нанэ тагарискирэ бэрша. Тагарискири нацполитика лыджия кэ одова, собы тэ надомэкэс тыкнэ нацыональности тэ ракирэс и тэ сыклёс прэ пэскири родно чиб пало адава, собы ёна тэ явэн отачнэ нацыональностенца, собы тэ кэрэс зорьяса лэн руссконэнца.

Только советско власть зоралэс заботисола ваш тыкнэ нацыональности. Барьёла соцыалистическо строительство и тховэла ангил амэндэ задэнбэ тэ откэрэс уса бутыдыр и бутыдыр культурна штубы, сыр школы, клубы, театры и ваврэ культурна организацыи.

А адыкэ жэ пандж бэршытко плано, саво амэ пролыджяса дро штар бэрш помогискирла отачнэ нацыональностенгэ инке учедыр тэ газдэс нацыонально культура. Кхэтанэ одолэса, со барьёла соцыалистическо строительство и культурно революция – амарьякэ стронакэ треби тэ создэс пэскирэ пролетарсконэ

квалифицированнонэ бутярен би савэнги́ро амэ на смогискираса тэ кэрас соцыалистическо общество.

Саро адава сыкавэла, со дро буты машки́р ромэндэ амэ бангэ тэ тховас практического задэибэна. Адыкэ жэ сыр тэ пролыджя́с лэн дро джи́ибэн, тре́би тэ пораки́рас дро амаро журнало.

Пиро миро дыкхи́ибэ тре́би адасаво тэ тховэс задэибэ: поки́цы статистическо учёто ромэн на смогиски́рна тэ пролыджя́н советска организа́ции, тре́би ко́корэ ромэнгэ адалэ́скэ тэ помо́гиски́рэс. Сыр адава тэ кэ́рэс?

1. Тре́би, со́бы адалэ́ рома, савэ органи́зованна дрэ́ колхозы́, артели́, клубы́, школы́ и адыкэ́ дуры́дыр тэ вы́кэдэн лы́лварэн ману́шэн тэ розма́рэн лэн пиро́ участки́, кай́ дживэ́на рома и тэ пролыджя́н за́пись, со́са ё́нэ залэ́напэ. Ваш ада́ва, со́бы тэ пролыджя́с за́пись амэ вы́кэ́раса спе́циально́ анкета́ и пиро́ а́дая форма́ можно́ тэ пролыджя́с ада́ва учёто́. Сарэ́ адалэ́ сведения́ тэ при́бичывэ́с дрэ́ амари́ редаќция, а редаќция пэ́скирья́тыр строна́тыр кэ́рла саро́, со́бы штэ́тытка органи́зации́ тэ лы́джя́н буты́ машки́р ромэндэ́.

2. Одо́й, кай́ дживэ́на рома́ сыр органи́зованна адыкэ́ и на органи́зованна бангэ́ тэ дора́кирэ́нпэ́ штэ́тытконэ́ организа́цыенца́ – сыр сельсо́вета, рико́ или я́чейка́ партия́, со́бы ё́нэ тэ лы́джя́н культу́рно-просвети́тельно́ буты́ машки́рал ромэндэ́ – тэ откэ́рэн ваш ромэнгэ́ школы́, ло́лэ вэнглы́, тэ́лыджя́н ликбе́зо и адыкэ́ дуры́дыр. Дро ада́ва случи́ё, коли́ отпхэ́нэнапэ́ адалэ́стыр штэ́тытка органи́зации́, рома́ ваш ада́ва бангэ́ тэ чинэ́с лы́л дро амари́ редаќция.

3. Дадывэ́с амари́ зада́ча тэ создэ́с романэ́ кадры́ – ваврэ́ лавэ́нца тэ создэ́с пэ́скирэн культу́рнонэн ману́шэн, савэ́ бы смогиски́рдэ́ руководи́ть бутя́са. Амэнгэ́ дро́ перво́ оче́редь тре́би пэ́скирэ́ сы́кляибна́скирэ́; ваш ада́ва амэ́ смогиски́раса тэ кэ́рас романэ́ курсы́. Ангил́ сарэ́стыр тре́би, со́бы ко́корэ́ рома, савэ́ шуки́р джи́нэн лы́л пиро́ примеро́, кон́ окончи́л рабфа́ко, семилетка́ и девяти́летка́ и за́камэн тэ́ джя́н прэ́ курсы́ ваш подгото́вка и пи́ри подгото́вка сы́кляибна́скирэн. Ада́ва дрэ́-ван ва́жно ваш буты́ ромэндэ́. Курсы́ адалэ́ авэ́на дрэ́ Москва́; ада́й ё́нэ посы́клёна́ чэ́на трин-штар́ и одо́й уже́ вы́джя́на вполне́ лё́чэ́ учите́ленца́ савэ́ пролыджя́на ба́ри поле́зно буты́ машки́р ромэндэ́.

4. Сарэ́ романэ́ колхозы́, артели́ и ваврэ́ организа́ции бангэ́ тэ́ бичя́вэн тэ́ сы́клён пэ́скирэн ману́шэн прэ́ разна́ курсы́, со́бы одотхы́р тэ́ вы́джя́н романэ́ руководи́тели́ колхозэ́н, тра́ктористы́, агро́номы, техни́ки и адыкэ́ дуры́дыр. Штаты́ дрэ́ уче́бна заведе́ния тре́би тэ́ домаре́спэ́ дрэ́ штэ́тытка органи́зации́, адыкэ́ жэ́ и пи́р-дал Нарко́мпросо́.

5. Тре́би тэ́ при́дэс ба́ро политическо́ значе́ниё ваш́ всео́бщиё́ обуче́ние. Тре́би тэ́ лы́джя́с ликви́да́ция негра́мотности́ машки́р взросло́нэндэ́ ману́шэндэ́, буты́дыр обрати́ть внима́ние прэ́ джю́влендэ́. Ваш ликви́да́ция негра́мотности́ тре́би тэ́ залэ́спэ́ ко́корэ́ ромэнгэ́, савэ́ шуки́р сы́ лы́лварэ́. Ваш ада́ва тре́би адалэ́ ману́шэнгэ́, савэ́ камэ́н тэ́ лы́джя́с ликви́да́ция негра́мотности́ машки́р ромэндэ́ тэ́ дора́кирэ́спэ́ штэ́тытконэ́ отде́лоса наро́дно образо́вание.

6. Тэ пролыджяс учёто, сарэн культурнонэ манушэн, кон ёнэ и кай кэрна, – дрэван важно тэлэс прэ учето ромэн коммунистэн, комсомольцэн тэ пролыджяс адава адякэ – рома савэ дживэна дро адава или вавир районо, лэна прэ учёто адалэ ромэн, савэ дживэна дро екх районо, адякэ ваврэ рома лэна прэ учето дро пэскиро районо. Адава амэнгэ дэла возможность тэ спхандэспэ лэнца и тэ дэс лэнгэ пэскирэ сыкаибэна сави буты ёнэ лэна тэ лыджян и сыр тэ лыджян.

7. Особенно обратить вниманиё прэ джювлэндэ, собы бутыдыр тэ влыджяс дро обшшественно буты ромнен, треби лэн роскрепостить пхарэ кхэрэскирэ быто-стыр. Ваш адава треби организовать ваш тыкниньконэ чяворэнгэ детсадо, детясли, плошшядки и ад. дурыдыр.

Только адякэ амэ смогискираса тэ газдас буты машир ромэндэ коли амэ сознательно и заинтересовано поджяса кэ адава.

Мэ думинава, со латхэнапэ рома, савэ откхарнапэ прэ адая статья и дэна пэскирэ предложения.

Калыш.

Редакциятыр: Лыл тов. Калышонэс печатынаса дискусионно, редакция мангэла, кон гинэла амаро журналэ, собы тэ пхэнэн пэскиро мнениё ваш адава затронутэ пучебэн.

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About the work among the Roma

One of the greatest tasks of the Soviet government in national policy is to achieve high cultural and economic development in backward national regions more quickly. To do this, it is necessary first of all to raise the productive forces in the national regions; to raise the productive forces in the national regions means to raise the national industry and productive agriculture. In order to raise the economy in the national regions, our Communist Party and the Soviet government have done a lot. New factories, plants, electricity plants, railways, sovkhozes, kolkhozes and machine-tractor stations have been opened – all this leads to the fact that the life of members of small nationalities is changing.

The five-year plan of the national economy opens up the way for the rise in the national regions of the USSR. At the same time, the industry is growing, the national proletariat is growing, and in its environment, it is selecting persons who will begin to rebuild the national regions into a socialist way of life.

All this suggests that the great Lenin slogan of nationalities' equality is being carried out. Backward national minorities, which are supported by the cultural proletariat of the Soviet Union, one after the other will grow to a new life.

Along with the fact that our economy is growing, the national culture is growing too.

The flourishing of national culture raises the dictatorship of the proletariat [1] and raises many more millions of working people in the USSR to a new life.

The small nations in conditions of proletarian dictatorship do return to their forgotten language, create its own literature and art “national in form and socialist in content” [2].

All this is introduced more and more into life and creates new people who engage firmly in the national culture.

We are carrying out the same task with our national culture: to create new people of labour, so that they live in the Communist spirit, so that they lead a class struggle against our enemies, so that the socialist construction will be faster.

Our national artistic and musical culture must determine us to fight with the national kulaks, to make all of the remotest national corners of our country sovietic, breaking the feudal-tribal savagery, and struggling for the emancipation of women – all this leads to the path of socialist construction.

At present stage, we are strongly fighting for a socialist agriculture, for a complete collectivisation, for the fight against the kulaks, which we must throw out as a class, and raise to a new height the national culture of the backward peoples of the Soviet Union. And now with our own eyes, we see how Roma and other nationalities who have not had their books in Tsarist times, now are healing their own language, their own literature.

There is no need to prove that these great achievements of the national policy of the party are very important for the further cultural and political development of the Roma. While our Roma kulaks do not like the development of Romani culture, the poor and middle peasants Roma take the socialist road and will kick the kulaks out as a class [3].

Our task is to fight against those who do not want to follow Lenin's real national policy and, first of all, to fight against great-power chauvinism, as well as local nationalism [4].

It is necessary to help the national culture, which strengthens the dictatorship of the proletariat and will help to build a socialist society.

Our common task today is to pay more attention to the cultural work among Roma, without which we will not be able to catch up with those nationalities that have gone far ahead.

Despite the fact that our party talked a lot about work among small unorganised nationalities, the work is nevertheless carried out in the regions, but it is not carried out as it should be. There is especially no work being carried out among the Roma. It is true that it is difficult to carry out any work among the Roma, but since our task is to accustom the Roma to a socially useful work in order to bring them into one working family and then together to conduct a socialist construction, we must carry out the work and will do it if we undertake it properly. It is only necessary to think well and develop a plan for how to carry out this work.

First of all, to carry out cultural, political and educational work among Roma, one needs to know where Roma live and what they do.

Only in the Soviet Union there are more than 200 000 Roma, scattered throughout the USSR, but there are large Roma villages, as well as large families living in cities. The work could easily be carried out among those Roma. However, neither Narkompros, nor the local organisations know that Roma dwell so close to them and that no work is being carried out among them.

Despite the fact that the five-year plan for cultural work among small nationalities provides some objectives, and there is a government decree on universal learning, but this is not carried out among Roma.

On the one hand, the work among Roma is not carried out in a way that is necessary because there is no statistical record of where the Roma live, how many they are and what they do, the Narkompros and statistical organisations are guilty of this. – On the other hand, the Roma themselves are guilty, they do not inform authorities about themselves so that local organisations can work among them.

We know that our socialist economy and the cultural revolution are growing in our country because the working people themselves take an active part in it.

If we take such backward nationalities who gave up their nomadic life previously as the Kyrgyz, Kalmyks and Bashkirs, we can see with our own eyes how their culture is growing and it is because they are interested in it.

It must be said that there are achievements among the Roma, if we look at the Romani schools, where they study in the Romani language, clubs, theatres, press, artels, kolkhozes and other organisations, but these are still small achievements, such achievements would be more when all conscious people among the Roma would be interested in this matter.

Workers and all working Roma need to understand that when we introduce compulsory education in their native language every year they would become more and more shaped as a nationality. Of great importance for this is when the work is carried out in the Romani language.

Here, for example, in Moscow, we are working in the Romani language among the Roma in the plants, factories, clubs, the theatre and in schools.

All this is carried out truly according to Lenin's national policy.

If we work among Roma in the Romani language, it enriches our language, raises our cultural level and so on.

It is necessary to fight strongly against those who say that it is not necessary to make reports at meetings, it is not necessary to open *likbez*s in Romani language. Whoever thinks that it is not necessary to work on the Romani language, helps our class enemies.

Some Roma, for some reason, are afraid to speak the Romani language at the collective meeting, they think that because of this they will be accused, but we are not in the Tsarist years. Tsarist national policy led to prohibition, not allowing small nationalities to speak and learn their native language in a way that they remained backward nationalities and under enforced Russification.

Only the Soviet government takes good care of small nationalities. Growing socialist construction puts before us the task to open more cultural institutions, such as schools, clubs, theatres and other cultural organisations.

In addition to this, the five-year plan, which we implement in four years, helps backward nationalities to raise the national culture even higher. At the same time that the socialist construction and cultural revolution are growing, our country needs to create its proletarian skilled workers, without whom we will not be able to create a socialist society.

All this shows that when working among the Roma, we must set practical objectives. About how to implement them, we need to talk in our journal.

In my opinion, the task should be set as follows: since the statistical accounting of Roma will not be able to be carried out by Soviet organisations, it is necessary that Roma themselves help. How to do it?

1. It is necessary that those Roma that are organised in kolkhozes, artels, clubs, schools and so on, choose literate people and distribute them to the areas where the Roma live and record what they do as a job. In order to carry out a census, we have elaborated a special form and on this form, one can hold this account. All this information should be sent to our editorial office, and the editorial office for its part will do everything to make the local organisations work among the Roma.

2. Where Roma live, both organised and unorganised, they should contact with local organisations – like the selsoviet, RIK or the party cell, so that they conduct cultural and educational work among the Roma: open schools for Roma, red corners, introduce likbez and so on. In that case, if local organisations refuse to do so, Roma should write a letter to our editorial office.

3. Today our task is to create Roma cadres – in other words – to create cultural people who would be able to lead the work. We first need our teachers; to this end, we will be able to create Roma courses. First of all, it is necessary that the Roma themselves, who are well literate, for example, who graduated from rabfak, seven-year-school and nine-year-school, want to go to training and retraining courses for teachers. It is very important to work with Roma. These courses will be in Moscow; here they will study three or four months and from there we will become quite good teachers who will conduct a lot of useful work among the Roma.

4. All the Romani kolkhozes, artels and other organisations should send their members to study at different courses, so that the Romani chairs of kolkhozes, tractor drivers, agronomists, technicians and so on come out of them. Personal places for Roma in educational institutions should be provided by local organisations, as well as by the Narkompros.

5. There is a need to attach great political importance to general learning. It is necessary to eliminate illiteracy among adults and pay more attention to women. The elimination of illiteracy should be dealt with by the Roma, who have a good literacy. To do this, these people who want to carry out the work on elimination of illiteracy among Roma need to contact the local Department of public education.

6. To keep a record of all cultural people, who they are and where they work – it is very important to take into account the Roma Communists, Komsomol members; to do so Roma who live in a particular area, put on record those Roma who live in one area, and other Roma will be registered in their rayon. This will give us an opportunity to contact them and for them to inform us about what work they will do and how to do it.

7. Especially needed is to pay attention to Romani women, to include them in the public activities, they need to be free from their hard home life conditions. For this, you need to arrange kindergarten, nurseries, playgrounds and so on, for young children.

This is the only way we will be able to raise the work among the Roma, if we consciously and with interest approach it.

I think there will be Roma that will respond to this article and give their suggestions.

Kalysh

From the editors: The letter of comrade Kalysh is published in a discussion-like format, the editorial board asks all those who read our journal to express their opinion on this discussed issue.

Notes

1. The Dictatorship of the Proletariat is a key notion of Marxism. This term designates the form of government in the USSR until 22nd congress of the Communist Party of USSR (1961).
2. The concept of the flowering of cultures national in form and socialist in content under the dictatorship of the proletariat was approved at the 16th Congress of the VKP(b), held in Moscow from 26 June to 13 July 1930 (Сталин, 1949, Т. 12, p. 369).
3. Here, in the Roma discourse, the basic slogan of the mass collectivisation of agriculture that began in 1929 is repeated. A separate question is to what extent it is adequate and applicable to the Gypsies in view of existing realities (for more details see further in the text).
4. This is a reference to the Russian great-power chauvinism and local nationalism in the individual Soviet republics and autonomous regions, separated by national-territorial principle. The terms *Great Power Chauvinism* (*Russian chauvinism*) and *Local Nationalism* were defined by Stalin in 1923 at the 12th Congress of the VKP(b), as two main threats to the success of the party's nationalities policy.

Source: Калыш. (1931g). Ваш буты машкир ромэндэ. *Нэво дром*, An 2. No. 6, pp. 5-7.

Prepared for publication by Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov.

Translated by Viktor Shapoval.

12.2.9 *About the Women's Day*

Ваш джювленгиرو дывэс
(8 марта)

Ангил кралистэ мэ багавас дро рестораны ваш тхулэнгэ барвалэ гадженгэ, савэ пал мирэ гилиа и кхэлэбэн чюрдэнас мангэ ловэ. Ёнэ на полэнас ман сыр мангэ адава сыс пхаро. Мэ сомас на бари и ваш мангэ тэ кэрав буты ратяса сыс дрэван пхаро, нэ адалэ тхулэ балыче на полэнас; ёнэ дыкхэнас прэ романэчятэ, сыр про развлечениё, мэ гужлы сомас тэкэрав саро адава, со закамэласпэ раскэ, а коли мэ на кэравас адава, со камэл о рай, то ман вытрадэнас аври э хоростыр. Акэ саво сыс джиибэн ангил кралистэ. Миро джиибэн дрэ бутяритко власть ачъя вавир, ман гинэна адай сыр сарэ манушэн; акана мэ только галыём, кай сы чячюно джиибэн, а нанэ рабство. Мэ акана сыклёвава дрэ студия и авава чячюнэ артисткаса. Ман сыклякирна тэгинав тэкхэлав тэ башавав прэ башады. Мэ саро адава лава тэкэрав прэ сцэна, и на ваш э матэ рангэ, а ваш сарэ манушэнгэ. Мэ саро джиибэн миро думискирдём ваш адава, со мангэ дья бутяренгири власть. Мангэ дрэван пхаро кэрлапэ коли амарэ

студийцы зрипирна ваш пхурано джиибэн. Мэ выкхарава сарэн чяен и чявэн, собы сарэ сыр екх тэджан дрэ гэрой барэнса.

Ученица Воинова-Масальско.

Джювлякано дывэс

Адава дывэс мэ на джинавас,
 Коли дро хоро сомас мэ –
 Мэ о гиля одой багавас,
 Кхэлавас про гэра одой.
 Ман о гадже одой шунэнас –
 Тхулэ пэрэнса със ёнэ,
 Ловэ барэ ёнэ чюрдэнас,
 Пало миро экхэлыбэ.
 Явнэ дро форо о барэ,
 Э-власть лынэ о бутярнэ ...
 Бутыр дро хоро ман нанэ,
 Дро романо театро мэ.
 Студийка Воинова-Масальско.

::

About the Women's Day (March, the 8th)

Under the Tsar, I had sung in restaurants for fat-rich gadže, they threw money to me for my songs and dance. They did not understand me, how hard it was for me. I was very young and night performance was very exhausting; however, those fat pigs did not understand it; they looked at the Roma girl as an attraction, I was obliged to perform everything, whatever the gentleman would order, and if I had not done what the customer wishes, they would kick me out of the choir. Such bitter was our life under the Tsar. Now, under the workers' power, my life has changed, they respect me as well, as all people; now I have just realized where real life is, not slavery. I am currently studying in the theatre studio and I will be a true actress. I am taught to read, to dance and to play the musical instrument. I will perform all these things not for drunk rich men, but for all people. All my life I was thinking about what the workers' power gave me. It is very painful for me to remember the former life. I call all Roma girls and boys to go as one keeping up with the adults.

School girl Voinova-Masalsko.

Women's Day [1]

I didn't know about this day,
 When I was in the choir –

There I sang songs,
 There I went out to dance.
 Gadže were listening to my songs –
 They were with thick bellies,
 They threw me big money
 For my dance.
 There had been rich who ruled the city
 Then the workers took the power ...
 I no longer work in the choir,
 I am in the Roma theatre now.
 Theatre studio's student Voinova-Masalsko [2].

Notes

1. The same poem, with minor editorial corrections, was also published in *Almanac of Roma Poets* (Альманах, 1931, p. 22).
2. Nothing is known about the author of these texts, P. Voinova-Massalskaya (this is the way her name is written in *Almanac of Roma Poets*).

Source: Воинова-Масальско. (1931b). Ваш джювленгиро дывэс (8 марта). *Нэво дром*, Ап. 2, No. 3, p. 21; Воинова-Масальско. (1931c). Джювлякано дывэс. *Нэво дром*, Ап. 2, No. 3, p. 21.
 Prepared for publication by Elena Marushiakova, Vesselin Popov and Viktor Shapoval.
 Translated by Viktor Shapoval.

12.2.10 About the Woman

О. Панкова

Ваш джювлякэ

Адасаво полэибэ, со джювлы, хай, только могискирла тэ явэл пашэ тыкнэчявэндэ –
 нанэ чячюно.

Адава сыс дэшуштар бэрш палэ, отэнчя коли ром гиндя пэс хуласа прэ ромнятэ.

Нэ Октябрьско революция тходя джювля псико дро псико муршэса.

Амэ джинас, со джювлы могискирла тэ залэл адасавэ жэ бутя сыр и мурш. И дык-
 хаса, со джювлы на отачела э муршэстыр. Хоть и ракирна, со джювлятэ бал длуго,
 нэ тыкны годы. А амэ пхэнаса со адава нанэ чячё.

Джювлы кхэтанэ муршэса могискирла тэ кэрэла нэво соцыалистическо обшше-
 ство и ёй банги адава тэ кэрэл.

Дро бут тыкнэ нацыоинальности, савэ сыс тасадэ жыко революция тагариса,
 джювлы на сыс мануш. Мурш ласа совсем на гиндяпэ.

Дром амарэ джювля – романэчя сыс тэло дэсто. Коли ёй инке сыс дро чяя прэ
 латэ хулай сыс дад. Покамыапэ дадэскэ саво на яви чяво ёв отдэла чя пал лэстэ.

На гинэлапэ, камэл ёй пал лэстэ тэ джял или на. И отэнчя хулай прэ латэ ужэ
 ром.

Кицы ж ёй прилэламенькица пал пэскиро джиибэ. И дро мразо и дро хачькирдо лынаскиро дывэс эй тырделапэ торбаса пало псикэ, пашо фэнштры о маро мангэла. Авэла кхэрэ, а одой буты жыко кирло, о чявэ мэлалэ, обрискирдэ, тэ хан мангэна.

А о ром сыр банитэра пашло прэ порныца, а на так дро патря кхэлла. Хулай сы. Ёв жэ прэ латэ и годла дэла.

Запыела о ром. Ёй черори на джинэл сыр тэ псирэл паш лэстэ.

А ёв то прэ латэ нартыныпэ.

Про чянга ромня тховэла, о гиля тэ багал затховэла, марла.

Ёй гэрुшка страхатыр издрала, а лав дарла тэ пхэнэл.

Нэ ромнялэ! Отгынэ одолэ бэрша, коли о ром със хулай.

Акана вавир рэндо. Акана хулан нанэ.

Октябрьско революция злыя лофо э ромэстыр.

Ром банго тэ явэл товаришшэ ромнякэ.

Нэ треби тэ пхэнэс, со машкир амарэ ромэндэ сы инке адасавэ “мурша”.

Икне на догья кэ годы сарэ ромненгэ, со ром нанэ хулай.

Адава пхурано кирныпэ нашты тэ домэкэс дро амаро нэво социалистическо джиибэ. Треби зоралэс тэ марэспэ пхураныпнаса. И адава марибэ банго тэ пролыджял тэрныпэ.

Прэ лэстэ пасёла адава задэибэ.

Ёв кэрла нэво джиибэ.

Ёв сыгыдыр сарэндыр и фэдыр сарэндыр адава кэрла.

Амаро комсомоло банго тэ джинэла и тэ пролыджял адава задэибэ.

Акана романычяй кэрла буты про производство, сыклёла. Лылварипэ откэрла якха замардэ джювякэ.

Ёй акана дыкхэла бут миштыпэ. Ваш лакэ саро нэво.

Журналостыр “Нэво дром”: [...]

Адава чинэла романычяй, сави сыклёла дрэ романо театро-студия. Джиибэ ромня парудяпэ акана, и ачя про бут миштэдыр. Акана сы чяворэнгирэ сады, дрэ савэ ромны прэ саро дывэс отлыджяла пэскирэ чяворэн. Одой пал лэндэ псирна. Ёнэ хана и пьена пиро мардэ. Ёнэ одой нанэ обрискирдэ и мэлалэ.

Дрэ Москва сы романо чяворэнгиро садо. Дрэ еня мардэ отлыджяла э дай чяворэс дрэ садо. Одой чяворо дро татыпэ и чяло.

Лынаскиро чяворытко садо уджяла пало форо тэ дживэл.

Кэ ёнэ моло дрэ курко дая тэ дада явэна тэ подыкхэн сыр ёнэ одой дживэна.

Окэ со чинэла екх дай:

“О кхам хачькирдо сыр яг, зорэлэс хачькирла э пхув, нанэ соса тэ дышынэс, дро муй, дро нахк попэрла о пыло. Форытконэ шумостыр кхинёна о кана. На шукар сы лынаскиро дрэ Москва. Камэлапэ тэ уджяс карик на яви дро гав, кай сы зэлэна фэлды, рупови паны дрэ рэка и учё голубо болыбэн.

На обычно сы адава хачькирдо дывэс ваш ромэнгэ, савэ дживэна дро Пролетарско районо дрэ Москва. На екх дакиро ило марлапэ ададывэс радытыр. Прогья екх чён

сыр на дыкхнэ энэ пэскирэ калэякхэнгирэ чяворэн. Екх чён сыр романо чяворэн-гиро садо угыя прэ дачя.

Ададывэс чяворэн удыххэна, ададывэс дро чяворэнгиро садо сы приемно дывэс. Сыр дживэна ёнэ одой. Савэ ёнэ кэрдэпэ пал адава чён. Соса чяравэна лэн? Сыр обджянапэ лэнца? Саро адава крэнцынэлапэ дрэ шэрэ даен.

О поездо урняла сыр чирикло, прастана мамуй зэлэна фэлды, вэшорэ, тыкнинька дачна кхэрэрэ. Сыгыдыр ... сыгыдыр ... сыгыдыр ... На могискирна тэ дужакирэн о дая. Кай жэ сы адая станция.

Паш мардо джяла о поездо. Нэ окэ ходо кэрдяпэ тише, о поездо подшыла кэ станция. Дро вагоно скэдэнапэ тэ сджян. Томилино. Дачно штэто, кай сы чяворэнгиро садо. Станциятыр ромня джяна пиро буглы гаса. Дачи, дачи тыкнэ и барэ о сады и цвэты, шуко крепко фано. Ромня придыкхэнапэ кэ дачи, родэна романо чяворэн-гиро садо.

– Энакэ, энакэ ёнэ – дыкхэнтэ.

Э дачя прэ сави про лоло похтан сы чиндло: “Романо чяворэнгиро садо”. Дачя тэрдэ сы дро баро садо. Сосны, брэзы оегли чюрдэна бари тень. Пашо кхэр тэрдэ сы тыкнинька скаминдорэ, пал савэ бэшлэ сы чяворэ.

Сарэ ёнэ сы дро лолэ трусики, о муёрэ, о трупэ захачимэ. Лэндэ сы о хабэ.

Романы руководительница, лолэ дыкхлэса про шэро, дыкхэла сыр хана чяворэ. Нашты тэ выджас скаминдэстыр, дужакирна чяворэ коли проджяла о хабэн.

Ваш дадэнгэ тэ даенгэ пригатовиндло про скаминд о драб. Пьена ёнэ, дыкхэна прэ чяворэндэ, марлапэ лэндэ дро шэро – “и амарэ чяворэ сы сы прэ дачя, ваш лэнгэ сы чисто шуко фано, ваш лэнгэ сы о кхам, э чяр о цвэты”. Пучена руководительницатыр, со кэрна чяворэ, сыр хана, сыр пьена.

Прогыя о хабэн, чяворэ лынэ тэ сыкавэн даенгэ пэскири дачя. Дрэ штуба прэ ванта убладэ сы патриня, тэрдэ дро рядо набарэ пасиибнытка.

Прастана тыкнинька гэрорья, джяна пал лэндэ о дая, придыкхэнапэ кэ саро, при-шунэнапэ кэ чяворэнгирэ глося. Прастана о мардэ. Лынаскиро дывэс поджяла ко концо.

Бельвель закэрдя о дачи э брэзы, о сосны калэ дыкхлэса. Чявэ пасинэ, засутя шумно калы коммуна.

Угынэ о рома.

Дро вагоно розджянапэ ромнендэ о муя сабнастыр, дрэ якха тэрдэ сы дрэ зэлэно фано калэ шэрорэ тэ лолэ трусики.

Росчинэла о поездо кало фано, шуминэна о роты. Дрэ фэнштра дыкхэла таты лынаскири бельволь”.

Амэ бангэ тэ выбарьякирас нэвэ зоралэ манушэн. И амэ адава кэраса.

∴

O. Pankova

About the Woman

Such a concept that the woman, so to say, can only take care of small children, – is wrong.

That was fourteen years ago when a man thought he owned his wife.

But the October revolution put the woman's shoulder by the man's shoulder.

We know that a woman can take any job a man can. And we see that the woman does not lag behind the man. They say that women have long hair but a small mind. And we say it's not true.

A woman, together with a man, can build a new socialist society, and she must do so.

In many small nations that were oppressed by the Tsar before the revolution, the woman was not a human being. The man did not reckon with her.

The way of our Roma women was under the whip. Until she was married, her master was her father. If the father liked some guy, he would give him the girl as a wife.

Nobody cares whether she wants to marry him or not. And then her husband is already her master.

How much suffering she endures in her life. In the cold and in the heat of the summer day she trudges with her bag over her shoulder, at windows, asking for bread. Coming home she has there a lot of works to do, the children dirty, ragged, asking for food.

And the husband either is lying on a feather bed like a panther and if not lying, he is playing cards. He is her master. He's even yelling at her.

If the husband starts to drink, she, the poor one, doesn't know how to please him.

And he has nothing but rudeness for her.

He makes his wife stand on knees, sing songs, beats her.

She, the poor thing, trembles with fear, and is afraid to utter a word.

But Roma sisters! Gone are the years when your husbands were your masters.

Now it is another order. Now there are no masters here.

The October revolution took the conceit of your husbands.

A husband has to be a comrade to his wife.

But I must say that among our Roma there are still such "heroes".

Not every Roma woman has reached the consciousness that her husband is not her master.

This former depravity should not be allowed into our new socialist life. It is necessary to fight the old days' customs. And this struggle should be carried out by young people.

It is her task.

Young people are building a new life.

They are the fastest and the best for it.

Our komsomol must realize and fulfil this task.

Now a Roma woman is doing work in the workplace, studying. Literacy opens the eyes of a formerly ignorant woman.

She now sees a lot of good things. And everything is new for her.

From the journal *Nevo drom*: [...] [1].

This is written by a Roma girl who is studying at the Roma Theatre Studio. The life of a Roma woman has changed now and has become much better. Now there are kindergartens in which a Roma woman brings her children for the whole day. They're taken care of. They eat and drink by the hour. They're not ragged or dirty.

There is a Roma kindergarten in Moscow. At nine o'clock the mother takes the children to the garden. There, the child receives warmth and satiety.

In the summer, the kindergarten moves out of town.

Mothers and fathers visit them once a week to see how they live there.

This is what one mother writes:

"The sun is hot like fire, it strongly warms the ground, one cannot breathe, one's face, nose get the dust. The ears are tired from the city hustle. To spend the summer in Moscow is not good. Everyone wants to go somewhere in the village, where there are green fields, silver water in the river and the high blue sky.

Unusually hot is this day for the Roma who live in the Proletarian district of Moscow. Each mother's heart beats with joy today. One month has passed since they had seen their black-eyed children. One month, since the Roma kindergarten went to the country.

Today they will see their children, today is reception day in the kindergarten. How do they live? What have they become this month? What are they fed? How are they treated? This is all in a mother's head.

The train flies like a bird, runs past green fields, small forests, small country houses. Faster ... faster ... faster ... The mothers can't wait any longer. Where is the station?

The train moves for half an hour. But the course is quieter, the train approaches the station. They're getting out from the car. Tomilino [2]. The country place where the kindergarten is dwelling. From the station, Roma women walk in a wide street. Dachas, dachas, small and big gardens and flowers, strong dry air. Romani women look closely to the cottages, looking out for the Roma kindergarten.

– Here, here they are – look.

A cottage, over which a red cloth is laid, with the written sign "Romani kindergarten". The cottage is situated in a large garden. Pine, birch, spruce cast a great shadow. Near the house there are small tables at which the children sit.

They are all in the red panties, face and body are tanned. They are having lunch.

The Romani headmistress, with a red scarf on her head, is watching as the children eat. They can't leave the tables, the children are waiting for lunch to finish.

For fathers and mothers, there is a tea prepared on the table. They drink, look at the children, a thought beats in their heads – "and our children are at the dacha too, for them there is clean dry air, for them, there is the sun, grass, flowers". They ask the headmistress what the children do, how they eat, how they drink.

The dinner is finished, the children to show the cottage to their mothers. In the room, pictures are hanging off the wall, and small beds are standing in one row.

Small legs run, mothers follow them, looking after everything, listening to the children's voices. Hours fly by. The summer day is coming to an end.

The evening comes, the cottages are closed with a black birch pine. Children lay down, the swarthy noisy community falls asleep.

The Roma leave.

In the car, Romani women's faces are lit with smiles, they can still picture the green air, their children's dark heads and red trousers.

The train runs through the dark air, the wheels rustle. The warm summer evening is seen through the windows."

We need to grow new strong people. And we will.

Notes

1. Here the article *About the Women's Day (March, the 8th)* from the journal *Nevo drom* (New Way) is included, the full text for which can be seen above. This is why we omitted it. An important note is that the text of P. Voinova-Massalsko is published by Olga Pankova with some editorial changes: in two places "worker's power" was replaced by "Soviet power"; "All people" has been changed to "working people, such as I am"; "Adults" has been replaced by "workers". The question is open whether these changes reflect some ideological reasons or are made on a purely stylistic base.

2. Tomlino is a countryside health resort, 25 km from Moscow. There the Roma children from *романо чяворэнгиро садо* (Gypsy kindergarten) spent their summer holidays.

Source: Панкова, О. (1932). *Комсомоло дрэ марибэ поло нэво джибэ*. Москва: Тэрны гвардия, pp. 30-35.

Prepared for publication by Elena Marushiakova, Vesselin Popov and Viktor Shapoval.

Translated by Viktor Shapoval.

12.2.11 *The Gypsy Theatre*

Ник[олай] Панков

Цыганский театр – не национальный театр

Журнал "Народное творчество" статьей Эдв[арда] Шолоха "Цыганский театр Ромэн", помещенной в No. 5, совершенно правильно ставит вопрос о Цыганском театре "Ромэн", его репертуаре и его путях. Моя статья, как одного из работников цыганского культурного фронта, является откликом на статью тов[арища] Шолоха.

У цыганского театра есть одна из трудностей в главной своей области, в области обслуживания своего зрителя. Его зритель не сосредоточен в одном месте и находится главным образом на периферии, в колхозах и даже в таборах. Как же театр выходит из этих трудностей? Вместо того, чтобы охватить цыганского зрителя, театр ставит перед собою совершенно иную проблему, а именно применение себя в среде интернационального зрителя.

Но ознакомление братских народов [Советского] Союза с прошлым и настоящим цыганского народа, с его искусством и достижениями может, конечно, иметь место, но тем не менее это не может являться самоцелью. Цыганский театр в первую

очередь должен стать культурным фактором своего народа. Но когда же у театра вместо постоянной связи со своим народом бывают лишь случайные встречи на каких-нибудь парадах, то в этом случае театр, естественно, теряет свой национальный облик, вырождаясь в экзотический театр, привлекая зрителей больше главным образом песнями и плясками, вводимыми в спектакли без всякой органической связи, но яркими и выразительными сами по себе.

Если же говорить о познавательной ценности театра, то таковой также нет у театра, потому что театр грешит антинародными искажениями цыганского быта. Возьмем для примера пьесу “Жизнь на колесах”, А[лександра] Германо, пользующуюся большим успехом среди интернационального зрителя. В погоне за экзотикой режиссура театра внесла сумбур: Какие цыганы фигурируют в пьесе, русские или зарубежные? По костюму – болгарские или румынские, так называемые “котлярья”. Цыганы из табора вожака Вангара являются и медвежатниками, и лошаdnиками и лудильщиками, что совершенно не верно. В СССР и в дореволюционной России котлярья лошаdnичеством не занимались. На русских цыган не похожи, потому, что начиная с половины XIX в. так называемые “русские” цыганы вождей и диктаторов не имели. Создание разнородных элементов, принадлежащих различным группам, делает спектакль фальшивым.

Пьеса [Ивана] Ром-Лебедева “Дочь степей” претенциозно названа “музыкальной” драмой. Перед зрителем – бытовая драма с любовной интригой. Кочующая цыганка, работающая в цыганском колхозе в качестве поденщицы (кстати, явление вообще странное), влюблена в бригадира Мотьку. Но чтобы покинуть постылого мужа и уйти с любимым, Ганка вынуждена рядиться в медвежью шкуру. Неужели, в наших условиях, женщина должна уйти от нелюбимого мужа не иначе как замаскированной. При этом инициативу и активное содействие автор предоставляет колхозной молодежи. Так ли это? Это конечно, профанация как чувства, так и нашей молодежи. Не будучи в силах прямо и смело заявить деспоту-мужу о своей любви к Мотьке, как это сделала бы современная и свободолюбивая цыганка, она вместе с тем, по воле автора, принимает более чем деятельное участие в общественной жизни колхоза. Это звучит фальшиво. (Поскольку автор дает жизнь колхоза – хотя и назвав пьесу “дочь степей” – это, несомненно, обязывает автора к правильному показу.). В пьесе нет столкновения общественных сил. Все сведено к личной драме, при чем весьма убогой. Образ Баурова, который по мнению автора должен явиться врагом колхозной жизни – притянут, и ни в какой мере не связан органически со всем развитием пьесы. В пьесе претендует на художественный образ в какой-то мере – Ганка, но мотивы, которые руководят автором Ром-Лебедевым на столько не оправданы, что образ Ганки является более чем на-половину недоношенным. Пьеса весьма примитивная, и далеко от отображения совхозной действительности.

“Свадьба в таборе” того же Ром-Лебедева также фальшива. И не случайно она названа “театральной” сказкой. Сказка, где девушка так свободно и так своеобразно и своенравно выбирала бы себе жениха, подобно тому, как отец ее выбирает

лошадь на ярмарке – не мыслима. (Остается еще “Вечер песни и пляски”, но это могло быть принято в первый год театра в качестве первого показа, а на на 3[-ем] году его существования.).

Этих беглых замечаний основных недостатков театра достаточно для того, чтобы сказать, что театр (далек от того пути, по которому должен идти современный национальный театр) [и] имеет много ошибок, мешающих ему стать настоящим национальным театром.

Театр, дающий лживые образы, театр, приносящий в жертву правду во имя театрализации, театр, не учитывающий нужда своего народа и не обслуживающий его – не нужен народу и не может именоваться национальным. Позволительно думать, что театр, искажающий правду и не умеющий показать верно свой народ, не нужен и для интернационального зрителя.

Цыганской массе необходим театр, она не откажется от существования театра; цыганы испокон веков связаны с музыкой, песней и пляской. Такие представители человечества как Державин, Пушкин, Толстой и многие другие преклонялись перед цыганским искусством. Цыганские хоры и оркестры даже в самые жуткие времена гонений и преследований против цыган в Европе оставались неприкосновенными. (Не потому ли что гонители так высоко ценили искусство?).

Цыганское искусство в нашем социалистическом строительстве должно быть использовано в деле воспитания цыганских масс. До сих пор театр это не сделал, и в этом вина падает всецело на руководство, проявившее свою несостоятельность.

Театр должен быть реорганизован. Театр должен обслуживать прежде всего свой народ. До сих пор театр ограничивался только поездками по крупным городам. Это была принципиальная ошибка. Театр должен обслуживать цыганскую массу зрителей.

Статья т. Шолоха указывает на необходимость более частых выездов театра в цыганские колхозы. Считаю это безусловно правильным, надо, чтобы театр выделил из труппы стационара постоянную группу. Состав ее может меняться. Эта группа, имея в своем репертуаре полноценные пьесы, не связанная с громоздким оформлением сможет обслуживать цыганскую массу на периферии. Только при соблюдении этого неперемennого условия Театр “Ромэн” будет театром цыганского народа.

Вторая необходимая работа, которая лежит перед театром – это ликвидация остатков лженародности, которой до сих пор продолжает болеть театр.

Для того, чтобы добиться этого, театру необходимо более глубоко и внимательно изучать жизнь, и особенно жизнь своего народа.

Надо привлечь таких высококвалифицированных специалистов, хорошо знающих язык и быт цыган, как профессора Сергиевский, Баранников, Вентцель, и др., которые оказали-бы громадную услугу как в области организации в театре научно-исследовательской работы по фольклору, так и в области консультаций по быту, языку.

Третья задача: надо пересмотреть репертуар театра. Привлечь настоящих драматургов для создания полноценного современного репертуара, обратить внимание на стиль собирания и особенно на обработку театром песенного материала.

Необходимо по-новому поставить в театре и учебно-воспитательную работу с актерами. Возглавить ее авторитетными людьми. Сейчас во главе учебной части стоит человек некомпетентный.

При театре необходимо создать семинар для подготовки инструкторов по обслуживанию цыганской художественной самодеятельности. И наконец надо создать при театре актив из цыганской интеллигенции.

Проведение в жизнь всех этих мероприятий выведет театр из того тупика, в котором он находится сейчас.

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Nikolay Pankov

The Gypsy Theatre is Not a National Theatre

The journal "Narodnoe tvorchestvo" [Folks Art] through Edward Sholok's article "The Gypsy Theatre Romen", published in No. 5, quite correctly raises the issue of the Gypsy Theatre *Romen*, its repertoire and its perspectives. My article, as one of the workers on the Gypsy cultural front, is a resonance of the article by Comrade Sholokh.

The Gypsy theatre has one of the difficulties in its main field, in the field of servicing its audience. Its spectators are not concentrated in one place and are mainly on the periphery, on kolkhozes and even in tabors. How does the theatre solve these difficulties? Instead of embracing the Gypsy audience, the theatre poses a completely different task, namely in approaching an international audience. While familiarisation of the fraternal peoples of the Soviet Union with the past and present of the Gypsy people, with their art and achievements, can, of course, take place, but nevertheless, this cannot be an end in itself. Gypsy Theatre must first become a cultural factor of its people. But when instead of a constant connection with its own people, the theatre has only occasional meetings at some parades, then in this case the theatre naturally loses its national appearance, degenerating into an exotic theatre, attracting the audience mainly with songs and dances introduced into the performances without any organic connection, that are however vivid and expressive.

If we talk about the cognitive value of the theatre, then the theatre also does not have it, because the theatre sins with anti-national distortions of Gypsy mode of life. Take, for example, the play "Life on Wheels," by Alexander Germano, which enjoys great success among an international audience. In pursuit of the exotics, the theatre's direction made a mess: Which Gypsies appear in the play, Russian or foreign? According to the costume – Bulgarian or Romanian, the so-called "Kotlyarya" [1]. Gypsies from the tabor of chief Vangar are bear-trainers, horse-dealers and tinsmiths, which is absolutely not realistic. In the USSR and in pre-revolutionary Russia, Kotlyarya did not engage in

horse-dealing. They are not similar to Russian Gypsies, because since the middle of the 19th century the so-called "Russian" Gypsies did not have chiefs and dictators. Creating dissimilar elements belonging to different groups makes the performance fake.

Ivan Rom-Lebedev's play "The Daughter of the Steppes" is pretentiously called a "musical" drama. In front of the audience is a household drama with a love affair. A nomadic Gypsy woman working in a Gypsy kolkhoz as a day labourer (by the way, the phenomenon is generally strange), is in love with foreman Motka. But in order to leave her hateful husband and leave with her beloved, Ganka is forced to dress up in a bear's skin. Really, in our conditions, a woman should leave her unloved husband only as a masked one? At the same time, the author provides initiative and active assistance to kolkhoz youth.

Is it so? This, of course, is a profanation of both feelings and our youth. Not being able to directly and boldly declare to her despot husband her love for Motka, as a modern and freedom-loving Gypsy woman would do, she, at the same time, by the will of the author, takes more than an active part in the public life of the kolkhoz. This sounds fake. (As far as the author presents labourer life in kolkhoz – although calling the play "daughter of the steppes" – this undoubtedly obliges the author to show it correctly.) [2].

There is no clash of social forces in the play. Everything is reduced to personal drama, and it's very miserable. The character of Baurov, which, according to the author, should be an enemy of the kolkhoz life, is far-fetched, and in no way connected organically with the whole development of the play. In the play, an artistic image in some way is only the one of Ganka, but the motives that guide the author Rom-Lebedev are in such extent unjustified, that the image of Ganka is more than half-prematurely. The play is very primitive, and far from reflecting sovkhov's reality.

The play "Wedding in the camp" of the same Rom-Lebedev is also fake. And it is no accident that it is called a "theatrical" fairy tale. A fairy tale where a girl so freely and so willfully and self-willed would choose a bridegroom, just like her father chooses a horse at a fair, is inconceivable. (There is still an "Evening of Songs and Dances", but this could be acceptable in the first year of the theatre as its first show, and not in the 3rd year of its existence.) [3].

These cursory remarks about the main shortcomings of the theatre are enough to illustrate that the theatre (is far from the path that the modern national theatre should follow) [4] and has many errors that prevent it from becoming a real national theatre.

A theatre that gives false images, a theatre that sacrifices the truth in the name of theatricalisation, a theatre that does not take into account the needs of its people and does not serve it, is not needed by the people and cannot be called a National one. It is permissible to think that a theatre that distorts the truth and does not know how to show its own people correctly is not needed for an international audience either.

The Gypsy masses need a theatre; they will not abandon the existence of a theatre; From time immemorial, Gypsies have been associated with music, song and dance. Representatives of humanity such as Derzhavin, Pushkin, Tolstoy and many others worshipped Gypsy art. Gypsy choirs and orchestras, even in the most terrible times of chasing

away and persecution against Gypsies in Europe, remained untouched (Is it because the persecutors so highly valued art?) [5].

Gypsy art in our socialist construction should be used for the education of the Gypsy masses. Until now, the theatre has not done this, and the blame falls entirely on the leadership, which has shown its failure.

The theatre should be reorganised. The theatre should serve primarily its people. Until now, the theatre has been limited only to trips to major cities. It was a fundamental mistake. The theatre should serve the Gypsy masses.

Comrade Sholok's article indicates the need for more frequent theatre visits to Gypsy kolkhozes. We believe this is certainly correct, it is necessary that the theatre allocates a permanent group from the stationary troupe. Its composition may vary. This group, having in its repertoire full-fledged plays that are not associated with cumbersome design, will be able to serve the Gypsy masses on the periphery. Only by being subject to this indispensable condition, the Romen Theatre will be a theatre of the Gypsy people.

The second necessary work that lies in front of the theatre is the elimination of the remnants of national falsehood [6] that the theatre continues to suffer from.

In order to achieve this, the theatre needs to study life more deeply and attentively, and especially the life of its people.

It is necessary to attract such highly qualified specialists who are well aware of the language and life of the Gypsies, such as professors Sergievsky, Barannikov, Wentzel, and others, who would make a great service in the field of organising scholarly folklore research in the theatre and in the field of giving consultations on the way of life, language of Gypsies.

The third task: it is necessary to revise the repertoire of the theatre. To attract real playwrights to create a full-fledged modern repertoire, to pay attention to the style of the theatre's gathering and especially to its processing of the song materials.

It is necessary to re-create in the theatre educational work with the actors. It should be led by renowned people. Now at the head of the educational part is an incompetent person.

At the theatre, it is necessary to create a seminar for the training of instructors in servicing Gypsy amateur performances. And finally, it is needed to create an active group from the theatre from the Gypsy intelligentsia.

The implementation of all these events will lead the theatre out of the impasse in which it is now [7].

Notes

1. *Kotlyarya* (котляря) is a self-designation used in Russia by and for the *Kelderari* Roma group. It is literally translation of the term *Kelderari* from Romanian in Russian language in meaning cauldron-makers.

2-5. The sentences in brackets are scratched in original, in their place there are handwritten additions that were intended to be included in the published text.

6. National falsehood (*лженародность*) – a term from literature science used in that time. It designated admiration for elements coming from outside and contempt for one's own culture traits.

This is combined with the glorification of one's own people, as the dignity of one's own people is presented in the way they are perceived from the outside.

7. The text is a manuscript of an article that was proposed for publication in a journal *Narodnoe tvorchestvo* (Folks art). It is accompanied by a handwritten review that has not been signed (RGALI, f. 673, op. 1, ed. khr. 454, l. 203), however from the archival description of the fund it is clear that its author is the famous theatrical critic Isaac L. Lubinski. The reviewer believes that the article should not be published for a number of reasons, the main ones being: The author's reasoning is superficial and too subjective; a previous issue of the journal has already published a positive review of the play *The Daughter of the Steppes*, and when publishing this article, the editorial will fall into contradiction; the author's critical remarks are insufficient for the accusations the theatre in National falsehood and the editorial board will be responsible for those accusations. Such accusation can only be made after a thorough assessment of the condition of the theatre, without which it cannot be blamed for such grave sins. In the end, Nikolay Pankov's article was not published.

Source: RGALI, f. 673, op. 1, ed. khr. 454, l. 104-110.

Prepared for publication by Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov.

Comments

As the published material shows, in the 1920s and 1930s, the specific genre of Gypsy literature *publicistic* was born and developed. Under this term are covered social and political essays aimed at enlightening and educating the public, as well as opinion-based and advocacy journalism. Within this genre, Roma authors had the opportunity to bring topics important for the community (and also for the society) to public discussion, primarily those concerning the life and problems of the Gypsies in the USSR. The fact that these authors had the opportunity to publish their texts both in Russian, in the mainstream press (including in the most authoritative and popular publications), meaning they were accessible to the entire Soviet society, and in the Romani-language journals, meaning they were intended for the Gypsy community offered them new possibilities to promote their visions of the Gypsy community's present and future, as well as to act as opinion-makers.

Formally speaking, from the published texts, only Ivan Lebedev's piece was not intended for the general public (Roma and non-Roma); it was only for the 'internal use' of the Soviet nomenclature. However, in its ideas and style, it is not different from the materials published in the press, so there is no reason to detach it.

One cannot help but notice that in most of these texts the same (or at least similar in content) concepts and idioms are used, expressing the basic ideology of the Soviet reality, in regard to the different nationalities and the national policy of the Soviet state during this period. First of all, this is the definition of the Russian Empire as a 'people's prison' repeatedly used by Lenin, which implies that individual nationalities in the Empire were under the constant oppression of Tsarism. Hence, the constant emphasis on the role of the October Revolution and the Soviet state, which eliminated the old bourgeois system and opened up wide opportunities for oppressed peoples. Only in the Soviet state were these nationalities able to actively engage in the construction of a 'new life'. This

includes, in addition to the main task of building socialism, also the development of the national identity, language, and culture of all individual nationalities.

Within this discourse, the Gypsy theme fits without any problems into the general ideological paradigm. Moreover, it is within these frameworks that the ideas of Roma civic emancipation are given the opportunity for its practical realisation because the Soviet state (at least in the early USSR) pursued a consistent affirmative policy in this direction. In this case, there is a coincidence (if not full, at least in basic lines) of the aims of the state policy and the vision of the Gypsy activists concerning what this politics should be, or in the words of the VSTs President Andrey Taranov: “Gypsies must be helped to become a people equal in all respects with other nationalities inhabiting the USSR” (see above). In pursuit of this common goal, the Roma activists highlight in their texts a number of specific issues of Roma civic emancipation. These problems are diverse, and there are several main points that focus on the attention of Gypsy publicists and which are clearly expressed in their texts.

The first is the question of land allocation to the Gypsies and attracting them to engaging in a societal-useful work. This process is closely linked to the sedentarisation of Gypsy nomads.

It is significant that the first article to open the first issue of the world's first Romani-language journal *Romany zorya* is devoted precisely to this topic, namely the article published above, written by Andrey Taranov *About the land for Romanyčhave*. This topic is a leading one in other publications by Gypsy activists in the central press, addressing the mainstream population. This is clearly evident from their titles, e.g. *From nomadism to sedentarisation* by Andrey Taranov (Известия ЦИК СССР, 1927, p. 6) or *Let us put aside the past nomadism: We will include Gypsies in the construction of socialism* (Комсомольская правда, 19329, p. 3).

Equally revealing is that the first official state document relating to Gypsies is the Decree of the TsIK and SNK USSR from 1926, October 1, *On measures to facilitate the transition of nomadic gypsies to a settled lifestyle* (Постановление, 1926). By the first Decree, Gypsies wishing to settle were entitled to receive agricultural land with priority over the rest of those wishing to do so, as well as the right to enjoy all the privileges enjoyed by the so-called *pereselentsy* (resettlers). The second Decree of the TsIK and SNK RSFSR from 1928, February 20, *On land allocation of Gypsies, who transit towards toiling settled way of life* (Постановление, 1928) not only confirmed those privileges but extends them further by assuming the costs of settling from the state budget. In this way, Gypsies are given the opportunity to enjoy privileges that were inaccessible to the vast majority of the population of the USSR.

Gypsy activists participated actively in the preparation and implementation of these founding documents of state policy concerning Gypsies. Representatives of VSTs participate in the specially created Commission for Land Management of Gypsy Workers under the Federal Committee on Land Affairs at the Presidium of VTsIK. Such representatives from 08.05.1926 are Andrey Taranov and Mikhail Bezlyudskiy, who by a decision of the

Presidium of VSTs of 15.02.1927 was replaced by Sergey Polyakov (GARF, f. P 3260, op. 6, d. 44, l. 33-34).

The influence of Gypsy activists on state Gypsy politics can take other forms too, and it is worth noting the public impact of their articles in the central press. This effect is most evident in the case of the article by Georgiy Lebedev and Alexander German (see above), after whose publication the editorial board of *Komsomolskaya Pravda* convened a special extended meeting to discuss its ideas and messages, a meeting attended by representatives of various Soviet institutions, leading newspapers and many Gypsy activists (GARF, f. P 1235, op. 121, d. 31, l. 334-348).

Another major issue often found in the work of Gypsy activists is that of the internal class division in the community, and more specifically of the so-called kulaks. The very idea of a class divide among the Gypsies was a direct reflection of the dominant ideology and relevant public language in the USSR at that time, leading to attempts to define the class structure of the Gypsy community in the spirit of Marxism- Leninism. In the beginning, as seen from the Memorandum of 03.04.1928 published above, the concept was proposed in relation to the existence of the 'germ of communism' in the Gypsy camp, which made it easier for Gypsies to move to collective agriculture. Very soon after that, in the spirit of Stalin's thesis from the late 1920s on sharpening the class struggle in the process of strengthening the socialist state, the concept of the need to combat the so-called class enemy within the Gypsy community became evident. For such class enemies, united under the label kulaks were declared before all the leaders of Gypsy tabors (nomadic or settled in big cities) as well as the heads of former Gypsy choirs. In the kulaks, members of, the so-called Gypsy courts have also been included, designated as a traditional institution through which the exploited Gypsy masses are kept under control (GARF, f. P 1235, op. 123, d. 28, l. 194-199; f. P 1235, op. 123, d. 27, l. 197-221; f. 10035, op. 1, d. 74091, l. 188-205; RGAE, f. 5675, d. 142, l. 15-17; Римско, 1932, p. 12).

It is difficult to say when and by whom the idea of the existence of class enemies (kulaks) among Gypsies was first formulated, but in any case, the published article by Georgiy Lebedev is one of the first in this direction. It reflects the universal slogan "to destroy the kulak as a class" that was a leading one during the mass collectivisation of agriculture, which began in the late 1920s and lasted until the early 1930s. In addition to this article, a number of other articles with the same message have been published in the journal *Nevo drom* in Romani language. Such is, for example, the article with the revealing title *Дро колхозо нанэ штэто кулакоскэ* (There is no place for kulaks in the kolkhoz), signed with the initials MT (most likely Mikhail Bezlyudskiy), in which the chairman of the kolkhoz *Svoboda* (Freedom) in Kardimovo, in the Smolensk region, namely Yefrosiniya (Ruzya) Tumashevich and her father, are declared kulaks (Нэво дром, 1930а, pp. 9-10). In this key are also two notes signed by the author with the pseudonym *Feldytko* (Nomad). The first one under the title *To destroy the kulak as a class* the charges against the Tumashevich family are reiterated (Нэво дром, 1931d, p. 14). In the second one *Are there Roma kulaks in Moscow* the discovered 'kulaks' from the ranks of Moscow Gypsies were Yegor Polyakov

(the head of the famous Gypsy choir), Mikhail Masaly'skiy, Yakov Vishnyakov and others (Нэво дром, 1931e, pp. 14-15). The topic of class enemies, the leaders of the Gypsy tabors, is widely reflected in both the newly created Gypsy literature and in the repertoire of the Theatre Romen, and even in cinema (in the Movie *The Last Camp* from 1935). Even the critical remarks (most likely written by Mikhail Bezlyudskiy) entitled *More close class attention at the theatrical front* written on the occasion of the theatre performances *Романо дром* (Gypsy Way) и *Гиля и кхэлыбэна Ромэн* (Songs and Dances of Gypsies) at Leningrad Ethnographic Theatre are within this key point (Нэво дром, 1932a, pp. 10-11).

Of course, in terms of historical and ethnographic realities, the idea of the existence of class stratification in the Gypsy community is completely untenable, and from today's point of view, it sounds more like an absurd joke. Seen in a historical context, however, this concept seems different in terms of specific time and place (early USSR). The civic emancipation of the community involved, first and foremost, an equal integration into the social realities among which they lived, and it is quite clear from this point of view that Gypsy activists used the language of the Soviet public discourse. For them, apart from the Soviet realities, there were no other alternatives, which means they needed to accept these realities as they were; therefore, the processes of Roma civic emancipation in the early USSR should accordingly be analysed from this point of view.

For the first time in the early USSR, however, some concepts emerged, which are particularly relevant today in connection to modern Roma activism and academia, namely the concept of anti-Gypsyism (Holler, 2014, pp. 84-85). This concept was firstly presented by Alexander German in 1928 in his article "Gypsies" (Безбожник, 1928, pp. 11-13), and was popularised by Alexander German and Georgiy Lebedev in 1929, and by Andrey Taranov in 1931, in the articles published above. In these all articles, the emphasis is primarily set on the overall policy of "rotten Tsarist anti-Gypsyism" in the Russian Empire, and this social phenomenon is defined as inherent for the epochs of feudalism and capitalism, which should no longer exist in the Soviet state. In both articles, however, there are carefully worded notes that make it clear that there are still some remnants of anti-Gypsyism in Soviet society. Anti-Gypsyism is explained as an insurmountable legacy of the old social order and against which it is necessary for the Soviet state to constantly fight.

They are expressed in the inattentive or neglectful attitude of the local authorities towards the Gypsies, spreading defamatory rumours, public expression of anti-Gypsy stereotypes, etc. Descriptions of specific examples of such attitudes, including police misconduct against Gypsies, are also contained in a number of documents prepared by VSTs and sent to various Soviet institutions (GARF, f. P 393, op. 43 A, d. 1763, l. 179-184; f. P 1235, op. 120, d. 27, l. 30-38; f. P 1235, op. 121, d. 31, l. 148). As a rule, the Soviet authorities responded quickly and effectively to such signals, as well as in cases of any manifestation of anti-Gypsyism by the majority population. The reason for such prompt action against any appearance of anti-Gypsyism was made because they were seen as a serious violation of the dominant ideology of proletarian internationalism and of Soviet legislation that did not permit discrimination on a national basis. For illustration, it is enough to list some titles of articles in the mainstream press, like e.g. *The Chauvinist Language – The*

Language of the Class Enemy: Shameful Belching of Great-Power Chauvinism at the Smolensk Pedagogical Institute (Большевистский молодняк, 1931, p. 2). This article describes a case of bullying and allegations of theft of a Gypsy student by his colleagues. Some press headlines reflect cases when persons accused of anti-Gypsyism are brought to court, e.g. *This is where the enemy works: The ridiculous gossip of the chauvinists must be put to an end* (Борьба, 1931, p. 3) and the article *Provocateurs before the court. The myth of the abduction of children* (Борьба, 1931, p. 3) about the case in Stalingrad, described in the published article published here, *A War against anti-Gypsyism* by Andrey Taranov. In the same spirit are the articles: *Hit the great-power chauvinists hard. Culprits harassed Gypsy workers brought to justice* (Тверская правда, 1931a, p. 3), *Cut off the dirty paws of the chauvinists: The culprits of the persecution of Gypsy workers soon will be brought before the proletarian court* (Тверская правда, 1931b, p. 3), and *In response to the sortie of the chauvinists, the front of international education is being strengthened* (Тверская правда, 1931c, p. 3) about the sentencing of two workers to forced labour for one year because of the ethnic mockery of a Gypsy colleague. It is hardly necessary to clarify that 'chauvinists' should be understood as 'Great Russian chauvinists'. Therefore, one should not be surprised by the sharp words in the published texts of the Gypsy activists against the 'Great Russian chauvinists'. The fight against this still occurring phenomenon was a major trend in the national policy of the early USSR (see Martin, 2001). This, in turn, logically led to the emergence of the concept of anti-Gypsyism.

The Gypsy activists' campaign against anti-Gypsyism was not only restricted to the USSR but included regular information on the persecution of Gypsies abroad. This information was in close cohesion with the general Soviet propaganda discourse, which comprehensively presented to the Soviet society the class, race and ethnic oppressions in the "world of capital" and accordingly promoted the Soviet model of a non-class society, where the cruel and unjust race and ethnic treatment is annihilated. A classic example in this regard is the highly admired film *Circus* (1936), in which a woman who gave birth to a child with a black father is persecuted in the US but finds happiness in the USSR, where there is no racial issue.

In this context, materials prepared by Gypsy activists about anti-Gypsyism in the West are numerous (especially fruitful in this regard was Alexander Germano, who mastered a number of foreign languages and regularly monitored the Western press).

An example of this is the article *Сэндо линчя дрэ Чехословакия* (Lynch law in Czechoslovakia) describing the anti-Gypsy pogrom in Slovakia (the case in Pobedim village in 1928), and presenting the adopted anti-Gypsy law against nomadism (see Chapter 8). The article summarises: "The life of Roma in Czechoslovakia is the same as the life of Negroes in America and Jews in Tsarist Russia" (Нэво дром, 1931f, p. 22-23).

It should not be a surprise also that it was in the early USSR that the issue of replacing the public name of the community with its ethnonym was raised. The proposal for the official use of the name 'Roma' (in form of Indo-Rom) was made by a non-Rom, namely by Daniil Savvov, who was employed at the Narkompros. In an article published in the Romani language journal *Romany zorya* in 1930, he wrote: "You have your own

name – ‘Rom’, the history tells that Roma come from India. It would be good to call yourselves ‘Indo-Rom’, but you call yourself ‘tsygan’ [Gypsy].” (Романы зоря, 1930b, p. 9). In the same issue of the journal was published a poem “A call from the kolkhoz” by Georgiy Lebedev who used the pseudonym Indo-Rom (Романы зоря, 1930c, p. 46). This proposal, however, finds little resonance among the Gypsy activists. They did not perceive the public denomination ‘цыгане’ (Gypsies) as of insulting, which is clearly seen from the article by Andrey Taranov *The Thirteenth Anniversary of October Revolution*, which states: “Tsarist Russia ... called the Uzbeks ‘Sarty’, the Jews ‘Zhidy’, the Ukrainians ‘Khokhly’, the Gypsies [цыгане] – ‘Pharaohs’ and so on” (Нэво дром, 1930, p. 1), i.e. the insulting name for Roma was not the word цыгане, but the designation Pharaohs.

The only reverberation to the proposal for a new public community name (‘Indo-Rom’) reappears in the 1930s when at the time of funding the Theatre Romen possible variants of its title were discussed. Among the proposals, one can find also a version connected with the term ‘Indo-Rom’, such as *Indo-Romskiy* (or *Indo-Romenskiy*) Theatre, i.e. ‘Indo-Roma Theatre’ (Бессонов, 2013, p. 454). The term was also included in the sentence in which the founders of the theatre declared their ‘full readiness to participate in the merciless cleaning of Indo-Romen Art’ from the so-called *tsyganshchina* (O’Keeffe, 2013, p. 217). As for the term *tsyganshchina* (цыганищина), in this context, it does not have any negative connotations regarding the Gypsies as a community. The very concept of *tsyganshchina* came into widespread public use in the 1920s, and for a long time, there was a massive public campaign in the press against this phenomenon, which was considered to be degenerated by a bourgeoisie kind of Gypsy art (see Штейнпресс, 1934; Щербакова, 1984) and an inauthentic pseudo-art (cf. Lemon, 2000, p. 141). This campaign, however, was not aimed against Gypsy music in general, but specifically against the *tsyganshchina* phenomenon; in contrast to this phenomenon and in order to present the ‘true’ Gypsy art the Soviet state created the Gypsy Theatre Romen – cf. article with the indicative title *From a night pub to a proletarian theatre: Gypsies declare a fight against “tsyganshchina”* (Рабочий и искусство, 1930, p. 4).

In this discourse can be added, though quite conditionally, the title ‘Rom’, used by Vladimir Zorin (about him see below) for two of his books published in Ukrainian – a collection of short stories and novella (Зорин, 1932a; 1934). The first one was published twice (Зорин, 1932b), in a 20 000 (sic!) print-run, and was translated into Moldovan language (Zorin, 1933). In this case, however, the use of the name ‘Roma’ in the title is a literary technique, because in the text the designation ‘Gypsies’ is employed..

In the early USSR, for the first time, the Gypsy men and women activists also brought to the forefront the specific problem of the Gypsy woman as well as the issue of the need to achieve gender equality both within the wider society and within the community. In modern terms, this is also found in present-day discussions about the double discrimination faced by Roma women, which includes also the issue of domestic violence against women (see above in the text by Olga Pankova) and children (see the book translated in Romani language with the title “Why we should not beat our children” (Кулишэр-Бунцельман, 1932)). As one Gypsy male activist also writes, the Gypsy woman is a ‘slave’

and she must earn the living for the whole family, including her husband (Звезда, 1926, p. 2). That is why the Work Plan of VSTs for 1926 stated that one of the goals of the Union was the need to release women “from the yoke of family and man's supremacy” so that they could have more time for socially useful work (GARF, f. 1235, op. 1, d. 27, l. 94).

Moreover, as it is clear from the manuscript by Nikolay Pankov published above, the performances of Theatre Romen (in the play *The Daughter of the Steppes* by Ivan Rom-Lebedev, premiered in 1935) proclaim the right of a Gypsy woman to leave her unloved man, whom she is married to without her consent from her parents. This reflects the idea of free love, which was widely promoted in the early USSR, especially by the famous Alexandra Kolontay. To put it in brackets, the lead character in the play, the famous actor Lyalya Chernaya (Nadezhda Kiseleva), soon after the premiere left her husband (Ivan Rom-Lebedev himself) and married Mikhail Yanshin (non-Gypsy, artistic director of Theatre Romen).

Specific is the case of the problems of the Gypsy woman in Central Asia, among the so-called Central Asian Gypsies, collectively referred to as Lyuli or Jugy; the designation is inaccurate because, in fact, it refers to a number of communities with different origins and identities (Marushiakova & Popov, 2016d). Public campaigns of Soviet power in Central Asia for the removal of the *paranjas*, used by ‘Women of the East’ to completely cover themselves, did not target Gypsy women (Northrop, 2004, p. 51); because it was rarely used by them. Instead, they wore a ‘softer’ form of veiling, with an uncovered face. That is why, along with the fight against *paranja* in Samarkand arises another movement for the liberation of Gypsy women – the fight against the begging bag. For the Gypsy women, it was a symbol of their unequal position in the community as with it they were obliged to feed their entire families. Female Gypsy activists Koromat Dzhililova and Dzhumakikh Norbaeva were especially active in this regards and repeatedly took action to persuade women to burn their begging bags, and to go to work in local factories. Koromat Dzhililova became a member of the VKP(b) and joined an agitation unit that travelled around the region and propagated the ideas of Soviet power; in one such public event, she was attacked and received seven knife strikes, but survived and died many years later as an honorary retiree in 1965 at the age of 79 (Назаров, 1969, p. 116).

Among other leading ideas developed in Gypsy publicistics, special attention deserves a text published as debatable (i.e. the editorial does not fully share the author's views) and signed with the alias Kalysh (it is not clear who is behind this pseudonym). This text raises the question of the use of the Romani language not only in education but also more broadly, in social life.

In direct correlation to this question is another case repeatedly discussed at the meetings with participation of Gypsies in Soviet institutions – to what extent Gypsy artels should be Gypsy-only by the composition or whether people of different nationalities can also work together (e.g. GARF, f. P 3316, op. 28, d. 794, l. 77-125). The prevailing view (both of representatives of the institutions and of the Gypsy activists themselves) was that there is nothing wrong with non-Gypsies working in Gypsy artels. On the contrary, in such cases, the results are better. However, it is important that non-Gypsies do not prevail because the

Gypsy character of the artel would be lost. Speaking in more general terms, the joint opinion was that Gypsies should not be encapsulated as a community in all public areas.

The last document published above is the manuscript of Nikolay Pankov. It is interesting above all because in some respect it moves away from the official discourse in regard to the Theatre Romen adopted in both the Gypsy and the mainstream press. Within the framework of this official discourse, the Romen theatre plays have been welcomed from different perspectives: the unveiling of class struggles in the Gypsy community, underlining the importance of Soviet policy towards the Gypsies, and especially in the context of the fight against the *tsyganshchina*.

The author, Nikolay Pankov, agrees with all of this but criticised the Theatre Romen from another perspective. In his manuscript, he discussed the extent to which the theatre reflects the typical and authentic ethnographic characteristics of the Gypsy community, both as a whole and in individual details. Nowadays, it is possible that this approach would be considered by many authors in the field of Romani studies as essentialism or exoticism, or both. In fact, it represents a typical and legitimate ethnonational discourse (in this case a Gypsy discourse) about national art (in this case the theatre). This is very clear in the author's calls for the Gypsy Theatre to be on the first place an ethnic, national theatre, that will educate the Gypsy masses in this national spirit.

Looking at the published texts, it is clear that they reflect the basic visions for solving the problems of their people's present. There is no reason to think that here is a forced imposition from the 'outside' of concepts foreign and unacceptable to Gypsies. On the contrary, it is obvious, that all of such 'outside' ideas are rethought and re-conceptualised through the point of view of the community, and more specifically of its elite, which was the main generator of visions for its future.

Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov

12.3 Letters

12.3.1 *A Letter from Khutor Krikunovo*

Приветственное письмо

27-го декабря 1926 г.

Дорогим товарищем Всероссийского Союза Цыган Ромэн от национального общества граждан группы ромэн хутора Крикунова.

Мы все группы ромэн приветствуем вас дорогие товарищи Всероссийского союза цыган, как Вы первые вступили в защиту нашей национальности цыган, где и организовали Союз, что мы и увидели. Дорогие товарищи, из Вашего письма, которое мы получили от 01.XII.1926 г. [мы поняли], что нам уже дорога при Советской власти открыта и наши первые товарищи цыгане находятся на местах, где и все вообще национальности, что и приветствуем только советскую власть товарищей коммунаров за правильное ведение порядка жизни в России.

Теперь, дорогие товарищи, опишем мы Вам о первом вступлении нашей жизни на оседлость, т.к. мы проживали с давних пор в окружности Донской области, вступили с первых дней в ряды красных партизан в феврале мес[яце] 1918 г. и прослужили в Красной армии до окончания кровавой революции, возвратились домой, начали задумываться о жизни, т. к. Красная армия дала нам понять, что такое есть жизнь человека. Мы, как красноармейцы, стали съезжаться со всеми семействами по 3-4 семьи, в одно место, где проводили свои собрания часто о своей оседлости, жизни, ну, т. к. мы не так были знакомы в первое вступление на новую жизнь, темнота нас одолевала, не зная куда и как обратиться, но думая, что Советская власть, эта власть наша, и она пойдет всегда к нам навстречу, т. к. и у нас является сильная охота к общей жизни трудящихся граждан и мы с большим стремлением и желанием собрали свой сбор, избрали себе организатора, уполномочив его своим сбором, которым оказался избранным Крикунов, Александр Павлович, который и принял на себя обязанность с большой охотой организовать свой национальный хутор, стал убеждать всех тех, которые по своей темноте не сознавали еще лучшей оседлой жизни, когда нас организовалось не так большое количество: несколько семей, т.е. – граждан Крикуновых, Щербаковых и Лиманских, то и пошли слухи о цыганском хуторе, стали к нам прибывать со всех сторон цыгане с просьбой их приписать к оседлой жизни, начали мы обращаться к властям об отпуске участков под землеустройство. На нас было обращено внимание со стороны администрации, внимание слабое, требовали правильно данные документы, нам их было трудно достать, т. к. Вы сами знаете, какое на нас было раньше внимание, но все-таки, благодаря некоторым товарищам из администрации, давали нам наставления – куда обратиться и как поступить. С большим трудом доставали правильные документы и толкались во все стороны, пока добились своей цели, что и произошел наш Сел[ьский] Округ о нашем желании на оседлость нашей жизни, где и разрешили нам строится на участке No. 23 при Верхне-Верховловском совете на балке Куберле и где мы и остановились на жительство, заключив договор под землеустройство. С нас взяли за договор по рублю 53 коп[еек] с души.

Землеустройство у нас еще не проходило, мы еще на земле [не] устроены. В первое начало нас организовалось 20 дворов и где нам разрешили занимать землю с участка No. 23 – 700 десятин на 20 дворов, т.е. на 87 душ. А всего участка No. 23 находится 3 722 душ, которые находится под долгосрочной арендой, сняты на 12 лет. А к нам еще приписано 25 семей, т.е. 92 души и с каждым днем прибывает все новые граждане и просятся в наше общество, а нам РИК [Районный исполнительный комитет] зимовники не разрешает принимать без ведома района, но так мы еще не так развиты, не зная правил и заходим в тупик. Просим утвердить за нами весь участок No. 23, т. к. в нас большое желание организовать чисто-национальный хутор и к нам все больше и больше прибывают наши братья, но нам участка не утверждают и мы теперь в тупике, не зная принимать таковых [...] желательно было бы даже дать клич своим братьям кочевникам, а не отказывать, что мы просим Вас позаботиться о своих братьях, которые еще живут в темноте дикой жизни.

Теперь дорогие товарищи пропишем мы Вам о своей жизни, как мы здесь живем. Группа наша состоит более бедняцкого населения сословия, как Вам наверно известно, что при нас то и у нас начали строиться с весны [19]26 года. Поставили себе 10 жилых помещений, находятся в тех помещениях по 3-4 семьи в одном помещении, а больше у нас сил не хватило, то и оставили до следующей весны, а нас 45 семей, т.е. 179 душ. Помощи нам нет и не знаем, куда обратиться за помощью, а своих сил не хватает и не в силах землеустроиться, трудно, дорогие товарищи, приходится землеустроиваться в первое начало на новой жизни, но все-таки дорогие товарищи, как не трудно нам приходится, но думаем перенести все трудности и остаться на новой жизни, как гласит жить теперь советская власть и уверяем Вас товарищи, что покажем пример своим отсталым товарищам новой жизни. При помощи Вашего наставления надеемся на Вас дорогие товарищи, что Вы не забудете о нас, дадите нам совет и наставления в нашей новой жизни, которую мы так жаждем и сладостно принялись за нее.

Теперь пропишем Вам товарищи о своем богатстве, т.е. о живом и мертвом инвентаре. У нас имеются 15 лошадей, 7 коров, 2 быка, 2 верблюда и уже у некоторых есть куры, гуси, свиньи и т.д. это будет на всю нашу группу, т.е. 45 семей, а мертвый инвентарь есть, как Вам известно и самим, у кого есть лошадь, то и цыганская повозка, больше ничего нет, но думаем приобрести по мере возможности.

Еще сообщаем мы Вам, товарищ Таранов, что у нашей [группы] состоят Григорий и Василий Тарановы, [и] к будущей весне ожидаем ихнего приезда. Теперь сообщаем мы Вам, что письмо мы Ваше получили, за которое мы Вам очень и очень благодарны, с которого мы узнали, что у нас есть Союз Цыган и как мы были рады с трепетом его читали на общем Собрании. У каждого в груди зажигалась искра и прокатывалась по лицу слеза и мы видели снова, что у нас есть товарищи, которые не забывают о нас, до этого мы не знали ничего и о нас наверно никто не знал, то и просим Вас дорогие товарищи широко оповестить в газетах о нашей группе и дайте клич нашим братьям цыганам вступить им в оседлость, как мы и просим Вас о всем о том сообщите нам, будем ожидать совета с большим нетерпением.

С приветом к Вам товарищи Общество Граждан группы цыган хутора Крикунова и уполномоченный хутора группы цыган Крикунов, А. П.

Адрес наш: Донская область, Сальский округ, Сев[еро]-Кав[казский] Край, ст[аница] Двойная, Орловское почт[овое] отд[еление], В[ерхне]-Верхоломский сельсовет, хутор Крикунова, группа цыган, Крикунову, А. И.

27.XII.1926 г.

С подлинным верно ... [подпись, печать Всероссийского Союз Цыган]

::

A Welcome Letter

December 27, 1926

To the dear comrades from the All-Russian Union of Gypsies *Romen* [1] from the National Association of Citizens from the group *Romen* from the *khutor* Krikunovo.

We, all groups of Roma, welcome you dear friends from the All-Russian Union of Gypsies as the first who have stood up in defence of our Gypsy nationality and have organised the Union which we saw. Dear comrades, from Your letter which we received on 01.12.1926 we realised that, for us, the route is already opened by the Soviet Authority and that our first comrades, Gypsies, are at the same place as all nationalities, and that is why we solely welcome the comrades of the Soviet Authority of the Communards for the proper maintaining of the life order in Russia.

Now, dear comrades, we will describe for You [2] the first entrance in our life towards sedentarisation, because for a long time we have been living in the Don Region; from the early days, we joined the lines of the Red Partisans [3] in the month of February 1918 and served the Red Army until the end of the bloody Revolution; we returned home and began to ponder about life because the Red Army gave us the possibility to understand what human life is like. We, as members of the Red Army, started to gather together with our whole families in groups of 3-4 families in one place, where we conducted our meetings; we spoke often about our sedentarisation, about our life as we were not so much aware about our first steps into the new life; darkness enveloped us, we did not know where to look for help, however, we thought that the Soviet Authority, that is our Authority, will always welcome us because a strong desire appeared in us concerning the common life of the working citizens, and we with great aspiration and desire we organised our own gathering, chose an organiser, commissioned him through our gathering, those elected being Krikunov, Aleksandar Pavlovich who, with great drive, took up the responsibility to organise our national khutor and began to persuade all of those who, because of their darkness, have still not realised how much better the settled life is [4]. When we were not yet organised in such big numbers, we were several families, i.e. the citizens Krikunovi, Sherbakovi and Limansky, and rumours started to spread around about our Gypsy khutor; Gypsies from all around the country began to come over with requests to enrol them in the settled life, so we started to turn towards the authorities for allocating plots of land for land settlement. The administration paid attention to us, the attention was weak, they wanted that the documents be filled in properly and it was difficult for us to get them, because You know yourselves what was the attention we used to receive before; nevertheless, thanks to several comrades from the administration who gave us directions – where to go and what to do we were able to achieve this. With great struggles, we received the right documents and pushed everywhere until we reached our goal, so that in our village of Okrug our desire to settle down is well known; this is where they allowed us to settle in the plot No. 23 at the Verkhne-Verkhlovskiy Council at the

Kuberle *balka* [5] and where we permanently settled down to live with a contract for land settlement. For the contract, they charged us 1 Rouble and 53 Kopeyki per person.

The land settlement is not finalised, as we have still not settled down on the land. Initially, 20 yards were organised where they allowed us to occupy land from plot No 23 – 700 *desyatin* for 20 yards, i.e. for 87 people. While on the whole plot No. 23 there are 3,722 people who are renting long-term, fixed for 12 years. While there are 25 families who are listed in, i.e. 92 people and each day arrive new citizens and beg to be let in our association, the Rayon Executive Committee does not allow us to accept winterers without the knowledge of the rayon; however, because we are still not that advanced, we do not know the rules and enter into a deadlock. We are asking the whole plot No. 23 to be allocated to us as we have a great willingness to organise a pure nationalities' khutor and more and more of our brothers come to us, but the plot is not authorised for us and we are now in a deadlock, not being aware how to accept such [...] [6]; it would even be good to invite our nomad brothers, and not to reject them, and that is why we ask You to take care of our own brothers who are still living in the darkness of the wildlife.

Now, dear comrades, we will describe to You our life, how we live here. Our group is composed of the poorer population and, as you may be aware, we began to settle since the spring of 1926 [7]. We built 10 residential premises for ourselves; in these premises, there one can find 3-4 families in one room, as we did not have enough strength to build more and that is why we left it for the next spring, and we are 45 families, i.e. 179 people. and we ensure you, comrades, that we will give an example of the new life to our underdeveloped comrades. With the help of your instructions, we count on you, dear comrades, that you will not forget about us, that you will give us advice and instructions in our new life, for which we are so thirsty and which we sweetly embarked on.

We will now, comrades, describe for You our wealth, i.e. our livestock and immovable inventory. We have 15 horses, 7 cows, 2 oxen, 2 camels [8] and some already have hens, ducks, pigs, etc., and that is all for our whole group, i.e. 45 families, while there is also immovable inventory, as it is well-known to You, whoever has a horse has a Gypsy carriage, nothing else; but we intend to get more, according to our possibilities.

Also, we also inform You, Comrade Taranov, that our group includes Grigoriy and Vasiliy Taranovs, and that in the next spring we expect their arrival. Now, we announce to You, that we received Your letter, for which we are very, very grateful, from which we learnt that we have a Union of the Gypsies, and how happy we were, we were reading it with such a thrill at our general Gathering. In each person's chest ignited a spark and there were tears rolling down on their face, and we saw again that we have comrades that do not forget about us; by then, we did not know anything about You and probably nobody knew anything about us, and that is why we ask You, dear comrades, to inform widely about our group in the newspapers and to invite our Gypsy brothers to settle down as we also ask You let us know about all of this; we will be eagerly looking forward to the advice.

With greetings to You, comrades, from the Association of the citizens from a group of Gypsies from khutor Krikunovo and the group of Gypsies commissioned by the khutor A. P. Krikunov.

Our address: Donskaya Oblast, Salskiy Okrug, North-Caucasus Kray, Train Station Dvoynaya, Orlovsky Post office, Verne-Verkholomski Village Council, Khutor Krikunovo [9], group of Gypsies, to A. I. Krikunov.

27.12.1926.

True with the original ... [signature, stamp of the All-Russian Union of the Gypsies] [10].

Notes

1. In this case, there is a duplication of the ethnonym 'Gypsies' and 'Roma' in Russian and Romani, the word Roma is used as an adjective.
2. Usage of Capital Letter in addressing somebody in letters is a rule in the Russian language. It is used as a form of polite treatment. We keep it also in the English translation because here it came to underline the respect of the writers of the recipients of the letter.
3. Red Partisans – irregular armed units involved in the Russian Civil War.
4. This is a very long sentence which in translation loses clarity and its core meaning. We intentionally kept here and below in translation the long phrases of the original in order to reflect the style of the authors.
5. *Balka* (балка) – the bed of a dried-up river.
6. Illegible text.
7. In some publications, the founding of khutor Krikunov is dated in the spring of 1925 (Друц & Гесслер, 1990, p. 287; O'Keeffe, 2013, p. 152).
8. The camels in some places in Southern Russia, in particular those in the regions adjacent to the settlements of Kalmyks, are used in agriculture.
9. Khutor Krikunovo does not exist today.
10. The published text is not an original letter from khutor Krikunovo, and his type-written copy was made by the administration of All-Russian Union of Gypsies.

Source: GARF, f. P 3316, op. 20, d. 653, l. 22-24.

Prepared for publication by Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov.

12.3.2 *The Gypsy Cavalry Division*

[Бланк] С.С.С.Р. Народный Комиссариат по Военным и Морским делам.

Начальник Главного Управления Рабоче-Крестьянской Красной Армии.

30 августа 1927 г., No. 108901.

Председателю Всероссийского Союза Цыган тов[арищу] Таранову.

Москва, Старый Гостинный двор, Помещение 54.

Народный Комиссар по военным и морским делам т. Ворошилов приказал сообщить Вам, что он считает предложение б[ывшего] командира Красной Армии Н. М. Бизев о сформировании цыганской кавалерийской дивизии несостоятельным, так как ежегодный призывной контингент цыганского населения весьма мал для создания такого крупного войскового соединения, каким является дивизия.

Зам. Начальник Главного Управления Р.К.К.А. ... [подпись].

::

[Letterhead] USSR. People's Commissariat for Military and Naval Affairs.
 Head of the Main Directorate of the R.K.K.A. (Workers' and Peasants' Red Army).
 30 August 1927, No. 108901.

To the Chairman of the All-Russian Union of Gypsies, Comrade Taranov.
 Moscow, Old Gostiny Dvor, Room 54.

The People's Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs, Comrade Voroshilov, ordered to inform you that he considers the proposal of the former Red Army commander N. M. Bizev to form a Gypsy cavalry division untenable, since the annual conscription contingent of the Gypsy population is too small to create such a large military force, that is the division.

Deputy Head of the Main Directorate R.K.K.A. ... [signature].

Notes

1. About Nikolay Timofeevich Bizev (Biz-Labza), see above.
2. The letter written by N. T. Bizev was not found, but from the official response of the leadership of the Red Army (and on behalf of its higher institution), it became clear what its content was – a proposal to create a separate Gypsy cavalry division.

Source: GARF, f. P 1235, op. 121, d. 31, l. 278.

Prepared for publication by Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov.

12.3.3 A Letter to M. I. Kalinin

Председателю Центрального Исполнительного Комитета Союза ССР
 М. И. Калинин

От курсанта ВКСС имени т. Киселева А. С. – т. Герасимова И. Я.
 Члена ВКП(б), по нац[иональности] цыгана.

В процессе практической работы инструктором нац[ионального] отдела Зап[адного] облисполкома при проведении работы по оседанию цыган, я убедился, что райисполкомы, сельсоветы и имеющиеся цыганские колхозы на местах не в состоянии удовлетворить требования кочующих и работающих на разной сезонной работе цыган, желающих перейти на оседлый образ жизни.

Вот примеры, подтверждающие вышесказанное.

Весной 1934 года в цыганский колхоз "Октябрь" (Зап[адная] обл[асть]) со стороны кочевников цыган было подано более 100 заявлений на предмет приема их в колхоз, который, исходя из расчета наличия земельной площади, принял только 9 семей, остальным отказал и они пошли на сезонные работы, часть продолжает жизнь по старому. Такое положение наблюдается и в других районах и областях.

Сейчас идет массовое оседание цыган в колхозах и кроме того, они целыми таборами идут работать на разные сезонные стройки (г. Смоленск).

Летом 1934 года на территории г. Смоленска (Зап[адной] обл[асти]) находилось цыган-кочевников до 400 семей, которые помещались в поле, в палатках; работая на разных сезонных работах. Все они неграмотные.

Советы среди них не ведут культурно-воспитательной работы, не борются с укorenившимися в них пережитками. Дети этих цыган школьного возраста не охвачены школой, только в двух таборах таких детей насчитывается 30 чел.

С наступлением осенних холодов рабочие цыгане вынуждены будут бросить свою работу, так как в полевых палатках они не смогут продолжать свою жизнь и работу на стройке. Жилища им не подготовлены и т.д. В районах и с[ельских]/советах недостаточно уделяется внимание вопросу по оседанию кочующих цыган. Я считаю необходимым сейчас издавать среди цыган газету на родном языке, которая явится мобилизирующим органом в деле перехода их с кочевого образа жизни на оседлый, к сожалению этого еще нет.

Крайне необходимо сейчас для цыган отвести административно-территориальную единицу, хотя-бы в виде небольшого района и снабдить этот нац[иональный] район соответствующими кадрами. Ведь среди нас, цыган – имеется много коммунистов, комсомольцев и кроме этого много цыган, учащихся в средних и высших учебных заведениях. Все эти кадры могут вполне обеспечить руководство на отведенной территории.

Мы имеем неплохие образцы существующих цыганских колхозов, а некоторые из них являются показательными в районе по проведению хоз. полит. кампаний, что подтверждают данные показатели цыганского колхоза “Октябрь” (прилагается).

Исходя от вышеизложенного, я прошу Вас поставить вопрос по оседанию цыган кочевников в разрезе выделения спец[иальной] цыганской территории в виде района и издание газеты на цыганском языке.

... [подпись] (Герасимов, И[лья] Я[ковлевич]).

9 Ноября 1934 года.

Москва, Лубянский проезд, 19.

ВКСС имени т. Киселева А.С.

::

To the Chairman of the Central Executive Committee of USSR M. I. Kalinin.

From the cadet in VKSS named after comrade Kiselev [1] – comrade I. Ya. Gerasimov.

A member of VKP(b), a Gypsy by nationality.

In the process of doing practical work as an instructor in the National Department of Western Oblast Executive Committee, while conducting work concerning the

sedentarisation of the Gypsies, I became convinced that the regional executive committees, village councils and the existing Gypsy kolkhozes in the localities are not in a position to satisfy the requirements of the Gypsies who are travelling and working various seasonal work, and who want to move to a sedentary way of life.

Here are examples that confirm the above-mentioned.

In the spring of 1934 in the Gypsy kolkhoz *October* (Western Oblast) there were more than 100 applications from the nomadic Gypsies for their acceptance in the kolkhoz which, based on the calculation on the available land plots, has accepted only 9 families while it has rejected the rest, so that they have gone to [do] seasonal work, while part of them continue to live their lives in the old-fashioned way. A similar situation is observed also in other rayons and oblasts.

Now, there is a mass sedentarisation of the Gypsies in the kolkhozes and, besides this, they go, in their whole tabors, to work on different seasonal construction sites (the city of Smolensk).

In the summer of 1934, on the territory of the town of Smolensk (Western Oblast), there were 400 families of nomad Gypsies nomad who were camping on the field, in tents, working different seasonal jobs. All of them are illiterate.

The Soviet institutions do not do cultural-educational work among them, they do not fight with their internalised remnants. The children of these Gypsies who are of school age are not included in schools; only in two tabors, the number of such children is 30.

With the arrival of the cold weather in the fall, the working Gypsies will be forced to abandon their work as they could not continue their lives living in tents on the fields and working on the construction sites. Housing has not been prepared for them etc. In the rayons and the village councils, there is insufficient attention paid to the question of the sedentarisation of the Gypsy nomads. I deem it appropriate now that a newspaper be issued in their native tongue which will be a mobilising organ in the work towards their transition towards a settled way of life. Unfortunately, however, this is still not the case.

Now, it is utterly necessary for an administrative-territorial unit to be allocated for the Gypsies, at least in the fashion of a small rayon, and this national rayon to be supported with the necessary cadres. In the end, among us, the Gypsies, there are many Communists, Komsomol members, in addition to this, there are many Gypsies who study in secondary schools and in high education. All these cadres could provide the management of the separate regions.

We do have not bad examples of the existing Gypsy kolkhozes and some of them appear to be exemplary in conducting economic and political campaigns in the rayon, which is confirmed by the indicators provided for the Gypsy kolkhoz *October* (they are attached).

Based on what was said above, I ask you to bring up the matter of the sedentarisation of the nomadic Gypsies, having in mind dedicating a special Gypsy territory in the form of a rayon, as well as issuing a Gypsy language newspaper.

... [Signature] (Ilya Yakovlevich Gerasimov [2]).

9 November 1934.

Moscow, Lubyansky proyezd, 19.

VKSS named after comrade A. S. Kiselev

Notes

1. Sergei A. Kiselev (1879-1937) was a Soviet party and state figure, Secretary of VTsIK.

2. About Ilya Gerasimov see for more details below.

Source: GARF, f. P 1235, op. 123, d. 28, l. 368-369.

Prepared for publication by Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov.

12.3.4 *A Petition from the Gypsy Nomads*

Копия

ВЦИК, Отдел Национальностей.

От табора кочующих цыган близ города Иваново.

Ходатайство

Мы – нацмены, цыгане, кочевники, не имеющие определенного местожительства и территории, желаем быть оседлыми, иметь определенное местожительство и собственную территорию в виде цыг[анского] района. [Желаем] активно работать на социалистических полях и промышленности, и когда будет создан цыганский район, мы также будем работать в промышленности и сельском хозяйстве, как другие автономные области.

Мы, кочевники-цыгане осознали, что только социалистический труд дает право быть честным гражданином Советского Союза, а поэтому мы просим отвести нам местность всем нацмен-кочевникам цыганам поселки.

И свои районы наша молодежь желает иметь оседлость и также учебу и стать полезным работникам социалистического отечества.

Мы знаем, что наша кочевая жизнь ничего не дает нам хорошего. Просим Отдел Национальностей ВЦИК походатайствовать перед правительством об отводе территории для цыган.

К сему просители цыгане от имени табора в количестве 20 семей.

К сему подписи и ряда желающих неграмотных кочевников цыган иметь свою территорию.

29 Июля 1935 г.

Копия верна: От[дел] Нац[иональностей] ВЦИК – Секретарь [...]. 3.VIII.[19]35 г.

∴

Copy [1]

[To] VTsIK, Department of Nationalities.

From tabor of nomadic Gypsies near the city of Ivanovo.

Petition

We – national minorities, Gypsies, nomads who do not have a specific residence and territory, wish to be sedentary, have a certain place of residence and our own territory in the form of a Gypsy rayon. We wish to work actively in the socialist fields and industry, and when the Gypsy rayon is created, we will also work in industry and agriculture, like other autonomous regions.

We, the nomadic Gypsies, have realised that only the socialist labour gives a right to be an honest citizen of the Soviet Union, and so we ask to be allocated a territory, to give settlements to all national minority – nomadic Gypsies.

And in our rayons, our youth wants to have settled areas and also study and become useful workers of the socialist fatherland.

We know that our nomadic life does not give us anything good.

We ask the Department of Nationalities of the VTsIK to intercede to the government for the allocation of the territory for the Roma.

To this, the Gypsy petitioners write on behalf of the camp amounting to 20 families.

To this signature are added also a number [2] of illiterate Gypsy nomads wishing to have their own territory.

29 July 1935 [3].

Copy true with original: IN VTsIK – Segretary ... [*signature indecipherable*]. 3.08. [19]35 r.

Notes

1. The letter has two variants – a handwritten original and a typewritten copy with handwritten additions in places. The typewritten copy is published here because the original is written with many misspellings and is difficult to decipher.
2. In addition to the typed copy, 8 original signatures were placed in the original.
3. The date in the original is omitted in the typewritten copy.

Source: GARF, f. P 1235, op. 130, d. 5, l. 85-86.

Prepared for publication by Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov.

12.3.5 *The Memorandum to Stalin from Trofim Gerasimov*

Дорогому вождю партии и рабочего класса – тов[арищу] СТАЛИНУ Иосифу Виссарионовичу.

От инженера Герасимова Трофима Яковлевича.

Докладная записка

Три месяца тому назад меня мобилизовали по приказу тов[арища] Орджоникидзе на вагоностроительный завод им[ени] газеты “Правды” (Запорожье-Каменское, Днепропетровской области) на выполнение Вашего (сталинского) заказа по вагоностроению. Ясно, этот весьма важный заказ будет безоговорочно досрочно выполнен.

До этого времени я работал на автозаводе им[ени] Сталина (Вашего имени в Москве) по созданию автомашин. Здесь мы работали крепко под руководством нашей партии, мы сумели одолеть американскую технику и создать свою машину “ЗИС” 5-6 лучшую машину. Последнюю работу я выполнял по конструкции легкой машины ЗИС 101. Я работал с группой специалистов над блоком цилиндра.

Вот что дала мне партия большевиков, советская власть.

В настоящее время я не только специалист, но и член ВКП(б) с 1927 года.

Кто я раньше был?

Цыган-кочевник, странствовал с табором с места на место. После этого я батрачил три года, а потом комсомол, школа, партия и ответственная работа социалистической стройки, и в последнее время выполняю Ваш заказ, дорогой Иосиф Виссарионович, по вагоностроению.

Цыганская национальность была особенно гонима царским правительством, как и все раннее угнетенные народности цыгане не имели постоянного местожительства и переезжали с места на место со своими жалкими пожитками.

На каждом переулке можно было услышать не только “цыганская морда”, но и зачастую избивали, начиная от сельского старосты деревни и кончая всей жандармерией.

Только партия большевиков, которую Вы олицетворяете (руководите), дала равнoprавие каждой народности.

Благодаря Вашему, Иосиф Виссарионович, правильному руководству, как мировой вождем партии большевиков, цыганская народность выросла на основе национальной политики нашей партии большевиков. Немало цыганских колхозов по Советскому Союзу, и многие из этих колхозов не только середняцкие, но уже зажиточные (“Красный Октябрь”, “Ромоно джиетэн”, “Нево дрям”, “Лули чергэн” и многие другие). Например, в одной Западной области имеется восемь цыганских колхозов, имеются клубы и школа-семилетка, которая в этом учебном году будет десятилетней. Имеются цыганские артели. Не говоря уже о других областях и республиках.

Недостаток этих всех колхозов заключается в том, что их площадь слишком мала и при всей возможности эти колхозы не в силах расшириться за счет других окружающих колхозов.

Пример. Колхоз “Красный Октябрь”, организован в 1928 г. В 1930-1931 г. колхоз выполнил фин[ансовый] план на 200% (план 400 р[ублей], выполнено 800 р[ублей]), государственные заготовки выполнены на 100%.

В 1932 г. колхоз за весенний сев и уборочную кампанию был премирован громкоговорителем и денежной суммой 500 руб[лей]. В 1933 г. за сельскохозяйственную выставку в районе премирован картофелекопалкой и денежной суммой 350 рублей. В 1934 г. план хлебосдачи и натуроплаты выполнил на 100% (дано 128 цен[тера], выполнено 128 цен[теров]).

В начале подготовки весенней посевной кампании цыганский колхоз заключил соцдоговор с соседним колхозом “Авангард”, на лучшее проведение весеннего сева и уборки.

В результате цыганский колхоз закончил весенний сев первым, взяв соревнующийся колхоз на буксир.

К 1935 г. цыганский колхоз ликвидировал полностью неграмотность. Вся школьная молодежь охвачена школьным образованием, начиная от начальной школы и кончая семилеткой. Помимо этого 18 студентов в Мединституте, 3 студента в Пединституте, 2 студента в ВКСХШ [Высшая коммунистическая сельскохозяйственная школа], 1 человек на курсах советского строительства ВЦИК. Помимо этого данный колхоз немало дал специалистов с высшим образованием стране, которые являются командирами на заводах, фабриках и на социалистических полях.

В колхозе имеется комсомольская ячейка в количестве 15 комсомольцев.

Дорогой Иосиф Виссарионович! Я не стану перечислять уйму достижений этого маленького колхоза, но скажу, что он делается таким, каким Вы говорили на съезде колхозников “колхозы должны быть большевистскими, а колхозники зажиточными”. Партия осуществляет великие проблемы, которой Вы руководите.

Цыганская народность на примере, на фактах убедилась, что наилучшая жизнь в колхозе, на заводах и фабриках. Следовательно, трудящиеся кочевые цыгане всеми силами стремятся бросить свой кочевой образ жизни. Например, в этот же колхоз “Красный Октябрь” весной 1934 г. было подано от 100 семейств заявление о их приеме, и колхоз из расчета земельной площади принял только 9 семей, а остальным отказал в приеме, т.к. колхоз не мог расширить свою площадь за счет окружающих колхозов. Остро ставился вопрос расширения площади земельной перед районной и областными организациями, но конкретного ничего не достигнуто. Такое же явление в каждом цыганском колхозе.

Другой пример. Весной за 1934 год около 800 семей цыган работали на всевозможных сезонных работах, располагаясь вокруг Смоленска в шатрах. Эти трудящиеся кочевники-цыгане не могли осесть, т.к. поздней осенью они вынуждены уехать, хотя последние настоятельно требовали, путем ходатайства, о предоставлении жилплощади, но и из этого ничего не сделали конкретно, т.к. организации к этому вопросу отнеслись бездушно и многочисленному населению цыганскому пришлось вести – продолжать кочевой образ жизни, вопреки своему желанию.

Организация национальных колхозов, из трудящихся цыган за период 1933-34 г. и конечно за 1935 годы, явилась массовым явлением, причем усиленное наступление переход на оседлый образ жизни.

Со стороны не только районных, но и областных и республиканских организаций, я считаю что проявлена полная недооценка национальной политики нашей партии. Сотни имеются фактов, когда по сотне семей трудящихся цыган соединялись в одно, образовывая колхозы, выделив ходоков, которые ходили оббивали пороги не только в районные организации, но и в областные, проедали свои пожитки к зиме и в итоге ничего не добивались. За период 1933 и 1934 г. не мало ходоков приезжало в Москву в Наркомзем РСФСР и ставили эти ходоки перед Наркомом т. Лисицыным с жалобами и с просьбами о предоставлении цыганским колхозам земли, были ходоки из Центрально-Черноземной области, БССР, с Поволжского края, Воронежской области и ряд других областей.

Да и не только ходоки приезжали в Москву, но и цыгане приезжали целыми таборами, располагались вокруг Москвы и требовали у Наркомзема РСФСР земельной площади. Такое явление особо было обнаружено в 1933 году. В этом 1933 была переполнена Московская область таборами цыган. Это вполне понятно, ибо в это время была поголовная тяга-желание трудящихся крестьян вступить в колхозы. Цыганское население имело большое желание перейти на оседлый образ жизни и, не найдя на местах никакой не только помощи, но и не получив указания, цыганские таборы вынуждены были приехать в Москву с ходатайством в центральные земельные органы. Например. МОЗО не могло переселить цыган которые с весны с 1-го мая организовались в два колхоза. Из-за косности МОЗО, недооценки национального вопроса не была доведена работа до конца. Все было готово, но у МОЗО не было средств перевести этих колхозников в Ваневский район и два колхоза были вынуждены не добившись никаких результатов продолжать кочевой образ жизни.

Густое заполнение окраин Москвы и самого города цыганскими таборами, административные органы вынуждены были административно выселить цыган из Московской зоны. 1934 год тяга цыган перейти на оседлость еще больше увеличилась. 1935 г. эта тяга еще с большей силой нарастает, но конкретных результатов нет, организации цыганских колхозов.

Отдел Национальностей ВЦИКа по цыганскому вопросу конкретного ничего не имеет. Серьезно цыганским вопросом он еще не занялся, как это полагается на сегодняшний день. Правда, кое-что в Отделе Национальности ВЦИКа есть. Имеется инструктор, который ведет работу не только по цыганской народности, но и по другими национальностям – тов. Токмаков, член ВКП(б) с 1925 г., по национальности цыган. В общем, по моему, кроме выездов, знакомства и увязки кое-каких вопросов Отдел Национальности не имеет. Это доказано тем, что он не мог подействовать на МОЗО, чтобы оно два колхоза, которые в свое время были организованы, довели бы дело до конца. Это во-первых. Во вторых, ежегодная и ежедневная неувязка на местах, как было выше упомянуто, в отдельных республиках и областях в деле

оседания цыган, что приводило, как мною уже приведено, к приезду ходоков и целых таборов в центральные органы Наркомзема. Мимо, по моему, Отдела Национальностей проходят вопросы динамического содержания стремления перехода цыган на оседлость. В этом деле, по моему, Отдел Национальностей не только не мог, воздействуя на местные организации, скорее осесть трудящимся цыганам на оседлость, но по моему, Отдел Национальностей ВЦИКа не имел эту зону деятельности.

Достижения Отдела национальностей ВЦИКа по цыганскому вопросу это – создать газету на цыганском языке, как это уже имеет Северо-Кавказский край. Эта газета явилась бы прямым, самым быстрейшим проводником социалистической стройки национальной цыганской культуры. Но президиум ВЦИКа не поставил, как это подобает, перед ЦК партии вопрос о разрешении выпуска своей национальной газеты. Газета была бы сигналом, рупором, прямым руслом связи между всеми цыганскими колхозами, артелями, клубами, цыганскими школами и благодаря чему все лучшие опыты лучших работ передавались бы друг другу, изживая все недостатки, не говоря уже о том, что колхозы, клубы, артели знали бы друг друга.

Вопрос с газетой тлеет (не разрешается) уже два года, в то время как она нужна еще часто, ежеминутно.

Еще весьма важный вопрос, это вопрос, о выделении цыганского района в начале, которой должен разрастись и превратиться в автономную цыганскую республику. По моему этот вопрос, настолько насущный на сегодня, что я лично не нахожу другого выхода, который бы послужил быстрее этого вопроса, построить национальную социалистическую республику. Вопрос на сегодня до крайнего предела назрел, о необходимости, о компактном заселении цыган.

По моему этот район целесообразно создать на Северном Кавказе, где уже имеется цыганский сельсовет.

В районе, где будут заселены цыгане можно вести во всех социалистических разрезах воспитание людей. Здесь конденсировать всю культуру с высоко колоритным содержанием. Имеющую нашу уже национальную литературу трудно распространить и она пылится на складах, а при компактном заселении, литература будет пущена в ход, в массы. Район будет сразу заселен и он разрастется в республику. Пример, который, я привел с колхозом “Октябрь”, достаточно ясно, говорит за то, что заселение-оседания трудящихся цыган очень велик. Имеющие колхозы с большим желанием поедут в отведенный район, и это даст возможность ликвидировать цыганские табора.

Есть ли у нас свои национальные кадры? Да, есть и в достаточном количестве, различных специальностей, эти кадры партийным процентом имеют удельный вес, так что и с этой точки зрения можно без всякого риска пойти на организацию цыганского района.

Этот вопрос обсуждается в Отделе Национальностей ВЦИКа, давно но он по моему теплится нерешительностью постановкой этого вопроса столь важного

на повестку дня и ходатайствовать перед соответствующими организациями об отводе цыганского района.

Я над этим вопросом много думал и считаю, что в настоящее время он должен быть теперь разрешен. Многие товарищи этот вопрос думали ставить перед Отделом Национальностей с 1928 года, но я, и многие другие были не согласны, считая, что этот вопрос еще далеко не подготовлен, т.к. сама масса трудящихся цыган не чувствовала потребности к переходу на оседлый образ жизни. Это во-первых, а, во-вторых, из цыганской национальности не было достаточно количество кадров-сталинцев, которые бы под руководством партии выполнили возложенные функции партийей.

В данное время эту функцию кадры из цыганской национальности под руководством партии выполняют и национальная цыганская социалистическая культура быстро с большевистскими темпами стала бы расти. На основе ликвидации цыганских таборов, была бы ликвидирована цыганская буржуазия и кулачество, которые эксплуатируют трудящихся цыган в таборах, где отсутствует партийное и советское око.

На сегодняшний день десятки тысяч людей, благодаря своей таборной жизни не являются помощниками выполнения нашего пятилетнего плана. Эта армия еще не прикладывает труда на наше общее дело, дело построения социализма.

При организации района, который с великой быстротой превратится в автономную цыганскую республику, эта армия трудящихся цыган станет прямым проводником социалистической стройки – нашей прямой и главной задачи.

Интересный факт. В конце 1934 г. был представитель английский в цыганском клубе, который говорил: “Я не ожидал, чтобы цыгане могли быть специалистами и вообще культурными людьми. Никто не поверит в Англии, чтобы у цыган была письменность, театр, техникум и т.д. У нас в Англии считают это дикое племя не способным проявлять культурное начало даже.”

Представитель на фактах был убежден, что партия большевиков предоставила права (равноправие) для каждой национальности, благодаря которым ранее отсталые народности за короткий промежуток времени культурно выросли, строя социалистическую национальную культуру.

Дорогой Иосиф Виссарионович! Я написал Вам докладную записку с тем расчетом, чтобы Вы столкнули это дело с мертвой точки. Мне кажется, что я не ошибаюсь в этих вопросах. Что я правильно подошел к разрешению последних. Ведь окончательное оседание цыганской народности имеет большое значение в мировом политическом разрезе, не говоря уже о том, что десятки тысяч людей вольются в нашу социалистическую страну, которые еще, к сожалению, странствуют с таборами по нашим полям или насиживают загородные свалки, ютятся около городов, не участвуя в нашей жизни.

А теперь я пару замечаний сообщу Вам относительно нашего завода, вернее о своем цехе. [...]

Вот на этом я и кончаю дорогой и любимый наш Иосиф Виссарионович. Извини, что быть может моя докладная записка была не по назначению, которая написана на скорую руку, за один прием, вернее за ночь. Но Вы меня поймете и все учтете.

С ком[мунистическом] приветом ... [подпись] (Герасимов).

Адрес домашний: Запорожье – Каменское, Днепропетровской области, Арсеничева улица, дом № 74, кв. 26, Герасимову Т. Я.

Или: Запорожье – Каменское, Днепропетровской области, вагоностроительный завод им. Газеты “Правды”, Кузнечный цех, Герасимову Трофиму Яковлевичу.

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To the Dear Leader of the Party and Workers' Class – Comrade Joseph Vissarionovich STALIN.

From Engineer Trofim Yakovlevich Gerasimov [1].

Memorandum

Three months ago, I was mobilised by the order of Comrade Ordzhonikidze in the Train carriage factory named after Newspaper *Pravda* (Zaporozhye-Kamenskoye, Dnipropetrovsk Oblast) for the fulfilment of Your (Stalin's) order about wagons-building. It is clear that such an important order be fulfilled without reservations and ahead of schedule.

Up until then, I was working in the Car Factory named after Stalin (Your name in Moscow) for the manufacturing of vehicles. There, we worked hard under the leadership of our Party and we managed to get the better of the American technology and to create our own better ZIS 5-6 [2] vehicle. My last work was on the structure of the ZIS 101 limousine car. I used to work with the specialist group in the cylinder block.

This is what the Bolshevik Party gave me, the Soviet Authority.

At the present moment, I am not only a specialist but, from 1927, also a member of VKP(b).

Who was I before?

A Gypsy nomad, I used to wander with the tabor from place to place. After that, I worked as an agricultural serf for three years and after that a Komsomol, school, Party and responsible worker on the socialist construction, while most recently I execute Your order, dear Joseph Vissarionovich, on wagon production.

The Gypsy nationality was especially persecuted by the Tsarist Government; like all ill-treated nationalities before, Gypsies did not have permanent addresses and moved from place to place with their miserable home property.

On each crossroad, it not only could be heard that ‘Gypsies mug’ but they often beat us, starting from the elected village elder and finishing with the whole gendarmerie.

Only the Party of the Bolsheviks that you personify (lead) gave equal rights to each nation.

Thanks to Your, Joseph Vissarionovich, rightful leadership as a world leader of the Party of the Bolsheviks, the Gypsy nationality grew on the basis of the national policy of our Party of the Bolsheviks. Not few are the Gypsy kolkhozes around the Soviet Union and many of these kolkhozes are not only on a middle level but already they are well-off (*Krasnyy Oktyabr'*, *Romono Dzhiyeten*, *Nevo Dryam*, *Luli Chergen* [3] and many more). For example, only in Western oblast, there are 8 kolkhozes, clubs and a school for the first seven grades which in this academic year will run until the 10th grade. There are Gypsy artels. And here I am not also speaking about the other oblasts and republics.

The shortcoming of all these kolkhozes includes the fact that their size is too small and taking into consideration all the possibilities, these kolkhozes are not able to be expanded at the expense of the other kolkhozes surrounding them.

Example. The kolkhoz *Krasnyy Oktyabr'* [Red October] was organised in 1928. In 1930-31, the kolkhoz has fulfilled its financial plan at 200% (planned 400 Rubles, achieved 800 Rubles), the state orders were done at 100%.

In 1932, the kolkhoz for the spring sowing and harvesting was awarded a loud-speaker and the sum of 500 Rubles. In 1933 for the agricultural exhibition in the region it was awarded a digger for potatoes and the sum of 35 Rubles. In 1933, for the agricultural exhibition in the rayon, it was awarded a potato digger and a monetary sum of 350 Rubles. In 1934 the plan for the submission of the wheat and the payment in kind was done at 100% (expected 128 quintals, achieved 128 quintals).

At the start of the preparation for the spring sowing campaign, the Gypsy kolkhoz made a socialist contract with the neighbouring kolkhoz *Avangard*, for the better performance of the spring sowing and harvesting.

As a result, the Gypsy kolkhoz finished the spring sowing first taking the competing kolkhoz in a tow.

Towards 1935, the Gypsy kolkhoz has entirely liquidated illiteracy. The whole school-age youth has been included in the school education starting from the elementary school and finishing with the seventh-grade school. Besides, there are 18 students in the Medical Institute, 3 students in the Pedagogical Institute, 2 students in the High Communist Agricultural School, 1 person is attending training on soviet construction at VTsIK. Besides, the named kolkhoz has given many specialists with post-graduate education who are commanders at the kolkhozes, factories and at the socialist fields.

In the kolkhoz, there is a Komsomol cell amounting to 15 Komsomol members.

Dear Joseph Vissarionovich! I will not begin to list the ton of achievements of this small kolkhoz but I will say that it turns out to be just as you said during the Congress of the Kolkhozes: "the kolkhozes need to be Bolshevik and the kolkhoz-workers well-off". The Party that you are leading is achieving great tasks.

The Gypsy nationality, in the background of this example, of the facts, was convinced that the best life is in the kolkhoz, at the plants and in the factories. Therefore, the toiling Gypsies aim with all their might to get rid of their nomadic way of life. For example, in

the mentioned kolkhoz, *Krasnyy Oktyabr'*, in the spring of 1934, there were applications handed in by 100 families for their acceptance in the kolkhoz, and the kolkhoz, based on a calculation of the land area, has accepted only 9 families while rejecting the rest because the kolkhoz cannot increase its size at the expense of its surrounding kolkhozes. The matter of increasing the land area was seriously raised to the attention of the rayon and oblast organisations, however, nothing concrete has been achieved. The same phenomenon could be observed in each Gypsy kolkhoz.

Another example. In the spring of 1934, about 800 Gypsy families have done all kinds of seasonal work located in tents, around Smolensk. These toiling Gypsy nomads were not able to settle down because in the late autumn they had no choice but leave, even though they had been insisting, by means of intercession, to be provided with a living space but nothing concrete had been done about this either, because the organisations dealing with the matter have dealt with it heartlessly and the numerous Gypsy population had to continue with their travelling life-style regardless of their will.

The organisation of working Gypsies' national kolkhozes for the period 1933-34, and palpable in 1935, appears to be a mass phenomenon, supported by an increased transition towards a settled way of life.

On the part not only of the rayon but also of the oblast and republican organisations, I believe that there has been a misjudgement concerning the national policy of our Party. There are hundreds of cases in which hundreds of working Gypsy families unite, forming kolkhozes, determining *khodoks*, who would travel and knock on the doors not only of rayon organisations but also of the oblast ones, consuming by wintertime all of their food reserves but in the end, nothing has been achieved. For the period 1933 and 1934, no small number of *khodoks* arrived in Moscow, in the Narkomzem RSFSR. These *khodoks* brought their complaints and requests for the allocation of land to the Gypsy kolkhozes before the People's Commissar, Comrade Lisitsyn; there were *khodoks* from Central-Chernozem oblast, BSSR, Povolzhskiy region, Voronezhskaya Oblast, and a number of other oblasts.

And it was not only *khodoks* that arrived in Moscow but also whole Gypsy tabors, settled in tents around Moscow and which required land allocation from the Narkozem of the RSFSR. Such a phenomenon was observed especially in 1933. In 1933, the Moscow oblast was overcrowded with Gypsy tabors. This can be entirely understandable as at that time the aspiration – the willingness of the toiling Gypsies to join the kolkhozes – was massive. The Gypsy population had a great desire to move to a settled way of life and not finding any support, nor receiving any directions, the Gypsy tabors were forced to arrive in Moscow, with intercession to the central agricultural institutions. For instance, MOZO was unable to relocate the Gypsies who, since spring, 1st of May, have organised themselves in two kolkhozes. Due to the short sight of MOZO and the misjudgement of the national issue, the task was not brought to its fruition. Everything was ready but MOZO did not have the resources to move these kolkhoz workers to the Vanevskiy rayon, so the two kolkhozes were forced, having no results, to continue their travelling way of life.

Due to the dense population at the outskirts of Moscow and of Gypsy tabors in the city itself, the administrative organs were forced to administratively push the Gypsies out of

the Moscow zone [4]. In 1934, the aspiration of the Gypsies to transit towards sedentarisation increased even more. In 1935, that aspiration grew even stronger, however, there are not concrete results, and there is no organisation of the Gypsy kolkhozes.

In the Department of Nationalities at VTsIK, there is nothing concrete regarding the Gypsy issue. It has not yet dealt with it seriously, in the manner in which it is needed these days. In truth, there is something at the Department of Nationalities at VTsIK. There is one instructor who works not only with the Gypsy nationality but also other nationalities – comrade Tokmakov, member of VKP(b) of 1925 [5], a Gypsy by nationality. On the whole, in my opinion, besides travels, meeting people and settling of certain issues, there is nothing else done in the Department of Nationalities. That is proved by the fact that it cannot influence MOZO so that the case with the two kolkhozes, that used to be organised before, cannot be brought to an end. That is the first. Secondly, as it was mentioned above, there is a yearly and daily absence of coordination in the field, in the separate republics and regions concerning the case for the sedentarisation of the Gypsies which led, as it was already known to me, to the arrival of *khodoki* and of whole tabors to the central institution of Narkozem. And, in my opinion, the issue of supporting the dynamic aspirations of Gypsies to sedentarise pass nearby the Department of Nationalities. Because of this, in my opinion, the Soviet of Nationalities is not only unable to influence the local organisations in helping the toiling Gypsies to promptly settle down, but in my opinion, the Department of Nationalities at VTsIK does not have this as its action zone.

An achievement of the Department of Nationalities regarding the Gypsy issue could be realised through [the release of] a newspaper in Gypsy language, as the one in the North-Caucasus Kray. This newspaper would be the fastest, direct vehicle of the socialist building of the national Gypsy culture. However, it can be assumed that the Presidium of VTsIK has not put forward to the Central Committee of the Party the question of issuing a national newspaper. The newspaper would be a signal, a megaphone, a direct watercourse for a connection between all Gypsy kolkhozes, artels, clubs, Gypsy schools and thanks to this, all of the best examples of good work would be shared from one to another, overcoming all shortcomings, not speaking about the fact that the kolkhozes, clubs, artels would get to know each other.

The issue about the Gypsy newspaper smoulders (has not been resolved) for two years already; and yet, such a newspaper is continuously needed, every waking minute.

Another rather important issue, is the initial detachment of a Gypsy rayon, which would have to grow and turn into an autonomous Gypsy republic. For me, this issue is so relevant today that I personally do not see any other way in which the building of a socialist republic by this nationality can be achieved. A present-day issue, which is now ripe enough and has developed to its limit, concerns the necessity of the compact settlement of the Gypsies.

In my opinion, it is appropriate to establish this rayon in the North Caucasus, where a Gypsy village council already exists.

In the rayon where the Gypsies would be settled, people's education could be conducted in all social dimensions. Condensed here will be the entirety of the highly vivid

Gypsy culture. Our already existing national literature gets spread around with difficulty and it collects dust on the shelves. When there is a compact settlement, however, this literature will be put into action, among the masses. The rayon will be immediately populated and it will grow into a republic. The example that I brought forth, with the [*Krasnyi*] *Oktyabr'* kolkhoz, speaks quite clearly to the fact that the settlement of the toiling Gypsies is truly significant. The available kolkhozes would go to their designated rayon with great willingness and this will allow the Gypsy tabors to be liquidated.

Do we have our own national cadres? Yes, there are quite enough of them, and from different specialties; these cadres are also significant as percentage of the presence of Party members, which means that from this point of view also, a Gypsy rayon could be organised, without any risk.

This question has long been discussed at the Department of Nationalities at VTsIK; but, in my opinion, while it is so important to today's agenda, and while it is a further reason for the relevant organisations to allocate a Gypsy rayon, it has nevertheless been accompanied by indecisiveness whenever it has been raised.

I have been thinking about this matter for a long time and I believe that, given the current times, it must be resolved now. Many comrades have been debating to raise the issue with the Department of Nationalities since 1928, however, I and many others disagreed believing that this question was not yet ready because the Gypsy toiling mass itself has not felt the need to move towards a settled way of life. That was the first reason. The second being that from the Gypsy nationality there were not enough cadres which were supporters of Stalin, and who would carry out the assigned functions of the Party within its management.

Nowadays, cadres from the Gypsy nationality, under the leadership of the Party, have been fulfilling this function, and the national Gypsy socialist culture started growing quickly with Bolshevik temps. On the basis of the liquidation of the Gypsy tabors, the Gypsy bourgeoisie and the kulaks, which exploit the toiling Gypsies in the tabors where the Party and Soviet eye are absent would also be liquidated.

Nowadays, because of life in the tabor, tens of thousands of people, are not actually involved in the implementation of our five-year plan. This army still does not yet apply its labour for our common cause, namely the work for the building up of socialism.

With the organisation of the rayon which will, with enormous speed, turn into an autonomous republic, this army of toiling Gypsies will become a direct conduit for the construction of Socialism – our direct and main task.

An interesting fact. At the end of 1934, in the Gypsy Club there was an English representative who said: "I did not at all expect that Gypsies could be specialists and cultured people. No one in England will believe that the Gypsies have their own writing, a theatre, a higher school, etc. At home, in England, the people believe that this savage tribe is not even able to show a cultural beginning."

The representative was convinced, based on facts, that the Bolsheviks' Party had granted rights (equality) to each nationality, thanks to which the underdeveloped

nationalities of before, in a short period of time, grew up culturally, building their socialist national culture.

Dear Joseph Vissarionovich! I have written to You a report note believing that you will move this case from the dead situation in which it finds itself now. It seems to me that I am not mistaken in these matters and that I have approached them correctly. Ultimately, the final settlement of the Gypsy Nation has great importance, of global, political dimensions, not to mention that dozens of people will flourish in our Socialist Country, who, unfortunately, are still wandering around with the tabors, still in our fields, or who are inhabiting the dumping grounds of the outskirts of cities, and not participating in our lives.

And now I will inform you about a few notes regarding our factory, more precisely about our workshop. [...] [6].

This is where I end, our dear and beloved Joseph Vissarionovich. Forgive me if perhaps my memorandum has not been appropriate, having written it in a hurry, in one sitting, more precisely on one night. However, you will understand me and you will consider everything

With a Communist greeting ... [signature] (Gerasimov).

Home address: Zaporozhye-Kamenskoye, Dnepropetrovsk Region, Arsenicheva street, Home № 74, Lodging 26, T. Ya. Gerasimov.

Or: Zaporozhye-Kamenskoye, Dnepropetrovsk Region, Vagon Plant named after Newspaper 'Pravda', Blacksmith's Workshop, Trofim Yakovlevich Gerasimov.

Notes

1. The date of the Memorandum is missing, but the handwritten resolution shows that the document was administratively processed in TsK VKP(b) on 18.07.1935.
2. ZIS is the abbreviation for *Завод имени Сталина*, factory named by Stalin. The ZIS-5 (ЗИС-5) was a 4x2 Soviet truck produced by Moscow ZIS factory from 1932 to 1948 (the first one was made at the end of 1930). ZIS-5 was the first Soviet motor vehicle to be exported. ZIS – 6 was Three-axle version. It was produced between 1934-1941.
3. It is interesting to note that all the Romani language names of Gypsy kolkhozes are printed with errors (*Ромоно джигетэн, Нево дрям, Лули чергэн*).
4. The deportation of Gypsies from Moscow, in 1933, will be discussed further below.
5. As seen from personal data card of Ivan Tokmakov prepared for All-Party Party Census of 1927, Ivan Tokmakov had been a member of the VKP(b) not since 1925, but since 1919 (RGASPI, f. 17, op. 9, d. 3642, l. 37-38). In the existing party hierarchy, the year of admission to the Party was a criterion of particular importance. This is a clear mistake on the part of Trofim Gerasimov, and it is not clear whether it was deliberately made or not.
6. The following is a long passage about the irregularities in the activity of the workshop and the factory where Trofim Gerasimov himself works, whereby all 'wreckers' are branded, emphasising their 'wrong' class origin. Such types of exposures to the authorities (essentially denunciations) were widely used at the time to justify mass repression against the so-called 'wreckers' (*вредителям*) and 'enemies of the people' (*враги народа*). The so-called 'wrecking' was a crime specified in the criminal code of the early USSR.

Source: GARF, f. P 3316, op. 64, d. 1637, l. 2-13.

Prepared for publication by Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov.

12.3.6 *A Letter to Stalin from the Gypsy Children*

[В] ЦК ВКП(б) тов[арищу] Сталину.

От воспитанников цыг[анского] д[етского] дома и школы гор[ода] Смоленска Зап[адной] области.

Мы, воспитанники цыг[анского] д[етского] дома и школы передаем свой пролетарский пламенный привет, нашему мудрому и великому и лучшему воспитателю и вождю всего трудового народа тов[арищу] Сталину.

До организации Цыг[анского] д[етского] дома мы, воспитанники этого д[етского] дома, ранее находившиеся беспризора и ведшие кочевой образ жизни и с организацией цыг[анского] д[етского] дома, который организовался в 1928 году и переживал организационный период при котором была масса недостатков как-то: отсутствие педагогических кадров, воспитателей, недостаточно жил. площади, отсутствие помещений и дров для школы, пионер[ского] отряда и прочее. Но при ведении правильной Ленинско-Сталинской нац[иональной] политики под Вашим умелым руководством мы, ранее угнетенная, отсталая нация цыган, сейчас, пережив организационный период д[етского] дома имеем ряд достижений, а именно постоянный педагогический состав, квалифицированных воспитателей своей нации, имеем специально отстроенное здание для занятий, и воспитанники получают знания в объеме 7 классов, имеем пионерский отряд.

И по поручению всего коллектива воспитанников нашего дома выносим Вам тов. Сталин !!! сердечную большую благодарность за превращение нас в полезных, сознательных строителей бесклассового социалистического общества.

По поручению коллектива цыг[анского] д[етского] дома [и] шк[олы].

Учком [Училищный Комитет]: ... [подписи] (Д. Камбович, Фоденков [?] Вл., Михолажина Л., Казимировская Наташа, Казимировский Александры).

02.I.1936 г.

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To TsK VKP(b), Comrade Stalin.

From the graduates of the Gypsy children's home with school, the town of Smolensk, Western Oblast.

We, the graduates of the Gypsy children's home with school, express our proletarian ardent greetings to our wise and great, the best educator and leader of the whole proletarian working people, Comrade Stalin.

Until the organisation of the Gypsy Children's Home, we, the alumni of this children's home, were without supervision and used to lead a nomadic lifestyle, and with the organisation of the Gypsy Children's Home, which was set up in 1928, and which experienced a period of organisation which was characterised with a ton of deficiencies, such as: absence of pedagogical cadres, educators, insufficient living area, absence of school premises and wood, Pioneer squad, etc. But, under the right Leninist-Stalinist national policy, under Your skilful leadership, we, the previously deprived, undeveloped nation of the Gypsies, after experiencing the organisational period of the Children's Home, now have a number of achievements, namely, permanent pedagogical staff, qualified educators from our Gypsy nation, we have a specially constructed building for classes, and the pupils gain knowledge in it until the 7th grade, we have a Pioneer squad.

On behalf of the entire staff of the alumni of our Home, we offer to you, Comrade Stalin !!!, a great heartfelt gratitude for turning us into useful, conscious builders of the classless socialist society.

On behalf of the collective of the Gypsy Children's Home with School.

The Student Committee: ... [signatures] (D. Kambovich, Vl. Fodenkov [?], L. Mikholazhina, Natasha Kazimirovskaya, Aleksandyr Kazimirovskiy).

02.01.1936.

Source: GARF, f. P 3316, op. 28, d. 793, l. 132-133.

Prepared for publication by Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov.

12.3.7 *A Letter to Stalin from the Delegates of the Western Oblast*

Великому учителю, гениальному вождю трудового народа всего мира.

Великому вождю нашей коммунистической партии ВКП(б).

Тов[арищу] Сталину!

От делегатов Западной области, первого союзного совещания по вопросу культурно-хоз[яйственного] обслуживанию трудящихся цыган всего союза.

Находясь на совещании где присутствуют делегаты от других областей Союза, цыганских колхозов и школ. Нам стало понятным, что благодаря правильной Ленинско-Сталинской нац[иональной] политики, часть из нашей нации, самой забитой, самой некультурной, угнетаемой в царское время, сейчас сумели включиться наравне со всеми трудящимися [Советского] Союза в строительство социализма и строят свою счастливую, радостную и зажиточную жизнь по новому.

Наша Западная область при помощи облисполкома, правильном руководстве обкома сумели наладить эту работу несравненно лучше, чем в других областях. Наши Цыганские колхозы Зап[адной] обл[асти] как напр. колхоз "Октябрь" ликвидировал бескоровность, имеет обобщественное стадо, все дети школьного

возраста учатся в школах, а взрослое население молодежи на рабфаках и техникумах в кол[ичестве] 30 чел[овек].

Колхоз со стороны районных организаций премировался неоднократно и идет передовым по с[ел]/совету и району.

У нас есть цыг[анские] школы начальные и одна полу-средняя (7-летка), последняя из них является кузницей, где выковываются наши кадры. Отсюда ежегодно дети отправляются на учебу в рабфаки и техникумы.

Дорогой тов. Сталин!

У нас все же есть много недостатков тормозящих к быстрейшему переходу кочевого населения на оседлой образ жизни. Наши колхозы не могут расширяться за счет окружающих колхозов (недостаток зем[ельной] площади) в силу чего у нас еще приходится отказывать в приеме в колхоз многим кочевникам, так, что часть цыган еще кочуют и попрошайничают.

Просим от имени цыган отвести территорию хотя в виде района для компактного заселения трудящихся цыган.

Среди нас много есть цыган коммунистов, комсомольцев – учащаяся молодежь, много выросло кадров из цыган, которые могли-бы обеспечить руководство в данной территории.

Дорогой т[оварищ] Сталин! Мы желаем чтоб к концу II пятилетки не было б ни одной семьи вне трудовой жизни.

Делегаты совещания от Западной области:

Инструктор Зап. облика ... (Герасимов И. Я.).

Директор н[ачальной] и [полу-]с[редней] ш[колы] и дет[ского] д[ома] ... (Михалажин Н. П.)

Пред[седатель] к[олхо]за “Октябрь” ... (Горбунов Р. И.)

4 января 1936 год.

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To the Great Teacher, the Genius Leader of the Working People from all Over the World,
To the Great Leader of our Communist Party VKP(b),
Comrade Stalin!

From the delegates of Western Oblast at the first union consultative meeting on the issue of cultural and economic service to the working Gypsies from the whole [Soviet] Union.

Being at a meeting attended by delegates from other areas of the [Soviet] Union from Gypsy kolkhozes and schools, we realised that thanks to the right Leninist-Stalinist national policy, part of our nation, the most forgotten, the most uncultured, oppressed during Tsarist's time, has now been able to join on an equal footing the workers of the

[Soviet] Union in the construction of socialism and are building their happy, joyful and prosperous life in a new way.

Our Western Oblast, with the assistance of the oblispolkom, under the proper management of the obkom, managed to organise this work incomparably better than in other oblasts. Our Gypsy kolkhozes in the Western Oblast, such as, for example, kolkhoz *October*, has eliminated the absence of cows, it has a common public flock, all children of school age learn in schools, while the older people and the youth attend rabfaks and technical schools amounting to 30 people.

The kolkhoz has been rewarded many times by the regional organisations and is considered to be a leader in the village council and rayon.

We have Gypsy elementary schools and one half-secondary (7th-grade) school, the latter being a smithery where our cadres are formed. From here, half of the alumni are sent to study in rabfak and technical schools.

Dear Comrade Stalin!

There are still many shortcomings in us, slowing the rapid transition of the nomadic population to a sedentary lifestyle. Our kolkhozes cannot be expanded at the expense of the surrounding kolkhozes (due to a shortage of land), which is why we still have to refuse the admission into kolkhozes of many nomads so that a part of the Gypsies are still wandering and begging.

We are asking on behalf of the Gypsies to allocate a territory, at least in the form of a rayon, for the compact settlement of the toiling Gypsies.

Among us, there are many Communist Gypsies, Komsomol members, youth that study, [and] many cadres that have emerged from among the Gypsies which would be able to provide leadership in the given territory.

Dear comrade Stalin! We wish that at the end of the second five-year plan there would be no family who does not have a working life.

Delegates of the meeting from Western Oblast:

Instructor of the Western Oblast Executive Committee ... [signature] (I. Ya. Gerasimov).

President of primary and half-secondary school and of the children's home ... [signature] (N. P. Mikholazhin).

President of the *Kolkhoz October* ... [signature] (R. I. Gorbunov).

January 4, 1936.

Source: GARF, f. P 3316, op. 28, d. 793, l. 13-1306.

Prepared for publication by Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov.

12.3.8 *A Letter to Constitutional Commission*

В Конституционную Комиссию, [под руководством] Й. В. Сталина.

Копия: Совет Национальностей ЦИК СССР.

От инструктора Зап[адного] Облисполкома И. А. Герасимов.

В Западной области имеется 4 цыганских колхоза, не плохо справляются со всеми хозяйственными работами. Колхоз “Октябрь” Смоленского района за отличную работу и за качественную сдачу зерна государству Наркомземом премирован грузовой автомашиной.

Нужно отметить, что цыганские колхозы не имеют возможности расширить свои земельные участки за счет окружающих колхозов.

Много цыган – кочевников пытались вступить в члены колхозов, колхозники исходя из своих экономических местностей отказывают в приеме, вследствие чего идет медленный процесс перехода от кочевья на оседлый образ жизни. Трудоустройство их в городе зачастую тормозит отсутствие жилищной площади.

Несмотря на трудности в этом процессе Советские организации оказывают помощь по трудоустройству, много цыган работают на фабриках, заводах, в системе промкооперации, имеются три школы, одна из них неполно-средняя.

Все-же по области и до сего времени имеется 500 семей кочевого и полукочевого населения цыган, которые не занимаются общественно-полезным трудом.

При обсуждении проекта Сталинской конституции СССР в цыганских колхозах и среди кочевого населения (в таборах) вызвало большую активность, цыгане во своих выступлениях приводили примеры прошлой и настоящей жизни.

Кочевое население просит Конституционную комиссию [под руководством] Й. В. СТАЛИНА и Правительство выделить один район в Союзе для компактного заселения цыган и оказать им помощь в трудоустройстве.

Сейчас особо большая тяга цыган к оседлости, [...] всюду между ними идет классовая борьба.

Считаю необходимым выделить один район в Союзе для развертывания там цыганских колхозов, сел. советов, оказать им помощь в трудоустройстве.

Цыганского населения по всеми Союзу соберется больше 100 тысяч, из них уже много есть коммунистов, комсомольцев, которые смогут оказать помощь партийным советским организациям в руководстве района.

[подпись] ... (Герасимов).

Гор[од] Смоленск, 12.X.1936 г.

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To Constitutional Commission, [under the leadership of] Joseph V. Stalin.

Copy: To Soviet of Nationalities of TsIK SSSR.

From the Instructor in the Western Oblispolkom, I. A. Gerasimov.

In the Western Oblast, there are 4 Gypsy kolkhozes, which deal quite well with all agricultural work. The kolkhoz *October* in the Smolensk Region was awarded by Narkomzem with a truck for excellent work and the qualitative submission of grain to the state.

It must be noted that the Gypsy kolkhozes have no opportunity to expand their land plots at the expense of the surrounding kolkhozes.

Many nomadic Gypsies have tried to become members of the kolkhozes, but the kolkhoz workers, on the basis of their economic landscape, refused to accept them, as a result of which the process of transition from a travelling way of life to a sedentary lifestyle goes slowly. Their employment in the city is often hindered by the absence of housing space.

Despite the difficulties in this process, the Soviet organisations provide support in employment, many Gypsies work in factories, plants, in the system of industrial co-operatives, we have three schools, one of which is an incomplete secondary school [1].

Nevertheless, until now there are 500 families in the region, nomadic and half-nomadic Gypsy inhabitants, who are not engaged in socially useful labour.

The discussion of the Stalinist Constitution project of the USSR in the Gypsy kolkhozes and among the nomadic population (in the tabors) provoked great activity; in their speeches, the Gypsies brought examples from their past and present lives.

The nomadic population asks the Constitution's Commission, under the leadership of J. V. STALIN, and the Government to allocate a rayon in the Union for the compact settlement of the Gypsies and to provide them with support in getting employment.

There is now a particularly great attraction to sedentarisation, [...] there is a class struggle everywhere.

I consider it necessary to dedicate a rayon in the Soviet Union for the purpose of setting up Gypsy kolkhozes, village councils, to provide them with help in getting employment.

The Gypsy population of the whole Soviet Union will be as numerous as 100,000 people, of whom there are already many Communist and Komsomol members, who will be able to help the Party's Soviet authorities in the management of the rayon.

... [signature] (Gerasminov).

The town of Smolensk, 12.10.1936.

Notes

1. In the RSFSR, according to the "Regulation on a Unified Labour School" (1918), the 6th and 7th years of schooling in the 2nd level schooling belonged to incomplete secondary school. The official name "Incomplete secondary school" was introduced by the Decree of the SNK USSR and the TsK VKP(b) "On the structure of primary and secondary schools" (1934).

Source: GARF, f. P 1235, op. 123, d. 27, l. 141-14106.

Prepared for publication by Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov.

12.3.9 *A Letter to Stalin by Nikolay Pankov*

Проект писъма И. В. Сталину.

(Не послано. Послано во 2-ой редакции).

В разрешении судьбы цыганского народа есть несколько тревожных моментов, которые меня как сына социалистического отечества и как цыгана, не могут не волновать и заставляют искать ответа на свои волнующие вопросы.

После долгого раздумья я, наконец, решил обратиться вот с этим письмом.

Цыган в СССР, по данным статистики 1926 г., числится 61 294 человека. Это кочевое, изолированное шатром племя, разбросанное небольшими кучками по всему союзу, обреченное царской политикой на вымирание вследствие гонений, нищеты и таких болезней, как туберкулез, рак и др. После столетий, окутанных жестокой легендой вокруг этого народа, как о племени неисправимом, как о каком-то отщепенце, являвшемся бедствием для тех мест, где появлялось это “порочное” племя, а в капиталистическом обществе и до сих пор, “пороки и злые наклонности” которого не в силах исправить ни гонение, ни пытки, ни казни, ни суровый закон, – здесь в СССР это “проклятое” и “неисправимое” племя было всколыхнуто идеями партии Ленина-Сталина, провозгласившей братство для всех обездоленных народов, оказавших помощь и поддержку преследуемым и эксплуатируемым. Цыганы – это голодные рты, не имевшие никакой экономики, не имевшие никакого своего пространства, жившие в большинстве случайностью, стали ломать шатры для того, что-бы перейти на оседлость и труд.

[1.] Примерно с 1927 года в разных местах стали создаваться цыганские колхозы, трудовые артели, стала зарождаться литература, имевшая своей целью оформить сознание и впитать идеи партии и советского государства; сделать из цыган сознательных творцов социализма; возникали культ-просветительные учреждения (клубы, школы, в 1930 г. возник в Москве театр).

К началу 1936 г. по Союзу насчитывалось “свыше” 40 цыганских колхозов, но эта цифра, мне кажется, не должна охватывать собою и половины народности; даже и в том случае, если допустить, что какая-то часть вовлечена в промышленность (чаще всего при новостройках в качестве транспортной силы), то все же какая-то часть (и не малая вероятно) на сегодня продолжает кочевать на прежних основаниях, и дело здесь, очевидно, не в нежелании цыган, а в том, что на трудоустройство нужны специальные средства и какой-то земельный фонд, ну и очевидно, потому что это племя не представляет компактной массы, а вкраплено незначительными кучками по всему союзу. Так незначительно или кустарно разрешается и их судьба, и это является одной из причин, что большая часть цыган в системе народного хозяйства является на сегодняшний день не плюсом, а минусом – это I-ое.

2. Между существующими колхозами, предприятиями и трудящимися цыганами нет никакой связи, и наша жизнь и с положительными и отрицательными сторонами ее остается внутри себя: хорошее может погибнуть, худое – дать пышный цвет! Приведу 1-2 примера:

а) В одном из цыганских колхозов были свободные жилые постройки, которые давали возможность колхозу доприселить некоторое количество цыган, но по распоряжению местных органов колхоз передал их на сторону. Колхозники не могли, из за отсутствия газеты, поднять этот вопрос на надлежащую высоту.

б) Московский цыганский театр отмежевался от передовых трудящихся цыганских масс Москвы; цыганские массы театром никак не обслуживаются, он вырожден в экзотический театр вместо того, чтобы стать орудием для воспитания цыганской народности;

в) Не единичны случаи, когда таборы, кочуя из одного места в другое в поисках возможности создать колхоз, натываются на разные объективные условия, как отсутствие в данном районе свободной земли или хозяйственных построек и т.д. ... и здесь газета, имея связь с Наркомземом, Госпланом и пр., могла бы сыграть положительную роль в деле оседания цыган.

Организационное и воспитательное значение газеты огромно. Вл. Ильич [Ленин] говорил, что газета обучает жить и строить свое хозяйство. Отсутствие газеты сильно тормозит наше движение по приобщению к труду и укреплению нашей хозяйственной жизни.

Не раз поднимавшиеся голоса за создание цыганской газеты оставались головами вопиющих в пустыне ... “нужно будет подумать, какого ведомства или организации должна быть ваша газета” – таков примерно бывал всегда ответ.

3. Ни одно ведомство, на обязанности которого должно бы было быть выявление кадров и главное – выращивание их, этим вопросом не занималось и не занимается, а ведь кадры решают все! Ни одно ведомство не может сказать, что оно приготовило, вооружило работника-цыгана на его фронте. Цыганские кадры не использованы, а их деятельность, в виду знания ими языка и быта, должны были бы дать положительный эффект.

4. Школы. В Москве существовали три группы при русских школах, и постепенно закрывались. В этом году прекратила свое существование последняя группа. Дети распределены по русским школам. Но можно ли быть уверенным что школа, оперирующая в своей воспитательной работе примерами не из жизни (нрав, быт, обычаи), может иметь положительный успех?

Наши дни показывают нам, что цыганская молодежь с образованием в объеме неполной средней школы и средней школы могут дать лишь две места. Это – Смоленск, где имеется цыганская неполная средняя школа и Москва из своего цыганского педагогического училища; при чем, чтобы иметь контингент учащихся, Пед[агогическому] уч[или]щу пришлось пойти на создание двух подготовительных классов. Это обстоятельство говорит как будто за то, что нецыганские школы среди цыган, по совершенно объективным причинам, успеха не имели.

5. Литература. Издание литературы на цыганском языке прекращается. В издательстве словарей издавался цыганско-русский словарь; был набран, сверстан, прошел корректуры и после всех операций последовало распоряжение снять его с производства.

Существует народность, язык, зарождается хозяйственная жизнь, тяга к культуре, естественно возникает и интерес и потребность в знании этого народа и его языка по новому и у других народностей, соприкасающихся с ним, для примера: Педагог нецыган, обучающий цыганских детей, культурной, партийной

работник, и т.д и т.п. Наконец и у культ[урного] раб[очего] цыгана м[ожет] б[ыть] потребность в словаре. Такой словарь есть один из моментов, служащих задачам интернационального воспитания.

Далее в Учпедгизе также совершенно прекращено издание цыганской учебн[ой] литературы. Учебники, бывшие в наборе разобраны или разбираются. Вполне можно согласиться при двуязычности народа, каким являются цыганы, с преподаванием всех дисциплин не на родном языке, но надо ли, должно ли при этом снимать учебники родного языка и литературы?

[6.] И наконец – последний вопрос – это выборы в Верховный совет. Ввиду разбросанности незначительными кучками, численность наша нигде очевидно не была достаточной, чтобы мы могли выдвинуть депутатов от своего народа.

II.1938. [Николай Панков].

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Draft letter to J. V. Stalin.

Unsent. Sent second edition.

In solving the fate of the Gypsy people, there are several alarming moments that I, as a son of the socialist fatherland and as a Gypsy, cannot help but worry about and which force me to search for an answer concerning these worrying questions.

After a long reflection, I finally decided to come forward with this letter.

The Gypsies in the USSR, according to the statistics from 1926, number 61,294. These are nomadic tribes, isolated in tents, dispersed throughout the Soviet Union in small groups, doomed by the Tsarist policy of extinction as a result of persecution, poverty, and such diseases as tuberculosis, cancer and others. After hundreds of years, wrapped with cruel legends about this people as an incorrigible tribe, as if they are some kind of a waste that is disastrous for those places where this “vicious” tribe has appeared, and in Capitalist societies until now, they are considered as people whose “vices and evil inclinations” are impossible to be corrected neither through persecutions, tortures, executions or harsh laws, – here in the USSR; this “damned” and “irredeemable” tribe was shaken by the ideas of Lenin-Stalin’s Party proclaiming a fraternity for all the nations that are deprived of everything, providing help and support to the persecuted and exploited. Gypsies – these are hungry mouths, with no economy, no living space of their own, living, for the most part, by chance-, have begun to break down the tents in order to settle down and start to work.

1. For example, in 1927, Gypsy kolkhozes and labour artels began to be created in different places; literature begun to appear seeking to influence the minds of the Gypsies and to absorb the ideas of the Party and Soviet State; to make the Gypsies conscious creators of socialism; cultural and educational institutions emerged (clubs, schools, in 1930 a Moscow Gypsy Theatre was created).

By the beginning of 1936, across the [whole Soviet] Union there were “more” than 40 Gypsy kolkhozes but it seems to me that this figure does not encompass even a half of the Gypsy nationality; even in this case, assuming that some part of the Gypsies is involved in industry (most often in new construction sites involved as a transport force), then some (and probably not a small) part nowadays continues in the old-fashion way, and the problem here is obviously not in the reluctance of the Gypsies but in the fact that for their employment special means and some land fund are needed; and it is obvious because this tribe is not a compact mass, but it is interspersed in small heaps throughout the Soviet Union. So, their fate is solved insignificantly or in small portions, and this is one of the reasons why a big part of the Gypsies in the national economic system nowadays appears to be not a plus but a minus – that is the first.

2. There is no connection between the existing kolkhozes, enterprises, and the working Gypsies, and our lives with their positive and negative aspects remain closed within itself: the good can perish and the bad flourish with lush colour! I will bring 1-2 examples:

a) In one of the Gypsy kolkhozes, there were free residential buildings that allowed the kolkhoz to settle down some more Gypsies, but at the disposal of the local authorities, the kolkhoz handed them aside. The kolkhoz workers could not, because of the absence of a newspaper, raise this issue at the necessary level.

b) The Moscow Gypsy Theatre detaches itself from the progressive toiling Gypsy masses of Moscow; the Theatre does not serve at all the Gypsy masses; it was transformed into an exotic theatre rather than becoming a weapon for the education of the Gypsy nation.

c) Not few are the cases when the tabors, wandering from one place to another in their search for an opportunity to create a kolkhoz, encounter various objective conditions such as the absence in a given region of free land or agricultural buildings, etc. ... here too, the newspaper, having a connection with Narkozem, Gosplan, and others could play a positive role in the deed of sedentarisation of the Gypsies.

The organisational and educational importance of the newspaper is enormous. Vladimir Ilyich Lenin has said that the newspaper teaches how to live and to build one's own economy. The absence of a newspaper greatly slows our movement towards labour and the strengthening of our economic life.

Not once the voices for the creation of a Gypsy newspaper remain voices screaming in the desert ... “it needs to be found out which department or organisation your newspaper is supposed to be linked to”, such, for example, has always been the answer.

3. No one administration, the duty of which should be the discovering of the cadres and the main one – their cultivation, has dealt with and does not deal with it even now; but as known cadres are all important! [1] No administration could say that it has prepared, armed the Gypsy worker on this front. The Gypsy cadres are not used even when their activities, given their knowledge of the language and the lifestyle of the Gypsies, should have a positive effect.

4. Schools. There were three groups in Moscow at the Russian schools, and they were gradually closing down. In this year, the last group ended its existence. The children are distributed across the Russian schools. But could we be confident that a school operating in its educational work with examples, not taken from life (morality, habits, customs), could be successful?

Our days show us that the Gypsy youth education, in half-secondary school and secondary school, can only be received in two places. That is Smolensk, where there is a Gypsy incomplete secondary school, and Moscow with its Pedagogical School; on top of that, in order to have a learning contingent, the Pedagogic School had to create two preparatory classes. This speaks to the fact that the non-Gypsy schools among the Gypsies, for perfectly external reasons, were not successful.

5. Literature. The publishing of literature in the Gypsy language has been terminated. The publishing house for dictionaries a Gypsy-Russian dictionary was being prepared: it was completed, the lay out was done, it went through corrections, and after all this there came an order that the dictionary be dropped from production [1].

There is a nationality, a language, a drive towards economic life and a culture is being born; naturally, an interest in, and a need for, knowledge about these Gypsy people and their language is also being born, in a new way, and also among other nationalities that interact with them, for instance: the non-Gypsy pedagogue educating Gypsy children, who is a cultured, party worker, etc. and so on. Finally, also the cultural working Gypsy may find use in the dictionary. The existence of such a dictionary is one of the moments serving the tasks of international up-bringing.

Furthermore, in Uchpedgiz, the publishing of Gypsy curriculum books has been completely terminated. The textbooks that have been selected to be printed were disassembled or are being disassembled. We can fully agree that because of the bilingualism of a people like the Gypsies, there can be teaching of all disciplines not in their native language, but should it be necessary to remove even the textbooks on the subject of mother tongue and literature?

6. And finally – one last question – concerns the elections for a Supreme Council. Keeping in mind the dispersal in small groups, our numbers would obviously be nowhere enough so that we could promote MPs from our people.

02.1938. [Nikolay Pankov].

Notes

1. Reference to the famous Stalin slogan “кадры решают все” (cadres are all-important).
2. The reference is to the Gypsy-Russian dictionary (Сергиевский & Баранников, 1938), whose editor was Nikolay Pankov. It is not clear whether Nikolay Pankov's letter influenced the decision to publish the dictionary, but it was published, albeit with a delay of almost three years.

Source: LANB, f. Николай Панков.

Prepared for publication by Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov.

Comments

The epistolary legacy of the early-Soviet Gypsies included numerous letters addressed to Soviet party and state institutions. Many of these letters (as well as many of the event speeches conducted by Soviet institutions) are on specific topics; they highlight successes and report on existing problems (this is the established pattern of all such presentations). The specific problems are mainly related to land management, Gypsy kolkhozes, and artels, housing problems, etc.

The letter published here by the residents of khutor Krikunovo (former nomads) was written two months after the issuing of the Decree of TsIK USSR and SNK USSR from 01.10.1926 *On measures to facilitate the transition of nomadic Gypsies to a settled lifestyle*. From the text of the letter, it is clear that the founders of khutor Krikunovo learned about this decree from a letter they received from the VSTs (which indicates that they already had an established relationship with the Union); and that the khutor was founded in the spring of the same year, around half a year before the Decree came into existence. This clearly pointed to the fact that there was an aspiration to move to a sedentary way of life before the Decree itself was issued.

This is perfectly understandable given the general situation in the USSR at that time when the country was devastated by the Civil War, and in many regions, the population dropped significantly. Under these conditions, a nomadic way of life became much more difficult, while there were many free uncultivated land areas and thus the work in agriculture proved to be a possible alternative for survival.

Chronologically the letter from khutor Krikunovo was not the first such letter written by Gypsies who asked for free land allocation for making a living from agriculture. As early as the summer of 1926, a letter was sent to the VSTs and to SN TsIK from the village of Gribani (no longer existing today), near Smolensk "On behalf of the 52 souls of the poorest people of the labour peasantry of Gypsy nationalities, who have been cultivating the land with their own labour for many decades". The letter was initiated by Trofim Gerasimov and the signatories Gypsies asked for help because, for three years, the local authorities repeatedly refused to give them land so they can create their own khutor (GARF, f. P 1235, op. 120, d. 27, l. 28-29). It should be noted that the settlement of the nomadic Gypsies in the Smolensk region began as early as the last decades of the 19th century, and their desire to receive their own land to cultivate is a completely logical consequence.

The letter from khutor Krikunovo entered into public circulation within the Soviet propaganda. Articles about him have been published in both Soviet officious – daily of VKP(b) *Pravda* (Орловец, 1927, p. 4) and also in the newsletter of the TsIK SSSR *Izvestiya* (Известия ЦИК СССР, 1928, p. 6). With his articles in Russian and in Romani language, Alexander German has also publicised khutor Krikunovo several times (Молодой Ленинец, 1928, p. 3; Крестьянская газета, 1928, p. 4; Романы зоря, 1929, pp. 7-10). Khutor Krikunovo thus became, within the public, an iconic symbol of nomadic Gypsies' ambition to settle down.

At the very same khutor, however, things were not going so well. After the local authorities did not satisfy the demands of the Gypsy residents living there to obtain land, some of them left in 1929. In 1931, after several people from the khutor were accused of stealing horses, the process of settlement was finally abandoned (O’Keeffe, 2013, pp. 152, 286).

The second letter published here, from the repeatedly mentioned Nikolay Bizev (Biz-Labza), is a rather specific curiosity. From another perspective, however, it is an important testimony of the spirit of the era, as a time of great dreams and hopes, as well as grandiose plans, all of which were also reflected among Gypsy activists. From a present-day perspective, it is clear that it was entirely unrealistic to discuss the possibility of creating a Gypsy Cavalry Division (sic!); nevertheless, the letter apparently was taken very seriously by the Soviet institutions, and the reply was signed by a representative of the top party leadership of the Red Army.

Particularly indicative from the perspective of Gypsy activists’ visions of the future of their community is one specific type of letters, namely the very popular genre of the time: the so-called ‘Letter to the Leader’. This form of addressing the highest authorities was repeating the model of the *челобитная* (a specific kind of Supplication) from Medieval Russia, which was imposed in Soviet society after the pyramid of Communist rule was finally established. At the same time, it became clear to all who the real ‘Supreme Leader’ of the Soviet state was – namely, the Secretary General of Communist Party, Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin. Although from a formally legal point of view the head of the state was Mikhail Kalinin (the Chairman of the TsIK USSR), to whom many letters were also sent. Nevertheless, the latter were primarily taking the form of petitions for solving personal problems. The fact that Gypsy activists addressed their letters mainly to Stalin, and much less frequently to Kalinin, shows that they carefully assessed the situation in the governing structures, therefore, sought support and expected the intervention of the highest authorities.

The letters of Gypsy activists to Stalin are not from the standard and mass type of thousands of thank-you-letters such as “Thank you Comrade Stalin for our happy childhood” (the only discovered letter from this type is from the graduates of the Gypsy Orphanage with a school in the Western Oblast). In all other letters are placed existing problems of Gypsies and on their basis, specific requests and recommendations are made. The majority of the published above letters to the ‘Supreme Leader’ are united around two basic, related ideas about the state policy towards the Gypsies for which assistance was requested – the termination of the nomadic way of life and the creation of a Gypsy territorial-administrative unit (a rayon which, in the future, should develop into an okrug and even into an Autonomous Republic). The idea of Gypsy autonomy will be discussed more in-depth in the next section. Therefore, here we will focus only on the attitude of Gypsy activists towards the nomadic way of life, which was characteristic for the majority (about three fourths) of the Gypsy population of the USSR at that time.

Surprisingly it appears that the active side pleading for the sedentarisation of Gypsy nomads in the USSR was initially the Gypsy activists, and the Soviet state affirmed and

realized these ideas (more or less successfully). As already pointed above, in January 1924, a meeting of the Initiative Proletarian Group of Gypsies was held, which decided to set up a Union of Gypsies, living on the territory of the Moscow governorate, which in the process of registration grew into a VSTs. In one of the very first letters to the Soviet institutions, namely to the Presidium of the SN of the VTsIK, in the Application dated 23.09.1924, the Initiative Group emphasised that the Group had set itself the task of “organisation the proletarian Gypsy masses and raising their cultural, educational and political level, and their transition to a settled way of life” (GARF, f. P 1235, op. 119, d. 10, l. 14; f. P 1235, op. 119, d. 10, l. 14).

A number of changes have taken place in the process of registration of the Gypsy Union between the Draft-Statute of January 1924 and the Registered Statute of 10.07.1925 regarding the issue of nomadic lifestyle Gypsies in both versions. It can be seen that the Gypsy activists were much more radical in their wish to see the Gypsy nomads settled. In their 1924 Draft-Statute, they brought the issue of nomadism to the fore as one of the main tasks of the organisation, and they spoke directly about the need for a “transition to a sedentary lifestyle” (GARF, f. P 1235, op. 119, d. 9, l. 4), while in the 1925 Statute, which was approved by the authorities, this problem becomes a back-up plan, and the wording is much softer and less engaging – “conduct the moral fight against the public evil among the Gypsies ... such as: drunkenness, fortune-telling, begging, gambling, nomadism” (GARF, f. A 259, op. 106, d. 2253, l. 21).

Almost immediately after the registration of VSTs, its leaders began taking active steps to change the Statute of the organisation (see above). The first of such requests were already accompanied by Motives for Application with a demand that the “inconsistencies of the clauses in the approved charter with the practical work of organising nomadic and sedentary Gypsy masses” be considered. It is underlined that one of the Union’s most important tasks is “the fight against nomadism, poverty, and against all that remains of the tsarist inheritance” (GARF, f. A 259, op. 96, d. 4233, l. 2). In the prepared new Draft Statute from 1926, proposed for approval by the institutions and for re-registration by the NKVD, Article II (Aims of the Union), § 1 it reads:

The Union aims at uniting and organising the Gypsy working masses living on the territory of the RSFSR, protecting their economic and legal interests, raising the cultural level and organising mutual support and transfer nomads into the productive and agricultural way of life (GARF, f. A 259, op. 96, d. 4233, l. 5).

In the version of the Statute approved by NKVD on July 15, 1926, however, the sentence ‘transfer nomads into the productive and agricultural way of life’ was removed. The problem with the nomadic way of life is mentioned in Article III (Method of Implementation), § 6 d, which reads:

The Union [...] conducts a moral struggle with the public evil among its members, such as: drunkenness, fortune-telling, begging, gambling, nomadism.

This sentence in fact repeats the wording of the next version of the Statutes approved on 23.07.1925 (GARF, f. P 393, op. 43A, d. 1763, l. 112).

This attitude of the Soviet authorities to the demands of the VSTs for an active combating of the nomadic lifestyle of the Gypsies and for their sedentarisation was not accidental, as it is very clearly displayed in the following example. In 1927, the NKVD received a letter from local authorities of the Tver Governorate which contained complaints of “thefts and scams” carried out by Gypsy nomads and sought to limit the “activity of this parasitic element”, i.e. it asked for administrative measures against the Gypsy nomadic way of life. NKVD’s reply of September 20, 1927, was categorical and unambiguous:

The Central Administrative Department of NKVD clarifies that compulsory restriction of the Roma nomadism is inadmissible as a matter of principle. The Soviet legislature does not know the measures you propose to combat the tribes that lead a nomadic way of life (GARF, f. P 393, op. 71, d. 6a, l. 2).

It sounds incredible but, in this case, the NKVD is the guardian of Soviet laws and opposes forced sedentarisation. In this spirit, in terms of combating nomadism for which the Gypsy activists also make appeals, in the end, they were only given the opportunity to lead a ‘moral struggle’ against nomadism.

Such a restrained position of the Soviet state to the calls for imposing the sedentarisation of nomadic Gypsies through administrative pressure is understandable given the specific socio-economic situation in the country. In the early USSR, the policy against nomadism, in general, was considered an extremely important task, which was a necessary condition for the transition to socialism (Зверяков, 1932). During the same period of time, the sedentarisation (or the placing under control, through the creation of permanent summer and winter settlements) of pastoral nomads in Central Asia and other regions was also done, along with that of the so-called Small Peoples of the North (Синицин, 2019). These nomadic communities, however, were seen as important from an economic point of view, as they provided (or could provide) the state with important animal products (meat, milk, fur, etc.). The same cannot be said about the nomadic Gypsies, who were not regarded as economically important for the Soviet state, and which allowed the issue of their sedentarisation to be left in the background and be drawn into an indefinite future (in this case – until 1956).

It is also interesting to note that none of the Gypsies’ letters, although addressed personally to Stalin, come with a resolution written by him, as it was usual in other such cases. Thus, we have reason to believe that these letters did not reach Stalin at all but were forwarded by his secretariat directly to the appropriate institutions (about the way of official proceeding with the thousands of letters to Stalin, see Khlevniuk, 2015). The only exception to this is Nikolay Pankov’s letter, which will be discussed below. This confirms, once again, that the Soviet institutions did not attach so much importance to the problems associated with the Gypsies, including the issue of the sedentarisation of the nomads. However, they were officially obliged to react to letters from citizens. As

an example of such a response, the reaction to the letter of Trofim Gerasimov could be quoted. It was forwarded to both the TsK VKP(b) Department of Industry to investigate the case of the so-called 'wreckers' mentioned therein and to the SN TsIK, from where it eventually came to the ON VTsIK. In his reply of 29.08.1935, the Head of the Department, Nygmet Nurmakov, was adamant:

A lot of work has been done in the field of arranging the Gypsy issues over the past 2-3 years; this work was done by the local Soviet and Party bodies under the daily control and leadership of the VTsIK without the participation of Gerasimov and others like him who limit their concern for Gypsies to annually write such notes. Settling the Gypsy issues is not an easy task, it does not require urgent measures, but persistent and patient work, in particular, work among the Gypsies, which we do all the time (GARF, f. P 3316, op. 64, d. 1637, l. 2).

The topic of the need to eradicate the nomadic lifestyle of the Gypsies, and the unavoidability for effective state action in this regard, is addressed in one form or another, not only in the letters of the Gypsy activists but also in the letters from the ordinary Gypsies on the ground. The letter published above, written by the Gypsies who wandered in the region of Ivanovo is not the only one. In another such letter dated August 10, 1935, sent to ON VTsIK by Gypsies who roamed the Udmurt ASSR, they strongly insisted:

To combat the nomadism of Gypsies, it is necessary to expand the work of a broader and more decisive nature, as in the south, north, east, and west of our Union. (GARF, f. P 1235, op. 130, d. 5, l. 80-81).

Besides the letters to the top of the pyramid of Soviet power, Gypsy activists' fight against the nomadic lifestyle of Gypsies was also manifested in the public domain, through articles published in the national press. Indicative in this regard are the titles of these articles: *From nomadism to sedentarisation* (Известия ЦИК СССР, 1927, p. 6), *Cast aside the nomadic past: We will include Gypsies in the active construction of socialism* (Комсомольская правда, 1930, p. 3). Many similar articles in this regard have also been published in the Gypsy journals of *Romany zorya* and *Nevo drom*, as well as in the Romani-language newspapers, *Palo bolshevistsko kolkhozo* (About the Bolshevik's Kolkhoz) and *Stalintso* (Stalinist), which were distributed also among Gypsy nomads.

In the letter by Ilya Gerasimov to Mikhail Kalinin, published above, as one of the most important problems facing the Gypsies in the USSR is stated the need for the publishing of a newspaper in the Romani language, which should "be a mobilising body in their transition from a nomadic lifestyle to a settled one". In the 1930s, this question was repeatedly raised also by other Gypsy activists (especially by Ivan Tokmakov in his capacity as an official at ON VTsIK) before the Soviet institutions, citing the need for propaganda concerning the sedentarisation of nomadic Gypsies as one of the main tasks of such a newspaper (GARF, f. P 1235, op. 121, d. 31, l. 61; f. P 1235, op. 123, d. 28, l. 208; f. P 1235, op. 130, d. 5, l. 103). Although the institutions have expressed support for this idea (GARF, f. P 3316, op. 28, d. 793, l. 5, 51-52), in the end, it was not realised. Not the least reason for

this was probably the lack of clarity in how this newspaper would be distributed among nomadic Gypsies as well as doubts about the effect such propaganda would have among an almost entirely illiterate audience.

The topic of the need for sedentarisation of the Gypsy nomads (and the associated with it establishment of a Gypsy national territorial-administrative unit) does not at all exhaust the content of the letters sent to higher state institutions. It is worth noting the so-called ‘Signal letters’ about problems with the implementation of state policy on Gypsies, often compounded by accusations against activists involved in the process. At least a dozen letters from this genre are preserved in the archives, among the most fruitful writer being Trofim Gerasimov and Mikhail Bezlyudskiy (GARF, f. P 393, op. 43 A, d. 1763; f. P 1235, op. 120, d. 27; f. P 1235, op. 123, d. 28). The addressees of these letters were most often ON VTsIK, as well as NKVD and OGPU. In the 1920s, the main target of the allegations was the leadership of the VSTs and, first of all, its secretary Ivan Lebedev, chairman Andrey Taranov and members of the ‘Polyakov clan’. The authorities were called “The union should not be closed, but reorganised, cleared of weeds” (GARF, f. P 1235, op. 120, d. 27). However, the Soviet authorities preferred not to make unnecessary noise about the existing problems and did not take any repressive action against the leaders of the VSTs. The leadership of VSTs, however, tried to improve the situation, thus on 18.07.1927 they exclude from its ranks’ “comrades Bezlyudskiy and Agva because of their dirty actions” and undermining the authority of the Union (GARF, f. P 393, op. 43 A, d. 1763, l. 77-78).

In the 1930s, a typical example of this genre is the letter from G. M. Andreev, a student at the Gypsy Pedagogical College in Moscow. The letter was entitled *On the shortcomings of the work with the Gypsy population* and was sent to the *Pravda* newspaper, an edition of the TsK VKP(b), from where on 21.04.1937 it was forwarded to ON VTsIK (GARF, f. P 1235, op. 130, d. 5). This letter, point by point, signalled in detail to the many existing shortcomings in the Gypsy kolkhozes, artels, schools, and even at the Theatre Roman, and calls for all the perpetrators to be “put to rights” by NKVD (Ibid.). Surprisingly, however, this letter, although written precisely in the midst of the so-called Great Purge, also did not lead to any action by the Soviet state against the accused (fortunately for them). This letter is also particularly interesting from a contemporary point of view because it raises some interesting questions that continue to be relevant today. This is for example the problem of the form of mother tongue education of Gypsy children, whether it should be the only language of instruction, or whether separate Gypsy-only schools are needed (Marushiakova & Popov, 2017c, pp. 48-59). He raised also issue of privileges and wrote: “to give less of all kinds of benefits [...] which have just the opposite results as intended” (this topic is also today a hot subject of discussions among a number of Roma activists, who are disappointed by the results of pro-Roma European policies so far).

The last letter published here, that of Nikolay Pankov to Stalin, is different from the rest. It offers a relatively much more comprehensive and detailed program for the need to work on a solution to the problems faced by the Gypsies in the USSR, covering various fields. Along with the already familiar themes (such as the issue of nomadism, kolkhoz building, etc.), the emphasis is also placed on the development of the Romani language,

education and culture, and even on the question of the need for political representation of the Gypsies in the highest state bodies (in the Supreme Soviet). Moreover, the letter de facto protests against the already started policy of closing down Gypsy schools and of suspending Romani language publications, which is distinctive compared to the other letters to Stalin. This letter should be viewed in the context of an already launched radical change within the national policy of the USSR, which put an end to the affirmative action policy.

Especially in the system of national schools first steps had been taken by the Decision of Orgburo of the TsK VKP(b) of 01.12.1937 concerning national schools, which proposed (i.e. assigned) to Narkompros the task “to reorganise these schools into Soviet schools of ordinary type” (RGASPI, f. 17, op. 114, d. 633, l. 4). Ironically, Nikolay Pankov wrote his letter in February 1938, about a month after the Orgburo of the TsK VKP(b) adopted the Decree *On the Reorganisation of National Schools* on January 24, 1938, i.e. at a time when the fate of these schools had already been decided.

To put it in brackets, the title of this Decree *On the Reorganisation of National Schools* in all previous publications (including ours) has been misrepresented as *About the liquidation of national schools and national school departments*, which changed the meaning of the sentence. This confusing repetition of past mistakes confirms once again the importance, and even the need, to verify the sources that are reproduced and move from book to book.

In this Decree, Gypsy schools are nowhere mentioned. It is noted that

The practice ... special national schools did enormous harm to the cause of proper education and training, fenced the children off from Soviet life, deprived them of the opportunity to join Soviet culture and science, blocked the path to further education in technical schools and higher schools” (RGASPI, f. 17, op. 114, d. 837, l. 100-101).

As such national schools are referred to the “German, Finnish, Polish, Latvian, English, Greek, Estonian, Ingrian, Veps, Chinese, etc.” schools. (Ibid.).

For the first time, a mention of Gypsy schools appears only in the tables of the Report of the Narkompros of 08.07.1938 (Ibid., l. 108).

It is interesting to note that, in fact, we only have the manuscript of Nikolay Pankov's letter, in which it is noted that an edited version of it was sent to Stalin. However, this letter is not stored in the archives, unlike the hundreds (even thousands) of others that have been scattered across various Soviet institutions. According to the recollections of family members of Nikolay Pankov, months after the letter was sent, he lived in anxious expectation to be arrested, but nothing happened. Only three years later, he was visited by NKVD officials, who informed him that Comrade Stalin had become acquainted with his letter, but no further reaction from the authorities followed (Калинин, 2005, pp. 56-57). The Second World War began shortly after the turn in the national policy of the Soviet Union, and after the end of the war, the situation in the USSR was already quite different.

In the new post-war realities, however, the practice of sending letters to the ‘Great Leader’ persisted among the generation of early-Soviet Gypsy activists, and they continued to exert their influence on Soviet policy toward the Gypsies, including on the question of the sedentarisation of nomads (Marushiakova & Popov, 2020a, pp. 265-276).

Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov

12.4 Autonomy

12.4.1 *The Working Plan*

План работ Всероссийского Союза Цыган на 1926-ой год.

По осуществление целей изложенных в пункте II, § 5-го [Устава] Всероссийского Союза Цыган, Президиум намечает следующий план работ. [...]

4. [...] 2/ Для сохранения вырождающихся национальных признаков цыганской массы и в виду их бытовых особенностей, Союз предлагает:

a/ Отвести в южном крае территорию для поселения цыган на которой (территории) и объединять все виды сельско-хозяйственных организаций, а также и самостоятельно желающих поселиться цыган. [...]

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The Working Plan The All-Russian Union of Gypsies in 1926 [1]

To implement the objectives set out in paragraph II, § 5th of the Charter of VSTs, the Presidium of the Union outlines the following work plan. [...]

4. [...] 2/ in order to preserve the degenerating national characteristics of the Gypsy population and in view of the peculiarities of their way of life, the Union proposes:

a/ to allocate in a Southern region a territory for the settlement of Gypsies on which (territory) to unite all kinds of agricultural organisations, as well as the Gypsies who wish to settle independently. [...]

Notes

1. The document is not dated, but it is likely to date from the beginning of 1926 (chronologically, next document from the same archival folder is dated 02/02/1926)

Source: GARF, f. P 1235, op. 120, d. 27, l. 99-101.

Prepared for publication by Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov.

Translated by Viktor Shapoval.

12.4.2 *The Concise Report on Gypsies*

[Бланк]: РСФСР. Всероссийский Союз Цыган. 2 Марта 1926 г. № 98. г. Москва.
В Федеральный Комитет ВЦИКа.

[Резолюция]: В Переселенческий комитет. [подпись]. 6.III.[19]26.

Краткий доклад о цыганах

Являясь выходцами из северо-восточной части Индии, цыгане появились в Европе в 1645-ом году. Страницы их пребывания в Европе говорят нам о сплошных кровавых расправах, которым подвергались кочующие цыганские племена. Эти преследования продолжавшиеся целые столетия привели к вкоренению в них кочевничества, а с ним и к вкоренению быстрого изыскания средств из которых главными или вернее более подходящим, являлось попрошайничество, гадание и в крайнем случае воровство. В России они появились в 1700 годах, где и были встречены по примеру “культурных” стран, “огнем и мечем”.

О всех проживающих в данное время в СССР цыган трудно дать точные сведения, так как ВСЦ не имеет своих статистических данных. Сведения, имеющиеся в Советских органах, неправильны, так как цыгане трудно поддаются учету в виду их непостоянного местонахождения. Судя по сведениям, которые имеет Союз через своих членов, то их по СССР насчитывается около 500,000. Сконцентрированы большей частью на юге и центральных губерниях, как-то: Курской, Костромской, Московской, Владимирской, Ярославской, Смоленской, Орловской и т.д., где они живут целыми деревнями.

Кочующих цыган около 75% – занимаются мелкими кустарничеством (кузнецы, лудильщики, шорники и т.д.). Оседлых – 25%, занимаются частью сельским хозяйством, фабр[ично]-завод[ским] трудом, посредничеством и торговлей лошадьми. У всех цыган, как у оседлых, так и кочевых сильно развито воровство, гадание, знахарство и т.д. На этой почве между местным населением и ими наблюдается враждебные отношения. Не редко бывают случаи, когда цыгане располагаются где-либо в районах и местное население их гонит.

В союз пересылаются из редакции “Крестьянской газеты” письма, в которых крестьяне просят принять меры по отношению цыган, наносящих большой вред жителям.

В культурном отношении цыгане стоят на низшей ступени развития, имея в своей среде 96% неграмотных (Собр. соч. Ленина).

Организовавшийся в 1925 г. Всероссийский Союз Цыган ставит своей целью организацию этих отсталых масс, борьбу с кочевничеством, поднятие их культурного уровня, приобщение их к советской общественности и к трудовой жизни. Поднять их хозяйственный и культурный уровень можно только в том случае, если они будут сконцентрированы в одном месте, поэтому Президиум Всероссийского Союза Цыган просит федеральный комитет ВЦИКа выделить из гос-фондовой

земли часть для поселения цыган, главным образом на юге, так-как цыгане народ южный, и оказать им государственную помощь построечным материалом, семенами, некоторым сельско-хозяйственным инвентарем и освободить на ряд лет от госналогов, пока они не обзаведутся своим хозяйством.

Только таким способом мы сумеем цыган сделать “людьми” и строителями нашего Советского Союза.

Председатель ВСЦ: ... [подпись] (Таранов).

Секретарь: ... [подпись] (Лебедев).

[рукопись] Адрес Союза Цыган: Петровский Парк, Красноармейская улица, Клуб имени тов. Лысицина, Цыганский уголок.

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[Letterhead]: RSFSR. All-Russian Union of Gypsies. 2 March 1926, No. 98. City of Moscow. To the Federal Committee of TsIK [1]

[Resolution]: To the Resettlement's committee. [signature]. 06.01.1926

The Concise Report on Gypsies

Being migrants from the North-Eastern part of India, Gypsies appeared in Europe in 1645 [2]. The pages of their stay in Europe tell us about continuous bloody massacres to which nomadic Gypsies tribes were subjected. These persecutions, which lasted for centuries, led to the establishment of nomadism among the Gypsy people, and to rooting in them prompt efforts for making an earning, among which the main, or rather, the more suitable, were begging, fortunetelling and, in extreme cases, theft. In Russia, they appeared in 1700, where they were met, following the example of “cultural” countries, with “fire and sword”.

It is difficult to give accurate information about all Gypsies living in the USSR at this time, as VSTs does not have its own statistical data. The information available in the Soviet administrative bodies is incorrect, as it is difficult to quantify the Gypsy population due to their non-permanent location. Judging by the information that the Union has collected through its members, there are about 500 000 Gypsies in the USSR. Gypsies are concentrated mostly in the South and Central governorates, such as Kursk, Kostroma, Moscow, Vladimir, Yaroslavl, Smolensk, Orel, etc., where they inhabit whole villages.

About 75% of Gypsies are nomadic, they are engaged in small handicrafts (blacksmiths, tinkers, saddlers, etc.). Settled are 25% and they are partly engaged in agriculture, work in plants and factories, are involved in mediation and horse trade. Among all Gypsies, both settled and nomadic, theft, fortunetelling, folk healing, etc. are strongly developed. On this basis, hostile relations are observed between the local population and the Gypsies. Not infrequently, there are cases when Gypsies have settled in some areas and the local population drove them away.

The editorial office of the *Krestyanskaya Gazeta* [Peasant Newspaper] resends to the Union letters received, in which the peasants ask to take measures against the Gypsies, causing great harm to the inhabitants.

Culturally, the Gypsies are at the lowest level of development, with 96 per cent of them being illiterate (Lenin's collected works).

Organised in 1925, the All-Russian Union of Gypsies aims to organize these backward masses, to fight against nomadism, raising their cultural level, attach them to the Soviet public and working life. It is possible to raise their economic and cultural level only if they are concentrated in one place; that is why the Presidium of VSTs asks the Federal Committee of VTsIK to allocate part of the state land for the settlement of Gypsies, mainly in the South, as the Gypsies are people of the South origin, and to provide them with state assistance in the form of building materials, seeds, some agricultural equipment, and to free them from state taxes for some years until they acquire their own economy.

Only in this way, will we be able to make from the Gypsies "people" and builders of our Soviet Union.

The Chairman of the Union: ... [signature] (Taranov).

Secretary: ... [signature] (Lebedev).

[handwritten] Address of the Gypsies Union: Petrovskiy Park, Krasnoarmeyskaya str., Club named after comrade Lisitsyn, the Gypsy corner [3].

Notes

1. Federal Committee for Land Affairs at VTsIK.
2. It is unclear exactly what is meant by the date. In any case, there are many earlier historical accounts of the arrival of Gypsies in Europe.
3. 'Gypsy corner' can be understood as a Gypsy part of the club, which was probably named after Nikolai V. Lisitsyn (1891-1938), a Soviet party functionary, at that time a member of the presidium of the Central Control Commission.

Source: GARF, f. P 3260, op. 6, d. 44, l. 5-6.

Prepared for publication by Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov.

Translated by Viktor Shapoval.

12.4.3 The Report to the Federal Committee of TsIK

[Бланк]: РСФСР. Всероссийский Союз Цыган. 1 Апрель 1926 г. No. 184. г. Москва.
В Федеральный комитет ВЦИКа.

В дополнение к ранее посланной Союзом Докладной записке от 02.III.1926 г. за № 98. Президиум Всероссийского Союза Цыган, сообщает о количестве необходимой для поселения цыган земли и о желательной территории, для поселения.

1/ По вопросу о количестве семей предполагаемых к поселению.

Президиумом предположенно поселить до 100,000 (сто тысяч) человек.

2/ О желательной территории для поселения. По результатам опроса самых масс, наблюдается общее тяготение к Югу.

Президиумом намечены на предмет поселения цыган Северо-Кавказскую или Кубанскую область.

Председатель ВСЦ: ... [подпись] (Таранов).

Секретарь: ... [подпись] (Лебедев).

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[Letterhead]: RSFSR. All-Russian Union of Gypsies. April 1st, 1926, No. 184. City of Moscow. To the Federal Committee of TsIK.

In addition to the Memorandum Note No. 98 sent earlier by the Union of Gypsies on March 2, 1926, the Presidium of the VSTs reports about the amount of land necessary for the settlement of Gypsies and about the desirable territory for this settlement.

1/ On the question of the number of families expected to settle.

The Presidium is supposed to settle up to 100 000 (one hundred thousand) people.

2/ About desirable territory for settlement. According to the results of the survey of the masses, there is a common attraction of Gypsies to the South.

The Presidium determined for the settlement of Gypsies the North Caucasus or Kuban regions [1].

The Chairman of the Union: ... [signature] (Taranov).

Secretary: ... [signature] (Lebedev).

Note

1. North Caucasus – after multiple reforms and renamings, from June 2, 1924 this area was officially called North Caucasus kray. Kuban region at this time was a part of North Caucasus kray.

Source: GARF, f. P 3260, op. 6, d. 44, l. 4.

Prepared for publication by Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov.

Translated by Viktor Shapoval.

12.4.4 The Supporting Report

Доклад

Всероссийский Союз Цыган обратился в Федеральный Комитет по земельному делу с ходатайством об оказании Союзу содействия в деле устройства на земле цыган в количестве *всего* до 100 000 человек *в течении ряда лет*.

Принимая во внимание, что согласно телефонограммы С[ельско]-Х[озяйственной] Секции Госплана РСФСР настоящий вопрос поставлен на повестку названной

секции с вызовом представителя Федкомзема, полагал бы поддерживать указанное ходатайство с учетом опыта устройства на земле еврейского населения, давшего с 1923-24 г.г. вполне удовлетворительные результаты.

Консультант: ... [подпись] (Воейков). 19.II.1926 г.

[Резолюция] Согласен делегировать Воейкова. 12.IV.1926. ... [неразборчивая подпись].

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Report

The All-Russian Union of Gypsies applied to the Federal Committee on Land Affairs with a request to assist the Union in settling the Gypsies on the land in the amount of [1] *up to 100,000 people over the years* [2].

Taking into account that, according to the telephonogram from the Agricultural Section of the State Planning Committee of the RSFSR, this issue was put on the agenda of the said section with invitation of representative of Fedkomzem, I would consider supporting this request, taking into account the experience of the land arrangement of the Jewish population, which gave from 1923-1924 quite satisfactory results.

Consultant: ... [signature] (Voeykov). 19.02.1926.

[Resolution] I agree to delegate Voeykov. 12.04.1926. ... [*signature indecipherable*].

Notes

1. Handwritten supplement.
2. Handwritten supplement.

Source: GARF, f. P 3260, op. 6, d. 44, l. 8.

Prepared for publication by Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov.

Translated by Viktor Shapoval.

12.4.5 *The Memorandum on Results*

Докладная записка

О результате проверки исполнения постановлений Президиума

ВЦИК от 01.IV.1932 г.

“О состоянии работы по обслуживанию трудящихся цыган”

[...] В заключение нужно сказать:

1. Тяга цыган к оседанию на землю упирается в отсутствие плана компактного заселения цыган, в слабом финансировании, и в связи с этим имеет место

стихийное оседание мелкими группами на небольших массивах, где нет возможности дальнейшего доприсоединения кочевников цыган.

2. Разрешение вопроса об оседании цыган на землю на данной стадии развития этой работы упирается в выделении специального района для заселения цыган.

3. Компактность оседания цыган облегчит сосредоточить все силы и средства на определенном участке, где можно будет сконцентрировать материальные средства и культурную жизнь. [...]

Практические предложения, изложены в проекте постановления.

Инструктор Отдела Национальностей ВЦИК: ... (Токмаков).

[?] Февраля 1935 г.

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Memorandum

About the result of the control of implementation
of Decree of the Presidium of VTsIK of 01 April 1932
“On the Situation *with Work in the Services for Toiler Gypsies*”

[...] In conclusion, we must say:

1. The intention of Gypsies to settle on the ground is retained by the absence of a plan of compact settlement of Gypsies, by weak funding, and in this connection, there is a spontaneous settling of small groups in small areas where there is no possibility of further additional settlement of Gypsy nomads.

2. The solution to the issue of the settlement of Gypsies on the ground at this stage of work waits for the allocation of a special district for the settlement of Gypsies.

3. The compactness of the Gypsy settlement will make it easier to concentrate all forces and means on a certain area, where it will be possible to concentrate material means and cultural forces. [...]

Practical proposals are set out in the draft of the resolution.

Instructor of ON VTsIK: ... [signature] (Tokmakov).

[?] February, 1935.

Source: GARF, f. P 3316, op. 28, d. 793, l. 6-13.

Prepared for publication by Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov.

Translated by Viktor Shapoval.

12.4.6 *The Minutes of the Meeting at the Department of Nationalities at TsIK USSR*

Протокол

совещания при Совете Национальностей ЦИК СССР по вопросам трудоустройства кочующих трудящихся цыган и их культурно-хозяйственного обслуживания 4 и 5 января 1936 г.

Председательствовал – тов. Хацкевич А. И.

Присутствовали: от Украинского представительства т. Косиор; от Отдела Национальностей ВЦИК т. Такоев; от Нац. Комиссии Моссовета т. Крумина; от НКЗема СССР т. Цылько; от НКЗема РСФСР т. Воронин; от Всес[юзного] Переселенческого Комитета т. Зубиетов; от Всекопромсвета т. Тагиев; от Гослитиздата т. Германов; от Книгоцентра т. Розенберг; от Центр[ального] Цыганского клуба т.т. Марин, Светлов; от Цыганского театра т.т. [М.] Гольдберг, Бланк, [И.] Лебедев, [И.] Сорочинский; от Цыганского педтехникума т.т. Модина, Хайтонов, Быстров; от Цыганской химпромартели т. Барановский; от Цыганской пищепромартели т.т. Грушина, Зверев; от Редакции газеты “Правда” т. Крен; от Редакции газеты “Известия” т. Розовский; от Редакции газеты “Труд” т. Антонов; от Редакции газеты “Закомпросвещение” т. Пауль; от ТАСС т. Жарковский; от Пред[седательства] Цыганского сельсовета Минераловодского р[айо]на Северо-Кавказского края т. Безлюдский; Пред. Цыганского колхоза “Новэ Джиибеэн”, Булиховского сельсовета Городецк[ого] р[айо]на Горьк[овского] края т. Иванов Ф. Т.; [от] Пред[седательства] Цыганского колхоза “Нэви Бахт”, Богдановского сельсовета Кинельск[ого] р[айо]на Куйбишев[ского] края т.т. Егоров, Жуковский; Пред[седатель] Колхоза “Октябрь” Михоношенского сельсовета Смоленского р[айо]на Западной области т. Горбунов; Зам[еститель] Директора завода-артели им[ени] Первой пятилетки Крупинск[ого] Сельсовета Павлово-Посадского р[айо]на Московской области т. Герасимова А. И.; Инструктор Орготдела Западного облизполкома т. Герасимов И. Я.; Директор цыганской школы семилетки Серебрянского сельсовета Смоленского р[айо]на Зап[адной] области т. Михолажин; Зав[едующего] Нац[иональном] отделе Днепропетров. облизполкома т. Билявский; Зам[еститель] Зав[едующего] Секретариатом През[идиума] ЦИК Союза ССР т. Акимов И. Ф.; Референт – консультант Секретариата Президиум ЦИК СССР т. Берин.

Слушали:

1. Вступительное слово тов. Хацкевича о *положении цыган*, целях и задачах совещания;
2. Доклады: а) о трудовом устройстве кочующих цыган в промыслах и сельском хозяйстве (докладчик тов. Такоев). б) о культурно-хозяйственном обслуживании цыган в СССР (докладчик тов. Берин).

3. Высказались: т.т. Тагиев (Всесопромсовет), Воронин (НКЗем РСФСР), Зубиетов (Переселенч. К[оми]тет), Цылько (НКЗем СССР), Косиор (Украин[ское] Пред[ставитель]ство), Герасимов (Зап. облисполком), Безлюдский (предс[еда- тель] цыг[анского] сельсовета и колхоза Минераловодск[ого] р[айо]на), Бланк (цыг[анский] театр), Панков (цыганск[ий] литератор), Модина (цыг[анский] пед- техникум), Барановский (Моск[овский] цыг[анский] химпром), Иванов (пред[се- датель] Цыг[анского] колхоза Городецк[ого] р[айо]на Горьк[овского] Края), Жуковский (цыг[анский] колхоз Куйбиш[евского] Края), Егоров (цыг[анский] кол- хоз Куйбиш[евского] Края), Сорочинский (цыг[анский] театр), Грушина (Пище- промартель), Зверев (Пищепромартель), Билявский (Днепропетр[опетровский] обли[сполком]), Токмаков [ОН ВЦИК], Герасимов (артель Моск[овской] обл[а- сти]), Хацкевич [ВЦИК].

Постановили:

1. Доклады и вступительное слово принять к сведению.
2. Для разработки проекта конкретных мероприятий по дальнейшему трудоустройству кочующих цыган и культурно-хозяйственному обслуживанию [всех] цыган в СССР, образовать под председательством тов. Хацкевича комис- сию в составе т.т. Цылько, Акимова И. Ф., Такоева, Берина, Абидовой, Ластовского, Косиора, Герасимова И. Я., Воронина, Тагиева, Зубиетова, Панкова, Сорочинского, Токмакова, Безлюдского, Иванова, Егорова, Грушинского, Марина, Германо, Розенберга, Харитоновна, Модиной, Круминой и представителей НКФ (Народный Комиссариат Финансов) СССР и НКПроса РСФСР.

Срок работы комиссии – 2 декады.

Председатель – ... [подпись] (А. Хацкевич).

Приложение к протоколу совещания при Совете Национальностей ЦИК СССР по вопросам трудоустройства кочующих цыган и их культурно-хозяйственного обслу- живания от 04.I.1936 г.

Совещание

о трудоустройстве кочующих и культурно-хозяйственном
обслуживании всех трудящихся цыган в СССР

т. Хацкевич: В порядке дня сегодняшнего совещания вопрос о трудовом устрой- стве кочующих цыган и о культурно-хозяйственном обслуживании всех трудя- щихся цыган СССР.

В СССР по переписи 1926 г. насчитывалось 61.294 душ цыган, что составляет одну сотую процента к общему количеству населения СССР. Таким образом цыгане относятся к малочисленным народностям, населяющим наш Советский Союз, при чем относятся к самым забитым и отсталым в прошлом народностями. Именно поэтому мы должны проявить особую заботу о цыганах, как наиболее

отсталых в прошлом. [...] Октябрьская революция, пролетарский интернационализм, ленинско-сталинская национальная политика обязывают нас в отношении малых народностей, в частности цыган, проявлять большое внимание, [...] Поэтому нужно принять целый ряд специальных мероприятий, чтобы поднять этот народ до уровня экономического и культурного подъема других передовых народов Советского Союза.

Общая всемирная история цыган самая дикая, самая кровавая, самая проклятая, пожалуй, из всех историй всех народов. Гонимое и презируемое, так называемое “фараоново племя” – цыгане притеснялись со стороны всяких религиозных буржуазно-капиталистических клик, которые заклеили этот народ особой кличкой и всячески притесняли и даже физически истребляли цыганский народ. [...] Цыгане по преимуществу кочующий народ; вследствие создавшихся особых исторических условий, цыгане очутились в исключительно тяжелом общественном и бытовом положении. Цыгане еще и до сих пор живут с остатками родового строя, с властью старейших. Отсталые в общественном, хозяйственном и в культурном отношении, а отсталых бьют, цыгане, как нацменьшинство, подвергались и до сих пор подвергаются в капиталистических странах самым диким преследованиям. [...]

Совершенно естественно, что при таких условиях жизни цыгане вынуждены были скрываться в лесах, оврагах, горных ущельях, пустынных местностях. Там они вели бродячий полудикий образ жизни, часто отвечая своим притеснителям и гонителям: разбоем, грабежом и воровством; цыгане занимались гаданьем, обманом, попрошайничеством, барышничеством лошадьми и т.п. Когда их обнаруживали и преследовали, они снимались и переезжали в другие места; скитались по всем странам, переезжая с места на место, цыгане жили на морозе, под открытым небом и в своих кибитках, землянках с детьми и больными стариками; вели в массе своей нищенскую жизнь и нередко голодали, питаясь кореньями и отбросами. Богатейшие из цыган со связями с полицией и торгаши – всячески эксплуатировали бедноту.

Вот кратко положение цыган в прошлом. В целом ряде европейских и других буржуазных государств положение цыган осталось таким же и сейчас. Итак, история цыганского народа самая тяжелая, самая непроглядная из всех историй всех народов.

После Октябрьской революции, в Советской России трудящиеся цыгане, как и все трудящиеся всех национальностей, приобрели право на управление государством, приобрели право на труд. [...] При неустанной заботе о национальностях, о нацменьшинствах вождя народов т. Сталина созданы все условия для перехода цыган к культурной трудовой жизни. Фабрики, заводы, сельское хозяйство – все это стало доступным для трудящихся цыган. Всем детям трудящихся цыган обеспечена возможность учиться. [...] Впервые в истории цыган, при советской власти в СССР создана цыганская письменность, на цыганском языке издаются учебники, издавались журналы, газета и т.д. В различных местах организовано несколько десятков школ, где учатся дети трудящихся цыган; растут из цыганской молодежи свои

писатели, поэты, литераторы, артисты. [...] Создан цыганский театр, где работает исключительно цыганский коллектив. [...] Всюду, где оседло живут цыгане, создаются очаги культуры – избы-читальни, клубы; так же мы имеем немало детских очагов – садов, ясель, площадок и т.д. [...] Вырастают и воспитываются новые люди среди цыган, пролетарии, колхозники, активисты, молодежь, способная строить жизнь по новому – по указанию партии Ленина-Сталина. Таковы общие успехи работы среди цыган, вовлечения их в социалистическое строительство, обеспечивающие счастливую жизнь трудящимся.

Вместе с тем, мы имеем в этой работе немало недостатков. [...] В 1925 г. по инициативе отдельных работников был создан Всероссийский союз цыган. Этот союз просуществовал до февраля месяца 1928 г. и ликвидировался, как не оправдавший своего назначения. Сейчас нет такого центра, который специально объединял бы работу среди цыган, и пожалуй, такой орган не нужен. Необходимо развивать работу по отраслям и территориям там, где живут и кочуют цыгане в смысле их скорейшего трудоустройства, поднятия и развития их экономической и культурно-бытовой жизни. С этой точки зрения необходимо приветствовать мероприятия Правительства СССР по созданию территориального цыганского района. [...]

Такоев (Отдел Национальностей ВЦИК): [...] Какие мероприятия необходимо наметить совещанию?

1) учесть общее количество цыган, населяющих СССР, потому что без этого не может быть планирования работы;

2) особо проработать вопрос о выделении района для цыган, ибо если они будут сконцентрированы на одной территории, легче поставить среди них работу. [...]

Берин: [...]

[Прения по докладам]:

Тагиев (Всекомпромсовет): [...]

Воронин (НКЗем РСФСР): [...] О выделении района для цыган, ибо на сегодняшний день осталось еще 6 590 неустроенных [семей]. Здесь называли цыганский край Западной Сибири. Мне кажется, что не обследовав участка, не зная его климатических условий, нельзя говорить о приемлимости или о неприемлимости участка. Судя по характеристике земельных органов Западно-Сибирского края, этот участок пригоден. Мысль о выделении района для компактного заселения цыганами – очень хорошая, ибо тогда цыгане могут вплотную приобщиться к социалистическому строительству.

Зубиетов (Всесоюзный переселенческий к[омите]т): Переселенческий комитет вносит следующие предложения по устройству цыган. [...] Следовало бы подыскать участок для создания цыганского района. Когда встал вопрос о создании такого самостоятельного района, переселенческий комитет запросил ряд краев и областей относительно возможности выделения участка, на котором можно было бы организовать на поселение 30-35 тыс. цыган. Были запрошены Азово-Черноморский край, Северный Кавказ, Поволжье, Крым, Урал, Западная Сибирь. Южные районы

ответили, что свободной земли нет, Горьковский край ответил, что может предоставить около 70-80 тыс. га земель с большими капитальными вложениями. Омск ответил, что могут предоставить землю в районе Остяко-Вогульска и только Западная Сибирь ответила, что может предоставить два фонда. Мы поставили перед собой задачу изучить более подробно эти два участка, ибо без обследования трудно сказать, подходят они или нет. Между прочим, мы знаем, что определенное количество свободных земель имеется на Урале, в Сталинградском крае, в Куйбышевском, и не только земель, имеются дома, оставленные раскулаченными. Эти районы могут быть также использованы. [...]

Цылько (НКЗем СССР): Если сравнивать с буржуазными странами, то в отношении устройства цыган у нас, в СССР, сделано много, но цифры, которые здесь названы, все-таки очень мизерны. Поэтому можно сказать, что работа только началась. Предложение о создании цыганского района я всецело поддерживаю, но в начале, по моему, следовало бы пойти по линии создания более мелких административно-хозяйственных единиц в составе существующих районов. Тогда цыгане имели бы свое представительство в райисполкоме, свои сельсоветы, свои школы, им была бы оказана специальная помощь. Цыгане, в силу их тяжелого прошлого, нуждаются еще в специальной защите интересов, о них нужно проявить особую заботу, что и предусмотрено рядом постановлений правительства. К сожалению, места не выполняют эти постановления, цыганам не предоставляются те льготы, которые должны быть им оказаны.

Предлагаемые в Западной Сибири фонды, судя по их составу (80% неудобной земли) не годятся. Цыганам надо предоставить как раз лучшие земли, потому что они впервые оседают. Им трудно сразу перейти на тяжелый физический труд. Поэтому надо найти такой земельный массив, который представлял бы лучшую землю и подходил бы цыганам по климатическим условиям. Мне кажется, что цыгане более склонны к животноводству, коневодству, свиноводству. Надо подыскать такой район, где можно было бы развивать эти отрасли. Есть прекрасные неиспользованные земли на Ставропольщине. [...] Условия этого района по климату вполне подходят для цыган. Затем колоссальное количество неиспользованной земли – в Оренбургской степи. Минераловодский район – прекрасное место для цыган. Можно найти районы в Поволжье, в Куйбышевском крае.

Организационный вопрос – специальные ли цыганские колхозы создавать или вливать в местные колхозы. Если нет особых специфических причин, которые говорили бы о том, что цыганы не уживаются с русским населением, то с хозяйственной стороны было бы целесообразно создать смешанные колхозы, ибо цыгане – народ мастеровой, они хорошие кузнецы, лудильщики, хорошие коневоды. В каждом колхозе нужны такие люди. Если нельзя, то в порядке создания самостоятельных небольших административно-хозяйственных единиц можно было бы устроить цыган в районе Ставропольщины, в Оренбургских степях, Куйбышевском краю и частично в Минераловодском районе, придав их хозяйству специальный уклон, но ни в коем случае не переселять цыган в Сибирь. [...]

Затем очень многим местным работникам надо вправить мозги, когда они отказывают принять цыган там, где их можно устроить. Не плохо было бы в самом переселенческом комитете создать специальную ячейку по устройству цыган (голоса: совершенно правильно).

Косиор (Украинск[ое] Пр[едставительст]во): До сих пор ни одна республика не придавала достаточного значения вопросу устройства цыган, требующему особого внимания, особого подхода. Надо прямо сказать, что без специальных дополнительных средств эти мероприятия по устройству цыган не будут проведены. Может быть придется пойти на то, чтобы создать специальные ячейки в районах, где имеются большие группы цыган, ячейки, которые проявляли бы особую заботу о них. Основное – поднять общественное мнение вокруг этого вопроса, чтобы покончить с кочеванием цыган и их устроить по-социалистически.

Герасимов (инструктор Западного облисполкома, цыган): [...]. Мои предложения. На первых порах цыганские колхозы сливать с русскими нельзя. Когда цыганский колхоз окрепнет, тогда можно говорить об объединении с русским колхозом или с колхозом других национальностей.

Один из тормозов развития дальнейшей работы в нашей области – недостаток земельной площади. Нужно подумать об отводе территории для цыган хотя бы в виду маленького района. В нашей области найдется около 60 коммунистов и комсомольцев, которые сумеют при помощи партии и правительства обеспечить руководство районом.

Мне кажется полезным привлечь Комзет к работе среди цыган, ибо Комзет имеет большой опыт по переселению.

Безлюдский (Сев[ерный] Кавказ, цыган, до 1919 г. кочевал): Я работаю в цыганском колхозе “Трудовой цыган” Минераловодского района с 1926 г. и вместе с тем являюсь председателем [цыганского] сельсовета. [...]

О выделении района для цыган. Если у цыган будет своя территория, своя газета, работа пойдет совсем по другому. Самым подходящим районом для заселения цыган была бы Ставропольщина. Сейчас там много кочующих цыган, ибо в этом районе базары. [...]

О переселении в мой колхоз. Я могу взять 150-200 семей, но при одном условии – если будет оказана помощь в отношении окончания водопровода, строящегося ряд лет, и в части лесоматериалов.

Бланк (цыганский театр): [...]

т. Панков (цыганский литератор): Мы, общественники цыгане, являемся свидетелями чего нибудь нового каждый год в цыганской жизни – печать, школы, детские сады, техникум, театр, артели, колхозы, и наконец сегодня стоит вопрос о территории для цыган.

Рядом с этими положительными фактами у нас есть свои болезни во всех наших трудовых и культурных ячейках.

О положении театра. [...] Цыганский театр – если так можно выразиться – жемчужина цыганская. Этот театр пользуется колоссальным успехом и в Союзе

СССР, и за рубежом, а между тем театр страдает от безрепертуарья. За последнее время нет новых пьес, а возможности создать новые пьесы безусловно есть. [...]

О техникуме. В техникуме чрезвычайно много ненормальностей. Молодежь в техникуме абсолютно безнадзорна, предоставлена сама себе. [...] Если бы не тов. Токмаков, у нас не было бы набора в техникум. [...]

О цыганских колхозах. Тов. Безлюдский не рядовой цыган, он знает конституцию, он сумеет кому угодно на глотку встать, но есть колхозы, где Безлюдских нет, и там положение кошмарное. [...]

Наконец, все народы собирают сокровищницу народного творчества, и только цыгане остаются за бортом – у нас не собираются ни песни, ни музыка (т. Хацкевич: Нас интересуют не цыганские мещанские романсы, а цыганское народное творчество – фольклор). [...]

Основной причиной, что наши ячейки – производственные и культурные – слабо работают, является отсутствие руководства со стороны ведомств, куда входят эти ячейки. Затем нужно цыганские кадры, которые заняты в русском производстве, как-то втягивать и распределять по нашим ячейкам. Тогда работа пойдет по-другому.

т. Молина (Цыганский педтехникум): [...]

т. Барановский (цыганская химпромартель): Я работаю в промысловой кооперации с 1927 г. Организованная нами первая московская промартель не только выросла в Цыгхимпром, но имеет и дочку – Пищепромартель. Все это мы создали собственными руками цыган.

Я сам до 13 лет был беспризорником. Партия и правительство воспитали из меня человека и я стал полезным членом общества. [...] Предложение о выделении специального цыганского района совершенно правильно. Если цыгане будут объединены на одной территории, легче будет проводить среди них работу (аплодисменты).

т. Иванов (пред[седатель] цыганского колхоза Городецкого района Горьковского края): До 15-и лет я вел бродячий образ жизни вместе с кочующими цыганами, являясь их воспитанником. [...]

Если бы у цыган была своя территория, работа пошла бы по другому. Я от всей души и чистого сердца желаю, чтобы был национальный цыганский район (аплодисменты).

Жуковский: Я являюсь председателем сельсовета, совершенно неграмотный. В русских сельсоветах и колхозах председатели грамотные и кроме того им в помощь дают еще парторга, а мне, совершенно неграмотному, никакой помощи никто не оказывает. [...] Мне говорят заставляй проводить массовую работу, но как проводить, когда мне самому надо учиться. [...] Наши цыгане колхозники просят, чтобы несколько цыганских колхозов собрать в одно место с тем, чтобы иметь свой сельсовет, свои школы.

Егоров (с[ело] Нойбах, Куйбыш[евского] Края): Наша школа интернациональная, там учатся и русские, и украинцы, и мордвины, и другие национальности [...]. Я же работаю и в школе, и являюсь парторгом трех колхозов. [...] Я не могу сказать,

хотя и внимательно к этому присматриваюсь, чтобы к цыганам было плохое отношение. Правда, в первое время были такие разговорчики, что из цыган ничего не выйдет, но сейчас такие разговоры больше не существуют, так как некоторые цыгане превзошли русских. [...]

Сорочинский [(Цыганский Театр)]: Я в прошлом цыган-кочевник. В 1918 г. принимал участие в московском перевороте, потом был на Урале до 1921 г., затем учился, окончил техникум. Сейчас один год три месяца работаю в Цыганском театре, как оперный артист. [...]

У нас директора меняются так часто, как в прошлом я менял лошадей. [...] Актеры молодые, музыкальные, способные, но этого недостаточно. [...] По моему, не нужно приглашать людей со стороны, а нужно заняться подготовкой имеющихся кадров. [...]

Грушина (от Цыганской пищепромартели): [...]

Зверев: [...]

Белявский (Днепропетровск): [...] Переводить цыган на оседлость мы начали с 1934 г. [...] У нас 10 человек врачей и инженеров из цыган, это наш актив.

Нужно сказать, что мы несколько увлекаемся переселением. Цыгане не всегда хотят переселиться, а хотят устраиваться на работу в том месте, где они живут. [...] К этому вопросу нужно подходить осторожно. В моей практике сами цыгане не просят о переселении, а хотят устраиваться на завод. Совершенно необходимо сверху дать указания о помощи цыганам, работающим в промкооперации, в частности, в отношении жилья и в отношении прописки в городах цыганской молодежи, которую можно устроить на заводы.

Токмаков: [...] Оседание среди цыган проходит медленно, цыгане перекачуются из одного района в другой, но у них огромное желание осесть. Очень трудно бороться с классовым врагом, потому что цыганский кулак особенно завоалирован, простым глазом его трудно узнать, а он существует и больше всего среди кочующих. [...]

Сложность вопроса заключается в том, что прежде всего нужно приучить цыган к процессам труда, для этого нужно увеличить отпускаемые средства. [...]. Безусловно необходимо проводить оседание в каком то одном месте с тем, чтобы там можно было сосредоточить и наши силы и средства и тем самым улучшить и культурно-воспитательную, и хозяйственную работу среди цыган.

Кочевье сейчас совершенно изменило свое направление. [...] Кочевье больше всего имело место на юге, и меньше всего в Западной Сибири – так было раньше, но сейчас, в связи с тем, что земля стала колхозная, экономика кочевания вышиблена, а также в связи с паспортизацией, кочевье переносится туда, где свободнее, а именно в Западно-Сибирский край, Омскую область, Вост[очно]-Сибирск[ий] край, очень мало кибиток кочующих цыган можно встретить теперь в Сев[еро]-Кавказском и Азово-Черноморском краях. В кибитках кочевники живут в лесу, но в тоже время можно наблюдать, что кочевание происходит даже не на лошадях, а на машине,

часто можно встретить цыгана в рабочей тележке, а не в кибитке, в этой рабочей тележке он разъезжает и работает по новостройкам.

Сейчас уже среди кочевников происходит процесс классового расслоения, часто можно слышать разговоры о том, что одни цыгане единоличники, а другие колхозники, они делятся на единоличников и колхозников уже во время кочевания и затем, когда встречаются с возможностью вступить в колхоз, часть из них оседает в колхозе. В значительной степени оседание цыган зависит от той поддержки, которую им окажут местные власти. [...]

Газета, если бы ее удалось выпустить, сыграла бы колоссальную роль. Мы выпустили в Сев[еро]-Кавказском крае 3 газеты и они дали очень большой сдвиг. [...]

Очень больной вопрос о кадрах. Люди решают все, а цыганские кадры очень малочисленны и распыленны. Между тем в русском районе работать много легче, чем в цыганском, с каждым из цыган приходится отдельно разговаривать; для того, чтобы чего нибудь от них добиться, приходится рассказывать всю историю человека. Когда будет выделен специальный район для цыган, нужно будет привлечь на работу среди цыган всех комсомольцев и коммунистов – цыган, работающих на русской работе. [...]

Герасимов: [...]

Хацкевич: [...] Многие товарищи страстно говорили о недостатках в работе по трудоустройству и культурно-бытовому обслуживанию трудящихся цыган. Если бы все было хорошо в деле устройства цыган, если бы было все хорошо в культурно-просветительном и материально-бытовом положении, мы и совещания не устраивали бы. Мы созвали совещание именно потому, что в отношении культурного и бытового обслуживания трудящихся цыган имеется много недостатков. Но наряду с этим, когда мы говорим, что тысяча цыган работает на наших фабриках и заводах, тысяча семейств устроена в сорока с лишком колхозах и с кочевой жизни они перешли на оседлую трудовую жизнь, когда десятки и сотни молодых цыган стали врачами, педагогами, техниками и т.д. – это не может не радовать, тем более, что цыгане в прошлом была самой распыленной, самой загнанной национальностью. Несомненно, в отношении цыган при советской власти достигнуты большие успехи.

Не мало и недостатков. Недостатки прежде всего в том, что нам до сих пор не удалось изжить те пережитки и извращения, которые имели место в прошлом и остались до некоторой степени среди цыган, которые имеются и сейчас среди цыган во всех странах кроме Советского Союза, где обстановка коренным образом изменилась в отношении всех трудящихся националов, в том числе и цыган. В частности, эти пережитки оказывались в том, что цыгане занимались обманом. Но если в отдельных случаях цыгане и обманывали, то это не значит, что среди цыган не могут быть изжиты пережитки, привившие им условиями капитализма, гонениями, притеснениями и проч. Обвинять цыган за то, что они кочевали, это все равно обвинять евреев за то, что они жили в местечках. Вам, активистам цыганам

нужно не теряться, не бояться трудностей, а всячески изживать эти пережитки. Мы должны принять все меры к тому, чтобы помочь цыганам устроить свою жизнь хозяйственно, материально и культурно. Условия для этого есть. Условия в нашем Союзе коренным образом изменились и с каждым днем улучшаются. Трудящиеся цыгане с первого дня Октябрьской революции получили полное право применять свой труд на любом поприще социалистического строительства, на заводах, различных промышленных предприятиях, в колхозах и т.д.

Изменились для цыган и условия кочевания. [...] Кочевание цыган вызывалось бездомностью, жебрачеством, нищенством и отсюда, конечно, вытекал и обман, и всякие другие развращения среди цыган. Сейчас только группа кулаков-эксплуататоров, продолжавшая командовать своей семьей, стегать кнутом, хочет продолжать кочевание, выступает против оседания. Эти люди ошибаются, они не смогут уже удержать цыган от оседания. Сейчас положение всех национальностей в СССР не то, что было раньше. В советской деревне уже нет прежней забитости, дикости, обмана, беспросветности, воровства; колхозная масса – это уже культурная масса. Да и цыган-кочевников таких богатых, как были раньше, которые имели разукрашенные брички, запряженные в несколько пар лошадей, уже нет. Сейчас крестьян ворожбой и обманом не проведешь. В лучшем случае со стороны колхозников эти кочующие цыгане вызывают человеческое сострадание и им дается кое-что в виде жертв, но крестьяне говорят цыганам при этом: “хватить вам лодырничать, бесцельно мотаться, а беритесь за хозяйственный производственный труд”. Многие цыгане это уже понимают. Обстановка социалистического строительства зовет всех к труду по лозунгу “кто не работает, тот не ест”. Об этом должны знать все цыгане, особенно те, которые еще не перешли к производственному труду. Наша задача объяснить им это, твердо, по-большевистски рассказать об этом.

Относительно национального момента в этом вопросе. Некоторые товарищи говорили здесь о том, что цыганское предприятие должно быть исключительно цыганское, цыганский колхоз должен состоять сплошь из цыган. Если бы, тов. Барановский, мы с вами, ставили вопрос так, что Америка мол для американцев, а Россия для русских, тогда нам с вами было бы место не здесь. Если бы русский пролетариат, который завоевал власть, который освободил от капиталистического гнета все национальности, решил бы, что русских большинство и Россия должна быть только для русских, то нам с вами не было бы места, и не только нам с вами, но и украинцам на Украине, так как там русские составляют большинство. Мы должны помнить, что русский пролетариат, свергнув царизм, освободил от капиталистического ига все национальности и сейчас, на основе Ленинско-Сталинской национальной политики, у нас в Советском Союзе все нации равны, все нации суверенны и все мы имеем одинаковое право на активное участие в социалистическом строительстве, на труд. Практически фабрики, заводы, вся промышленность созданы русским пролетариатом, земля завоеванная русским пролетариатом и для русских крестьян, и для всех других национальностей. В этом заслуга русского пролетариата. Сейчас речь идет о том, чтобы вырвать цыган из той

“ямы” прошлого, в которой в значительной части они находятся, вырвать для того, чтобы приобщить их к культурной жизни наравне с другими национальностями.

Если вы нам скажете, что с цыганами поступают несправедливо, вытесняют их с завода, из колхоза, мы будем реагировать, но если вы говорите, что производственное предприятие или колхоз должны быть исключительно для цыган, то это неправильно. [...] Мы должны работать рука об руку, идти объединенно дорогой Ленина-Сталина по пути к построению бесклассового социалистического общества, по пути к коммунизму. [...]

Постановление Президиума ВЦИК о создании специального цыганского района нужно приветствовать потому, что это облегчает обслуживание их на национальном языке и в хозяйственном и в культурно-бытовом смысле облегчает выращивание кадров. Это вообще хорошее правильное решение и нужно всячески помочь его скорейшему осуществлению. Я согласен с тов. Цылько, который указывает на район для цыган около Ставрополя, где есть условия к тому, чтобы развернуть работу среди цыган. Хватит места и здесь, нечего искать какие то районы в Сибири. Земельная перегрузка в Сталинградском крае, Азово-Черноморском, Северо-Кавказском и др. Кроме этого нужно устраивать цыган там, где они уже акклиматизировались. Например, если около Смоленска (Западная обл[ась]) партийными и советскими организациями созданы для цыган такие условия, что они не хотят оттуда уезжать, нужно их там и оставить. [...] Очевидно, там имеются цыгане, которые еще не охвачены колхозом, и которые приезжают в колхоз для того, чтобы в него вступить. Организованные в колхозы цыгане зовут своим примером всех цыган к культурно трудовой жизни, но есть еще много кочующих цыган, которые хотят осесть в определенном месте. Что же, пусть оседают цыгане в определенном месте и потом будет цыганская автономная советская социалистическая республика.

Есть у нас еще и трудные моменты – это классовая борьба. Есть еще кулаки, извращенные старыми пережитками, есть еще подкулачники, имеются лодыри, жулики и др. подобный элемент, оставшиеся в наследство от капитализма. Мы должны бороться одинаково беспощадно и с кулаком, и с подкулачником, и жуликом и лодырем, подходя при этом осторожно к каждому в отдельности цыгану, не оскорблять цыгана, не говорить, что если он цыган, то обязательно плут и обманщик. Совершенно необходима большая работа воспитательного порядка среди трудящихся цыган. Дружбу народов, которая сейчас окрепла, нужно всячески развивать. [...]

Вопросом подготовки кадров из цыган мы займемся специально. Не обязательно всех готовить на цыганском языке. В начальной школе занятия можно проводить на начальном [национальном] языке, но специальных высших учебных заведений для цыган создавать не нужно, они могут учиться и в русских, и в украинских вузах.

Т[оварищ] Безлюдский – активист-коммунист и писатель цыганский, он, видимо, не проходил университета до Октябрьской революции, я в этом уверен,

но он и другие подобно ему товарищи, работая над собою в многом успели и стали крупными людьми не только среди цыган, но и для нашего общего дела социалистического строительства в СССР. Сейчас все национальности, в том числе и цыгане, имеет свободный доступ в любое учебное заведение. Но надо учиться и на работе, и многие из вас это делают. [...]

Мне хотелось бы создать комиссию возможно более широкую с тем, чтобы мы глубоко проработали все вопросы. Дадим комиссии двухдекадный срок и затем заслушаем этот вопрос либо на Президиуме Совета Национальностей, либо на Президиуме ЦИК Союза СССР.

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Minutes

of the Meeting at the Department of Nationalities at TsIK USSR on the questions of the employment of toiling nomadic Gypsies and their cultural and economic services

January 4 and 5, 1936

Presided – comrade Alexander I. Khatskevich.

Presented: from the Ukrainian Representative Office comrade Kosior [1]; from Department of Nationalities VTsIK comrade Takoiev; from Nationalities Committee of Mossovet comrade Krumina; from Narkomzem USSR comrade Tsył'ko; from Narkomzem RSFSR comrade Voronin; from VPK comrade Zubietov; from Vsekopromsovet comrade Tagiev; from the Goslitizdat comrade A. Germano; from Knigocentr comrade Rosenberg; from Central Gypsy Club comrades Marin, Svetlov; from Gypsy Theatre comrades M. Goldberg, Blank, I. Lebedev, Sorochinskiy; from the Gypsy Pedagogical College comrades Modina, Kharitonov, Bystrov; from Tsygkhimpromartel comrade Baranovskiy; from Gypsy Pishchepromartel comrades Grushina, Zverev; from Editorial Office of newspaper *Pravda* comrade Kren; from the Editorial Office of the newspaper *Izvestiya* comrade Rozovskiy; from the Editorial Office of the newspaper *Trud* (Labour) comrade Antonov; from the Editorial Office of the newspaper *Za Kommunisticheskoe Prosveshchenie* (For the Communist Education) [2] comrade Paul; from the TASS comrade Zharkovskiy; from the Head of the Gypsy Village Council of Mineralnye Vody district of North-Caucasian kray comrade Bezlyudskiy; Head of the Gypsy kolkhoz *Nevo Džuiben* (New Life) in Butakhovskiy Village Council of Gorodetsk district of Gorky kray comrade F. T. Ivanov; Head of the Gypsy kolkhoz *Nevi Baxt* (New Happiness) in Bogdanovskiy Village Council of Kinelskiy district of Kuybyshev kray comrades Egorov, Zhukovskiy; Head of kolkhoz *Oktyabr'* (October) in Mikhonoshenskiy Village Council of Smolensk district of Western Oblast comrade Gorbunov; Deputy Director of factory-artel named after First Five Year Plan of Krupino Village Council of Pavlovo-Posadsk district of Moscow Oblast comrade A. I. Gerasimov; Instructor of Organisational Department of the Western oblispolkom comrade I. Ya. Gerasimov; Director of the Gypsy seven-year school in Serebryanskiy Village Council of Smolensk district of Western Oblast comrade Mikholažhin, Head of

the National Department of Dnepropetrovsk oblispolkom comrade Bilyavskiy; Deputy Head of the Secretariat of Presidium of Tsik comrade I. F. Akimov; referent-consultant of the Secretariat of Presidium of TsIK comrade Berin [3].

[Things] listened:

1. Comrade Khatskevich's opening remarks on the *situation of Gypsies* [4], goals and objectives of the meeting;

2. Reports: (a) on the employment of nomadic Gypsies in trade and agriculture (presenter comrade Takoev); b) cultural-economic services for Gypsies in the USSR (presenter comrade Berin).

3. Commented: comrades Tagiev (Vsekopromsovet), Voronin (Narkomzem RSFSR), Zubietov (VPK), Tsyl'ko (Narkomzem USSR), Kosior (Ukrainian Representative Office), Gerasimov (Western oblispolkom), Bezlyudskiy (Head of the Gypsy Village Council and kolkhoz of Mineralnye vody district), Blank (Gypsy Theatre), N. A. Pankov (Gypsy Writer), Modina (Gypsy Pedagogical College), Baranowski (Moscow Tsygkhimprom), Ivanov (Head of the kolkhoz of Gorodets district of Gorky kray), Zhukovskiy (Gypsy kolkhoz, Kuybyshev kray), Egorov (Gypsy kolkhoz, Kuybyshev kray), Sorochinskiy (Gypsy Theatre), Grushina (Pishcheprom artel), Zverev (Pishcheprom artel), Bilyavskiy (Dnepropetrovsk Oblast), I. P. Tokmakov, Gerasimov (Artel in Moscow Oblast), A. I. Khatskevich.

Decided:

1. To take the reports and opening speeches into consideration.

2. To develop a project of specific measures for the further employment of nomadic Gypsies and cultural and economic services for all Gypsies in the USSR, to form, under the chairmanship of comrade Khatskevich, a Commission composed of comrades Tsyl'ko, I. F. Akimov, Takoev, Berin, Abidova, Lastovskiy, Kosior, I. Ya. Gerasimov, Voronin, Tagiev, Zubietov, Pankov, Sorochinskiy, Tokmakov, Buzlyudskiy, Ivanov, Egorov, Grushina, Marin, Germano, Rosenberg, Kharitonov, Modina, Krumina and representatives of Narkomfin and Narkompros.

The term of the Commission's work – 20 decades.

Chairman – ... [signed] (A. Khatskevich).

Annex to the Minutes of the meeting at the Council of Nationalities VTsIK on the employment of nomadic Gypsies and their cultural and economic services from 04.01.1936.

Consultative Meeting on the employment of nomadic [Gypsies] and cultural and economic services for all toiling Gypsies in the Soviet Union.

Comrade Khatskevich: In the agenda of today's meeting the question of the job placement of nomadic Gypsies and cultural and economic services for all toiling Gypsies of the USSR is considered.

In the USSR, according to the census of 1926, there were 61 294 Gypsy persons, which represents one-hundredth of a per cent of the total population of the USSR [5]. Thus, the Gypsies belong to the small in numbers minorities inhabiting our Soviet Union, and in the past, they belonged to the most oppressed and backward nationalities. That is exactly why we must take special care of the Gypsies as the most backward in the past. [...] The October Revolution, proletarian internationalism, the Leninist-Stalinist national policy oblige us to respect nationalities small-in number, in particular the Gypsies, to show much attention. [...] So we need to take a series of special measures to raise this nation to the level of economic and cultural development of other advanced peoples of the Soviet Union.

The general world history of Gypsies is the wildest, the bloodiest, perhaps, the most damned, of all the histories of all peoples. Despised and persecuted, so-called “Pharaoh’s tribe” – the Gypsies were oppressed by various religious bourgeois-capitalist cliques, which branded these people particularly with a nickname and otherwise harassed and even physically exterminated the Gypsy people. [...] Gypsies are mainly nomadic people; due to the special historical conditions, Gypsies have found themselves in an extremely difficult social and domestic situation. Gypsies still live with the remnants of the tribal system, in the power of tribal chiefs. They are socially, economically and culturally backward, and beaten as the backward people, the Gypsies, as a national minority, have been and are still being subjected to the most savage persecution in capitalist countries. [...]

It is natural that under such life conditions the Gypsies were forced to hide in forests, ravines, mountain gorges, desert areas. There they led a semi-vagrant lifestyle, often responding to their oppressors and persecutors with robbery, stealing and theft; Gypsies were engaged in fortune-telling, cheating, begging, horse dealing, etc. When they were discovered and pursued, they were removed and moved to other places; they wandered in all countries, moving from place to place, Gypsies lived in the cold, under the open sky and in tents, mud huts with children and sick old persons; they led a miserable life and often starved, ate roots and garbage. The richest of the Gypsies with links to the police and the hucksters – in every way exploited the poor.

Here is briefly the situation of the Gypsies in the past. In a number of European and other bourgeois states, the situation of the Gypsies remains the same until today. Thus, the history of the Gypsy people is the most difficult, the most impenetrable of all the histories of all peoples.

After the October Revolution, in Soviet Russia, toiling Gypsies, like all workers of all nationalities, acquired the right to govern the state, acquired the right to work. [...] With the tireless care of nationalities and ethnic minorities of the leader of the peoples, comrade Stalin, all conditions have been created for the transition of Gypsies to a cultural working life. Factories, plants, agriculture – everything has become available to toiling Gypsies. All children of toiling Gypsies have the opportunity to learn. [...] For the first time in the history of the Gypsies, under Soviet authorities in the USSR, the Gypsies’ written language is created, textbooks are published in the Gypsy language, journals have been published, newspaper, etc. In various places there are several dozen schools,

where children of the toiling Gypsies learn; their own writers, poets, literature workers, artists grow out among Gypsy youth. [...] The Gypsy theatre is created, run exclusively by Gypsies. [...] Wherever settled Gypsies live, there cultural centers are also created – reading rooms, clubs; we also have a lot of children's centres – kindergartens, day nurseries, playgrounds, etc. [...] New people grow and bring up among the Gypsies, proletarians, farmers, activists, young people who are able to build life in a new way – under the guidance of the party of Lenin and Stalin. These are the general successes in the work among the Gypsies, their involvement in socialist construction, ensuring a happy life for workers.

At the same time, we have many shortcomings in this work. [...] In 1925, on the initiative of individual workers, the All-Russian Union of Gypsies was established. This Union existed until February, 1928 and was liquidated, as its appointment was not justified. Now there is no such centre, which would be especially devoted to working among the Gypsies, and perhaps such a body is not needed. It is necessary to develop work in the sectors and territories where Gypsies live and wander in order to soon achieve their employment, raising and developing their economic, cultural and everyday life. From this point of view, it is necessary to welcome the activities of the Government of the USSR to create a territorial Gypsy rayon [6]. [...]

Takoev (Department of Nationalities VTsIK): [...] What activities does the meeting need to outline?

(1) to take into account the total number of Gypsies living in the USSR, because there can be no work planning without it;

(2) to give special consideration to the allocation of a rayon for the Gypsies, because if they are concentrated on one territory, it is easier to conduct work among them. [...]

Berin: [...]

[Debate on the reports]:

Tagiev (Vseokpromsovet): [...]

Voronin (NKZem RSFSR): [...] On the allocation of the rayon for Gypsies, for today there are still 6,590 unsettled [families]. Some people talked about the Gypsy region in Western Siberia. It seems to me that without examining the area, without knowing its climatic conditions, it is impossible to talk about the acceptability or the unacceptability of the area. Judging by the characteristics sent by the land bodies of the West Siberian kray, this area is suitable. The idea of allocating a rayon for the compact settlement of Gypsies is very good because then the Gypsies can closely join the socialist construction.

Zubietov (VPK): The Resettlement Committee makes the following proposals on the arrangement of Gypsies. [...] It would be necessary to find an area for the creation of a Gypsy rayon. When the question of creating such an independent rayon arose, the Resettlement Committee requested a number of Krays and Oblasts regarding the possibility of allocating an area on which it would be possible to organize a settlement of 30-35 thousand Gypsies. Requested were the Azov – Black Sea Kray, North Caucasus, the Volga region, the Crimea, the Urals, Western Siberia. The Southern regions replied that there is no free land, the Gorky Oblast replied that it can provide about 70-80 thousand hectares of land with large capital investments. Omsk replied that they can provide land

in the area of the town of Ostyako-Vogulsk [7] and only Western Siberia replied that it can provide two land funds. We have set ourselves the task of studying these two sites in more detail because without a survey it is difficult to say whether they are suitable or not. By the way, we know that a certain amount of free land is available in the Ural, in Stalingrad Oblast, in Kuybyshev Oblast, and not only land, there are also houses left after “dekulakisation”. These rayons can also be used. [...]

Tsyl'ko (Narkomzem USSR): When compared with bourgeois countries, in respect of the arrangement of the Gypsies, in the Soviet Union, here in the USSR we have made a lot but the numbers that are mentioned here are still very miserable. Therefore, we can say that the work has just begun. I fully support the proposal to create a Gypsy Rayon, but in the beginning, in my opinion, we should go through the creation of smaller administrative and economic units within the existing districts. Then the Gypsies would have their representation in the district executive committee, their village councils, their schools, they would receive special assistance. Gypsies, due to their difficult past, still need special protection of their interests, they need to get special care, which is provided to them by a number of governmental regulations. Unfortunately, in localities the authorities do not comply with these decrees; Gypsies are not provided with the benefits that should be provided to them.

The land funds offered in Western Siberia, judging by their composition (80% of it is inconvenient land) are not suitable. Gypsies should be given the best land because it is the first time they settle. It is difficult for them to switch immediately to hard physical labour. Therefore, it is necessary to find such a land area, which would provide better land and would be suitable for Gypsies in climatic conditions. I think Gypsies are more inclined to animal husbandry, horse breeding, pig breeding. We need to find an area where they can develop these trades. There are very good unused lands in Stavropol area. [...] The climate conditions of this region are quite suitable for Gypsies. Then a colossal amount of unused land – in the Orenburg steppe. Mineralovodsky district is a great place for Gypsies. You can find areas in the Volga region, in the Kuibyshev region.

Organisational question – whether to create special Gypsy kolkhozes or to insert them into local farms. If there are no specific reasons that would suggest that the Gypsies do not get along with the Russian population, then it would be advisable from an economic point of view to create mixed kolkhozes, for the Gypsies are a skilled people, they are good blacksmiths, tin-smiths, good horse breeders. Every kolkhoz needs such people. If it is not possible, then in the order of creating independent small administrative-economic units it would be possible to accommodate the Gypsies in the Stavropol region, in the Orenburg steppes, the Kuibyshev region and partly in the Mineralovodsky district, giving them a special target, but in no case should the Gypsies be resettled in Siberia. [...]

Then a lot of regional workers have to straighten their brains out when they refuse to accept Gypsies where they can be arranged. It would not be bad to create a special cell on the arrangement of Gypsies in the Resettlement Committee (voice: done correctly).

Kosior (Ukraine Representative Office): Until now, not a single republic has attached sufficient importance to the issue of the accommodation of Gypsies, which requires special attention, a special approach. It must be said bluntly that without special additional funds these measures for the accommodation of Gypsies will not be realised. It may be necessary to create special *yacheykas* in areas where there are large groups of Gypsies, *yacheykas* that would take special care of them. The main thing is to raise public opinion around this issue in order to end the nomadism of Gypsies and accommodate them in a socialist way.

Gerasimov (instructor of Western oblispolkom, a Gypsy): [...] [8]. My proposal. At first, Gypsy collective farms cannot be merged with Russian ones. When Gypsy collective farms get stronger, then we will be able to talk about uniting them with the Russian collective farm or with the collective farm of other nationalities.

One of the obstacles to the development of further work in our region is the lack of agricultural land area. We need to think of allocating the territory for the Gypsies at least in a form of the small rayon. In our oblast, about 60 Communists and Komsomol members could be found, who will be able, by the assistance of the Communist Party and the government, to provide the management of this rayon.

It seems useful to invite the Komzet for work among the Gypsies, as the Komzet has great experience in relocation [9].

Bezlyudskiy (North Caucasus, a Gypsy, until 1919 nomadic): I have been working in the Gypsy kolkhoz *Toiling Gypsy* [10] Mineralnye Vody district since 1926 [11], and at the same time I am the Head of the [Gypsy] Village Council [12]. [...] [13]

About allocation of the district for Gypsies. If Gypsies have their own territory, their own newspaper, the work will go very differently. The most suitable area for the settlement of Gypsies would be Stavropol area. Now there are a lot of wandering Gypsies because in this area there are big markets. [...]

About relocation to my kolkhoz. I can take 150-200 families, but on one condition – if assistance is provided with regard to finishing the plumbing of water pipes, which has been under construction for a number of years, and with timber.

Blank (Gypsy theatre): [...]

Comrade Pankov (Gypsy writer): We, Gypsy activists, are witnessing every year something new in the Gypsy life – the press, schools, kindergartens, [the Pedagogical] College, theatre, artels, kolkhozes, and finally today on the agenda is a question of the territory for Roma.

Besides these positive facts, we have our own diseases, in all our labour and cultural units.

On the situation with the theatre. [...] The Gypsy theatre – so to speak – is a Gypsy pearl. This theatre has tremendous success in the USSR and abroad, meanwhile, the theatre suffers from shortness of its repertoire. Recently, there are no new plays, and there are certainly opportunities to create new plays. [...]

About the College. There are a lot of abnormalities in the College. Young people in the College are completely neglected, left by themselves. [...] Without the help of comrade Tokmakov, we would not have a new cohort of students in the College. [...]

About Gypsy kolkhozes. Comrade Bezlyudskiy is not an ordinary Gypsy, he knows the Constitution, he will be able to step up on anyone's throat (i.e. to convince anyone in a dispute), but there are kolkhozes where there are no such Bezlyudskiys, and there the situation is horrible. [...]

Finally, all the peoples are collecting their treasures of folk creativity, and only Gypsies are left behind – we are collecting neither the [folk] songs nor music (comrade Khatskevich: We are not interested in petty-bourgeois Gypsy romances, only in the Gypsy folk art – folklore). [...]

The main reason that our units – productive and cultural – work poorly is in the absence of leadership from the departments in which these units are included. That is why we need Gypsy personnel who are engaged in Russian production, to involve them in some way and to distribute them within our units. Then the work will go differently.

Comrade Modina (Gypsy Pedagogical College): [...]

Comrade Baranowski (Tsygkhipromartel): I have worked in the field of industrial cooperation since 1927. The first Moscow Industrial artel organised by us not only increased into *Tsygkhiprom*, but has a filial structure – *Pishchepromartel*. All this is what we have created with our own Gypsy hands.

I was a street kid myself until I was 13. The party and the government raised me as a human and I became a useful member of society. [...] The proposal of allocating the special Gypsy Rayon is entirely correct. If Gypsies will be united on one territory, it will be easier to work among them (applause).

Comrade Ivanov (Head of Gypsy kolkhoz in Gorodetskiy district of Gorky kray): Until I was 15 years old, I led a wandering lifestyle with nomadic Roma, being their pupil. [...] Had Gypsies their own territory, the work would have gone differently. I sincerely and wholeheartedly wish that a national Gypsy rayon existed (applause).

Zhukovskiy: I am the Chairman of the Village Council [14], I am fully illiterate. In the Russian village councils and kolkhozes, the chairmen are literate and in addition, they are helped by the Communist party organizer, and I, being fully illiterate, no one helps me. [...] They tell me to force the people to carry out [cultural] mass work, but how to carry it out, when I myself need to study. [...] Our Gypsies, kolkhoz workers, are pledging to gather in one place several Romani kolkhozes, in order to have their own Village Council, their schools.

Egorov (village Neubach, Kuybyshev Kray): Our school is international, and other nationalities are studying there: Russians, Ukrainians, Mordvins, [...]. I'm working in the school, and I'm the Communist party organiser of the three kolkhozes. [...] I cannot say, that there is a bad attitude towards Gypsies, although I look closely at this. However, at the beginning, there were such conversations that Gypsies are not of use at all, but now these conversations don't exist anymore since some Gypsies have surpassed the Russians in work. [...]

Sorochinskiy [(Gypsy theatre)]: In the past, I was a Gypsy-nomad. In 1918 I took part in the Moscow coup d'etat, then I worked in the Ural until 1921, then studied, graduated from College. Now, for one year and three months I have been working in the Gypsy theatre, as an Opera singer. [...] Our Directors replace one another as often as I have changed horses in the past. [...] Actors are young, capable in music, talented, but this is not enough. [...] In my opinion, it is not necessary to invite people from outside, but it is necessary to train existing staff. [...]

Grushina (from Gypsy Pishchepromartel): [...].

Zverev: [...].

Belyavskiy (Dnepropetrovsk): [...] We started transferring Gypsies to a sedentary way of life in 1934. [...] We have 10 physicians and engineers from among Gypsies, they are our activists. [...]

I must say that we are somewhat addicted to resettlement. Gypsies do not always want to move, but they want to get a job in the place where they live. [...] This issue should be approached with caution. In my practice, the Gypsies themselves do not ask for resettlement but want to get a job at the factory. It is absolutely necessary to issue an ordinance at high level on the aid to Gypsies who are working in industrial cooperation, in particular with regard to housing and in relation to registration in cities of Roma youth, who can be engaged in factories.

Tokmakov: [...] Settling of Gypsies goes slowly, Gypsies wander from one district to another, but they have a great desire to settle. It is very difficult to fight against the class enemy because the Gypsy *kulak* is especially disguised, it is difficult to recognise him with an unaided eye, though he exists, most of all among the Gypsy nomads. [...]

The complexity of the issue lies in the fact that first of all, it is necessary to accustom Gypsies to the processes of labour, for this it is necessary to increase the targeted funds [...]. Of course, it is necessary to settle Gypsies in one place so that our forces and resources can be concentrated there and thus improve cultural, educational and economic work among Gypsies.

Today travelling has absolutely changed its direction. [...] it most of all took place in the South, and least in Western Siberia – so it was before, but now, due to the circumstance that the land has come into kolkhozes possession, the economy of nomadism is kicked out, as well as in connection with the passportisation, nomadic routes are transferred to places, where it carried on more freely, namely in the West Siberian kray, Omsk region, East Siberian kray. Very few caravans of wandering Gypsies can presently be found in North Caucasus and Azov – Black Sea krays. In the caravans the nomads live in the forests, but at the same time it is possible to observe that nomadism is done not only on horseback but by car; you can often find a Gypsy in a working truck, not in the caravan, in the working truck he drives and works on the new constructions' places.

Now among the nomads there is a process of class stratification, one can often hear talks about the fact that some Gypsies are individual peasants, and other Gypsies are kolkhoz members, they are divided into individual peasants and kolkhoz adherents already during the nomadic period and then, when they meet with the opportunity to

join the kolkhoz, some of them settle there. To a large extent, the sedentarisation of Gypsies depends on the support they will receive from local authorities. [...]

The newspaper, if it could be released, would play a huge role. We released 3 newspapers in the North-Caucasus region and they gave a very big change. [...]

A very sensitive issue is that about cadres. The people decide everything [15], but Gypsy cadres are very small in number and dispersed. Meanwhile, in a Russian rayon, the work is a lot easier than in Gypsy one; it is necessary to speak to each Gypsy individually; in order to get some reaction from him, we have to tell him the whole story of man. When the special Rayon will be allocated for Gypsies, it will be necessary to attract all the Gypsy Komsomol and Communist party members for the work among Gypsies, who are now doing Russian work. [...]

Gerasimov: [...][16].

Khatskevich: [...] Many comrades spoke passionately about the shortcomings in the work on the employment and of the cultural and consumer services for toiling Gypsies. If everything was well in the case of the arrangement of Gypsies, if everything was well in the cultural, educational and material situation, we would not have arranged the meeting. We convened the meeting precisely because there are many shortcomings with regard to the cultural and consumer services for toiling Gypsies. But along with this, when we say that thousands of Gypsies work in our factories and plants, thousands of families are arranged in forty-odd kolkhozes and that they have moved from a nomadic life to a settled working life, when dozens and hundreds of young Gypsies became physicians, teachers, technicians, etc. – this cannot but make us rejoice, especially knowing that Gypsies in the past were the most dispersed, the most persecuted nationality. Without a doubt, the Gypsy people under the Soviet Authority has achieved great success.

The shortcomings are not few. The shortcomings are, first of all, that we have not yet been able to overcome the remnants and perversions that have occurred in the past and have remained to some extent among Gypsies, they still exist among Gypsies in all countries except the Soviet Union, where the situation has changed radically for all national workers, including Gypsies. In particular, these remnants found expression in the fact that Gypsies were engaged in deception. But though, in some cases, Gypsies cheated, it does not mean that these remnants cannot be liquidated among Gypsies; these remnants were adopted in the conditions of capitalism, persecution, oppression and so on. Blaming Gypsies for the fact that they are nomad, is like blaming the Jews for the fact that they lived in shtetls [17]. You, the Gypsy activists, must not get discouraged, not to be afraid of difficulties, and in every way try to get rid of these remnants. We must use all means to help Gypsies to organise their lives economically, financially and culturally. There are conditions for this. Conditions in our Union have changed radically and are improving every day. Since the first day of the October Revolution, the toiling Gypsies have received the full right to apply their labour in any field of socialist construction, factories, various industrial enterprises, kolkhozes, etc.

The conditions of nomadism have also changed for Gypsies. [...] The Gypsy nomadism was caused by homelessness, mendicity, begging, and hence, of course, stemmed

deception and all sorts of other corruption among Gypsies. Now only the group of kulaks-exploiters, continue to command their families, whip them [18], wanting to continue nomadism, opposing the idea of settling. These people are wrong; they will not be able to keep Gypsies from settling. Now the position of all the nationalities in the Soviet Union is not what it used to be in the past. In the Soviet village, there are no longer the former downtroddenness, savagery, deceit, hopelessness, theft; the kolkhozes mass is already a cultural mass. And the Roma-nomads, as rich as they were before, who had decorated caravans, harnessed to several pairs of horses, no longer exist.

Now the peasants cannot be fooled with sorcery and deception. In the best case, these wandering Gypsies evoke human compassion on the part of the peasants, and they are given something in the form of a charity, but along with this the peasants say to Gypsies: "stop being lazy, roaming aimlessly, and start to engage in economically productive work". Many Gypsies are already aware of it. The situation of the socialist construction calls everyone to work according to the slogan "who does not work, he does not eat." This should be known to all Gypsies, especially those who have not yet moved to productive work. Our task is to firmly explain that to them, to tell them about it, in a Bolshevistic way.

On the national aspect of this question. Some comrades spoke here that a Gypsy enterprise should be an exclusive Gypsy enterprise, Gypsy kolkhoz should consist entirely of Gypsies. If we, comrade Baranovskiy, we and you together, posed the question in that way that America is supposedly for Americans, Russia for Russians, then we would be out of here. If the Russian proletariat, which has won power, which has freed all nationalities from capitalist oppression, had decided that there is the Russian majority here, and Russia has to be only for Russians, then there would be no place for us to be with you, and not only for us, but also for Ukrainians in Ukraine as the Russians also make the majority there. We must remember that the Russian proletariat, having overthrown Tsarism, liberated all nationalities from the capitalist yoke, and now, on the basis of Lenin-Stalin's national policy, in the Soviet Union all Nations are equal, all Nations are sovereign and we all have the same right to take an active part in the socialist construction, to work. Factories, plants, all industry are practically created by the Russian proletariat, the earth won by the Russian proletariat and for Russian peasants, and for all other nationalities. This is the merit of the Russian proletariat. Now the issue is about pulling Gypsies out of the "pits" of the past, which, in significant part, they are in; we have to pull out them in order to introduce them to the cultural life on an equal basis with other nationalities.

If you tell us either that Gypsies are being treated unfairly, or that they are being forced out of the factory, from the kolkhoz, we will react; but if you say that the productive enterprise or the kolkhoz should be exclusively for Gypsies, then this is wrong. [...] we must work hand in hand, go together with the way of Lenin-Stalin on the way to building a classless socialist society, on the way to communism. [...]

The decree of the Presidium of the VTsIK about creating a special Gypsy Rayon should be welcomed because it makes easier to service them in their national language and in economy, and in a cultural and community sense it facilitates the cultivation of the cadres. This is generally the right decision and we need to help in every way to implement

it as soon as possible. I agree with comrade Tsyl'ko who indicates the area for Gypsies near Stavropol, where there are conditions to expand the work among Gypsies. There is enough space here as well, there is no reasons to look for some rayons in Siberia. There is land shortness in the Stalingrad kray, the Azov – Black Sea kray, North Caucasus kray, etc. It is reasonable to arrange [that] Gypsies [settle] where they have already been acclimatised. For example, if near Smolensk (the Western Oblast) the Communist party and Soviet organisations have created such conditions for Gypsies that they do not want to move, you need to leave them there. [...] Obviously, there are Gypsies who are not yet encompassed by the kolkhozes, and who come to the kolkhoz to join it. Gypsies who are organised into kolkhozes serve as an example and call all Gypsies to join a cultural toiling life, but there are also many nomadic Gypsies who want to settle in a certain place. Well, let Gypsies settle in a designated place and then there will be a Gypsy Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic.

We also still have difficult moments – it is a class struggle. There are still kulaks, perverted remnants of the old-time, there are still kulaks' agents, there are idlers, rogues and others elements inherited from capitalism. We must fight equally mercilessly with the kulaks, and their agents, and rogues and idlers, carefully approaching in the meantime each individual Gypsy, not to offend him, not to say that if he is a Gypsy, then he is definitely a cheater and a liar. It is absolutely necessary to conduct a lot of educational work among the toiling Gypsies. The friendship of peoples, which has now become stronger, must be developed in every way. [...]

We will especially deal with the issue of training the Gypsy cadres. It is not necessary to prepare everyone in the Gypsy language. In primary school, the instruction can be conducted in the native language, but there is no need to create special higher education institutions for Gypsies, as they can study in Russian and Ukrainian universities.

Comrade Bezlyudskiy is a Communist, activist and Gypsy writer, he apparently did not pass any university before the October Revolution, I'm certain of it. But he, and others comrades like him working towards self-education have succeeded in many aspects and have become big people not only among Gypsies but also for our common task of the socialist construction in the USSR. Now all nationalities, including Gypsies, have free access to any educational institution. But you need to learn from work too, and many of you do it. [...]

I would like to make the Commission as broad as possible so that we can work on all these issues in depth. We will give the Commission a two decades term and then put this question either to the Presidium of the Council of Nationalities or to the Presidium of the TsIK of the USSR.

Notes

1. It is unclear who was the representative of the Ukrainian SSR at the meeting. Stanislav Kosior (1889-1938) at that time was the First Secretary of the Communist Party of Ukraine. Two of his brothers (Joseph and Casimir) also held important positions in the Soviet state system and did not work at the Ukrainian Representative Office in Moscow, and the third brother Vladislav was

in exile in Siberia at the time. The meeting was probably attended by the fifth brother Mikhail (1893-1937), but it is also possible that the representative of the Ukrainian Representative Office in Moscow was another relative or namesake.

2. In 1930-37 this was the title of *Uchitel'skaya gazeta* (Teachers' Newspaper).

3. T. Berin was a referent-consultant of the Secretariat of the Presidium of the TsIK of the USSR, preparing most of the official materials targeting the Gypsies, which were discussed in the Council of Nationalities of the TsIK of the USSR.

4. A handwritten addition.

5. In fact, the Census of 1926 counted 61 234 (not 61 294) Gypsy persons (Всесоюзная перепись населения, 1926); it is 0.04% (not 0.01%).

6. When the materials of the Meeting were published, this sentence was changed as follows: "It is necessary to welcome the measures of the Government of the RSFSR to create territorial Gypsy rayon for settlement by toiling Gypsies" (Совещание, 1936, p. 63). The change ('rayons' instead of 'rayon') reflects the contradictions between the positions of the VTsIK and the NKVD on the issue of Gypsy autonomy, which will be addressed below. In this case, it is indicative that the NKVD managed to impose this change in the speech of Alexander I. Khatskevich, who at that time was not only Secretary of the Council of Nationalities of the TsIK of the USSR, but also a member of the Editorial Board of the journal *Revolutsiya i Natsionalnosti* (Revolution and Nationalities) where the materials of the Meeting were published.

7. Ostyako-Vogulsk, now Khanty-Mansiysk, an administrative centre of Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug – Yugra.

8. In his presentation, Ilya Gerasimov describes in detail the successes achieved in the establishment of Gypsy kolkhozes and Gypsy schools in Western Oblast.

9. Komzet (*Committee for the Settlement of Toiling Jews on the Land* at Presidium of the VTsik) was established in 1924. The Committee actively worked on the creation of Jewish settlements in the Crimea and in many other regions of the USSR, and subsequently on the establishment of the Jewish Autonomous Oblast with the administrative centre in the town of Birobidzhan in the Far East in 1934.

10. Translation error – the Gypsy name of the collective farm 'Труд Ромэн' (*Trud Romen* in Russian should be translated as 'Цыганский труд' (Gypsy labour) and not as "Трудовой цыган" (Toiling Gypsy).

11. In his presentation, Mikhail Bezlyudskiy states that he has been the head of the Gypsy kolkhoz *Trud Romen* (Gypsy Labour) since 1926 (when the kolkhoz was created), while in fact he was sent by the Department of Nationalities at VTsIK to head the kolkhoz in 1933 (see below). There is probably a printing error in the minutes.

12. This refers to the Gypsy *selsoviet*, established in the village of Kangly, Mineralnovodsky region, in 1932 (see below).

13. In his presentation, Mikhail Bezlyudskiy spoke in detail about the problems which the Gypsy kolkhoz headed by him constantly encountered.

14. This is the village of Bogdanovka, Kinel' district, Kuybyshev (now Samara) Oblast. The interesting thing about this case is that an illiterate Gypsy was a chairman of the village soviet, whose inhabitants were predominantly not Gypsies but ethnic Russians.

15. "The Peoples Decide Everything" (Люди решают все) – a reference to the catchphrase "The Cadres Decide Everything" (Кадры решают всё), from the speech *On the State of Affairs in the USSR* of Joseph Stalin on May 4, 1935.

16. In his presentation, A. I. Gerasimov spoke in detail about the many different problems with which the metal-working artel where he worked was constantly confronted.

17. Here Alexander Khatskevich refers to 'shtetl' – small settlement with Jewish population in the areas demarcated by the 19th century Pale of Settlement in the Russian Empire, beyond which Jewish residency was mostly forbidden.

18. The image of the Gypsy kulak who beats poor Gypsies with a whip was widespread in the propaganda of the time (in illustrations, posters, theatre and cinema). In this sense the whip became a symbol, in the first place of class oppression, but also of gender oppression, as e.g. in the story *Пхагурдо Дэсто* (The Broken Whip), published in the Romani language (Безлюдско, 1932, pp. 5-17).

Source: GARF, f. P 3316, op. 28, d. 794, l. 77-125.

The Minutes of the Meeting are published with some editorial corrections in the journal *Революция и национальности* (Revolution and Nationalities), a publication of the Department of Nationalities at TsIK USSR (Совещание, 1936, pp. 61-72).

Prepared for publication by Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov.

Translated by Viktor Shapoval.

12.4.7 *The Draft Decree*

Проект

Постановление

Президиума Всероссийского Центрального Исполнительного Комитета

Заслушав доклад инструктора Отдела Национальностей ВЦИК т. Токмакова о результатах проверки исполнения Постановления Президиума ВЦИК от 1 апреля 1932 г. “О состоянии работы по обслуживанию трудящихся цыган”, Президиум ВЦИК констатирует, что за последние 3 года работа среди трудящихся цыган несколько улучшилась. [...] Однако, в результате продолжающейся недооценки значения работы по обслуживанию трудящихся цыган со стороны наркоматов и ряда местных исполкомов и советов, Постановление Президиума ВЦИК от 1 апреля 1932 г. в значительной части не выполнено:

1) Наркомзем РСФСР не разработан конкретный план землеустройства трудящихся цыган для их компактного заселения; [...]

Считая, что дальнейшая работа по вовлечения трудящихся цыган в социалистическое строительство тормозится из-за отсутствия плана компактного оседания цыган в пределах одного района, Президиум ВЦИК постановляет:

1. Предложить СНК РСФСР поручить Госплану и Наркомзему РСФСР в месячный срок наметить один из районов в пределах РСФСР для компактного заселения его трудящимися цыганами, обеспечив это мероприятие соответствующими средствами для хозяйственного и социально-культурного строительства в районе. [...]

5. Просить ЦИК Союза ССР:

а) Организовать при Совете Национальностей ЦИК Союза ССР газету на цыганском языке; [...].

Председатель Всероссийского Центрального Исполнительного Комитета.

Секретарь Всероссийского Центрального Исполнительного Комитета.

∴

Draft [1]

Decree
of the Presidium of VTsIK

Having heard the report of the instructor of the Department of Nationalities VTsIK, comrade Tokmakov, on the results of the audit of the execution of the Decree of the Presidium of VTsIK of April 1, 1932 *On the Situation of Work in the Services for Toiler Gypsies*, the Presidium of VTsIK notes that over the last 3 years the work among toiling Gypsies has slightly improved. [...] However, as a result of the continuing underestimation of the importance of work on the services for toiling Gypsies by the People's Commissariats and a number of local executive committees and councils, the Decree of the Presidium of the CEC of April 1, 1932 has largely not been implemented:

1) Narkomzem RSFSR has not developed a specific plan for land allocation to toiling Gypsies for their compact sedentarisation; [...]

Considering that further work for the involvement of toiling Gypsies in the socialist construction is hampered by the absence of a plan for the compact settlement of Gypsies within the same region, the Presidium of VTsIK decides:

1. To propose to SNK of RSFSR to require from the Gosplan and Narkomzem within a month to outline one of the rayons within the Russian Federation, for the compact settlement of the toiling Gypsies, supplying this plan with appropriate funds for the economic and socio-cultural development in the area. [...]

5. To ask TsIK USSR:

a) To organise a newspaper in Gypsy language at the Department of Nationalities at TsIK USSR; [...].

Chairman of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee.

Secretary of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee [2].

Notes

1. The document is not dated, but judging by the arrangement of the materials in the archive folder, it was prepared in early 1936, shortly after the Consultative Meeting on the employment of nomadic [Gypsies] and cultural and economic services for all toiling Gypsies in the Soviet Union (see above).

2. This Decree of VTsIK was not accepted and remained only as a project, and instead the Decree of the Presidium of VTsIK USSR from 7th April 1936 "*On Measures on the employment of nomads and the improvement of economic and cultural services for toiler Gypsies*" was accepted (Постановление, 1936, p. 87). The proposal to create a newspaper in the Gypsy language, despite strong support from the Department of Nationalities at VTsIK, the Central Election Commission was not accepted. About other differences between the proposed and adopted decree see below in the Comments section.

Source: GARF, f. P 3316, op. 28, d. 793, l. 4-5.

Prepared for publication by Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov.

Translated by Viktor Shapoval.

12.4.8 *Heading the 'Workers Propose' (1)*

Рубрика “Трудящиеся предлагают”.

Три предложения

[...] И третье наше предложение: создать в составе РСФСР или УССР Цыганскую автономную область, объединив разрозненные ныне цыганские колхозы. Благодаря созданию Цыганской автономной области у нас еще более успешно будет идти переход цыган на оседлое положение и культурное их возрождение.

Ю. Масленников, В. Смирнов, В. Плетнев.

Москва.

∴

Heading the 'Workers Propose' [1]

Three Proposals

[...] And our third proposal is to create a Gypsy Autonomous Oblast within the RSFSR or the Ukrainian SSR, uniting presently scattered Gypsy kolkhozes. Thanks to the creation of the Gypsies Autonomous Oblast, we will be even more successful in the transition of Gypsies to a settled status and their cultural revival.

Yu. Maslennikov, V. Smirnov, V. Pletnev [2].

Moscow.

Notes

1. This heading was introduced in the newspaper *Komsomolskaya Pravda* within the framework of the so-called nationwide discussion of the draft of the new Constitution of the USSR (adopted on 05.12.1936).
2. It is not clear who the authors of this proposal are, the names are not those of known Gypsy activists, and it is likely that these were ordinary Soviet citizens.

Source: Масленников, Ю. Смирнов, В., Плетнев, В. (1936a). Три предложения. *Комсомольская правда*, Ап. 7, No. 161 (3447), 1936, July 14, p. 2.

Prepared for publication by Elena Marushiakova, Vesselin Popov.

Translated by Viktor Shapoval.

12.4.9 *Heading the 'Workers Propose' (2)*

Рубрика “Трудящиеся предлагают”.

Актив цыган Москвы при центральном цыганском клубе и уполномоченные вновь организуемого цыганского колхоза в Харькове обсудили предложение тт. Ю. Масленникова, В. Смирнова и В. Плетнева о создании цыганской автономной области (см. “Комсомольскую правду” от 14 июля с. г.). Цыганский актив г. Москвы это предложение поддерживает и считает, что:

1. Создание цыганской автономной области будет способствовать быстрейшему оседанию трудящихся цыган на определенной территории.

2. Следовало бы издавать периодический печатный орган на цыганском языке, что способствовало бы культурному росту цыганского народа.

Следуют 27 подписей.

∴

Heading the "Workers Propose"

The group of Moscow Gypsy activists at the Central Gypsy Club and the plenipotentiaries of the once again organised Gypsy kolkhoz in Kharkiv [1] discussed the proposal of comrades Yu. Maslennikov, V. Smirnov and V. Pletnev about the creation of the Gypsy Autonomous oblast (see *Komsomolskaya Pravda* of July 14, this year). The Gypsy activists of Moscow support this proposal and believe that:

1. The establishment of the Gypsy Autonomous Oblast will contribute to the rapid settlement of toiling Gypsies on the allocated territory.

2. A periodic printed organ should be issued in the Gypsy language, which would contribute to the cultural growth of the Gypsy people.

27 signatures follow.

Notes

1. Probably this refers to the newly-established Gypsy kolkhoz in Lozova railway station, Kharkiv oblast in Ukrainian SSR (GARF, f. P 1235, op. 123, d. 27, l. 210).

Source: [No Author]. (1936b). [Трудящиеся предлагают]. *Комсомольская правда*, An. 7, No. 170 (3456), 1936, July 24, p. 2.

Prepared for publication by Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov.

Translated by Viktor Shapoval.

12.4.10 *About the Gypsy National Rayon*

Рубрика "Предложения"

О цыганском национальном районе

Герасимов (инструктор западного облисполкома). В Западной области имеются 4 цыганских колхоза. Много цыган работает на фабриках, заводах, в системе промкооперации.

Все же в области до сих пор имеется 500 семей цыган, ведущих кочевой и полукочевой образ жизни.

Среди кочевого населения сейчас замечается большая тяга к оседлости. При обсуждении проекта сталинской Конституции в цыганских колхозах и среди кочевого населения (в таборах) было много заявлений о том, чтобы просить правительство выделить один район в Союзе для заселения цыган.

∴

Heading 'Proposals' [1]

About the Gypsy National Rayon

Gerasimov (instructor of the Western Oblast Executive Committee). In the Western oblast, there are 4 Gypsies kolkhozes. Many Gypsies work in factories, plants, in the system of industrial cooperation.

Nevertheless, in the region there are still 500 families of Gypsies, leading a nomadic and semi-nomadic life.

Among the nomadic population a great craving for settled life can now be seen. When discussing the draft of Stalin's Constitution in the Gypsy kolkhozes and among the nomadic population (in tabors) there were many motions about asking the government to allocate one area in the Union for the settlement of the Gypsies.

Notes

1. This heading was also introduced in the framework of the so-called nationwide discussion of the draft of the new Constitution of the USSR.

Source: Герасимов, И. (1936). О цыганском национальном районе. *Известия ЦИК СССР*, Ан. 20, No. 241 (6098), 1936, October 16, p. 3.

Prepared for publication by Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov.

Translated by Viktor Shapoval.

Comments

As can be seen from the published material in this part (12.4.), the idea of creating a Gypsy territorial-administrative unit first arose among Gypsy activists and they were its most ardent supporters. In fact, they were also the main driving force, having tried for years to engage the Soviet institutions in its fulfillment. The reasons for the emergence of this idea are easy to understand. It is apparent also why the very notion of a Gypsy territorial-administrative unit was considered one of the pillars on which the future of the Gypsies as a Soviet nationality must be built. In forging a new multinational state (i.e. the USSR), different nationalities received not only a right but also a real opportunity to create their very own national-territorial administrative units of a different order: namely, a national Union or Autonomous Republics and oblasts as higher-level autonomous administrative entities. At a lower administrative level were the national rayons and selsoviets (for sources and literature on the subject, see Кайкова, 2007). In this newly constructed national-administrative hierarchy of the 1920s, Gypsies were completely absent. Of course, they are by no means the only exception to this regard and, in this case, one cannot speak of any kind of discriminatory treatment specifically targeting them. A population census in the Russian Empire in 1895 recorded 140 peoples (Алфавитный список народов, 2005); at the USSR Census in 1926 their number was already over 160 (Всесоюзная перепись населения, 1926). However, the number of existing separate national territorial-administrative units was much smaller than that of the peoples.

The reasons for the absence of Gypsies in this national-administrative hierarchy are the existing realities: in the USSR, they lived as a diaspora in vast territories, with the majority of them being nomads (about three-quarters); in cases in which they were settled, their relative share in individual settlements was always insignificant (hardly in any settlement exceeding even a few per cent).

In this situation, it is only natural for Gypsy activists to strive for equal treatment with other nationalities and to campaign for their own territorial-administrative unit. Equally important is the fact that the existence of such an administrative unit guaranteed the budget financing of their community-development activities, which, as seen above, was a major problem for Gypsy activism in the 1920s. At the same time, Gypsy activists were taking into account the existing realities, so their calls to the Soviet state for the creation of a Gypsy national rayon were directly linked to the need of sedentarisation of nomads, who would inhabit such a rayon. Resettlement of sedentary Gypsies was unrealistic, or at least difficult to accomplish, while the state-supported transfer of nomads on free territory and their settling there seemed much more realistic and easier to accomplish. This is actually the main reason for the repeated calls for sedentarisation of nomadic Gypsies, which was perceived by the activists as the first mandatory step needed in order to achieve the creation of a national Gypsy rayon. Moreover, Gypsy activists in the 1920s, united by the VSTs, had even already chosen the geographical location of this rayon, namely the southern part of Russia; as they carefully express it: "there is a general attraction to the South". The choice is not accidental. In southern Russia, one could find the most developed agricultural regions, with good climate conditions and comparatively more Gypsy nomads, could also be found there. As could be seen from the above-published document, the presidium of VSTs determined also the minimum number needed to establish a national Gypsy area, namely 100 000 people. The latter seems rather strange given the fact that the Census of 1926 reported a total of 61 234 Gypsies living throughout the USSR (*Ibid.*). However, VSTs, in its paperwork, repeatedly emphasised that this was not the real number of Gypsies, and proposed different figures – from 200,000 to a very fantastic 1,000,000 (see above).

Moreover, the heads of VSTs managed to persuade Soviet institutions in their assessments. Therefore, the Union's action plan set the number of 500 000 (in another version 600 000) Gypsies, and this was taken as a base in the planning of the activities (and in their requests for funding). Unfortunately for the VSTs, these figures were accepted not only in the planning but also in the auditing of the activities (GARF, f. P 393, op. 43 A, d. 1763, l. 7-8).

Attempts to achieve at least some result along the way of the establishment of a Gypsy territorial-administrative unit in the 1920s have been fruitless. The blame for this does not solely lie with the Soviet institutions, which, in principle, did not reject the idea itself, but rather were cautious and took no practical actions in this regard. The VSTs itself also focused its efforts in other areas, namely in its own economic activity. Ultimately, activities in this direction ended with the liquidation of the VSTs in 1928. Since then, Gypsy activists continued to work in other fields, mainly the preparation of

teaching materials, the publication of Romani literature, etc., and this situation continued until the 1930s.

Things changed radically in 1932 when Ivan Tokmakov was appointed instructor at ON VTsIK. His position was one of the lowest in the department's hierarchy, but this does not appear to have been an obstacle in the significant advancement towards the realisation of the idea of a Gypsy national territorial-administrative unit. The decisive factor here was the possibility for a Gypsy activist not to stand outside the party-administrative system, but to act 'from within', as part of that system. This enabled him to use its resources and mechanisms, which significantly changed things.

The appointment of Ivan Tokmakov to the new post was followed by the issuing of the Decree of the Presidium of VTsIK from 01.IV.1932 on the status of work to service toiling Gypsies (GARF, f. P 1235, op. 130, d. 5, l. 38-39). This Decree marks the true beginning of the Soviet Union's purposeful and structured policy towards the Gypsies. Here, for the first time, the idea of creating a separate Gypsy national territorial-administrative unit has crept into the official texts, though carefully worded:

1. To propose to the NKzem of the RSFSR to develop and submit to the SNK of the RSFSR a concrete plan for the land management of Gypsy workers for their compact settlement ... (Ibid.).

In the same year, 1932, the first concrete step in this direction took place. – A national Gypsy selsoviet was established in the village of Kangly, rayon Mineralnye vody, Stavropol Kray. In this way, Gypsies were ranked among the nationalities that had their own national territorial-administrative units. Dozens of other nationalities in the USSR have been deprived of this opportunity. In spite of the fact that this Gypsy unit was at the lowest possible administrative level, the very fact was already a significant achievement in the desired direction. As chairman of the new Gypsy selsoviet was appointed Mikhail Bezlyudskiy, who was specifically sent to this mission by ON VTsIK. Bezlyudskiy also became chairman of the restructured Gypsy kolkhoz *Trud Romen* (Gypsy Labour), which very soon became a model example of a successful Roma kolkhoz in the public space. At the beginning of 1935, Ivan Tokmakov prepared the above-published Memorandum, in which he substantiated the need for the establishment of a Gypsy territorial-administrative unit. He argued that its creation would accelerate and facilitate the settlement of nomads, and would enable them to concentrate in one place all the efforts and resources. This justification, formulated by Tokmakov, was key in all subsequent steps of the Soviet institutions in this direction; it was also the leading one in all letters sent by Gypsy activists to the highest Soviet institutions. And, more importantly, there is no hint in any of the case files that Tokmakov was performing the tasks assigned to him by his principals. On the contrary, it is clear that it was him who initiated the process in the frame of his office duties (GARF, f. P 3316, op. 28, d. 793; d. 794). So, in this case, there is every reason to speak of an initiative that came from the Gypsy elite, which received an understanding and support from the Soviet state.

In fact, the event that had the strongest impact on Roma activists was the creation of a Jewish Autonomous Region within the RSFSR, located in the Far East, in an almost uninhabited region with no local Jewish population. It became clear that the Soviet state was able to initiate and create territorial-administrative units for diasporic nationalities who, *de facto*, had no common territory of settlement. This proved to be a model not only for Gypsies but also for other such nationalities, e.g. for Assyrians who also made steps in this direction (GARF, f. P 3316, op. 64, d. 1637).

The justification of the necessity to create a Gypsy national territorial-administrative unit was not only linked with the need to terminate the Gypsies' nomadic way of life. In a letter dated 08.10.1935 addressed to the ON VTsIK the Gypsy nomads in Udmurt Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic outlined additional reasons why they believed they should have their own administrative unit:

And also in order for the Gypsies to maintain their nationality, as such, [...] we ask to allocate a piece of land for the territory of the Gypsy republic, oblast, or, as a last resort, okrug (GARF, f. P 1235, op. 130, d. 5, l. 80-81).

These reasons are presented in a much more detailed form in the letter of G. M. Andreev, according to which, allocating an area for Gypsy settlement was a way to solve the numerous existing issues in regard to achieving the policy of the Soviet state towards Gypsies and, in particular, the problems of creation of organisational framework for Gypsy activism (GARF, f. P 1235, op. 130, d. 5).

Gypsy activists were well aware of the problems associated with the establishment of a Gypsy national territorial-administrative unit, so they offered more flexible and long-term actions. The first step would be the establishment of a Gypsy rayon which would grow into an oblast and even into a Republic. Some activists went as far as proposing deadlines for the implementation of these plans for the creation of a Gypsy national rayon, linked to the more general plans for the development of the USSR. So, for example, Ilya Gerasimov, instructor in the Oblispolkom of the Western Oblast with the center of Smolensk wrote:

It is necessary to fulfill the political tasks of the second five-year plan – the construction of a classless socialist society, so that by the end of the second five-year plan [1937 – authors note] there will be not a single person outside a toiling settled life. (GARF, f. P 3316, op. 28, d. 794).

The same logic followed Soviet institutions, engaged with this process, and especially structures of the VTSIK and the TsIK. The main coordinator of this bureaucratic process, requiring coordination between different agencies, was Alexander Khatskevich, at that time Secretary of the SN TsIK. We will not go into all the details of the vastness of the file, but we will sketch the main points of the process. In 1935, a circular request was sent to the subjects of the RSFSR through the structures of the VPK at the SNK USSR with the question whether they were able to provide vacant land for the compact settlement of Gypsy nomads, for the purpose of sedentarisation (GARF, f. P 1235,

op. 130, d. 5). The answers received were diverse. Some of the local authorities (e.g. North Caucasus kray, Azov-Black Sea kray, Crimean ASSR) were adamant that they have no vacant land. Others, on the contrary, offered such lands, e.g. Gorky kray, offered land in the Mari ASSR (which belonged to it at that time), or in Omsk region (where the land offered was in the Ostyako-Vogul district, today the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug). However, these proposals were considered inappropriate due to severe climatic conditions. West Siberian Territory bound the provision of vacant land in the Chisto-Ozerskiy rayon (today in the Altai Kray) with the need to receive additional budgetary investments (Ibid.). For his part, Ilya Gerasimov, using his administrative position, proposed the Western Oblast, justifying it with the presence in the area of an already prepared primary structure – Gypsy kolkhozes, schools and, most importantly, with the availability of prepared cadres, Communists and Komsomol members with respective education, who “can fully provide management of the allotted territory” (GARF, f. P 3316, op. 28, d. 794, l. 169-172). After discussing the received proposals, a commission was set up at the ON VTsIK, which included Ivan Tokmakov, whose task was to select

rayons in which it would be expedient to concentrate the toiler nomadic Gypsy population for their transition to sedentary way of life (GARF, f. P 1235, op. 130, d. 5).

Ultimately, as most feasible was defined the proposal of the West Siberian kray. Narkomzem sent there a complex expedition to investigate several locations that were proposed by local authorities as suitable. These were in the present-day Altai Kray and the Kemerovo oblast – the Charyshskiy, Soloneshskiy, Altai, Kondomskiy, and Mrasso-Kondomskiy rayons (GARF, f. P 1235, op. 130, d. 9). The correspondence between the Narkomzem and the local authorities shows that definitive decision had not been reached and evasive expressions continued to be used, such as

“the materials gathered during the research trips are insufficient”, “due to the question being put in are too general ... no fully grounded conclusions can be drawn”, etc. (Ibid.).

Finally, with the Decree of the Presidium of the VTsIK on 12.10.1935 VPK was entitled to release funds for new research with the ordinance to “seek area for the settlement of toiling Gypsies in compact masses” (GARF, f. P 3316, op. 28, d. 793).

In such a situation, the Consultative Meeting of SN TsIK USSR was convened on 04-05.01.1936, the Minutes from which are published above. As seen from the speeches of the participants in the Conference they welcomed the decision to create a national Gypsy rayon but did not commit to determining its location, because different institutions had different preferences. In his concluding speech, Alexander Khatskevich listed various options, but his preference apparently was the North Caucasus kray, where ON VTsIK already delegated Mikhail Bezlyudskiy for the creation of the first Gypsy selsoviet and for the strengthening of the kolkhoz *Trud Romen* (Gypsy Labour), i.e. to lay the foundations for a future national Gypsy rayon.

Although the decisions taken at the Meeting at the Department of Nationalities at TsIK USSR were not announced in the Soviet press, a few days after it being held, a brief announcement appeared in the Western press: "An autonomous gypsy republic is to be set up in the Soviet Union, where gypsies will be settled and develop their own culture. – Reuter". (Sunday Express, 1936, p. 2). In all likelihood, there was a press release for foreign correspondents accredited in the USSR, i.e. the Soviet state was preparing a propaganda campaign aimed for those abroad to show the achievements of Soviet national policy.

However, the processes in this direction were neither simple nor easy. Immediately after the Consultative Meeting, Ivan Tokmakov fulfilled its decision and prepared the Draft of the Decree of the Presidium of VTsIK, published above. Following his discussion at the SN TsIK Presidium Meeting on February 16, 1936, it was decided after some revision to submit it for approval (Постановление, 1936, pp. 89-91). During this time, Alexander Khatskevich actively lobbied the Soviet institutions for the urgent adoption of this Decree. In his a letter to the TsIK Chairman Mikhail Kalinin, with a copy to the SNK USSR, he proposed that the Decree be jointly adopted by the TsIK and the SNK, which would increase its importance and accelerate its implementation. He reasoned:

It is of utmost importance to adopt this decree just at this time, when in the capitalist countries, the 'Big suffocate the Small', in order to emphasise this exceptional care of the great Soviet Union, the Lenin-Stalin Party in relation to the small and in the past the most backward nationalities such as the Gypsies. (GARF, f. P 1235, op. 123, d. 27, f. 10).

Despite the intercession of Khatskevich the SNK USSR preferred not to engage directly with the case and, on April 7, 1936 Presidium of the TsIK USSR adopted a Decree *On Measures on the employment of nomads and the improvement of economic and cultural services for toiler Gypsies* (О мероприятиях, 1936, p. 87). In this Decree, however, some important changes had been made compared to the original project. On the one hand, it included a number of affirmative measures to support the work of Gypsy kolkhozes and artels. On the other hand, the issue of the creation of a Gypsy national rayon had been moved to a backward position.

In the adopted Decree, instead of "one of the rayons within the RSFSR for compact settlement of toiler Gypsies" (as in the Draft, see 12.4.7.), another, much more open sentence was used:

4. Approving the actions of the VTsIK on the allocation of special rayons for the development of kolkhozes of settling Gypsies, instruct the All-Union Resettlement Committee to outline the appropriate locations for settlement by nomadic Gypsies who wish to move to a settled way of life within two months, ensuring that newly created Gypsy kolkhozes receive tax relief. (Ibid.).

At first glance, the change is insignificant (instead of one 'rayon' there is already an unspecified number of 'rayons'), but it is extremely important because it reflects the

existing contradictions between the positions of TsIK and NKVD on the issue of Gypsy autonomy, which find their expression in the policy pursued in this direction.

In 1936, several more important events took place that had a strong impact on the establishment of a Gypsy national territorial-administrative unit. In the course of a nationwide discussion concerning the new Constitution of the USSR (the so-called Stalin Constitution, adopted on December 5, 1936) a proposal for the creation of a Gypsy autonomous oblast, published above, appeared in the press. The authors of this proposal cannot be identified (different hypotheses are possible in this regard), but Gypsy activists used the opportunity to express their support for the idea in public.

At that time, the head of NKVD became Nikolay Yezhov and the office was restructured, greatly expanding its functions, including assuming those of OGPU and of other administrative structures. The All-Union Resettlement Committee was also transformed and, on July 22, 1936, it became the Resettlement Department of the NKVD. Thus, in the end, the task of creating a Gypsy autonomous unit became a task that had to be realised by the NKVD. This led to some significant discrepancies in the scale and pace of work, reflecting the different positions of the TsIK USSR and NKVD, which were not strategic, but tactical. The NKVD did not object in principle to the creation of such a unit, but adhered to a more realistic and pragmatic approach: to set smaller control figures for the number of sedentarised Gypsies, to create several Gypsy rayons in different places in order to approve the methodology, to see the results, etc. Once more, new regions for the settlement of Gypsies started to be discussed, e.g. Kuybyshev, Gorky, Kirov krays, etc., including even the Ukrainian and Byelorussian Soviet Republics (GARF, f. P 1235, op. 123, d. 27).

Formally speaking, the process of creating a Gypsy autonomy was led by TsIK USSR and VTsIK, which finds its expression in the repeated insistences of the ON VTsIK to speed up the process and “to instruct the NKVD Resettlement Division to determine the territory as soon as possible and practically begin to populate it with Gypsies who are travelling in the RSFSR” (GARF, f. P 1235, op. 130, d. 5). Despite the more cautious approach, the NKVD took its task seriously. With the help of its representatives, inspectors to the Resettlement Department, a wide range of activities were conducted in the countryside, including state inspections of the Gypsy kolkhozes, assisting the local authorities in their land allocation, etc. (RGAE, f. 5675, op. 1, d. 143; d. 144; d. 148; d. 149; d. 151; d. 152; d. 157). Attempts were even made (though unsuccessfully) to organise the creation of a new Gypsy selsoviet near the Gypsy kolkhoz, *Nevi baxt* (New Happiness) in Kuybyshev kray (RGAE, f. 5675, op. 1, d. 146). An important aspect of the work of the NKVD was the construction of new homes for the kolkhoz members, and for this purpose, they provided special trains with timber, cut in the camps of the GULAG (RGAE, f. 5675, op. 1, d. 147; d. 179), i.e. it comes down to the sinister historical irony of the NKVD was using GULAG’s resources to build housing for the Gypsies.

A historical puzzle that has not yet been answered is also linked to the activities of the NKVD targeting Gypsies during this period. According to published material from the oral history of the Sikachev family in Moscow, in the winter of 1937, a large group of

Gypsy nomads was deported to Siberia, from Moscow and its neighbouring regions. In Siberia, in the region of Taiga Station (today in Kemerovo Region), this group, together with deported Gypsies from other regions (a total of 340 families or about 1 800 people), established a Gypsy kolkhoz, headed by Alexander Sikachev (1909-1983) which by the end of the year broke down and the Gypsies shun away (Калинин, 2005, pp. 45-47). We have also heard variants of this story during our past fieldwork research in Ivanovo and Kiev.

At first glance, everything in this story seems highly plausible. However, research and searches both in the central archives in Moscow, from where Gypsies had supposedly been deported, and in regional archives in Western Siberia (Novosibirsk, Kemerovo, Tomsk), found no documentary evidence which could verify the whole story. It is difficult to judge, whether this is a case of secondary emerged quasi-history, or a reminiscence of the memory of real events, such as the deportation of Gypsies from Moscow in 1933 (for more details see below). The third option – that all documentation of the incident had been destroyed – seems the least likely. The question remains open until (possible) new evidence is found. Unconfirmed by any historical evidence is the claim made by a non-historian, about proposals to create a Gypsy autonomous region that “to be called Romanestan” (Lemon, 2000, p. 133; 2001, p. 228; Klímová-Alexander, 2005a, p. 164). It cannot be taken seriously as the term ‘Romanestan’ was never used in the documents and publications of the early USSR.

In the late 1930s, an extremely important and significant turning point took place in the overall national policy of the USSR. On December 1, 1937, the Organizing Bureau at the Central Committee of the TsK VKP(b) revised the question *On the liquidation of national rayons and selsoviets* and found it “inappropriate to continue the existence of both special national rayons and selsoviets” (RGASPI, f. 17, op. 114, d. 633, l. 3-4); the relevant decision of the Politburo at the TsK VKP(b) on this issue was adopted on December 17, 1937 (RGASPI, f. 17, op. 3, d. 1006, l. 39-40).

In this situation, the issue of the establishment of a national Gypsy territorial-administrative unit was eliminated, and all activities in this direction were discontinued. Soon after that, the Second World War began. After the war, in the new post-war realities, everyone forgot about the existence of a Gypsy selsoviet in the Kangly village. Ironically, this selsoviet was not officially closed until June 12, 1952 (!), when Gypsies no longer lived there (since the time of the war and German occupation) (GARF, f. A 385, op. 17, d. 2037).

As is clear from what has been presented above, the attempt to create a Gypsy Autonomous Republic in the USSR, initiated by Gypsy activists, ultimately failed. This failure, however, cannot be explained as a repressive measure of the Soviet state directed against the Gypsies, because all the factualities of the events show that the reasons for this end result were not the reluctance of the Soviet authorities to pursue this ‘Gypsy dream’. On the contrary, the state actions in this regard were emphatically affirmative. The real reasons for this failure lie in the general historical, social and political context, within which the creation of Gypsy autonomy was a very minor element in the context of the general problems to be solved by the Soviet state during this period. Whether the failure of the plans to create a Gypsy autonomous republic was for the good or bad of the

Roma in the USSR can no longer be judged today. Similarly, the question of how the creation of a ‘Gypsy state’ within the USSR would influence the movement for Roma civic emancipation on a global scale can also be only a subject of alternative history, which is already a completely different genre.

Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov

12.5 (Auto)Biographies

12.5.1 *Andrey Taranov*

Здравствуйте, товарищ Саткевич!

Получил Ваше хорошее письмо, которое произвело на меня отрадное впечатление. Чувствуется, что писал письмо грамотный человек.

Пхенава чачипэ, мэ восхишен коли гинав тыро лыл прэ романы чиб. Мэ кердя буты дрэ романо редакция, бут джидём манушен савэ сотрудничали дрэ романо журнало “Романы зоря” и “Нэво дром”.

Шукар джинав Коля Панковонэс, саво бут лачипэ кердя Ваш романы литература. Джидём Саша Германо, Миша Безлюдскона – мануш древан даровито и бут ваврэн. На аджэ машикур амендэ никон начиндя грамотно прэ романэ чиб, сыр ту, Коля.

Коля (прошу не обижайтесь, что я Вас так просто называю), я переписываюсь с Мишей Безлюдским, он мне писал про Вас. Недавно начал переписываться с будущим историком – Володей Иващенко, который сообщил про Вашу деятельность. Вот жду, когда Володя приедет ко мне, буду рад с ним познакомиться и побеседовать.

Очень рад, что наши начинания 20-30 годов продолжают развиваться. В этой большой работе, тов[арищ] Саткевич, ваша большая заслуга.

Вы сумели убедить местные органы в необходимости организации цыганской школы – интерната. Действительно организованная Вами школа является в настоящее время первой и единственной в СССР.

Я чувствую, что Вы на этом не остановитесь.

До [Второй мировой] войны, по делам службы, мне приходилось бывать в Белоруссии и в частности в Витебске, там тогда существовал цыганский дет[ский] интернат, заведующим был учитель-цыган, фамилии его я не помню, он толковый человек. Если Вы его знаете, прошу сообщите о нем, живли он, и чем он занимается.

Коротко сообщаю о себе: родился в 1896 году в семье цыган сэрвы, в прошлом Курской губернии, отец мой занимался кузнечным делом.

До 10 лет кочевал вместе с родителями, и благодаря моей матери (она была русская) [и] ее влиянием на отца, стали жить оседло.

В 1913 г. работал со старшим братом кузнецом вагоно-ремонтных ж[елезно]-д[орожных] мастерских ст[анции] Отрожка, Воронежской обл[асти]. В 1915 году был призван в Царскую армию, был на фронте. В феврале 1918 возвратился домой, а в

апреле вместе с другими товарищами, в городе Короче участвовал в формировании кавалерийского дивизиона по борьбе с контрреволюцией и бандами.

В начале 1919 года наш дивизион кавалерийский вошел в состав 11 Кав[алерийской] Дивизии 1-ой Конной Армии С. М. Буденного, в составе которой принимал участие в боях за Касторное, Дебальцево, Ростов на Дону, против белогвардейцев деникинской армии.

В 1920 году участвовал в составе этой же дивизии на польском фронте Львовском направлении. Был ранен шашкой в правую руку, после чего стал инвалидом гражданской войны.

После возвращения из госпиталя продолжал служить в своем кав[алерийском] полку в качестве политрука эскадрона, участвовал в разгроме банд Махно, [Булак]-Балаховича, басмачества в Средней Азии.

В 1922 г. политотделом 11 Кавдивизии был направлен в г. Москву на учёбу в Коммунистический Университет трудящихся Востока (КУТВ). В 1925 г. по окончании КУТВа ЦК ВКП(б) оставил меня на организационной работе среди цыган. В конце 1925 г. Указом правительства был создан Всероссийский Союз цыган, где и работал председателем Союза до его ликвидации. В 1930 г. была создана цыганская редакция журнала "Романы зоря", а после "Нэво дром" при Центр[альном] издательстве народов СССР, работал ответственным редактором.

При моем непосредственном участии, вместе с Колей Панковым, был поднят перед Министерством просвещения вопрос о создании цыганской письменности.

В этом вопросе принимал участие нарком А. В. Луначарский.

Была создана комиссия по разработке основы шрифта. В комиссию входили: Панков Н. А., профессор Сергиевский Макс[им] В., Вентцель Татьяна В. (лингвист, работала в БСЭ), и [еще один] профессор МГУ (фамилии его не помню). В 1931 г. вместе с другими тов[арищами] организовывал цыганск[ий] театр и по совмест[ительству] был директором театра.

После ликвидации цыганской редакции в 1934 г. незначительное время работал в ЦК партии Киргизии, а затем директором табачного совхоза "Киргизия". В 1937 г., когда в правительстве возник вопрос о создании цыганского района, я был отозван из Киргизии в Москву и работал в Переселенческом Комитете при Совнархозе СССР в качестве уполномоченного по трудоустройству цыган.

Осуществлению, важного исторического значения, создания цыганского района, помещала война и *ваврэ рэнда*.

В 1944 году Министерство Пищевой промышленности направило меня в Молдавию, на работу в качестве директора табачного завода, который был разрушен немцами и приходилось его восстанавливать.

В 1948 году работал в Резинском райкоме партии Молдавии, затем работал зав[едующим] рай[онным] отделом соц[иального] обеспечения. С 1950 г. по состоянию здоровья не работаю, стал персональным пенсионером.

Да, чуть не упустил сообщить, что член КПСС я с 1922 года.

Окэ саро. Чин мангэ лыла, буду очень рад. Яв састыпэ и бахталэс.

Привет вам от моей дочери Ляли и внуков Сережи и Андрюши. Посылаю свою фотокарточку, точно не помню когда фотографировался, приблизительно [19]29-30 годы. Память чертовски меня подводит, стал много забывать.

А. Таранов [подпись].

2.VIII.1964.

∴

Hello, comrade Satkevich! [1]

I received Your good letter, which made a pleasant impression on me. It felt as if the letter was written by an educated person.

I tell you sincerely, I admire you, reading your letter in Romani. I worked in the Romani editing field, I knew a lot of people, who collaborated on the Romani journals "Romany zorya" and "Nevo drom".

I know well Kolya Pankovo, who did a lot of good things for Romani literature. I new Sasha Germano, Misha Buzlyudsko – a very talented man, and many others. But none among us could write in Romani with as good a spelling as you do, Kolya [2].

Kolya (please do not feel offended of my informal way of addressing), I am corresponding with Misha Bezlyudskiy, he wrote to me about You. Recently I began to correspond with the future historian – Volodya Ivashchenko [3], who informed me about Your activity. Now I am waiting when Volodya will come to me, I will be glad to meet him personally and talk to him.

I am very glad that our initiatives of the 1920s and 1930s continue to develop. In this great work, comrade Satkevich, is your great merit.

You succeeded to convince the local authorities of the need to organize a Gypsy boarding school. Indeed, the school you have organised is now the first and only one in the USSR [4].

I feel like You're not going to stop there.

Before the Second World War, I had to visit Belarus on business and, in particular, in Vitebsk, where the boarding school for Gypsy children existed at that time, its head was a teacher, a Gypsy, whose surname I don't remember [5], he is an intelligent person. If You know him, please tell me if he is alive and what he does.

I tell you briefly about myself:

I was born in 1896 in a family of Gypsies Servi, in the former Kursk governorate, my father was engaged in blacksmithing.

Until I was 10 years of age I roamed together with parents, and thanks to my mother (she was a Russian), under her influence on my father, we have become settled.

In 1913 I worked with my older brother, as a blacksmith in the wagon-repair workshops at the railway station Otrozhka, Voronezh oblast. In 1915 I was enlisted into the Tsarist army and I was at the front. In February 1918, I returned back home and in April, along

with other comrades, in the town of Korocha, I participated in the formation of the cavalry subdivision for combating counter-revolutionaries and bandits.

In early 1919, our cavalry subdivision became a part of 11th cavalry Division in the 1st Cavalry Army of Semyon M. Budyonny, and we took part in the battle for Kastornoye, Debaltsevo, Rostov-on-Don, against the white guards of Denikin's army.

In 1920 I participated in the same division's actions on the Polish front, heading in Lviv direction. I was wounded with a sword in my right hand, and then I became a disabled veteran of the Civil War.

After returning from the hospital I continued to serve in the same cavalry regiment as a political leader of the squadron, participated in the defeat of bandits of Nestor Makhno, Stanisław Bułak-Bałachowicz, Basmachi movement in Central Asia.

In 1922, the political Department of the 11th cavalry division sent me to Moscow to study at the Communist University of the Toilers of the East. In 1925, after graduation, I was sent by the TSK of the VKP(b) on the organisational work among the Gypsies. At the end of 1925, the All-Russian Union of Gypsies was created by a decree of the Government; and I worked as the Chairman of the Union before its liquidation. In 1930, the Gypsy edition of the magazine *Romany zorya* was created, and later *Nevo drom* at the Tsentrizdat, where I worked as an Executive Editor.

With my direct participation, together with Kolya Pankov, the question of the creation of Gypsy writing was raised before the Ministry of Education.

In this matter, Narkom Anatoliy V. Lunacharskiy took part.

A Commission was set up to develop the basis of the alphabet. The Committee included: Nikolay A. Pankov, professor Maxim V. Sergievskiy, Tatiana V. Wentzel (linguist, worked in the Great Soviet Encyclopedia), and another Professor of Moscow State University (I cannot remember his surname). In 1931 together with other comrades, I organised Gypsy Theatre and I was the Director of the theatre.

After the liquidation of the Gypsy editorial board in 1934 for a short time, I worked in the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Kyrgyzstan, and then as the Director of the tobacco sovkhos *Kyrgyzstan*. In 1937, when the government raised the issue of creating a Gypsy rayon, I was recalled from Kyrgyzstan to Moscow and worked as the Plenipotentiary for the employment of Gypsies in the Resettlement Committee at the Sovnarkhoz USSR [6].

The process of the establishment of the Gypsy district, a plan of very important historical significance, failed because of the war and ... *other things* [7].

In 1944, the Ministry of Food Industry sent me to Moldova to work as a Director of a tobacco factory, which was destroyed by the Germans in the wartime and had to be restored.

In 1948 I worked in Rezina district's Committee of Communist Party of Moldova, then I worked as a Head of the regional Department of social security. Since 1950 – because of health reasons – I have not been working anymore, being a personal pensioner [8].

Oh, I almost forgot to inform you that I am a member of the Communist party since 1922. *That is all. Write me letters, I will be very glad. Leave with health and luck.*

Greetings to you from my daughter, Lyalya, and grandchildren Sergey and Andrey. I send my photo, I do not remember exactly when I was photographed, in circa 1929-30. My memory is failing me terribly, I started to forget a lot.

A. Taranov [signature].

02.08.1964.

Notes

1. The published text is a letter sent on 02.08.1964 by Andrey Taranov to Nikolay Satkevich.
2. Text in *Italics* is written in Romani language.
3. The reference here is to Vladimir I. Ivashchenko – a graduate of history education, a teacher in Rostov-on-Don, author of a book on the history of Gypsies in the USSR (Ивашченко, 2011).
4. This refers to the boarding school for Gypsy children organised by the local authorities in Irkutsk in 1963 following Nikolai Satkevich's suggestion, and run by him, which functioned until 1965.
5. The reference here is to Petr I. Mikholažhin (1908-1943) – director of the Gypsy School in Vitebsk (Belarusian SSR), killed as a soldier in the Soviet Army during the Second World War (Банк данных, 2019).
6. At that time, Sovnarkhozes no longer existed (closed in 1932); in fact, A. Taranov was, for a short time, attracted to the VPK at SNK USSR, in the summer of 1936 (РГАЭ, ф. 5675, оп. 1, д. 160, л. 4-5) and, from 1937 he worked as an inspector in the Resettlement Department of the NKVD (РГАЭ, ф. 5675, оп. 1, д. 179, л. 36-38).
7. The allusion “*vavre renda*” (other things) in Romani language is with hidden significance. In this case, that means Taranov wouldn't write about some important details in his letter.
8. The title ‘personal pensioner’ in the USSR means that its holder receives the so-called ‘personal pension’ (hierarchised at three levels – local, republican and union), which was given to retired persons for “exceptional contribution to the construction of the Soviet state”. The holders of this title received individual pension supplements and several privileges in the field of communal services, health services, public transport, and even received special food bonuses on respective holidays. The name of Andrey Taranov is not present in the lists of pensioners of union and republican significance, i.e. his personal pension is at the lowest, local level.

Source: LANB, f. Николай Саткевич.

Prepared for publication by Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov.

Translated by Viktor Shapoval.

12.5.2 *Nikolay Pankov*

Автобиография

Николая Александровича Панкова

Родился я в Петербурге (ныне Ленинград) 20 (7) мая 1895 г. в цыганской семье.

Род мой со стороны отца был оседлым уже более столетия. Мой прадед Михаил Архипович Панков обосновался в Новгороде и всю свою жизнь прожил там в Никольской слободе. Сын его (мой отец) перебрался в Петербург, где и проживал он и весь его род.

Род матери, Екатерины Ильиничны, урожденной Никканен, вел кочевой образ жизни (Швеция, Финляндия). Отец матери обосновался в Петербурге, кочуя лишь в летние месяцы под Петербургом и по чухонским и эстонским деревням.

Отец мой, по обычаю большинства цыган того времени, был барышником, занимался куплей-продажей и меной лошадей; умер в 1913 году. Мать занята была лишь домом и детьми; умерла в 1952 г.

Я систематического образования не получил. После того, как я окончил начальную церковно-приходскую школу, куда попал самостоятельно, без помощи родителей, родители совершенно серьезно считали меня “ученым” человеком.

В 1910 г. я поступил работать “мальчиком” на Главный Телеграф и настойчиво занимался самообразованием, читая книги и нащупывая метод для освоения русского языка. На работу поступил я не в поисках средств к существованию, а в поисках иного пути жизни.

К 1912 г. я овладел русским языком настолько, что мог заниматься “интеллигентным” трудом и работал уже в конторе у одного из петербургских нотариусов.

К этому времени я был читателем в библиотеке на “три книги” (одна новая, две старых) и своим человеком среди мелких книготорговцев в книжной “толкучке”, а также не пропускал ни одной публичной лекции. Вскоре создается почва для конфликта обеспокоенного отца с сыном, уходящим из-под власти традиций. Но в декабре 1913 года отец умер, а я продолжаю свой путь трудовой жизни и интеллектуального развития одиночки-самоучки.

После 1918 г. я работал в канцеляриях, и в школе педагогом, и в детском доме воспитателем (Ленинград).

После 1922 г., с переездом на жительство в Москву, я работал на заводах “Динамо” им. С. М. Кирова, Станкостроительном им. С. Орджоникидзе, Мотозаводе.

Подорвав здоровье и силы, я с 1942 года стал инвалидом труда 2-ой группы. Но после того, как прошел острый период болезни, чтобы продолжать работу, я отказался от 2-ой группы инвалидности, перешел на 3-ю группу и несколько лет до 1953 г. подвизался на положении ночного сторожа.

Наряду с работой на промышленных предприятиях, начиная с 1924-25 гг., в группе с культурными цыганами-партизанами (А. С. Таранов, И. П. Токмаков) стал работать среди цыган в целях привлечения кочующих цыган к труду, оседлости и культуре. (И[ван] П. Токмаков во время [Великой] Отечественной войны, имея под 60 лет, и все данные по положению и возрасту не участвовать в войне, отправился на фронт добровольцем и в 1942 г. погиб замученным в плену.)

Многу были созданы первые цыганские буквари для взрослых и детей и первые учебники по литературе. Рядом с составлением учебной литературы я занимался переводом на цыганский язык общественно-политической и русской классической литературы и был одним из создателей цыганской журналистики. В журнале “Романы зоря” (Цыганская заря), позже получившем название “Нэво дром” (Новый путь), появлялись мои очерки и стихи. Я же являлся в нем литературным редактором.

При создании цыганского педагогического техникума (потом училища) в Москве мне единодушно всем цыганским активом было предложено занять место

преподавателя цыганского языка. В этом училище я работал с основания до закрытия (1933-1938 гг.).

Проф. М. В. Сергиевский и акад[емик] А. П. Баранников при издании в 1938 г. своего цыганско-русского словаря пригласили меня к участию в их коллективе в качестве редактора.

При создании цыганской литературы я включился в работу по переводам, сознавая всю важность этого дела для языка, входящего в новую фазу своего развития. Переводы помогли мне узнать возможности своего родного языка и найти пути для создания своего литературного стиля. Переводы являются испытанием и неизбежным этапом у всех народов при их пробуждении к новой жизни. Я чувствовал также настоятельную необходимость ознакомить цыганский народ, хотя бы в переводах, с великой русской классической литературой и с работами классиков марксизма-ленинизма. Моя литературная и педагогическая работа получила признание со стороны цыганских масс и специалистов языковедов.

В 1930-х гг. Английское общество по изучению цыган, по рекомендации советского академика А. П. Баранникова, пригласило меня через ВОКС [Всесоюзное общество культурной связи с заграницей] вступить в члены этого общества.

В 1944 г. по рекомендации М. В. Сергиевского и С. С. Игнатова я был принят в члены Союза Советских Писателей.

∴

Autobiography of Nikolay Alexanderovich Pankov

I was born in St Petersburg (now Leningrad) on May 20 (7) [1], 1895 in a Gypsy family.

My clan from my father's side has been settled for more than a century. My great-grandfather Mikhail Arkhipovich Pankov has dwelled in Novgorod and spent his entire life there in Nikolskaya Sloboda. His son (my father) moved to St Petersburg, where he lived along all his relatives.

My mother's clan, Ekaterina Ilyinichna, nee Nikkanen, led a nomadic life (Sweden, Finland). My mother's father settled in St Petersburg, wandering only in the summer months near St Petersburg and in Finnic and Estonian villages.

My father, according to the custom of most Gypsies of that time, was a horse-dealer, engaged in the sale and exchange of horses; died in 1913. My mother was occupied only with the home and children, died in 1952.

I didn't get a systematic education. After I graduated from the primary parish school, where I got on my own, without the help of my parents, my parents absolutely considered me an "educated" person.

In 1910 I went to work as a "boy" at the Main Telegraph and persistently engaged in self-education, reading books and seeking for a method for developing my Russian language. I did not go to work in search of a livelihood but in search of a different way of life.

By 1912, I had mastered the Russian language so much that I could do “intelligent” work and started to work in the office of one of the St Petersburg notaries.

By this time, I was a reader in the library for “three books” (one new, two old) and a familiar man among the small booksellers in the book “flea market”, and did not miss a single public lecture. Soon the ground was created for the conflict of the concerned father with the son escaping from the power of traditions. But in December 1913 my father died, and I continued my path of working life and intellectual development of an individual autodidact.

After 1918 I worked in offices, and at a school as a teacher, and in an orphanage as a tutor (Leningrad).

After 1922, when I moved to Moscow, I worked at the *Dynamo* plant named after S. M. Kirov, and a Machine-tool plant named after S. Ordzhonikidze, Motor plant.

With undermining health and strength, in 1942 I became a disabled worker of the 2nd group. But after the acute phase of the disease, in order to continue work, I refused the 2nd group of disability, was moved to the 3rd group, and for some years after that, until 1953, I worked in the position of a night watchman.

Along with work at industrial enterprises, since 1924-1925, in the group with cultural Gypsy party activists (Andrey S. Taranov, Ivan P. Tokmakov) I began to work among Gypsies in order to attract nomadic Gypsies to work, settlement and culture. (Ivan P. Tokmakov, during the [Great] Patriotic War [2], being almost 60 years old, and having all the reasons of his status and age not to participate in the war, nevertheless, he went to the front as a volunteer and, in 1942, died after being tortured in captivity.)

I created the first Gypsy ABC books for adults and children and the first textbooks on literature [3]. Along with the preparation of educational literature, I was engaged in the translation into the Gypsy language of social-political and Russian classical literature [4] and was one of the founders of Gypsy journalism. My essays and poems appeared in the journal *Romany zorya* (Gypsy Dawn), later called *Nevo drom* (New Way). I was also the literary editor there [5].

When creating a Gypsy Pedagogical College (later a School) [6] in Moscow, I was unanimously invited by all the Gypsy activists to take the place of the Gypsy language teacher there. In this school, I worked from its foundation until its closing (1933-1938).

Professor Mikhail V. Sergievskiy, and Academician [7] Alexey P. Barannikov, when publishing his Gypsy-Russian dictionary in 1938, invited me to participate in their team as an editor [8].

During the creation of Gypsy literature, I became involved in the work of translation, aware of the importance of this process for the language entering a new phase of its development. Translations helped me to learn the possibilities of my native language and find ways to create my own literary style. Translations are a test and an inevitable stage for all peoples when they awaken to a new life. I also felt an urgent need to acquaint the Gypsy people, at least in translations, with the great Russian classical literature and with the works of the classics of Marxism-Leninism. My literary and pedagogical work has received recognition from Gypsy masses and professionals.

In the 1930s, the English Gypsy Lore Society, on the recommendation of the Soviet Academician Alexey P. Barannikov, invited me through the All-Union Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries to become a member of this society.

In 1944, on the recommendation of the Mikhail V. Sergievskiy and Sergey S. Ignatov [9] I was accepted as a member at the Union of Soviet Writers.

Notes

1. Both dates are according to Gregorian and Julian calendars.
2. Great Patriotic War is the term of designation for the Second World War in the Soviet Union.
3. Дударова, Н. А. & Панково, Н. А. (1928). *Нэво дром (букварё)*. Москва: Центриздат. The list of publications of Nikolay Pankov see in Annex I – Romani Language Publications.
4. Three books by Alexander Pushkin, including the famous narrative poem *Gypsies (Roma)*, are samples of Russian classical literature which were translated by Nikolay Pankov. Besides, he has translated at least 3 books by Vladimir Lenin and 6 books by Joseph Stalin, but sometimes social-political publications did not have their translator's name listed on the cover, i.e. it is quite possible that he was also a translator of other similar publications in the Romani language.
5. Formally, in the journal *Romany zorya* only the collective Editorial Board was listed; in the journal *Nevo drom* only Andrey Taranov was listed as Executive Editor. In 1932 Alexander German was listed as technical editor and then Alexey Svetlov. However, this does not mean that Nikolay Pankov did not actively participate in the editorial activity of the two journals.
6. There is an inaccurate representation of the names. Initially, in 1932, a Gypsy Department was created at the Pedagogical College of the Krasno Presnensky District named after Timiryazev, which in 1935-1936 transformed into an independent Gypsy Pedagogical College, which existed until 1938 (GARF, f. P 1235, op. 127, d. 8.).
7. Academician (академик) is the highest title in the academic hierarchy in the Soviet Union.
8. It reflected the book: Сергиевский, М. В. & Баранников, А. П. (1938). *Цыганско-русский словарь. Около 10 000 слов с приложением грамматики цыганского языка*. Москва: Государственное издательство иностранных и национальных словарей.
9. Sergey Sergeevich Ignatov (1887-1959) is a famous Soviet theatre and literary critic.

Source: LANB, f. Николай Саткевич.

Prepared for publication by Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov.

Translated by Viktor Shapoval.

12.5.3 Nina Dударova

[Автобиография]

Я родилась в Ленинграде в 1903 году. Моя мать – цыганка пела в цыганском хоре. Отца не помню. Когда мне было пять лет, мать вторично вышла замуж за русского, очень хорошего человека, который относился ко мне как к родной дочери.

Среднюю школу я закончила в 1919 г., педагогическое [образование] – работая в школе, в институте по повышению квалификации учителей. С 1925 года я живу в Москве. В 1925 году был организован Цыганский Союз, который возглавлял цыган, член [Коммунистической] партии А. С. Таранов. В программе культурно-просветительной работе, принятой цыганским союзом, стоял вопрос, об организации школ для цыганских детей в Москве. Наркомпрос и

партийные организации, поддержали это начинание. Было решено открыть три школы в разных районах Москвы. Мне было поручено организовать школу в Рогожско-Симоновском районе. В 25[-ой] районной школе были отведены две классных комнаты. Я начала составлять список учеников, т.е. ходила по домам, баракам и уговаривала родителей отдать детей в школу. Говорила я с ними на родном языке. Они знали, что я цыганка и относились ко мне с полным доверием. Материальное положение цыган, за редким исключением, было очень тяжелое: детям не в чем было ходить в школу. Пришлось хлопотать о денежной помощи. В этом мы тоже получили поддержку; деньги были отпущены, я закупила одежду, обувь, учебные пособия и в октябре 1925 года школа была открыта. Учеников было около 30 человек. Первый – большой класс, второй – маленький. Мне дали в помощь – русскую учительницу, которая поработав 3 года, ушла, т. к. не знала языка, цыган с их особенностями, и ей было очень трудно работать.

По той же причине закрылись две школы в других районах. Русские учительницы не справились с работой, и ребята разбежались.

В нашей школе было уже четыре класса, и мне пришлось работать на две смены. Дети были живые, любознательные, но крайне недисциплинированные и шумливые. Меня это не пугало. Я знала психологию и особенность цыганских ребят. Знала, что для того, чтобы удержать их и заставить полюбить школу, надо много терпения, педагогической чуткости и выдержки. Занятия сначала велись на русском языке. Урокам я придавала большое значение и тщательно готовилась к ним, чтобы заинтересовать, заставить работать и удержать внимание детей. Постепенно работа налаживалась, дисциплина становилась лучше, ребята стали походить на школьников. Сразу была развернута работа среди родителей. Открытие цыганского клуба “Лолы чергэн” (“Красная звезда”), в котором я была членом правления, очень помогло. Я стала устраивать в клубе беседы на различные темы: педагогические, антирелигиозные, санитарные и др. Клуб выпускал стенгазету. На сцене выступал кружок самодеятельности, который тогда назывался “Синяя блуза”, в нем участвовали школьники старших классов. В этих художественных выступлениях были и призыв к труду, к новой жизни, и порицания старого цыганского быта. Родители видели выступление школьников, видели как дети изменились, какой это организованный детский коллектив. Все это действовало на их идеологию, на их мировоззрение. Они стали понимать, что Советская власть зовет их к новой хорошей жизни. Большое внимание я уделяла художественному воспитанию детей. Водила их в театр, в кино, в Третьяковскую галерею. Ставила с ними инсценировки, пьесы, перекладывала свои стихи на музыку. Мои ребята участвовали во всех школьных утренниках. Нас приглашали в Колонный зал Дома Союзов, в Центральный Дом пионеров. Не помню точно в каком году, кажется в 1932 или 1933 наш шеф фабрика “Парижская коммуна”, пригласила нас выступить на вечере, посвященном годовщине Октябрьской революции, с инсценировкой “Атасы и ададывес” (Вчера и сегодня). Когда мы вошли в зал, то увидели в Президиуме Надежду

Константиновну Крупскую. Она скоро уехала, плохо себя чувствовала, но начало нашего выступления посмотрела с большим интересом. На всесоюзном слете пионеров (у нас был свой пионерский отряд) ребята видели Максима Горького. Общение с другими детьми, учениками других национальных школ: татарами, армянами, айсорами, латышами, немцами и русскими, конечно, развивало цыганских ребят, воспитывало их в духе интернационализма. Росло новое советское поколение цыган.

Конечно, это было постигнуто не сразу. Были и срывы: мальчики иногда пропускали занятия в школе, потому что ходили на конную. Первое время; в дни религиозных праздников, отсутствовала половина класса. Приходили с невыученными уроками, так как дома “пинэ бравинта”, сыс “кошибэн, марибэн” (пили водку, были скандалы и драки). Приходилось идти к родителям, убеждать их и стыдить. Должна признаться, что я пользовалась большим уважением и даже любовью и взрослых, и детей, а это много значило. Встречая теперь своих бывших учеников, я слышу от них, какое большое значение имела школа для их будущего. Школа росла.

Был уже первый выпуск 4-ого класса. Некоторые пошли в ФЗУ [Фабрично-заводское училище], некоторые пошли учиться дальше. Каждый год был набор новых учеников. Школа крепко вошла в цыганский быт. Слух о нашей школе шел и за пределы Советского союза. К нам приезжали иностранные делегации, нас фотографировали, писали о школе в журналах и газетах. Хорошая статья была в журнале “Народный учитель”... Я получила письмо от одного профессора из Швеции. На конверте было написано: СССР – Москва. Единственной цыганской учительнице. И письмо дошло. Позже, когда были организованы цыганские колхозы, мне писали учителя колхозных цыганских школ Смоленской области, Северного Кавказа. Они спрашивали советов, помощи. В каждом номере журнала “Нэво дром” (Новый путь), я писала о школе, о наших достижениях и недостатках. Писали в журнале в детской страничке и давали свои рисунки мои ученики.

В 1927 году у нас вышел из печати первый цыганский букварь. Авторы: Панков Н. А. и я. Большую помощь нам оказал профессор Сергиевский М. В. и лингвист Венцель Т. В. Они принимали живое участие в создании цыганской литературы.

В 1933 году была выпущена моя грамматика для первого класса, потом мой учебник для взрослых, хрестоматия Панкова Н. А. и другие учебники, список которых я не буду перечислять... Занятия в школе можно было проводить и на родном языке, т. к. даже учебники по географии и естествознанию для IV класса были переведены на цыганский язык. Для изучения русского языка были отведены особые часы. Детскую цыганскую литературу издавал Нацсектор издательства “Молодая гвардия”, где я была редактором. Моя жизнь была заполнена до предела: я вела все четыре класса в школе, писала учебники, стихи, статьи в журнал, редактировала, писала рецензии, была членом правления клуба, преподавала литературный цыганский язык в театре “Ромэн”, да и не перечислить всего, что тогда делалось. Все мы тогда работали с большим подъемом, радостью, потому, что у нас на глазах рос наш забитый, отсталый народ. Цыгане становились равноправными гражданами

нашей великой Родины. Многие работали на фабриках, заводах, артелях, создавались колхозы, школы, педтехникум, был детский сад, клуб, театр, книги. Только в нашей стране могли все это получить цыгане и сознание этого придавало нам силы и бодрость в работе. Школа существовала 13 лет. Совершенно неожиданно было в 1938 году распоряжение о закрытии всех национальных школ, клубов, детсадов, редакций, словом всего, что давало возможность расти культуре маленьких национальностей и цыган особенно, с их вековой отсталостью. Школа была закрыта. Многие ребята бросили учиться. Я перешла работать в русскую школу. Я также относилась с любовью к своему делу, потому что люблю свою работу и люблю детей, но самым радостным моим воспоминанием, всегда будут трудные годы моей работы в цыганской школе. Во время войны, когда школы в Москве были закрыты (1941 г.), я работала на заводе “Москабель”, копала противотанковые рвы, работала в госпитале; имею даже медаль за оборону Москвы. Когда школы были открыты, я опять пошла учить детей. В 1949 году я была награждена в Кремле орденом “Знак почета”.

Вот вся история моей жизни. Начатое нами дело еще не окончено. Нечего скрывать, что положение цыган и сейчас еще как темное пятно на светлом и радостном фоне нашего настоящего. Вы, наша смена, помните, что цыгане это тоже дети нашей великой Родины и жить они должны также, как все люди нашей страны, а не быть ее пасынками. Этого надо добиваться, но для этого надо много и упорно работать.

Н[ина] Дударова.

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[Autobiography]

I was born in Leningrad in 1903 [1]. My mother was a Gypsy singer who sang in the Gypsy choir. My father, I do not remember him. When I was five years old, my mother remarried a very good Russian man who treated me like his own daughter.

I graduated from high school in 1919, my teaching education was at the Institute for advanced training of teachers. I graduated from it while working in the school. Since 1925 I live in Moscow. In 1925 the Gypsy Union was organised, which was headed by a Gypsy, a member of the Communist Party Andrey S. Taranov. The program of cultural and educational work adopted by the Gypsy Union [2], stressed on the question about the organisation of schools for Gypsy children in Moscow. Narkompros and the Party organisations supported this initiative. It was decided to open three schools in different parts of Moscow. I was entrusted to organize the school in Rogozhsko-Simonovskiy district. In this district, in school No. 25, two classrooms were given to us [3]. I began to make a list of students, i.e. to visit the houses, barracks and persuaded parents to send their children to school. I spoke to them in our native language. They knew I was a Gypsy woman and they trusted me. The financial situation of the Gypsies, with a rare exception, was very

difficult: the children had nothing to wear to go to school. I had to plead for financial help. In this we also received support; the money was released, I bought clothes, shoes, textbooks and in October 1925 the school was opened. There were about 30 pupils. The first class was a big one, the second group was a smaller one. I was given an assistant – a Russian teacher, who worked for 3 years, and then left, because she didn't know the language, the Gypsies with their peculiar features, and it was very difficult for her to work.

For the same reason, two schools in other districts were closed [4]. Russian teachers did not cope with the work and the children ran away.

In our school, there were already four classes and I had to work in two shifts. The children were lively, inquisitive, but extremely undisciplined and noisy. It didn't scare me. I knew the psychology and peculiar features of Gypsy pupils. I knew that in order to keep them and make them love school, you need a lot of patience, pedagogical sensitivity and endurance. Classes were first taught in Russian. I gave great importance to the lessons and carefully prepared for them in order to awake the interest of the pupils, make them work and keep the children's attention. Gradually the work got better, discipline got better, the pupils began looking like schoolchildren. At the same time the work among parents was developed. The opening of the Gypsy Club *Лолы чергэн* (Red Star), where I was a member of the Board, helped us a lot. I began to arrange the club talks on various topics: educational, anti-religious, concerning health, etc. Our club published a wall newspaper. The training course, which was then called *The Blue Blouse* [5], performed on the club stage; the older high school students took part in it. In these artistic performances, there was a call to work, to a new life, and disapproval of the old Gypsy way of life. Their parents saw the student performances, saw how children have changed, what is an organised children's team. All of this influenced the parents' ideology, their worldview. They began to understand that the Soviet authorities are calling them to a new good life. I paid much attention to the artistic education of the children. I took them to the theatre, to the cinema, to the Tretyakov Gallery. My pupils and I prepared the performances and the plays, I put my poems on music for them. My pupils participated in all schools' matinees. We were invited to the Hall of Columns, the Central House of Pioneers. I don't remember exactly what year, I think in 1932 or 1933, our patron, supporting factory *Paris Commune*, invited us to perform at the evening event dedicated to the October Revolution anniversary, where we staged *Атася и ададывес* (Yesterday and Today). When we entered the hall, we saw Nadezhda Konstantinovna Krupskaya [6] in the Presidium. She soon left, felt bad, but she watched the beginning of our performance with great interest. At the All-Union meeting of pioneers (we had our own pioneer squad) the pupils saw Maxim Gorky. Communication with other children, students of other national schools, Tatars, Armenians, Assyrians, Latvians, Germans and Russians, of course developed the Gypsy children, brought them up in the spirit of internationalism. A new Soviet generation of Gypsies grew up.

Of course, this was not immediately reached. There were also breakdowns: the boys sometimes missed classes at school because they went at the horse market. In the beginning, in the days of religious holidays, half of the class was missing. They sometimes

came with unlearned lessons, because their adults at home were “drinking vodka”, there were “scolding, fight” [7]. I had to go to the parents, convince them and shame them. I must confess that I was highly respected and even loved by both adults and children, and that did matter a lot. Meeting now my former students, I hear from them what a great importance the school had for their future. Our school grew.

The first graduation of the 4th class was successful. Some went to factory-plant schools, some went to study further. Every year there was a set of new pupils. Our school firmly entered the Gypsy way of life. The rumour about our school went beyond the Soviet Union. We were visited by foreign delegations, we were photographed, magazines and newspapers wrote about our school. A good article appeared in the magazine *Narodnyi uchitel'* (People's Teacher) ... I received a letter from a Professor from Sweden. On the envelope, the address was written: The USSR – Moscow; To the only Gypsy teacher. And the letter was received. Later, when the Gypsy kolkhozes were organised, I was written to by teachers of the Gypsy kolkhoz's schools of the Smolensk region, the North Caucasus. They asked for advice, help. In each issue of the *Nevo drom* (New Way) journal, I wrote about the school, about our achievements and shortcomings. My pupils wrote and gave their drawings in the children's page in the journal.

In 1927, we have published the first Gypsy ABC book. Authors: Nikolay A. Pankov and I [8]. A great help to us was given by the professor Mikhail V. Sergievskiy and the linguist Tatyana V. Wenzel. They took part in the development of the Gypsy literature.

In 1933 my grammar for first grade was published, then my textbook for adults came, the Reader by Nikolay Pankov, and other school-books, I will not list each of them ... [9]. The schooling could be done in the native language because even the textbooks in geography and natural science for the 4th grade were translated into the Gypsy language. Special hours were given for studying the Russian language. Children's Gypsy literature was published by the Nationalities Sector of the Publishing House *Molodaya Gvardiya* [Young Guard], where I was an editor. My life was filled to the limit: I led all four classes at school, wrote textbooks, poems, articles in a magazine, edited, wrote reviews, was a member of the club board, taught the literary Gypsy language in the Theatre *Romen*, and I can't list everything that was done then. Every one of us worked then with great enthusiasm, joy, because we have seen how our formerly persecuted and backward people were growing in front of us. Gypsies became equal citizens of our great Motherland. Many of them worked in factories, plants, artels, created kolkhozes, schools, the Pedagogical College; there were the kindergarten, the club, the theatre, the books. Only in our country Gypsies could get all this, and the understanding of this gave us strength and vigour in our work. The school existed for 13 years. Completely unexpected, in 1938, a decree was issued on the closure of all national schools, clubs, kindergartens, editing offices, in short everything that made the cultures of the ethnic minorities and especially of the Gypsies able to grow, with their centuries of former backwardness. Our school was closed. Many pupils quit learning. I went to work in a Russian school. I also loved my work, because I love teaching and I love children, but the most joyful part of my life, I will remember, always remained the difficult years of my work in the Gypsy school. During the war, when

schools in Moscow were closed (1941), I worked at the plant *Moskabel* (Moscow cable), digging anti-tank ditches, worked in the hospital; even have the medal for the Defense of Moscow. When the schools were open, I went back to teach children. In 1949, I was awarded the Order of Honor in the Kremlin.

That's the whole story of my life. The mission we started is not over yet. It should not be hidden, that even now the situation of the Gypsies looks like a dark spot on the bright and joyful background of our present. You are our successors, remember that the Gypsies are also children of our great Motherland and they should live like all the people of our country, and not be her stepchildren. This must be achieved, but it needs a lot of hard work.

Nina Dudarova

Notes

1. There is some uncertainty about the year of Nina Dudarova's birth. Here it marks as such 1903, and in her VSTs' membership card is inscribed 1902.
2. The programs and plans of educational work among Gypsies were made by Narkompros with the active involvement of Gypsy activists (Комсомольская правда, 1930, p. 3; Романы зоря, 1930b, p. 7).
3. It was Gypsy Elementary School (with 57 students in 3 school classes), located at Bolshaya Kommunisticheskaya str., No. 6 (former Bolshaya Alekseevskaya; now Alexander Solzhenitsyn str.).
4. This information is not entirely clear. Two other Gypsy schools (near Petrovskiy park) were not closed; they had permanent addresses from 1926 till 1930-1931 (Вся Москва, 1926, p. 511; 1930, p. 203; 1931, p. 189).
5. The name 'The Blue Blouse' is very indicative. At that time this was the designation of the workers' proletariat.
6. Nadezhda Konstantinovna Krupskaya was the wife of Vladimir Lenin (widow by that date).
7. This part of the sentence: there was "drinking vodka", there were "scolding, fight" is written in Romani language and in Russian translation.
8. Дударова, Н. А. & Панково, Н. А. (1928). *Нэво дром (букварё)*. Москва: Центриздат.
9. The list of publications of Nina Dudarova see in Annex I – Romani Language Publications.

Source: LANB, f. Николай Саткевич.

Prepared for publication by Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov.

Translated by Viktor Shapoval.

12.5.4 Mikhail Bezlyudskiy

Моя Биография

Коротко о родителях

Родители мои вели кочевой образ жизни. Отец занимался торговлей лошадьми, хотя сам никогда не имел больше одной клячи. Мать была профессиональной гадалкой. Она умела хорошо гадать на картах, умела делать из воска "чертиков" и хорошо ими пользовалась при гадании. Родители кочевали с табором в пределах Рязанской губернии.

Родился я 8 августа 1901 года в таборе, который был расположен своими шатрами на опушке леса в 12 верстах от уездного города Сапожек Рязанской губернии.

Из своего детства хорошо помню себя в возрасте 10-11 лет. На зиму весь табор направлялся в уездный город Михайлов, где каждая семья имела определенную квартиру. Наша семья всегда зимовала в этом же городе в доме кузнеца Алексея Денисова. В зимние вечера сын кузнеца – Саша Денисов обучал меня азбуке (он учился в городской школе).

Здесь же я подружился с другим русским Колей Рогожевым, который учился в городской гимназии. Отец Коли – Александр Никитович Рогожев – имел у себя хорошую столярную мастерскую, в которой изготовлялись разные архангелы, иконы и прочие предметы для церквей.

Каждое лето мой отец вместе с матерью выезжал на годовые ярмарки торговать лошадьми, я же оставался без копейки денег дома. Хозяин Алексей Денисов и его жена очень жалели меня, но у самих было пятеро детей, и я зачастую ложился спать голодным. Поэтому я целыми днями торчал в столярной мастерской Александра Никитовича Рогожева, помогал подать ему нужную деталь, разводил столярный клей. Жена Александра Никитовича, а также его дочь часто сажали меня вместе с собой за стол обедать и наказывали, чтобы я обязательно приходил к ним ужинать. Но часто ходить к ним кушать я стеснялся. Я начал нищенствовать: каждое воскресенье я уходил в город и обходил лавки торговцев мануфактурой и обувью просил “на хлеб” ...

Однажды, узнав о том, что я нищенствую, Александр Никитович сказал мне:

– Мишутка, ты брось собирать милостыню. Приходи всегда, как захочешь кушать, к нам. Тебя надо куда-нибудь пристроить на работу. погоди, я вот поговорю с хозяином булочной Овчинниковым. Может в булочную требуется мальчик ...

Так благодаря Александру Никитовичу Рогожеву я начал работать в булочной Овчинникова. Отец не раз пытался сорвать меня с работы, но я не сдавался и продолжал работать.

В булочной сначала я выполнял разные работы, больше был на побегушках, колол дрова, убирал пекарню, а затем научился делать баранки, плюшки и даже “французские булки”. Не обходилось и без подзатыльников, получаемых от старшего пекаря Ерофеевича, которому часто я бегал в казенку за шкаликом (соткой) водки ...

Родители мои перестали ругать меня за мою работу в булочной. Но однажды отец сказал мне:

– Цыгане смеются надо мной, что сына отдал в работники. Говорят, один сын и тот ни как у всех цыган. Стыдно мне в таборе.

Но я стоял на своем. Так я проработал в булочной Овчинникова три года. Но летом 1918 года мне пришлось бросить работу в булочной.

Хорошо помню, был базарный день. В середине дня вдруг в городе началась стрельба. Я вышел из дома и направился в город. Около булочной Овчинникова я встретил своего хозяина-кузнеца Алексея Денисова с винтовкой в руках. Увидев меня он крикнул:

– Мишутка, марш домой! Радуйся, Мишутка, Революция пришла и в наш город. Жаль, что молод, взял бы Тебя с собой ...

Но осенью 1918 года в ряде сел и деревень Михайловского уезда кулачье организовали восстание против установившейся Советской власти. Кулацкое восстание было быстро подавлено.

В это время я выехал с отцом в табор, который был расположен в лесу под городом Сапожек.

Выезжая с отцом, я захватил с собой полмешка разных книг, которые я покупал на заработанные деньги. Здесь были книги о Еруслане Лазаревиче, Бове Королевиче, сочинения М. Горького, Салтыкова-Щедрина и другие.

Находясь в таборе, я целыми днями просиживал в лесу за чтением книг, а вечера проводил в близлежащей деревне в кругу русских ребят и девушек, пел под гармошку страдания, за что не раз получал от отца кнута.

– Ты скажи, – говорил мне отец, – чего тебя тянет к русским. Тебя уже пора женить, вот и выбирай себе в таборе невесту ...

И вот однажды в наш табор приехал другой табор польских цыган. Вечерами у шатров горели большие костры. Молодежь обоих таборов буйно веселилась, а я убегал в деревню.

На следующий день, после очередной порки кнутом, отец сказал:

– Завтра пойдем сватать Настю. С ее родителями мы уже договорились. Они согласны отдать Настю за тебя замуж.

Когда отец запряг коня в легкие дрожки и выехал, мать сказала:

– Отец поехал за самогонкой.

Я выбежал из шатра. Забрался дальше от палаток в лес и лег на траву. В голове одна мысль сменяет другую, но я крепко представлял свое будущее: женившись, я должен научиться хорошо торговать лошадьми и заняться конокрадством. Не жить же с молодой женой на иждивении отца и выглядывать из сумки жены ... А ведь я до 18-летнего возраста не разбирался в лошадях. Более того, я не мог по зубам лошади установить возраст лошади, а это большой позор для цыгана.

... У шатра моего будущего тестя большой костер. В шатре сидят пожилые цыгане и цыганки. На земле расстелен большой ковер. Здесь много бутылок самогона и разной закуски. У костра собралась молодежь, поют и пляшут.

В шатер позвали меня и невесту. Мы стоим рядом перед своими родителями, которые уже изрядно насамогонились.

– Так ты, Мишутка, стало быть согласен взять в жены Настю, – обращаясь ко мне, сказал отец Насти. – Ну, а мы не супротив этого. Ну, а ты, дочка, в согласии идешь за Мишутку замуж?

После некоторого молчания Настя тихо сказала:

– Тату, воля ваша, но я не согласна. За кого вы меня выдаете, ведь он не умеет ни торговать, ни воровать ... Что ж своей сумкой буду его кормить.

Я был рад Насте за ее откровенность. Но я радовался преждевременно.

– Цыть! – вскричал отец Насти. – Мишутка еще молод, еще научится всему. Через неделю сыграем свадьбу, такое наше со сватами согласие.

Не помню, как я вышел из шатра, долго бродил по лесу, а в голове было одно: бежать, надо бежать из табора.

Воспользовавшись сильным опьянением родителей, я вытащил из повозки сундучок, в котором хранились документы родителей и мое свидетельство о рождении, я быстро спрятал свое свидетельство в карман. Захватив кусок вареного мяса и кусок хлеба, выбежал из шатра, направился по большаку в уездный город Сапожек.

Уже рассветало когда я очутился на улице спящего города.

Проходя мимо трехэтажного кирпичного дома, на котором висела вывеска “Государственный банк”, из будки показался милиционер. Увидев меня, милиционер спросил:

– Эй, цыганенок, чего так рано вышел на промысел.

Я подошел к нему и со слезами на глазах рассказал ему о себе все.

– Да ты успокойся, – по отечески говорил мне милиционер. – Вот сейчас сменюсь с дежурства, поведу тебя к нашему начальнику, он поможет тебе. А признаться, первый случай в моей жизни, когда цыган бежит от кочевья ...

И вот я в кабинете начальника уездной милиции.

Внимательно выслушав меня, начальник, немного подумал, затем снял телефонную трубку, переговорил, а затем обращаясь ко мне, сказал:

– Какойнибудь документ-то у тебя есть с собой? Так, – проговорил он, рассматривая мое свидетельство о рождении. – Мой совет тебе, цыганенок, вступить в ряды Красной Армии добровольцем. Возраст у тебя подходит.

В этот же день военный комендант оформил документы. Мне выдали красноармейское обмундирование, искупался в бане, а вечером с воинским эшелоном направили меня в губернский город Рязань. Здесь меня определили в один из стрелковых батальонов.

Однажды дежурный по батальону вошел в казарму и сказал мне:

– Безлюдский, к тебе отец с матерью приехали.

Это известие было для меня как снег на голову.

Встреча была тяжелой. Мать плакала, а отец говорил сквозь слезы:

– Бросай Миша, эту службу. Я привез тебе паспорт иностранного подданного, новый костюм и сапоги. Поедем в табор, а на женитьбе твоей не будем настаивать, сам выберешь себе невесту ...

Но как было ни тяжело, ехать в табор я отказался и заявил, что службу в Красной Армии не брошу.

В 1920 году наш батальон в составе 11-й армии направили на Кавказский фронт, где Красная Армия вела бои за освобождение Грузии. В боях за взятие города Батума участвовал и я в качестве конного разведчика.

В 1921 году меня направили на 13-е Бакинские пехотно-командные курсы Красных командиров, которые в мае месяце 1922 года я успешно окончил, получив звание Красного командира.

По окончании курсов каждому выпускнику предоставлялся месячный отпуск. Но куда ехать мне? Где разыскать своих родителей? И я взял проездной литер до города Михайлов. Я не ошибся. В 20-ти верстах от города, в лесу, у реки Проня, я нашел табор. Здесь и состоялась встреча с родителями. К сожалению, полностью свой отпуск провести не смог. Меня тянуло обратно в г. Тифлис (здесь были наши курсы). Прожив с родителями в таборе две недели, я распрощался со всем табором. (Здесь я узнал, что девушка Настя вышла замуж за моего двоюродного брата Павлушу.)

Приехав в Тифлис, я тут же получил направление в штаб пограничных войск ЗакЧеКа [Закавказская Чрезвычайная Комиссия], отсюда меня направили в одну из погранзастав на побережье Каспийского моря на должность помощника начальника погранзаставы.

Так, я с 1922 по 1925 год находился в погранвойсках на должности помощника начальника, а потом начальника погранзаставы.

В 1925 году штаб погранвойск ЗакЧеКа командировал меня в Москву в Высшую Пограничную школу ОГПУ, но проучившись в этой школе 10 месяцев, был демобилизован по состоянию здоровья.

После демобилизации я принимал активное участие в работе Всероссийского Союза Цыган, председателем которого был т[оварищ] Таранов А. С. С этого времени я начал писать на цыганском языке стихи, рассказы и повести.

В 1928 году, после окончания краткосрочных курсов педагогов МОНО отправило меня в открывшуюся в Марьиной роще цыганскую школу, а в 1930 году я перешел на работу в театр “Ромэн” в качестве актера.

В 1931 году я работал редактором нацотдела издательства ГИХЛ и Сельхозгиза по изданию художественной и сельскохозяйственной литературы на цыганском языке.

В июле 1933 г. Отдел Национальностей ВЦИК, где уполномоченным по работе среди цыган работал цыган Иван Петрович Токмаков, направил меня в Минводский район в качестве председателя цыганского колхоза “Труд Ромэн”, где я проработал до 1939 года, а затем был переведен на работу в Минводскую районную газету в качестве зав. сельхозотделом редакции и проработал здесь до 1941 года.

О цыганском колхозе “Труд Ромэн”

В 1929 году, в станице Суворовская, Минералводского района, Ставропольского края, был создан цыганский колхоз, который был назван “Труд Ромэн”. Организатором этого колхоза был цыган Лебедев Николай Иванович. В начале организации в колхозе состояло около 120 цыганских семейств, с преобладающим большинством цыган ранее проживающих в городах: Кропоткин, Краснодар, Майкоп, Армавир, Ростов-на-Дону.

В связи с тем, что в колхоз принимались цыгане без особого отбора, в числе колхозников очутились цыгане, которые раньше занимались аферами, карманщицами и др. Поскольку со стороны председателя колхоза Лебедева Н. И. допускалось

покровительство этой категории цыган, то впоследствии они оказали пагубное влияние на остальных цыган и, главным образом на цыганскую бедноту.

На организацию цыганского колхоза “Труд Ромэн” Советское Государство отпустило огромную сумму денежной ссуды для приобретения сельскохозяйственных машин, инвентаря, продуктивного и рабочего скота.

За колхозом было закреплено на вечно около двух тысяч гектаров удобной для земледелия земли и угодий. Однако, обрабатывалась эта земельная площадь недостаточно. Снимались низкие урожаи, а государственный план хлебопоставок из года в год не выполнялся.

На протяжении около трех лет председатель колхоза Лебедев Н. И., который был окружен недобросовестными цыганами-колхозниками, путем всяких махинаций получил из государственного банка большие суммы денег и расходовал их не по прямому назначению. Так, например, Лебедев Н. И. самолично выдавал деньги на устройство пышных свадеб, крестин и т.п. В результате отсутствия должного контроля со стороны районных организаций Лебедев Н. И. организовал при колхозе племенную коневодческую ферму, которая впоследствии превратилась в источник обогащения самого Лебедева Н. И. и его окружения. Делалось это так: Лебедев Н. И. снабжал соответствующими справками своих приближенных, выдавая им крупные суммы для поездки в крупные города для покупки лошадей якобы для конефермы. Лошади закупались и в вагонах отправлялись в другие города, где и продавались по спекулятивным ценам. Таким образом Лебедев Н. И. и его собутыльники наживали огромные суммы денег. Однако так продолжалось недолго. Цыганская беднота, работающая в колхозе, быстро разгадала физиономию своего председателя. Лебедев Н. И. и его приближенные были разоблачены в спекуляции цыганами-колхозниками, и конеферма была ликвидирована. Цыгане колхозники начали уходить из колхоза.

За свои антигосударственные действия Лебедев Н. И. был отдан под суд, но отделался условным осуждением. (На суде он делал упор на свою безграмотность.)

В последствие было установлено, что Лебедев Н. И. являлся до революции крупным кулаком, который в городе Армавире имел свою собственную почтовую контору, постоянные дворы и несколько жилых домов.

В июле 1933 года по командировке из Москвы я прибыл в распоряжение Северо-Кавказского КрайЗУ [Краевое Земельное Управление], которое направило меня в Минераловодский район в качестве председателя колхоза “Труд Ромэн”. Надо сказать, что этот колхоз произвел на меня удручающее впечатление. Колхозные поля и угодья были в бурьянах и сорняках. На молочно-товарной ферме стояло 7 голов истощенных коров, 11 голов лошадей, из которых 6 голов были молодняк. Из имеющихся когда то 138 жилых домов, для жилья были приспособлены только 11 домов. В колхозе в это время состояло лишь 11 семейств цыган, причем 7 семейств из них состояли из вдовушек-цыганок, мужья которых отбывали наказания в тюрьмах и лагерях. В колхозе не было продовольствия для колхозников, большая часть цыганских детей и женщин были опухшие от истощения.

Посевная площадь колхоза составляла: озимой пшеницы 75 га, озимого ячменя 35 га, овса 30 га, кукурузы 40 га.

Сам я лично никогда не занимался сельским хозяйством и трудности, которые я встретил в колхозе, помогли мне преодолеть начальник политотдела Минводской МТС т[оварищ] Дмитриев, райком партии, райисполком и райЗО [Районный Земельный Отдел]. Колхозу была оказана немедленная помощь в продовольствии. Благодаря их практической помощи колхоз успешно убрал урожай.

Положение дел в колхозе заставило меня немедленно выехать в Крайисполком [Краевой Исполнительный Комитет], где мне была оказана всемерная помощь: были отпущены кредиты на приобретение всего необходимого. При содействии районных организаций было закуплено в колхозах и коммунах района: дойных коров 30 голов, рабочих лошадей 20 голов, рабочих волов 12 голов, было куплено также сельхозмашины и инвентарь.

Молва о том, что в колхозе “Труд Ромэн” работает председателем цыган, присланный из Москвы, быстро облетела цыганские таборы. Осенью 1933 году уже было принято в колхоз 17 семейств кочевых цыган. С помощью районных организаций были восстановлены жилые дома и каждая цыганская семья получила жилье.

В 1934 году я был избран председателем первого в мире цыганского сельского Совета. В этом же году в колхоз было принято еще 45 семейств кочевых цыган.

При колхозе была открыта начальная школа, занятия в которой вели цыгане-учителя присланные из Москвы, на цыганском языке. Был открыт детский сад и детские ясли. Обслуживание детсада и детяслей осуществлялось колхозницами-цыганками.

В 1934 году в колхозе был выращен богатый урожай и план хлебопоставок был выполнен досрочно. В этом же году колхоз получил ссуду на приобретение дойных коров для каждой семьи колхозника.

В 1935 году я был вызван в Москву на совещание при Отделе Национальностей ВЦИК по вопросу трудоустройства кочевых цыган. На этом совещании я внес предложение сделать колхоз “Труд Ромэн” показательным колхозом для привлечения большего количества кочевых цыган.

И в 1936 году Правительство приняло решение о создании на территории цыганского сельского Совета в Минводском районе, на базе колхоза “Труд Ромэн”, социалистического городка. В этом же году были составлены проекты этого поселка, а осенью того же года в адрес колхоза “Труд Ромэн” начали поступать эшелоны с круглым и пиленным лесом. Строительство соцгородка было поручено Переселенческому Отделу Ставропольского крайисполкома. Начали прибывать строители. Весной 1936 года были сложены первые фундаменты для 20 жилых многоквартирных домов.

Весть о строительстве соц[иалистического] городка в колхозе “Труд Ромэн” молнией облетела кочевых цыган, кочующих в пределах Краснодарского и Ставропольского краев, Ростовской и Грозненской областей. Цыганские таборы потянулись в колхозы.

К сожалению, строительство соц[иалистического] городка было прекращено наркомом земледелия СССР в 1937 году. По указанию Переселенческого отдела Ставропольского крайисполкома весь лесоматериал был вывезен с территории колхоза “Труд Ромэн” в колхозы Минводского района.

Для меня это было ударом, и я на нервной почве слег, работать в колхозе я уже не мог. После трехмесячного лечения я обратился в Минводский райком партии с просьбой перевести меня на работу в Минводскую районную редакцию газеты “За стахановский труд” (до колхоза “Труд Ромэн” в Москве я занимался литературной работой, и работа в газете была мне хорошо знакома).

Таким образом, моей заветной мечте не удалось осуществиться.

Мне страстно хотелось, чтобы как можно больше кочевых цыган приобщилось к трудовой жизни, ради этой цели я не жалел своих сил и труда. Вместе с колхозниками-цыганами в первые дни моего приезда в этот колхоз переживал трудности. Благодаря Советской власти, которая сделала из меня, бывшего кочевого цыгана, гражданина страны, дала мне среднее образование – я стремился отдать все для своего цыганского народа.

В редакции газеты я работал зав[едующим] сельхозотделом и за успешную работу в газете был участником ВСХВ [Всесоюзная сельскохозяйственная выставка] в Москве в 1939 году.

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В 1941 году вместе с семьей переехал в Грозненскую область. Здесь Обком партии направил меня в Наурскую районную редакцию в качестве редактора райгазеты.

Примечание: В ряды ВКП (б) я вступил в Минводской редакции в 1941 году.

В качестве редактора Наурской райгазеты “Ленинский путь” я проработал до 1947 года. В 1947 году в Наурский район прибыла комиссия ЦК ВКП (б) по проверке постановления ЦК ВКП (б) “О сохранности колхозной собственности”.

Комиссия установила грубое нарушение этого Постановления руководством района. Были сняты с работы и исключены из партии все руководство района, в том числе и я. Некоторых из них отдали под суд, не избежал этой участи и я. А вся моя вина состояла в том, что в колхозах района я покупал продукты по дешевой, а не по базарной цене. Мне предъявили обвинение в покупке 15 кг муки, 2-х кг постного масла и 4-х кг мяса. Осужден я был нарсудом на 3 года.

Полностью свой срок я отбыл в сельскохозяйственной открытой колонии под городом Омск, где с первого же дня работал воспитателем среди заключенных, имел свободное хождение в город Омск.

В 1950 году возвратился к своей семье в станицу Наурскую. Большое спасибо первому секретарю райкома партии т[оварищу] Брызгалову, который помог мне поступить на работу в Наурский хлопкосовхоз в качестве секретаря дирекции совхоза.

В 1952 году я переехал в Ростовскую область, во вновь создаваемый на целине Волго-Донской хлопкосовхоз, в котором я проработал в качестве инспектора по кадрам до 1956 года.

В 1956 году Ростовский-на-Дону трест совхозов направил меня на работу в г. Красный Сулин в Строительно-монтажное управление в качестве старшего инспектора отдела кадров. Здесь я проработал в этой должности до 1961 года, а затем перешел на пенсию по возрасту.

С июня 1964 года поступил на работу в завод железобетонных изделий в качестве вахтера на проходной, с окладом 40 рублей в месяц. Кроме того, получаю пенсию 30 рублей.

... [подпись] (М. Безлюдский).

16 августа 1964 года.

г. Красный Сулин, Ростовской области, Новосельский пер., 3.

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My Biography

Briefly about my parents

My parents led nomadic way of life. My father was a horse trader, though he never had more than one bad horse. Mother was a professional fortune-teller. She knew well how to tell fortunes using the cards, she knew how to make wax “devils” and used them well in divination [1]. My parents wandered with their tabor within the province of Ryazan.

I was born on August 8, 1901 in the tabor, which was located with all its tents on the edge of the forest in the 12 verst [2] from the district town of Sapozhek Ryazan province.

From my childhood, I remember myself well at the age of 10-11 years. For the winter, the whole tabor went to the district town of Mikhailov where each family had a certain rented flat. Our family always spent winters in the same town in the house of the blacksmith Alexey Denisov. During the winter evenings, the son of the blacksmith – Sasha Denisov taught me the alphabet (he studied in an urban school).

There, I made friends with another Russian Kolya Rogozhev, who studied at the city gymnasium. Kolya's father – Alexander Nikitovich Rogozhev – had a good carpenter's workshop in which various archangels, icons and other things for churches were made.

Every summer my father and my mother went to the annual horse fairs to trade horses, but I was left without a penny of money at home. Our host Alexey Denisov and his wife took pity on me, but they themselves had five children and I often went to bed hungry. So, I spent my days staying in the carpentry workshop of Alexander Nikitovich Rogozhev, assisted him by giving the necessary detail, preparing carpenter's glue. The wife of Alexander Nikitovich, as well as his daughter, often invited me at the table to dine with him and always told me to come for supper with them. But I felt ashamed to go eat with

them too often. I started begging: every Sunday I went to the town and walked around the shops of fabric and shoe merchants and asked for “bread” ...

One day, having found out that I was begging, Alexander Nikitovich told me:

– Mishutka, cut out your begging alms. Come to us every time you want to eat. You need to find some place to work. Wait, I’ll talk to the owner of the bakery Ovchinnikov. Maybe the baker needs a boy ...

So, thanks to Alexander Nikitovich Rogozhev, I started working in the bakery of Ovchinnikov. My father tried to pull me off my work more than once, but I did not give up and continued to work.

In the bakery, I first had some small works, more as a courier, and chopped wood, cleaned the bakery, and then I learned how to bake bagels, buns and even “French” baguettes. It was schooling not without cuffs, received from the older baker Erofeevich, and I often ran to buy a small bottle of vodka for him.

My parents stopped scolding me for my work in the bakery. But one day my father told me:

– Our Gypsies laugh at me for putting my son to work. They say, I only have one son and he is not like a real Gypsy. I’m ashamed in the tabor.

But I stood my ground. So, I worked in the bakery of Ovchinnikov for three years. But in the summer of 1918, I had to quit my job at the bakery.

I remember well, it was the market day. In the middle of the day suddenly a loud gunfire began in the town. I left the house and went to the city. Near the bakery of Ovchinnikov I met our host blacksmith Alexey Denisov with a rifle in his hands. Seeing me he shouted:

– Mishutka, go home! Rejoice, Mishutka, the Revolution has come to our town. It’s a pity, you’re young, I’d take You with me ...

But in the autumn of 1918 in a number of villages of the Mikhailovskiy district, the kulaks organised a rebellion against the established Soviet power. Kulak uprising was quickly suppressed.

At this time, I left with my father in a tabor which was located in the forest near the town of Sapozhek.

When I left with my father, I took with me half a bag of different books that I bought for the money I earned. Here were books about Yeruslan Lazarevich, Bova Korolevich [3], the works of Maxim Gorky, M. Saltykov-Shchedrin, and others.

Being in the tabor, I spent all days sitting in the forest and reading books, and spent the evenings in a nearby village in the circle of Russian boys and girls, singing short songs on the accordion (so called “passions” [4]); for those visits, I have repeatedly received from my father hits of his whip.

– Tell me, son, – my father told me, – why are you attracted to the Russians. You are of marrying age, so choose a bride in the tabor for yourself ...

And one day another tabor of Polish Gypsies [5] came to our tabor campsite. In the evenings, large fires burned near the tents. The youth of both tabors were having wild fun, but I was running away to the village.

The next day, after another whipping, my father said:

– Tomorrow we will go to match Nastya to you. We've already made a deal with her parents. They agreed to give Nastya to marry you.

When my father harnessed a horse in a light carriage and left, my mother said:

– Your father went to buy *samogonka* [6].

I ran out of the tent. I went from the tents deeper into the forest and laid down on the grass. In my head, one thought replaced another, but I clearly imagined my future: married, I would have to learn how to trade horses and engage in horse stealing. I can't live with the young wife, fed either by my father's pocket or by my wife's begging ... But being 18 years old, I had no experience in horse dealing. Moreover, I could not recognise the horse age by looking at its teeth, and that is a great shame for a Gypsy.

There was a big fire lit near my future father-in-law's tent. In the tent, elderly Gypsy men and women were sitting. There was a large carpet on the ground. There were a lot of bottles of *samogonka* and various snacks. Young people gathered around the fire, singing and dancing.

They called me and my bride in the tent. We stood in front of our parents, who were already quite drunk.

– So you, Mishutka, do you agree to marry Nastya, – turning to me, said Nastya's father. – Well, we're not against this. Well, and you, daughter, are you willingly going to marry Mishutka?

After some silence Nastya said quietly:

– Daddy, it is your will, but I do not agree. Whom do you choose for me, after all, he can neither trade nor steal ... Well, I shall feed him from my bag [7].

I was glad hearing Nastya's frankness. But I rejoiced prematurely.

– Hush! – Nastya's father cried out. – Mishutka is still young, he will learn everything. In a week the wedding will take place, it is our decision with our matchmakers.

I do not remember how I came out of the tent, long wandered through the forest, and in my head was only one thing: to run, I must run from the tabor.

Because of the strong intoxication of my parents, I could search out a little chest, with my parents' documents and my birth certificate, found in our cart, and I quickly hid my certificate in my pocket. Taking a piece of boiled meat and a piece of bread, I ran out of the tent, went along the highway to the district town of Sapozhek.

It was dawn when I found myself on the street of the sleeping town.

I was passing by the three-storey brick house on which the sign "State Bank" hung, when the militsiya [8] man appeared from the booth. Seeing me, the militsiya man asked:

– Hey, Gypsy boy, why did you go stealing so early?

I went up to him and told him all about myself with tears in my eyes.

– Relax, – the militsiya man told me in a fatherly way. – Wait a bit, I'll finish my service time and I'll take you to our boss, he will help you. But I have to tell, it is the first time in my life when the Gypsy flees from wandering ...

And here I am in the office of the district militsiya chief.

Having listened to me carefully, the chief thought for a while, then took the phone, talked with someone, and then returned to me, saying:

– Do you have any kind of personal document with you? Well, – he said, examining my birth certificate. – My advice to you, Gypsy, is to join the Red Army as a volunteer. You're of proper age.

On the same day, the military commandant issued the documents. I was given a Red Army uniform, bathed in the bath, and in the evening with military train I was sent to the provincial city of Ryazan. Here I was assigned to one of the infantry battalions.

One day the battalion officer came into the barracks and told me:

– Bezlyudskiy, your mother and father came to you.

This news was as surprising as the snow falling on my head.

Our meeting was sad. My mother was crying, and father spoke through tears:

– Leave, Misha, that service. I brought you a passport of a foreign national, a new suit and boots. Let's go to the *tabor*, and we will not insist on your marriage anymore, you can choose your bride by yourself ...

But, though it was very heavy, I refused to go to a *tabor* and declared that I won't leave my service in the Red Army.

In 1920, our battalion, as a part of the 11th army, was sent to the Caucasian front, where the Red Army fought for the liberation of Georgia [9]. I also participated in the battles for the capture of the city of Batum as a horse scout.

In 1921, I was sent to the 13th Baku infantry command courses of Red commanders, which I successfully graduated from in May 1922, having received the title of Red commander.

At the graduation from the courses, each graduate was given a month vacation. But where to go? Where to find my parents? And I took a travel letter to the town of Mikhailov. I was right. 20 verst from the town, in the forest, at the river Pronya, I found our *tabor*. This is where the meeting with my parents occurred. Unfortunately, I couldn't spend my whole vacation there. I wanted to come back to Tiflis [10] (our courses were here). Having lived with my parents in the camp for two weeks, I said goodbye to our whole *tabor*. (Here I learned that the girl Nastya was married to my cousin Pavlusha).

Arriving in Tiflis, I immediately received a referral to the headquarters of the border troops of Transcaucasian [11] ChK, from there I was sent to one of the border posts on the coast of the Caspian sea to the position of an assistant chief of the border post.

So, from 1922 to 1925 I was in the border troops in the position of an assistant chief, and then a chief of a border post.

In 1925, the headquarters of the border troops of Zakcheka sent me to Moscow to the Higher Border security school of the OGPU, but after studying at this school for 10 months, I was demobilised for health reasons.

After demobilisation, I actively participated in the work of the All-Russian Union of Gypsies, which was chaired by comrade Andrey S. Taranov. From that time, I began to write poems, stories and novels in the Gypsy language.

In 1928, after finishing short courses for teachers, MONO sent me to the Gypsy school opened in Maryina roshcha [12], and in 1930 I moved to work in the Theatre *Romen* as an actor.

In 1931, I worked as an editor of the National Department of the Publishing house of GIKhL and Selkhozgiz for the publication of fiction and agricultural literature in the Gypsy language.

In July, 1933, the Department of Nationalities of the Central Executive Committee, where plenipotentiary for work among the Gypsies was Ivan Petrovich Tokmakov, sent me to Mineralnye Vody district as Head of the Gypsy kolkhoz *Trud Roman* (Gypsy Labour), where I worked until 1939, and then was transferred to work in Mineralnye Vody local newspaper as the head of the Agricultural Department of the Editorial Board and worked here until 1941 [13].

About the Gypsy kolkhoz *Trud Roman* (Gypsy Labour)

In 1929, in the stanitsa Suvorovskaya [14], Mineralnye Vody district, Stavropol kray, a Gypsy kolkhoz was created, it was named *Trud Roman*. The organizer of this kolkhoz was a Gypsy, Nikolay Ivanovich Lebedev. At the beginning of its creation, the kolkhoz consisted of about 120 Gypsy families, with the vast majority of Gypsies previously living in the cities: Kropotkin, Krasnodar, Maykop, Armavir, Rostov-on-Don.

Due to the fact that the kolkhoz accepted Gypsies without special selection, among the other kolkhoz members were accepted Gypsies who used to be engaged in scams, pickpockets, etc. Because the Head of the kolkhoz N. I. Lebedev provided protection for this category of Gypsies, later they had a negative influence on the rest of Gypsies and mainly on the poor Gypsies.

The Soviet State released a huge sum of financial loans for the organisation of the Gypsy kolkhoz *Trud Roman* in order to purchase agricultural machinery, equipment, productive and working cattle.

About two thousand hectares of land convenient for farming and agriculture were given to the kolkhoz for perpetuity. However, the cultivation of this land area was not sufficient. Poor harvests were gathered, and the state plan of grain deliveries was not realised from year to year.

For about three years, the Head of the kolkhoz N. I. Lebedev, who was surrounded by unscrupulous Gypsy kolkhoz members, using various deceptions, received from the State Bank large sums of money and spent them not for the proper purpose. So, for example, N. I. Lebedev has personally given money to organise magnificent weddings, christenings, etc. As the result of lack of proper monitoring by the district's organisations, N. I. Lebedev could organise in the kolkhoz a separate horse breeding farm, which later served as a source of the individual enrichment of N. I. Lebedev and his inner circle. This was done in the following way: N. I. Lebedev supplied some persons of his entourage with the relevant reference-papers, giving them large sums of money to travel to big cities in order to purchase horses, ostensibly for the horse farm. Horses were purchased, and were sent in wagons to the other cities, and sold at higher speculative prices. Thus, N. I. Lebedev and his partners in alcohol-drinking collected huge sums of money. However, this did not last long. The Gypsy poor mass, working on the farm, quickly disclosed the real face of their Head. N. I. Lebedev and his entourage were unmasked by Gypsy kolkhoz members

as profiteers, and the horse farm was eliminated. The Gypsy kolkhoz members began to leave the kolkhoz.

N. I. Lebedev was prosecuted for his anti-government actions but got away on probation. (At the trial, he focused on his illiteracy).

Later it was discovered that, before the revolution, N. I. Lebedev was a big *kulak*, who had its own postal service, inns and several houses in the city of Armavir.

In July 1933, officially sent from Moscow, I arrived at the disposal of the North Caucasus kray's Land Directorate, which sent me to the Mineralnye Vody district as Head of the kolkhoz *Trud Roman*. I must say that this kolkhoz made a depressing impression on me. The kolkhoz fields and lands were covered with various weeds. On the dairy farm, there were only 7 exhausted cows, only 11 horses, among them 6 horses were too young for works. From the 138 residential houses available in the past, only 11 houses were prepared for dwelling. The kolkhoz at that time consisted of only 11 families of Gypsies, 7 of them included Gypsy widows, whose husbands were serving sentences in prisons and forced labour camps. The kolkhoz did not have food for the kolkhoz members, most of the Gypsy children and women were swollen from exhaustion.

Cereal fields area of the kolkhoz were: winter wheat 75 hectares, winter barley 35 hectares, oats 30 hectares, maize 40 hectares.

I have never personally worked in agriculture before, and the difficulties that I met on the kolkhoz were overcome by me with the help of the head of the political department of Mineralnye Vody's MTS comrade Dmitriev [15], the district's Party Committee, the district's Executive Committee and the district's Land Department. The kolkhoz was provided with immediate food supply. Thanks to their practical help the kolkhoz harvested successfully.

The state of works in the kolkhoz made me immediately go to the North Caucasus Kray's Executive Committee, where I was provided with all possible assistance: loans were issued for the purchase of everything necessary. With the assistance of district organisations, 30 dairy cows, 20 working horses, 12 working oxen were purchased in the kolkhoz and communes of the district, agricultural machinery and equipment were also bought.

The rumor that a Gypsy, sent from Moscow, works as the Head of the kolkhoz *Trud Roman* quickly flew around the Gypsy camps. In the autumn of 1933, 17 families of nomadic Gypsies were accepted to the kolkhoz. With the help of district organisations, houses were restored and each Gypsy family received housing.

In 1934, I was elected Head of the world's first Gypsy Village Council. In the same year, another 45 families of nomadic Gypsies were accepted to the kolkhoz.

At the kolkhoz, the elementary school was open, in which classes were conducted by Gypsy-teachers sent from Moscow, in the Gypsy language. A kindergarten and a nursery were opened too. The kindergarten and the nursery were served out by kolkhoz members, Gypsy women.

In 1934 the kolkhoz has collected a rich harvest, and the plan of grain deliveries was realised ahead of schedule. In the same year, the kolkhoz received a loan for the purchase of dairy cows for each family of the kolkhoz members.

In 1935 I was invited to Moscow for a meeting at the ON VTsIK on the employment of nomadic Gypsies. At this meeting, I made a proposal to make the kolkhoz *Trud Roman* an Exemplary kolkhoz [16] to attract more nomadic Gypsies.

And in 1936, the Government adopted the decision about creation on the territory of the Gypsy Village Council in Mineralnye Vody district, on the basis of the kolkhoz *Trud Roman*, an exemplary socialist town [17]. In the same year, the projects of this settlement were designed, and in the fall of the same year trains with the round and sawn wood began to arrive to the kolkhoz *Trud Roman* [18]. The construction of the socialist town was ordered to Resettlement Department of the Stavropol Kray [19] Executive Committee. Builders began to arrive. In the spring of 1936 the foundations for the first 20 single-family houses were laid.

The news of the socialist town construction on the kolkhoz *Trud Roman* flew nomadic Gypsies roaming within the Kranodarsky kray and Stavropolsky kray, Rostov and Grozny regions. The Gypsy tabors moved to kolkhozes.

Unfortunately, the construction of the socialist town was stopped by the People's Commissar of Agriculture of the USSR in 1937 [20]. After the order of the Resettlement Department of the Executive Committee of Stavropol kray all wood was removed from the territory of the kolkhoz *Trud Roman* to the kolkhozes of Mineralnye Vody district.

For me it was a shock and, as I fell ill of nervous causes, I couldn't work in the kolkhoz. After a three-month long treatment, I went to Mineralnye Vody Party Committee with a request to transfer me to work in Mineralnye Vody regional newspaper *Za Stakhanovskiy trud* (For Stakhanovite Labour) [21] (before work in the kolkhoz *Trud Roman* I was engaged in Moscow in doing literary work and thus working with newspapers was also familiar to me).

Thus, my main dream could not be realised.

I wanted to help as many nomadic Gypsies as possible to join the working life, for this purpose I did not spare my efforts and labour. Together with the Gypsies in the kolkhoz in the first days of my arrival in this kolkhoz I overcame the existing difficulties. Thanks to the Soviet government, which made me, a former nomadic Gypsy, a citizen of the country, gave me a secondary education – I tried to give everything to my Gypsy people.

In the newspaper, I worked as head of the Agricultural Department and for the successful work I did in the newspaper I was entitled to take part as a member in the VSKhV [22] in Moscow in 1939.

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In 1941, together with my family, I moved to Grozny region. Here, the Regional Party Committee sent me to work as an editor in the Naurskaya district newspaper's Editorial Board.

Note: I became member of the VKP(b) in 1941, during the time when I was working in the Mineralnye Vody newspaper Editorial Board.

As editor of Naurskaya newspaper *Leninskiy put'* [Lenin's path] I worked until 1947. In 1947, the Commission of the Central Committee of VKP(b) having the duty to verify the implementation of the decision of the VKP(b) *On the safety of the kolkhoz' property* arrived in the Naurskaya district.

The Commission found a big violation of this Decision by the district administration. All the leadership of the district, including me, were removed from work and excluded from the party. Some of them were put on trial, and I did not escape this fate. And all my fault was that I bought food products at cheaper, not at the market price, visiting kolkhozes of the district. I was accused of buying 15 kg of flour, 2 kg of vegetable oil and 4 kg of meat. I was convicted by the people's court for 3 years.

I served my full term in an agricultural open colony for people sentenced near the city of Omsk [23], where, from the first day, I worked as a teacher among prisoners and had a free regime for visiting the city of Omsk.

In 1950 I returned to my family in the village of Naurskaya. Many thanks to the first Secretary of the district party Committee comrade Bryzgalov, who helped me to get a job in the Naurskaya's cotton kolkhoz as a secretary of the kolkhoz' Directorate.

In 1952, I moved to the Rostov region, in the newly created on virgin lands Volga-Don cotton kolkhoz, where I worked as a staff inspector until 1956.

In 1956, the Rostov-on-Don trust of sovkhozs sent me to work in the town of Krasniy Sulin at the Construction and Installation Department as a senior inspector of the Staff Department. Here I worked in this position until 1961, and then moved into retirement.

Since June 1964 I entered the plant of reinforced concrete products as a watcher at the entrance, with a salary of 40 rubles per month. In addition, I receive a pension of 30 rubles.

... [signature] (M. Bezlyudskiy).

August 16, 1964.

Town of Krasniy Sulin, Rostov region, Novosel'skiy lane, No. 3.

Notes

1. Meaning the traditional trick to 'find' in a broken egg a 'little devil' or a 'small snake' which is used by Roma women fortune-tellers throughout the region of Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe (see e.g. Добровольский, 1908, pp. 65-66; Ficowski, 1985, pp. 219-230).
2. *Verst* is old Russian unit of length equal to 1.0668 km.
3. Yeruslan Lazarevich and Bova Korolevich are heroes in inexpensive books, a typical reading in the mass folk literature at this time.
4. This refers to the sub-division of the *Ruska Roma* that inhabited the territories of present-day Western Belarus, Lithuania and Eastern Poland.
5. *Stradaniya* (passions, suffering) is a musical-poetic genre of Russian folklore, a kind of a *Chastushki* (short humorous folk songs) of lyrical-comedic content.
6. *Samogon*, *samogonka* is a homemade strong alcoholic beverage.
7. 'To go with a bag' is a euphemism which refers to the practice of begging.

8. *Militsiya* or *Narodnaya militsiya* was the name of the police forces in Russia, the Soviet Union and the Russian Federation (since 1917 until 2011).
9. It refers to the establishment of the Soviet power in Georgia, by military force.
10. Tiflis is the old (till 1936) official name of the city of Tbilisi.
11. The Transcaucasian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic existed from 1922 to 1936 and included Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia.
12. *Maryina roshcha* is an administrative district in North-Eastern part of the city of Moscow; in past this was one of the historical areas where in the mid-19th century were placed the famous Gypsy choirs and where were the homes of Gypsy musicians.
13. The manuscript is divided into two parts, which are here united into one; the part concerning the Gypsy kolkhoz *Trud Romen* (Gypsy Labour) was added to the location specified by author. Here the two parts are published together according to a chronological principle.
14. *Stanitsa* is the designation of a former Cossack settlement, the administrative centre of the district.
15. It is interesting to note that I. I. Dmitriev is mentioned here, who in 1933, dared to inform the Soviet rulers about the catastrophic hunger consequences in the region (Трагедия, 2000, pp. 667-668). Apparently, the sending of Mikhail Bezlyudskiy there, exactly at this point in time, aimed at strengthening and developing the Gypsy kolkhoz *Trud Romen* because of the overall crisis situation, i.e. he was entrusted as a valuable Gypsy cadre.
16. The title “показательный” or “образцовый” (two synonyms meaning exemplary) in Soviet times was not only an honourable one, but led to a number of benefits and privileges.
17. The idea of building ‘socialist towns’ was introduced and discussed from the 1920s to May 1930 when the Politburo of the TsK VKP(b) rejected it. The idea reflected a search for the establishment of efficient and socialist living spaces, with communal housing, communal services, socialisation of the way of life, etc., especially for Siberia and the Far East, where new cities were to be built. In the archives no documents witnessing a government decision to create such a ‘socialist town’ based on the kolkhoz *Trud Romen* were found. Such an idea had also not been discussed at any meeting in the VTsIK concerning the activities aimed at creating a Gypsy national rayon or county, or in the perspective of the Gypsy Autonomous Republic (see above). This idea may have been present among the Gypsy activists or, more likely, Bezlyudskiy himself had hoped that would happen.
18. Here and below Bezlyudskiy confused some geographical names, often changed during his life: at the time he worked there, it was the North Caucasus kray (established in 1924, 3 times changed borders – later (since 13 March 1937) Ordzhonikidze’s kray, later part of Krasnodarsky kray, and since 12 January 1943 Stavropolsky kray).
19. Trains with round and sawn wood, for the construction of houses and outbuildings, were sent as a priority to the Gypsy kolkhozes in the period 1936-37. The organisation of these deliveries was entrusted to the Resettlement Department of the NKVD, using the resources of the NKVD GULAG, i.e. the whole action was carried out within one department (for the deliveries in the region of the North Caucasus see: РГАЭ, ф. 5675, оп. 1, д. 149).
20. No such decision is known to have been issued by the Ministry of Agriculture, and it seems unlikely that such a decision would have been made at this level, without coordination with the higher institutions (if there even was a decision taken to create such a ‘socialist town’ at all, a matter which remains controversial).
21. *Stakhanovit* labour refers to labour modelled after the Alexey Stakhanov (1906-1977) example. He was a miner who was known for producing more than it was required, by working harder and more efficient. His mining records gave birth to the Stakhanovit movement which intended to increase worker productivity and to demonstrate the superiority of the Soviet economic model.
22. All-Union Agriculture Exhibition (1935-39), later Exhibition of Achievements of National Economy (VDNKh).
23. In the former village of Ostashkovo, now part of the city of Omsk.

Source: LANB, f. Николай Саткевич.

Prepared for publication by Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov.

Translated by Viktor Shapoval.

12.5.5 *Ilya Gerasimov*

[Биография]

[...] Четыре цыганских колхоза на Смоленщине организованы были цыганом Герасимовым Ильей Яковлевичем.

Родился он в 1898 году в Смоленской обл[асти]. Его отец в царское время вел кочевой образ жизни. В семье было 10 человек детей. Илья Яковлевич хорошо помнит песни и танцы в лесу у костра. До сих пор не забыл он как цыгане-барышники подделывали лошадям зубы, т.е. из старого коня делали молодого, из ленивого, заливая четвертинку водки через ноздри лошади, делали ее ретивой.

Отец Герасимова И. Я. говорил ему, что не выйдет из него путевого барышника. Совсем его сын не лынет к коням и ничего в них не понимает. Мать Илья Яковлевича занималась гаданием и иногда брала его с собой. Три года он пас лошадей, принадлежащих жителям деревни.

В 1925 г. в этой деревне его избрали председателем крестьянской бедноты. Когда организовался Всероссийский Союз Цыган в Москве, ему было поручено организовать из кочевых цыган колхозы, совхозы. Союзом Цыган ему было выдано удостоверение как уполномоченному по организации колхозов по Смоленской и Брянской губерниям. Совместно с Михалажиным Николаем Павловичем и грамотной цыганкой Рузей Тумашевич был организован в Кореневщине Михновского сельсовета Смоленского района колхоз, которой вырос из 35 семей до 120.

После организации этого колхоза, без особых усилий были организованы колхозы:

1. В Кардымовском районе – 80 семей.
2. В Духовщинском районе – 65 семей.

В 1929 году был организован четвертый колхоз им[ени] Конституции в Александровском из 110 семей. В этом же году Герасимова И. Я. избрали председателем колхоза “Октябрь”. Колхоз состоял из 110 семей. В этом же году, в конце, Илью Яковлевича избрали председателем Михновского сельсовета. В 1932 году его направили учиться в Вяземскую одногодичную партийную школу. В 1933 году Смоленский Облисполком Герасимова И. Я. направил учиться дальше в Москву на двухгодичные [Высшие] курсы советского строительства при Президиуме ВЦИК и ЦИК СССР. После окончания курсов его направили на работу в Смоленский Облисполком инструктором Облисполкома. В 1944 году он переехал в Брянск, где работал зав[едующим] отделом Исполкома по хозяйственному и бытовому устройству эвакуированного населения. В 1961 году Герасимов Илья Яковлевич ушел на заслуженный отдых, с получением персональной республиканской пенсии.

Не отдыхается человеку, который не мыслит жизни без труда. Илья Яковлевич Герасимов работает по сей день внештатным заведующим оргинструкторского отдела Советского района г. Брянска. До сих пор цыгане Смоленщины с большим уважением вспоминает Герасимова И. Я. как деятеля, любящего своих соплеменников. [...]

[Николай Саткевич] [2]

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[Biography]

[...] Four Gypsy collective farms in the Smolensk region were organised by a Gypsy, Ilya Yakovlevich Gerasimov.

He was born in 1898 in the Smolensk oblast. His father led a nomadic way of life during tsarist times. There were 10 children in the family. Ilya Yakovlevich remembers songs and dances in the forest near the fire well. So far, he has not forgotten how Gypsies horse-dealers forged horses teeth, i.e. from an old horse, they made a young one, from a lazy one, pouring a quarter of vodka through the nostrils of a horse, made it zealous.

Ilya Yakovlevich Gerasimov's father told him that he won't be a good horse-dealer. Altogether, his son does not cling to horses and does not understand anything in them. Ilya Yakovlevich's mother was engaged in fortune-telling and sometimes took him with her. For three years he grazed horses belonging to the villagers.

In 1925, in this village [1] he was elected chairman of the peasant poor. When the All-Russian Gypsy Union was organised in Moscow, he was entrusted with organising kolkhozes and sovkhoses for nomadic Gypsies. The Union of Gypsies issued him a certificate as a plenipotentiary for the organisation of kolkhozes in the Smolensk and Bryansk governorates. Jointly with Nikolay Pavlovich Mikhilazhinym and the literate Gypsy women Ruzya Tumashevich he organised a kolkhoz in the village of Korenevschina at Mikhnovka village council in Smolensk rayon, which has grown from 35 families to 120.

After the organisation of this kolkhoz, the following kolkhozes were organised without much effort:

1. In Kardymovo rayon – 80 families.
2. In Dukhovshchina rayon – 65 families.

In 1929, the fourth [2] kolkhoz named after the *Constitution* was organised in Aleksandrovskoe [3] of 110 families [4]. In the same year, I. Y. Gerasimov was elected chairman of the kolkhoz named "October". The kolkhoz consisted of 110 families. In the same year, in the end, Ilya Yakovlevich was elected chairman of the Mikhnovka Village Council [5]. In 1932 he was sent to study at the Vyazemsky one-year party school. In 1933, the Smolensk Oblast Executive Committee sent I. Y. Gerasimov to Moscow to study further at two-year courses for Soviet construction at the Presidium of VTsIK and TsIK USSR. In 1944 he moved to Bryansk, where he worked as a head of the department of the Executive Committee for the economic and household services for the evacuated

population. In 1961, Gerasimov Ilya Yakovlevich went on a well-deserved rest, receiving a personal republican pension [6].

But a person who cannot imagine a life without work cannot rest. Ilya Yakovlevich Gerasimov is still working on freelanced contract as head of the organisational department of the Sovetsky rayon of the city of Bryansk.

Until now, the Gypsies of the Smolensk region with great respect recall I. Y. Gerasimov as an activist, loving his fellow tribesmen. [...]

[Николай Саткевич] [7]

Notes

1. It is not clear which village it is referred to, in all likelihood it is Korenevshchina (see below).
2. The name of the third kolkhoz is omitted.
3. Aleksandrovskoe in the Mikhnovka village council is the old name of the present-day village of Aleksandrovka. The village is known because of the tragic fate of local Gypsies: 176 of them were killed during the Nazi occupation on the 24th of April 1942.
4. The list of kolkhozes presented here is not only incomplete but not entirely accurate. This is explained by the fact that in the Western region (with the regional center of Smolensk) the Gypsy kolkhozes have repeatedly divided, dissolved, changed, etc. The following Gypsy collective farms are mentioned in the archives for the period of the 1930s: *Октябрь* (October), *Свобода* (Freedom), *Красный городок* (Little Red city), *Красномайск* (Red May), *Веселый or Веселый уголок* (Jolly or Jolly corner), *Сталинская конституция* (Stalin's Constitution) (GASO, f. P 2360, op. 1, sv. 181, d. 2068).
5. This village council is not defined as one of nationalities, which means that Ilya Gerasimov became chairman of a village council, populated mainly by Russians, where only a few Gypsies lived.
6. This means that Ilya Gerasimov has received the second type of personal pension (see above).
7. The text was written by Nikolay Satkevich in 1964 based on personal meetings and conversations with Ilya Gerasimov.

Source: LANB, f. Николай Саткевич.

Prepared for publication by Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov.

12.5.6 Alexander German

Автобиография

Я, Герман Александр Вячеславович (литер. псевдоним Германó), родился 26 мая 1893 г. по стар[ому] ст[илю], под г. Орлом, в селе Старцево-Лепешкино (по паспорту – гор[од] Орел). Зимой этого года, за три месяца до моего рождения, мой отец, рабочий-водопроводчик, работая на строительстве городской водоканализации на Полесской пл[ощади], простудился и умирает от скоротечной чахотки. Безграмотная мать, оставшаяся в нужде, поступает работать на пивоваренный завод. Умерла также в Орле, в 1919 г., 69-ти лет. Из 12-ти детей я был самый младший. Выжило нас 5 человек, остальные умерли в детском возрасте. В молодости умерли два брата – фармацевт и художник-самоучка. Не остались в живых и сестры.

Благодаря помощи сестры, старшей меня на 23 года, я восьмью лет поступил в 3-классн[ое] приходское училище, а с 1905 года учусь в 4-х клас[сном] городском

училище, но окончить его не удалось: заболел я скарлатиной в тяжелой форме и осложнения болезни дают о себе знать до сих пор. Не окончив двух классов я готовлюсь экстерном на аптекарского ученика, но не выдержал экзамена за четыре класса гимназии. Благодаря поддержке второй сестры, вышедшей замуж за агронома, я поступаю в 4-й кл[асс] Коммерческого училища в Святошино, Киевск[ая] губ[ерния], которое кончил в 1915 г. и в этом году зачислен слушателем Киевск[ого] Коммерч[еского] Института. Из-за скудного заработка (был репетитором) пришлось в 1916 г. отказаться от Института. Вернувшись в Орел, я, освобожденный по болезни от военной службы, поступил дрогистом в Богоявленскую аптеку, в которой работал по декабрь 1917 года.

Излагать на досуге свои думки и наблюдения начал я в школьные годы. Писал миниатюры и короткие бытовые зарисовки, некоторые из них вошли в кн[игу] “Былые зарницы”, Орел, 1921 г. Впервые выступил в печати в сентябре 1915 г. в сб[орнике] “Орловцы – жертвам войны”. (Миниатюра “Червь грызет” и небольшой рассказ “Иван Талыго” имели положительный отзыв в местной прессе).

С февраля по октябрь 1918 г. работал счетоводом в Финансовом отделе Орлов[овского] Горисполкома, а с октября по декабрь инструктором Орловск[овского] Потребсоюза.

В январе 1919 г. был мобилизован в Красную Армию и направлен делопроизводителем в Отдел снабжения 4-й стрелк[овой] дивизии, затем назначен зав. вещевым складом. В сентябре переведен делопроизводителем в Ружпульпарк (Петроград), вскоре назначен заведующим этого парка. Во время пребывания в 4-й дивизии состоял членом Культурно-просветительной комиссии и по предложению военкома проводил собеседования и устраивал литературные вечера в красноарм[ейских] частях.

В ноябре того же 1919 г. работаю в Орловск[ком] Губвоенкоме помощником делопроизводителя и делопроизводителем Адм[инистративно]-Мобил[ьного] отдела, затем секретарем губвоенкома.

В мае же 1921 г., после демобилизации, я целиком отдаюсь литературной работе. Становлюсь постоянным сотрудником газеты “Известий Орловск[ого] Губкома РКП (б) и Губисполкома”, в дальнейшем переименованной в “Красную Правду”, “Земледелец и Рабочий” и “Орловскую Правду”. Писал бытовые фельетоны, очерки и небольшие рассказы под псевдонимом “А. Полуднев” и “И. Тиновой”. Принимал участие в литературных вечерах, в однодневных газетах, как “Маяк” (недели помощи школе), “Поволжье” (помощи голодающим Поволжья) и др. Принимал участие в собирании экспонатов только-что организованного Тургеневского музея в Орле. Собирал по школам творческие начинания учащихся и редактировал школьный худ[ожественно]-лит[ературный] журнал “Первоцвет” в изд[ательство] Орл[овского] Отделения Госиздата. Принимал инициативное участие в организации Центр[ального] клуба и был руководителем первого рабоче-красноармейского литер[атурного] кружка в г. Орле, в который привлек около 40 человек.

С мая по ноябрь 1921 г. работал зав. Театральной студией в клубе Орлов[ского] сельско-хозяйств[енного] баталиона и зав[едующим] Литературным отделом (ЛИТО) при Орлов[ском] ГУБОНО. С 17 июня временно замещал должность инспектора Клубного отделения Просветительного отдела Политуправления Орлов[ского] Воен[ного] Округа. 25 августа назначаюсь ГУБОНО в порядке совместительства отв[етственным] Секретарем Редколлегии Орлов[ского] Губиздата.

В феврале этого же 1921 г. в Орлов[ском] Городском театре, а затем Гарнизонном клубе, была включена в “Вечер политсатиры” одноактная пьеса “В некоем учреждении”, которая благодаря положительной оценке была включена Губпрофсоветом в репертуар “недели профдвижения”. За короткий период времени она, по сведениям ГУБОНО, ставилась около 300 раз в клубах Орлов[ской] губ[ернии], не учитывая Курск[ой] и др[угих] смежных губернии. Политтеатр Орлов[ского] Воен[ного] Округа выпустил ее отдельным изданием, за которым последовало 2-е издание Орлов[ского] Госиздата.

Одновременно шел драм[атический] эпизод “Заказчик” (из импер[иалистической] войны) в клубе при Сборно-пересылочном пункте и в красноармейских частях. Летом же ставились – миниатюра “Поэт мычания” (Сад Окровоенкома) и двухакт[ная] пьеса “Не сон ли?” (Сад объединенного клуба пожарн[ой] организации), но обе последние пьески успеха не имели.

С ноября 1921 г. в ред[акции] газеты “Орлов[ская] Правда” заведовал отделом “По губернии” и сотрудничал в Губ. РОСТА, для которой написал сцену “Утро в редакции” для передачи информации с подмостков. В июне 1922 г., после двухмесячного перерыва по болезни, был назначен ответств[енным] выпускающим газ[еты] “Орлов[ской] Правды”, совмещая должность зав[едующего] отделом “Крестьянская жизнь”. 15 января 1924 г., по согласованию с ред[акцией] газеты перешел в издательство “Красная книга” (Орел) на должность отв[етственного] секретаря издательского отдела. 1 марта 1925 г. был освобожден ввиду перехода на выборную должность по проф[союзной] работе отв[етственным] секретарем Секции работников печати при Орлов[ском] Губпросе, где пробыл с 25 января по 24 сентября 1925 г. 1 октября 1925 г. снова был привлечен редакцией “Орловской Правды” на должность Завед[ующий] Местным отделом. 30 марта 1926 г., в момент переорганизации редакционного аппарата, я изъявил желание уволиться в связи с переездом в Москву.

Работая в “Орлов[ской] Правде”, я сотрудничал в местной комсом[ольской] газете “Правда Молодежи”, в котор[ой] поместил ряд рассказов. Они перепечатывались в воронежской газете “Комсомолец” и др[угих] молодеж[ных] провинц[иальных] газетах и вышли отдельным сборником “По новому” в моск[овском] изд[ательств]е “Молодая гвардия”, в 1925 г. [...]

В последние годы пребывания моего в Орле состоял членом детской комиссии при изд[ательств]е “Красная книга” (вышла моя книжка для детей “Слушали постановили”, 1925) и принимал участие при этом же издательстве в разработке и

составлении “Книги для чтения” для 1-го класса на основе местного материала; в 1922 г. явился инициатором и был членом редколлегии первого сборника пролетарских поэтов и писателей Орловского края; активно принимал участие и выступал со своими произведениями в Литературной секции Общества краеведения, в Тургеневском Литературном Обществе, в лит[ературной] группе “Ярь” при комсом[ольской] газете; участвовал в инициативной литгруппе “Чернозем” и редактировании журнала этой группы “Новый путь”, 1925 г.

В этот период являлся от редакции “Орлов[ской] Правды” делегатом на 1-й Губернский съезд рабселькоров; делегатом 2-ого Орл[овского] Губ[ернского] Соповещения раб[очих], сельск[их] и воен[ных] корреспондентов “Орл[овской] Правды” и “Нашей деревни”; делегатом 7-ого Орлов[ского] Губ[ернского] Съезда Союза Рабпрос и делегатом Орлов[ской] Губ[ернской] конференции работников печати. Во всех случаях – с решающим голосом.

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В мае 1926 г. я, “периферийный классик”, не знавший суровой критики, отправился, полный радужных надежд, в Москву. В портфеле с десятков новых и заново переработанных рассказов, которые тотчас по приезде разнес по редакциям, где получил один ответ: “зайдите недельки через две”. Прошел установленный срок – и увы! – то не подходит по теме к журналу, то не к сезону, а то – вообще некудышная вещь. Один рассказ приняли, но напечатали через год (“Деревенский безбожник”). Земляки говорили: “Ну, Саша, подмазывай пятки и гайда по шпалам домой!” Обескуражило меня: нет денег и без пристанища. В поисках постоянной работы подрядился я заполнять бланки почтовых переводов для периодических изданий – по ½ копейки за штуку. Нашел на 20-й версте по Белор[усской] ж.д. (ныне “Бахавка”) комнатку и начал заполнять их по две-три сотни в сутки. Как-то и кто-то из москвичей предложил мне обратиться в Всерос[сийский] Союз Цыган, где нужны были культурщик и работник по организации издания на цыганском языке.

1 июня 1926 г. я был принят на редакцион[но]-издат[ельскую] работу в Цыганский союз. Этот период времени для бесписьменной народности был организационным во всех отношениях. Партия и правительство разрабатывали мероприятия в содействии перехода кочевых цыган на оседлость. Для разъяснительной работы необходима была литература на родном языке цыган, которые, испытывавшие гнет и преследование в годы царизма и находившиеся еще во власти таборных кулаков, относились с недоверием к привлечению их к равноправному трудовому образу жизни. Необходимо было еще развенчать среди кочующих цыган доморощенные легенды буржуазного толка о их происхождении и истории, в которых воспевались их вечная изолированность и враждебность к ним окружающих их культурных народов.

Для организации цыганской письменности требовалось срочное создание алфавита и оформление основ грамматики. Из-за разбросанности статей о цыганах во

многих журналах и газетах, забытых или мало кому известных, затруднялись изучение их экономики, быта, нравов, пережитков, верований и пр. Я задался целью собрать литературу о цыганах – по возможности всё, что было опубликовано в прошлом в русской печати. После трехлетней работы в библиотеке им[ени] Ленина Главнаука Наркомпроса РСФСР одобрила и выпустила в Центриздате, в 1930 г., мою “Библиографию о цыганах” (Указатель книг и статей с 1780 г. по 1930 г., с предислов[ием] проф. М. В. Сергиевского).

Наряду с собиранием и изучением печатных источников я предпринял собирание фольклора кочевников и изучение цыганского языка с голоса. Перевоплотившись в своеобразного “Алеко”, я проводил неделями в таборе. Все это привело к тому, что я свободно овладел языком и стал писать стихи и прозу по-цыгански, разносторонне ознакомился с жизнью и чаяниями кочевых цыган и паразитизмом (цыганщиной) столичных хоровых цыган.

Я остановился на этом объяснении для того, чтобы не было в дальнейшем недоуменных вопросов: цыган или не цыган – я? Постиг язык (знаю северный и южный диалекты) и душу цыган потому, что иначе я бы не мог изобразительными средствами вести политико-просветительскую работу среди кочевников. Достиг ли я этой цели? – судить не мне по моим опубликованным работам.

23 августа 1926 г., на заседании редак[ционно]-издат[ельской] коллегии при Всерос[сийском] Союзе Цыган мне было поручено проработать вопрос о периодическом издании на цыг[анском] яз[ыке], а в октябре с назначением секретарем редакции поручилось мне оформить выпуск первого номера журнала “Романы зоря”. Этот единственный в мире печатный орган цыган вышел в ноябре 1927 г., где помещен мой первый опыт на цыг[анском] яз[ыке] – рассказ “Руворо” (“Волчонок”).

Одновременно с работой среди цыган я примкнул к литгруппе начинающих писателей “Рабочая Весна”, где в сентябре 1928 г. избираюсь отв[етственным] Секретарем. В октябре этого же года был принят членом Всесоюз[ного] об[щест]ва пролет[арских] писателей “Кузница”. [...] В феврале 1929 г. организовал цыганскую литер[атурную] группу “Роменгиро Лав” (“Слово цыган”) и становлюсь ее секретарем – руководителем. В 1929-30 гг. прослушал методологию литературоведения, теоретическую поэтику, русскую литературу 19-го века и мастерскую прозы в организованных “Кузницей” Литературных мастерских, где между прочим, слушателями был выделен старостой. Зав[едующий] учебной частью был Ф. В. Гладков. Впервые с разоблачением сущности цыганщины выступил в ноябре 1929 г. на Диспуте “Цыганское искусство и борьба с цыганщиной” в Доме Искусств. О борьбе с цыганщиной в худож[ественной] литературе, музыке и в быту неоднократно выступал в Центр[альном] Цыганск[ом] Клубе “Лолы чергэн” (“Красная звезда”), членом которого состоял с 1927 г.

С 1928 г. выступаю в русской печати о цыганах. Статьи и очерки в “Комсом[ольской] Правде”, в “Раб[очей] Газете”, “Молодом Ленинце”, “Крестьян[ской] газ[ете]”, “Просвещении Национальностей”, “Национальной книге”, “Безбожнике”, “Вокруг

Света”, и др. О моем очерке “Цыгане” в сборн[ике] “Наша жизнь” (изд. Федерации) Максим Горький дал отзыв: “интересно и ново” (“Журнал для всех” 1929, No. 12).

В декабре 1928 г. – присуждена премия на конкурсе журнала “Всемирный Следопыт” за рассказ “Бессчастные мирикля” – опубликован в этом журнале (1929, No. 1). В 1930 г. в издательстве “Недра” вышли “Цыганские рассказы”, которые рекомендованы для библиотек в “Рекомендат[ельном] бюллетене” Наркомпроса, 1930, No. 34, и в Учпедгизе, в 1931 г. издан сбор[ник] очерков “Цыгане вчера и сегодня”.

В 1930 г. и до весны 1931 вел культмассовую работу в промартели “Цыгпищепром”. По август 1932 был ответств[енным] секретарем и по совместительству техническим редактором цыганск[ого] журнала “Нэво дром” (“Новый Путь”) в изд[ательстве] Центриздата, затем Учпедгиза. С 1932 г. являюсь внешним редактором ГИХЛа, Учпедгиза, “Молодой Гвардии”, Антирелигиозн[ого] изд[ательств]а, “Советского Законодательства”, и рецензентом этих издательств и других – Детгиза, Профиздата, Сельхозгиза, Медгиза. Одновременно поступаю работать на штатную должность редактора Нацсектора Гослитиздата по выпуску художественной литературы на нац[иональных] языках, где пробыл с ноября 1934 г. по декабрь 1938 г.

В эти годы вышли отдельными изданиями на цыг[анском] яз[ыке] – “Нэво Джиббен” (“Новая жизнь”), очерки, Центриздат, 1929; “Атасятуно бурмистро” (“Вчерашний вождь”), рассказ, Центриздат 1930; “Лэс кхардэ рувэса и ваврэ респхэныбэна” (“Его звали волком и другие рассказы”), ГИХЛ, 1933, “Джяна нэвэ рома” (“Идут новые цыгане”), Профиздат, 1933; “Сергеа Лагуно” (в соавторстве с цыг[анской] поэтессой О[льгой] Панковой), “Молодая Гвардия”, 1933; “Ганка Чямба и ваврэ респхэныбэна” (“Ганка Чамба и другие рассказы”), Гослитиздат, 1935.

По предложению актива московских цыган, в связи с борьбой с цыганщиной, мною написан ряд песен, которые положены на музыку, а также переведены с русского яз[ыка]: революционные и современные массовые песни для Центрального Цыганск[ого] Клуба, часть которых (15 названий) вошли в сб[орник] “Масова гия” (“Массовые песни”), Музгиз, 1934. Переведен мною на цыганск[ий] яз[ык] “Интернационал” (в начале я пробовал переводить с цыг[анским] поэтом М. Безлюдским), помещ[енный] в сб[орник] “Пандж масова гия” (“Пять массовых песен”), Музгиз, 1932. К 12-летию Красной Армии была напечатана моя песня на цыганск[ом] яз[ыке] в сб[орнике] “Красноармейские песни народов СССР”, Музгиз, 1933. Писал тексты цыганских песен для Всерос[сийского] Гастр[ольно]-Концерт[ного] Объединения (трудовое соглашение от 14.1.1940).

Кстати, сообщу вкратце о моих поэтических опытах на цыганском языке. Стихи на русском языке я никогда не пробовал писать. Когда мною была написана музыкальная пьеса “Жизнь на колесах”, потребовались тексты песен на цыганск[ом] яз[ыке]. Я предложил написать их цыганским поэтам, но они не удовлетворили режиссера-постановщика. (То же произошло и с поэтическими примерами в моей “Книге для чтения”, для 1-го класса.) Испытав вначале трудности освоения поэтического языка цыган, я начал с 1931 писать стихи, а также переводить с русского языка классиков и современных поэтов. Стихи помещал в цыган[ском]. журнале “Нэво

дром”. Выходили они отдельными сборниками: “Лолэ яга” (“Красные огни”), Гихл, 1934; “Яв прэ стрэга” (“Будь на страже”) “Молодая гвардия”, 1934; “Гиля” (“Стихи”), Гослитиздат, 1935; “Роспхэныбэна дрэ гиля” (“Три поэмы”), Гослитиздат, 1937; “Нэвэ гиля” (“Новые стихи”) и драм[атическая] пьеса в стихах), Гослитиздат, 1938. В 1939 перевел для театра “Ромэн” – “Моцарт и Сальери” и “Скупой рыцарь” А. Пушкина.

В русском переводе мои стихи печатали в сб[орнике] “Писатели СССР – Великому Октябрю”, ГИХЛ, 1932; сб. “Сталинская Конституция в поэзии народов СССР”, Гослитиздат, 1937; сб[орнике] “Ленин и Сталин в поэзии народов СССР”, Гослитиздат, 1938; сб[орнике] “Сталин в творчестве народов СССР”, Орел, 1939; в Московских газетах и журналах – “Вечерняя Москва”, “Легкая индустрия”, “Крестьянка”, и др., в провинции – в Курской “Молодой Гвардии”, “Орловск[ой] Правде”, “Белгородской Правде” и др.

Вышли отдельными изданиями на русском яз[ыке] сб[орник] “Стихи и песни”, Гослитиздат, 1937, и сб[орник] “Цыганские стихи”, из[дательств]о Област[ного] Совета депутатов трудящихся, Орел 1941, под редакц[ией] Вас[илия] Казина, тираж которого при оккупации немецко-фашистск[их] полчищ был полностью ими уничтожен в орловской типографии “Труд”.

С 1930 г. мои стихи (также рассказы, очерки, статьи и сказки) переводились на языки народов СССР и на иностранные: украинский, белорусский, армянский, татарский, еврейский, литовский; английский, французский, немецкий (в пер[евод]е Вайнерта); возможно и на другие языки, но не имею сведений.

В сентябре 1930 г. вместе с Ив[аном] Ром-Лебедевым (член ССП) и др[угими] была образована инициативная пятерка по организации цыганского театра, а в октябре этого года, как представитель редакции “Нэво дром” состоял членом Оргкомитета при наркомпросе по созданию Государств[енного] Цыган[ского] Театра-студии. 6 декабря выступал по докладу Ив[ана] Ром-Лебедева на диспуте “О путях [развития] индо-ромского искусства” в Тео-клубе.

21 декабря 1931 г. постановкой моей пьесы “Джибэн прэ роты” (“Жизнь на колесах”) открылся Московск[ий] Государств[енный] Цыганск[ий] театр “Ромэн”. 5 сентября 1935 г. пьеса была показана на первом театральном фестивале, и как писала газ[ета] “Правда”: “Пьеса “Жизнь на колесах” вызвала бурное одобрение зрительного зала”. Прошла она в театре “Ромэн” свыше 1 200 раз, просуществовав на его подмостках до 1939 г. Вторая пьеса “Машкир яга” (“Между огней”), поставленная театром “Ромэн” 22 мая 1932 г., посвящалась гражданской войне. В другом – Московск[ом] Передвижном Цыганск[ом] Театре, была представлена осенью 1932 г. моя пьеса “Палага первая” о борьбе с классовым врагом – цыганским кулаком. Все эти пьесы изданы Центриздатом в сб[орнике] “Романо театро” (“Цыганский театр”), в 1932 г.

По договору с Радиокomiteетом мною был сделан лит[ературно]-муз[ыкальный] монтаж “Цыганы”, переданный по радио 24 апреля 1940 г. По центральному радиовещанию; 29 февраля того же года передавались “Стихи” в русском переводе, а 4 июля – мои “Цыганские сказки”.

Цыганские сказки, запись которых я начал с 1926 г., стал опубликовывать с 1928 г. в журн[алах] “Экран”, “Читатель и писатель”, “30 дней”, “Безбожник”, “Деревенский безбожник”, “Дружба народов” и др. В настоящее время подготовлен к печати сборник “Цыганские сказки” на 8 печ[атных] листов.

С момента возникновения цыганской письменности я был редактором почти всех отдельных изданий поэзии и прозы начинающих писателей, также и их переводов: А. Пушкина – “Цыганы”, “Капит[анская] дочка”, “Дубровский” и др., Л. Толстого, [М.] Горького, [А.] Чехова, [В.] Короленко, [П.] Мериме – “Кармэн”, и др., из советск[их] писателей – М. Шолохова, [В.] Ставского, [А.] Новикова-Прибоя, [В.] Бахметьева, [Н.] Ляшко, [Б.] Житкова и др. в издании Гослитиздата и Детгиза.

1931 мною были выявлены в Москве и провинции 12 начинающих цыганских поэтов и привлечены к участию в первом “Альманахе цыганских поэтов”, вып[ущенном] в Центриздате под моей редакцией. Также под моей редакцией вышел другой – “Цыганский альманах”, Гослитиздат, 1934.

Помимо художеств[енного] творчества мною было предпринято составление стабильных учебников для цыганских школ: За учебу, 1932; Грамотным детям, 1932; Вперед к работе, 1932; Учебник цыганского языка, 1934; Хрестоматия по литературе, 1934; Книга для чтения-1-я и 2-я части, 1932; Учебник цыганского языка, 1937 (2-е изд. переработанное); Книга для чтения – 1-я часть, 1937 (2-е изд[ание] переработанное) и др.

Кроме того, проредактировал или перевел ряд учебников и книг по разнообразным вопросам – обществ[енно]-политич[еским], сельскохозяйств[енным], антирелигиоз[ным] и др[угую] литературу в издании Партиздата, Центриздата, Учпедгиза, Детгиза и проч.

Как представитель цыганской печати, в порядке общественной работы принимал активное участие по работе среди трудящихся цыган в Отделе Национальностей ВЦИК, Наркомпроса, Наркомзема, Всекопромсовета, Межведомственной комиссии нацменьшинств при Моссовете по вопросам организации цыганских колхозов, кооперативно-промысловых артелей, школ, ликбезов и других мероприятий по трудоустройству кочевых цыган. Как член правления Центр[ального] цыг[анского] клуба “Лолы Чергэн” участвовал в библиотечн[ой] работе, в продвижении цыганской книги (в помощь Когизу), проводил правовые консультации по жилищно-бытовым и другим вопросам путем личного общения и переписки. Состоял членом художеств[енного] совета в театре “Ромэн”. В 1940 г. был избран секретарем бюро образованной в этом году цыганской секции при ССП.

В целях личного ознакомления на местах с состоянием и нуждами осевших на землю цыган и для проведения политико-просветительской работы среди них неоднократно выезжал на периферию: колхоз “Труд Ромэн”, Цыганского сельсовета, Минераловодческого района, колхозы “Октябрь” и “Свобода” Смоленской области, завод им. “1-й Пятилетки” Метизсоюза, Загорск, Москов[ской] обл[асти] (дер[евни] Крупино, Павлово-Посадское) и др.

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В Великую Отечественную войну, с первых дней до конца, являлся начальником Аварийно-восстановит[ельного] звена 33-го Домуправления Свердловского РОНД г. Москвы, неоднократно назначался ответств[енным] дежурным по президиуму Союза Совет[ских] Писателей, был командирован в июле 1941 г. на курсы по повышению знания комсостава МПВО по Свердловскому району, которые прошел в два месяца практически вплоть до ночных дежурств при курсах МПВО [Местная противовоздушная оборона].

Во время войны сотрудничал в Информбюро, написал цикл стихов об участии цыган в партизанских отрядах, выступал со стихами и сказками в красноармейских частях и госпиталях (Гучково, Люблино, Чухлинка и др. Московск. обл.). Весной 1942 г. работал в радиоцентре по обработке писем с фронтов Отечественной войны для передачи по радио. В июле этого года состоялся мой творческий вечер в фольклорной секции при ССП (Цыганские сказки). В 1943 г. проявился интерес к инвалидам войны, потерявшим зрение на поле боя. По предложению Всесоюз[ного] Об[щест]ва слепых я провел обследование и написал ряд очерков со слов слепых инвалидов для печати о системе Брайля (О незрячих инвалидах была небольшая статья “Возвращение к жизни” в газ[ете] “Москов[ский] Большевик”, 20.X.1943 г.

Зимой 1942 г. работал над повестью “Записки русского воина” – от лица участника, студента горного института. (Работа осталась не законченной, написано 5 п. л.). Также осталась незаконченной рукопись в 12 п[ечатных] л[истов] “Цыгане в русской художественной литературе” (От Державина до Блока). В 1944 г. подготовил к печати “Основы цыганского языка”, краткое пособие для обучения цыг[анскому] языку в элементарном изложении, 5 печ[атных] листов. Привел в систематический порядок “Дополнение к библиографии о цыганах” (изданной в 1930 г.), 6 печ[атных] листов.

В 1945 г. написал обзор “Фашизм и цыгане в Отечественную войну”, 1 печ[атный] лист. В 1946 г. по заданию ВОКСа [Всесоюзное общество культурной связи с заграницей] выполнена работа совместно с Ив. Ром-Лебедевым – “Краткая история советских цыган”, 3 п[ечатных] л[иста]. В 1947 г. по договору с Орл[овском] Областн[ом] Изд[ательств]ом представлен в соавторстве с чл[еном] ССП В. Г. Черевковым сборник “Товарищ Иннокентий” (о И. Ф. Дубровинском) 3 ½ печ[атные] листа; к 800-летию г. Москвы по договору с театром “Ромэн” от 20. VII. 1947 г. написана “Краткая история Госуд[арственного] Цыганск[ого] театра”, 1 ½ печ[атного] листа; по договоренности с ВОКСом выполнена для заграницы в дек. 1947 – янв. 1948 г. работа “Цыгане Советского Союза”, 3 печ[атных] листа. В связи с 30-летием советской власти мною написана статья “Цыганский театр” для сб[орника] “Советский театр”, 1 печ[атный] лист; в 1946 г. – для заграничной выставки “Советская книга”, в соавторстве с В. Черевковым – “Лауреаты художествен[ной] литературы”, сборн[ик] био-критических аннотаций, 8 печ[атных] листов. Все рукописи одобрены и приняты ВОКСом.

В 1945-1948 годах начаты работы и до сих пор собираю материал по Орловскому краю в книгохранилищах и архивах г. Москвы – “История Орловской области”, “К истории провинциальных зрелищ и местных интересов”; “Орел и Орловцы” – полу-беллетристические очерки. Вчерне закончил воспоминания о восстановительном периоде Орлов[ской] губернии – “из записной книжки местного писателя”, около 5 печ[атных] листов. Для собирания материала выезжал в 1949-1950 г.г. в Орел, Мценск, Змиевка и др[угие] места Орловск[ой] области. В Орле 8.XII.1949 г. выступал со стихами в Орлов[ском] Областном Радиокomitee. Печатался в “Орловск[ой] Правде” в 1949-50 гг.

О моей работе за 1949-1951 г.г. при сем представляю творческий отчет в драмсекцию ССП.

В текущем году совместно с т.т. Захаркиным Ф. Д. и Чинёновым И. Н закончил “Очерки по истории Орлов[ской] партийной организации” (с 1890-х годов по 1917 г. включ[ительно]) по договору с Орловск[им] Обл[астным] Издательством, 25 печ[атных] листов.

В настоящее время по договоренности с Госуд[арственным] Моск[овским] цыганским театром “Ромэн” пишу 3-х актную пьесу “Ланцов и прочие” (название условное).

О моем художественном творчестве развернутых критических статей не было. Это объясняется, пожалуй, отсутствием литературоведов, знающих цыганский яз[ык], за исключением проф[ессора]-лингвиста М. В. Сергиевского, который дал на страницах цыганского журнала вообще оценку о молодой цыганск[ой] художеств[енной] литературе. Краткие сведения о моей работе есть в Больш[ой] Сов[етской] Энциклопедии. В “Литер[атурном] обозрении”, 1938 г., No. 3, обстоятельно написал о моем сб[орнике] “Стихи и песни” в рус[ском] переводе – К[орнелий] Зелинский. Писалось много о пьесе “Жизнь на колесах”, особенно в местах, где гастролировал театр “Ромэн”. Иностранная пресса уделяла внимание вскользь в связи с интересом к постановкам этого театра.

Состою членом профсоюза с 1918 г., в настоящее время при Гослитиздате.

В 1946-47 г.г. посещал лекторий, организованный Парторганизацией ССП и Советом Клуба писателей и прослушал циклы – стратегию и тактику большевистской партии, политику большевистской партии в области литературы и искусства и логику. В 1951-52 г.г., там же, в Клубе Литераторов, прослушал цикл по эстетике.

За последнее годы общественную работу веду при Домуправлении No. 34, и секретарем Комиссии Содействия укрупненных двух домов по Столешникову пер[еулку] утвержден президиумом Свердловск[ого] Райисполкома г. Москвы.

Вышеизложенное мною подтверждаю имеющимся при мне документами и публикациями в печати.

На территории врагов я никогда не был, связь с заграницей не имел и не имею, не примыкал к враждебным партиям и группировкам, родственников – врагов народа не имею, под судом и следствием не был и никогда не подвергался административным взысканиям.

10 мая 1952 года, г. Москва.

... [подпись] (А. Германо).

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Autobiography

I, German Alexander Vyacheslavovich (pen name *Germanó*) [1] was born on the 26th of May 1893 (according to the Julian calendar), near the city of Orel, in the village of Startsevo-Lepeshkino (in the passport – in the city of Orel). In the winter of that year, three months before my birth, my father [2], a plumber working on the construction of a city water pump on Polesskaya square, caught a cold and died of fulminant phthisis. My illiterate mother [3], left in poverty, went to work at the brewery. She also died in Orel, in 1919, at the age of 69. I was the youngest of 12 children. We, 5 children, survived, the rest died in childhood. In their youth, two of my brothers died – a pharmacist and a self-taught artist. No sisters remained alive either.

Thanks to the help of my sister [4], who was 23 years older than me, being eight years old, I was enrolled in a three-grade parish school, and since 1905 I studied in the four-grade urban school, but it was not possible to finish it: I fell ill with scarlet fever in an aggravated form and the complications of the disease still make themselves felt. Without finishing two classes I studied externally as an apothecary student, but failed the exam for the four grades of the gymnasium. Thanks to the support of my second sister, who married an agronomist, I entered the 4th grade of the secondary Commercial school in Svyatoshino, Kiev governorate, from where I graduated in 1915 and, in the same year, I enrolled as a student in the Kiev Commercial Institute college. Because of the meagre earnings (I was a tutor) I had to abandon the Institute in 1916. Having returned to Orel, I was freed from military service due to illness, I entered as a druggist in the pharmacy at the Bogoyavlenskaya square, where I worked until December 1917.

I've started to express my thoughts and observations at leisure, being at school. I wrote miniatures and short everyday sketches, some of which were included in the book *Past Lightnings*, Orel, 1921. Firstly, my works appeared in print in September 1915 in the book *Orlov's inhabitants: to the victims of war*. (The miniature "The Worm gnaws" and the short story "Ivan Talygo" had a positive review in the local press.)

From February to October 1918, I worked as an accountant in the Financial Department of Orel Executive Committee and, from October to December 1918, I worked as an instructor at the Orel Consumer Union.

In January 1919, I was mobilised into the Red Army and sent as a clerk to the Supply Department of the 4th infantry division, then appointed as a head of a material storage. In September, I was transferred to the position of a clerk at the ammunition storage Ruzhpulpark (Petrograd) [5] and soon appointed as its head. During my service in the 4th division I was a member of the Cultural and Educational Commission and, at

the suggestion of the military commissaire, I conducted interviews and arranged literary events in the Red Army units.

In November 1919, I worked in the Orel Provincial Military Committee as an assistant clerk and clerk at the Administration and Mobilisation Department, then as a Secretary of this committee.

In May 1921, after demobilisation, I devoted myself entirely to literary work. I became a permanent employee of the newspaper *Izvestiya Orlovskogo Gubkoma VKP(b) i Gubispolkoma* [News of Orel Gubkom RKP(b) and Gubispolkom], later renamed to *Krasnaya Pravda* [Red Truth], *Zemledelets i Rabochiy* [Peasant and Worker] and *Orlovskaya Pravda* [Orel's Truth]. I wrote the everyday life satires, essays and short stories under the pennames "A. Poludnev" and "I. Tinovoy". I took part in literary evening events, in one-day newspapers, like *Mayak* [Lighthouse] (weeks for help the schools), *Povolzhie* (of famine relief at the South Volga region), etc. I participated in collecting exhibits for the freshly organised I. Turgenev's Museum in Orel. I gathered creative works of school students and edited the school art and fiction magazine *Pervotsvet* [Primrose] for the Orel Department of Gosizdat. I proactively participated in the organisation and was the head of the first literary circle for workers and Red Army soldiers in the Center-club of the city of Orel, which attracted about 40 people.

From May to November 1921 I worked as head of the Studio Theatre at the Orel Agriculture battalion and as head of the Literary Department (LITO) in the Orel's GUBONO. Since June 17th, 1921, I temporarily replaced the position of inspector of the Club branch of the Educational Department of the Political Directorate of Orel Military District. On August 25th, I was appointed by GUBONO as a part-time Secretary of The Editorial Board of the Orel Provincial Publishing House.

In February 1921, my one-act play *Vnekoem uchrezhdenii* [In a Certain Institution] was included in the Evening, as part of their political satire, and was shown in the Orel City Theatre, and then in the Garrison club; this play, thanks to a positive review, was included by the Governorate Trade Union into the repertoire of the Week of the professional movement. In a short period of time it, according to GUBONO, was shown about 300 times in clubs of the Orel Province, not counting Kursk and other neighbouring governorates. The political Theatre of Orel Military District had published my play as a separate edition and the 2nd edition followed soon in the Orel Provincial Publishing House.

At the same time, my dramatic episode *The Customer* (a case from the Imperialistic war) was shown in the club at the Mobilization and Dispatching point and in the Red Army units. In the summer a miniature *A Poet of Mooing* was shown (in the Garden of the Orel Provincial Military Committee) and a 2-act play *Not a dream* was shown (in the Garden of the United Club of Firemen Organisations), but the two last small plays were not successful.

From November of 1921 I was head of the Department 'In the Province' of the newspaper *Orlovskaya Pravda*. I had also a part-time job in the Orel Provincial Russian Telegraph Agency (ROSTA). I wrote for the agency a scene titled *One Morning in the Editor's Office*, intended for the open stage. In June 1922, after a two-month break due to illness, I was

appointed to the position of an Executive Releasing Editor of the newspaper *Orlovskaya Pravda*, taking also the position of Head of its Department 'Peasant Life'. On January 15th, 1924, by the agreement of the editorship of the newspaper *Orlovskaya Pravda*, I moved to the Publishing House *Krasnaya kniga* [Red Book] (in the city of Orel) to take the position of Executive Secretary of its Publishing Department. On March 1st, 1925, I was released due to a transition to an elected position in the trade unions' structure: Executive Secretary of the Section of press workers in Orel, which I occupied from 25 January to 24 September 1925. From October 1st, 1925, I was again involved in editing of the newspaper *Orlovskaya Pravda* to the position of head of its Local department. On March 30, 1926, at the moment of re-organisation of the editorial staff, I expressed a desire to resign in connection with my move to Moscow.

Working in *Orel's Truth*, I collaborated in the local Komsomol newspaper *Pravda Molodezhi* (Truth of the Youth), and I put a number of my short stories there. They were reprinted in the Voronezh newspaper *Komsomolets* (A Member of Komsomol) and other youth provincial newspapers and published in a separate collection titled *In a New Way* in Moscow's publishing house *Molodaya Gvardiya* (Young Guard), in 1925. [...]

In the last years of my stay in Orel, I was a member of the Children's Commission at the publisher *Krasnaya kniga* (Red book), (my book for children *Listened – Decided*) and participated in the same publishing house in the development and preparation of *Books for Reading* for the 1st grade on the basis of local material; in 1922 I was the initiator and a member of the Editorial Board of the first volume of compiled works of proletarian poets and writers in the Orel region; I actively participated and recited my works for the public in the Literary Section of the Society of Local Lore, in Turgenev Literary Society, in the literary group *Yar* (Steep Shore) at the Komsomol newspaper, I participated in the initiative of the literary group "Black earth" and in the editing the magazine of its group, *Noviy put'* (New Way), 1925.

During this period, I was a delegate from the Editorial Board of the newspaper *Orlovskaya Pravda* to the 1st Orel Governorate Congress of worker correspondents; a delegate of the 2nd Orel Governorate Meeting of worker, peasant, military correspondents of the newspapers *Orlovskaya Pravda* and *Nasha derevnya* [Our Village]; a delegate of the 7th Orel Provincial Congress of the Educators' Union and a delegate of the Orel Governorate Conference of the press workers. In all cases, I had a decisive voice.

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In May 1926, I, a "provincial classic", who did not know the harsh criticism, went, full of bright hopes, to Moscow. In my portfolio, there were dozens of new and newly reworked stories, which, immediately after my arrival, I distributed among the publishers, and received one answer: "come back in a week or two". That term passed – and alas! something does not fit the theme of the journal, other does not fit to the season, and something else is generally worth nothing. One story was accepted but printed after a year (*Derevenskiy bezbozhnik* [The Village Atheist]). Countrymen said, "Well, Sasha, prepare

your feet and head back home!” What discouraged me was the lack of money and shelter. In search of a permanent job, I was contracted to fill in the forms of postal orders for periodicals – 0.5 kopeikas for 1 form. I found a room to rent on the 20th mile from Belorusskiy railway station (now it calls Bakovka) and began to fill two or three hundred forms a day. Somehow, someone from the Muscovites suggested that I apply to the All-Russian Union of Gypsies, as they needed an organiser of cultural events and publications in the Gypsy language.

On June 1, 1926, I was appointed at the Gypsy Union for the job of editing and publishing. This period of time was organisational in all respects for the people without alphabet. The Communist Party and the Soviet Government developed measures to facilitate the transition of nomadic Gypsies to a settled way of life. In order to conduct explanatory work, it was necessary to have literature in the native language of the Gypsies, who had suffered oppression and persecution during the Tsarist years and were still in the power of the tabor's kulaks, and who treated with distrust the attempts to attract them into the working life under the conditions of equal rights. It was necessary to discredit among the wandering Gypsies homegrown legends made up by the bourgeoisie about the Gypsy origin and history, which praised their eternal isolation and hostility towards their neighbouring cultural peoples.

The task of organising the Gypsy writing required the urgent creation of an alphabet and the design of the basics of a grammar. Due to the dispersion of articles about Gypsies in many magazines and newspapers, forgotten or little known, it was difficult to study their economy, way of life, customs, remnants, beliefs, etc. I decided to collect literature about Gypsies, if possible, everything that was published in the past in the Russian press. After three years of work in the Lenin Library, the Glavnauka in Narkompros approved and published in the Tsentrizdat, in 1930, my *Bibliography of Gypsies* (Index of books and articles from 1780 to 1930, Preface by prof. M. V. Sergievskiy) [6].

Along with the collection and study of printed sources, I undertook a collection of nomadic folklore and a study of the Gypsy language orally (by means of voice). Having reincarnated in a kind of Aleko [7], I spent weeks in the *tabor*. All this has led to the fact that I have freely mastered the language and began to write poetry and prose like a Gypsy, versatile and familiarised with the life and hopes of nomadic Gypsies and with the parasitism (*tsyganshchina*) of the Gypsy choirs in the capital city.

I stopped at this explanation in order to avoid further questions: a non-Gypsy or a Gypsy? Who am I? I've learned the language (I know the Northern and Southern dialects) [8] and the soul of the Gypsies because otherwise I would not be able to conduct political and educational work among nomads by pictorial artistic means. Have I achieved this goal? – it is not my task to assess my own published works.

On August 23, 1926, at the meeting of the Editing-Publishing Board at the All-Russian Union of Gypsies I was entrusted to work on the question about a periodical publication in Gypsy language and, in October, after my appointment as a Secretary of the Editorial Board, I was ordered to prepare the first issue of the magazine *Romany zorya*. This is the

world's first journal printed in the Gypsy language, it was released in November 1927, and contained my first experience in the Gypsy language – the story *Pyvopo* (A Small Wolf).

While working among the Gypsies, I joined a literature group of beginner writers *Rabochaya vesna* (Workers' Spring), where in September of 1928 I was elected an Executive Secretary. In October of the same year I was accepted as a member of the All-Union Society of the Proletarian Writers *Kuznitsa* (The Forge). [...] In February 1929, I organised the Gypsy literature group *Romengiro Lav* (Word of Gypsies) and became its Secretary-Manager. In 1929-30 I've learned the methodology of literary studies, theoretical poetics, Russian literature of the 19th century and attended the prose workshop in the Literary Workshops organised by *Kuznitsa*, where, by the way, I was allocated by the praepostor of the students' collective. Head of the training department was F. V. Gladkov. For the first time, I have made the disclosure of the evil essence of *Tsyganshchina* in November 1929 at the Dispute 'Gypsy art and the fight against *Tsyganshchina*' in the House of Arts. I had many speeches on the fight against *Tsyganshchina* in the fiction literature, music and everyday life in the Central Gypsy Club *Loly Čergen* (Red Star), a member of which I was since 1927.

Since 1928 I wrote in the Russian press about Gypsies. Articles and essays in *Komsomolskaya Pravda* (Komsomol's Truth), in *Rabochaya Gazeta* (Workers' Newspaper), *Molodoy Leninets* (Young Leninist), *Krestyanskaya Gazeta* (Peasants' Newspaper), *Prosveshchenie Natsionalnostey* (Education of Nationalities), *Natsionalnaya Kniga* (National Book), *Bezbozhnik* (Atheist), *Vokrug Sveta* (Around the World), etc. Maxim Gorky expressed his opinion about my essay 'Gypsies' in the collective book *Nasha zhizn'* (Our life): 'interesting and new' (*Zhurnal dlya Vsekh* (Journal for All), 1929, No. 12).

In December 1928, I was awarded the prize in the contest of the magazine *Vsemirnyy Sledopit* (World's Pathfinder) for the story *Besschastnye miriklya* (Unlucky Necklace), published in this magazine (1929, No. 1). In 1930, the Publishing House *Nedra* (Subsoil) published my volume *Gypsy Stories*, which was recommended for libraries in the *Recommendation Bulletin* of the Narkompros (1930, No. 34); and Uchpedgiz, in 1931, published a collection of my essays *Gypsies Yesterday and Today*.

In 1930, and until the spring of 1931, I conducted cultural work in the manufactory artel *Cygpishcheprom*. Until August 1932, I was the Executive Secretary and part-time Technical Editor of the Gypsy Journal *Nevo drom* (New Way) in the publishing house Tsentrizdat, then Uchpedgiz. Since 1932, I was an external editor of GIKhL, Uchpedgiz, *Molodaya Gvardiya*, Antireligious Publisher, *Sovetskoe Zakonodatelstvo* (Soviet Legislation), as well as a reviewer for these publishers and other: Detgiz, Profizdat, Selkhozgiz, Medgiz. At the same time, I took a full-time position of editor in the National Sector of the Goslitizdat for the production of literature in the national languages, where I worked from November 1934 to December 1938.

In these years I published, as separate editions, the following materials in the Gypsy language: *Нэво джиибэн* (New Life), essays, Tsentrizdat, 1929; *Атасятуно бурмистро* (Yesterday's Leader), story, Tsentrizdat 1930; *Лэс кхардэ рувэса и ваврэ роспхэныбэна*

(His Name Was Small Wolf and Other Stories), GIKhL, 1933; *Джяна нэвэ рома* (New Gypsies Coming), Profizdat, 1933; *Серёга Лагуно* (co-authored with the Gypsy poet Olga Pankova), Molodaya Gvardiya, 1933; *Ганка Чямба и ваврэ роспхэныбэна* (Ganka Chamba and Other Stories), Goslitizdat, 1935.

At the suggestion of the asset of the Moscow Gypsies, in connection with the fight against *Tsyganshchina*, I wrote a number of songs that are put to music, as well as translated from Russian revolutionary and modern mass songs for the Central Gypsy Club, part of which (15 titles) entered the songbook *Масова гуля* (Mass Songs), Muzgiz, 1934. I have translated the anthem *International* into the Gypsy language (at the beginning I tried to translate it with the poet M. Bezlyudskiy), it was published in the songbook *Пандж масова гуля* (Five mass songs), Muzgiz, 1932. To the 12th anniversary of the Red Army my song in Gypsy language was published in the songbook *Red Army Songs of the peoples of the USSR*, Muzgiz, 1933. I wrote song lyrics in the Gypsy language for the All-Russian Concert Tours Association (employment contract of January 14th, 1940).

By the way, I will report briefly about my poetic experiments in Gypsy language. I have never tried to write poetry in Russian. When I wrote the musical play *Life on wheels*, I needed lyrics in the Gypsy language. I offered to write them to Gypsy poets, but they did not satisfy the director-producer (It also happened with poetic examples in my *Книга для чтения* (Book for reading), for the 1st school grade). Having first experienced difficulties in mastering the poetic language of the Gypsies, I began in 1931 to write poetry, as well as to translate from Russian classics and modern poets. The poems were published in the Gypsy journal *Nevo drom*. They went out in separate collections: *Лолэ яга* (Red Lights), GIKhL, 1934; *Яв прэ стрэга* (Be on Guard), Molodaya Gvardiya, 1934; *Гуля* (Poems), Goslitizdat, 1935; *Роспхэныбэна дрэ гуля* (Three Poems) [9], Goslitizdat, 1937; *Нэвэ гуля* (New Poems) and *Theatre play in verses*, Goslitizdat, 1938. In 1939 I have translated for the Theatre Romen – *Mozart and Salieri* and *The Miserly Knight* by A. Pushkin.

The Russian translations of my poems were printed in the collection *Writers of the USSR: To the Great October*, GIKhL, 1932; collection of *Stalin's Constitution in the Poetry of the Peoples of the USSR*, Goslitizdat, 1937; collection *Lenin and Stalin in the Poetry of the Peoples of the USSR*, Goslitizdat, 1938; collection of *Stalin in the Art Works of the USSR Peoples*, Orel, 1939; in the Moscow newspapers and magazines – *Vechernyaya Moskva* [Evening Moscow], *Legkaya Industriya* [Light Industry], *Krestyanka* [Peasant Woman], etc., in the province media: Kursk's *Molodaya Gvardiya* [The Youth Guard], *Orelskaya Pravda* [The Orel Truth], *Belgorodskaya Pravda* [The Belgorod Truth], etc.

I published, in separate editions in Russian, my *Стуху и нечу* (Poems and Songs), Goslitizdat, 1937, and a collection of *Цыганские стуху* (Gypsy Poems) in the Publishing house of the Regional Council of the Toilers' Deputies, Orel, 1941, whose editor was Vasiliy Kazin. All copies were completely destroyed in the time of the occupation by the German-Fascist hordes in the Orel Printing House *Trud* (Labour) [10].

Since 1930, my poems (as well as stories, essays, articles and fairy tales) were translated into the languages of the peoples of the USSR and foreign languages: Ukrainian,

Belarusian, Armenian, Tatar, Jewish, Lithuanian, English, French, German (in the translation by E. B. G. Weinert); perhaps in other languages too, but I have no information.

In September 1930, along with Ivan Rom-Lebedev (a member of the Union of the Soviet Writers [11]), and others, I participated in the initiative group of five persons on the organisation of the Gypsy theatre, and in October of that same year, as a representative of the Editorial Board of *Nevo drom*, I was a member of the Organizing Committee of the Narkompros for the creation of the State Gypsy Theatre-studio. On December 6th (1930), I spoke on the report of I. Rom-Lebedev at the debate *On the Ways of Development of Indo-Roma Art* [12] in the Theo-club.

On December 21st, 1931, my play *Джибэн прэ роты* (Life on Wheels) has opened the Moscow State Gypsy Theatre Romen. On September 5th, 1935, this play was shown at the first Theatre Festival, and, as the newspaper *Pravda* wrote: "The Play *Life on Wheels* caused a stormy approval of the audience". It was performed in the Theatre Romen over 1200 times, having existed on its stage until 1939. My second play, *Машикур яга* (Between the Fires), was staged by the Theatre Romen on May 22, 1932; it was devoted to the civil war. In the other Gypsy theatre – in the Mobile one [13], in the autumn of 1932 was presented my play *Палага первая* (Palaga the first). It is about the fight against the class enemy – the Gypsy kulak. All these plays were published by Tsentrizdat, *Teatro Romano* (Gypsy Theatre), in 1932.

Under the contract with the Radio Committee I wrote a literary-musical installation *Tsygany* (Gypsies), which was broadcast on April 24th, 1940, by the Radio; on February 29th of that year my *Poems*, in Russian translation, were published, and, on July 4th – my *Gypsy Tales*.

Gypsy tales, the recording of which I began in 1926, I started to publish in 1928 in the journals *Ekran* [Screen], *Chitatel' i pisatel'* [Reader and Writer], *30 dney* [30 days], *Bezbozhnik* [Atheist], *Derevenskiy bezbozhnik* [Village Atheist], *Druzhba narodov* [Friendship of Peoples], etc. Now I have prepared for publication a collection of *Gypsy Tales* for 8 printing sheets.

Since the first steps of the Gypsy writing, I was the editor of almost all the separate editions of poetry and prose of novice writers, as well as their translations: Pushkin – *Gypsies*, *The Daughter of the Commandant*, *Dubrovskiy*, etc., L. Tolstoy, M. Gorky, A. Chekhov, V. Korolenko, P. Mérimée – *Carmen*, etc., and the Soviet writers – Mikhail Sholokhov, V. Stavski, A. Novikov-Priboy, V. Bakhmetyev, N. Lyashko, B. Zhitkov and others in the Goslitizdat and Detgiz publishing houses.

In 1931, I discovered in Moscow and its provinces 12 novice Gypsy poets, whom I invited to participate in the first *Almanac of Gypsy Poets*, in Tsentrizdat, under my editorship. Also, I edited for publication the other *Gypsy Almanac*, Goslitizdat, 1934.

In addition to my work on fiction literature, I have undertaken the preparation of stable textbooks for Gypsy schools: *For Learning*, 1932; *To Literate Children*, 1932; *Forward to Work*, 1932; *Textbook of Gypsy Language*, 1934; *Readings on Literature*, 1934; *Book for Reading* – 1st and 2nd parts, 1932; *Textbook of Gypsy Language*, 1937 (2nd ed. revised); *Book for Reading* – 1st part, 1937 (2nd ed. revised), etc.

In addition, I edited or translated a number of textbooks and books on various issues – social and political, agricultural, antireligious, and other books in the publications of Partizdat, Tsentrizdat, Uchpedgiz, Detgiz, and so on.

As a representative of the Gypsy media, I took an active part in public work among Gypsy workers in ON VTsIK, in Narkompros, in Narkomzem, in Vsekopromsovet, in the Interdepartmental Commission of National Minorities under the Moscow Council, on the organisation of Gypsy kolkhozes, cooperative-productive artels, schools, basic educational institutions and other measures for the employment of nomadic Gypsies. As a Board Member of the Central Gypsy Club *Loly Čergen*, I participated in the library events, in the promotion of the Gypsy books (helping Kogiz), conducted juridical consultations on housing and other issues through personal contact and correspondence. I was a member of the Artistic Council at the Gypsy Theatre. In 1940 I was elected Secretary of the Bureau of the freshly organised Gypsy section at SSP.

For personal acquaintance with the conditions and needs of the newly-settled Gypsies and for the purpose of conducting political-educational work among them, I travelled to the periphery: the kolkhoz *Trud Romen* (Gypsy Labour) in the Gypsy Village Council in Mineralnye Vody district; the kolkhozes *Octyabr'* (October) and *Svoboda* (Freedom) of the Smolensk region; the factory *Pervaya petiletka* (1st Five-year Plan) of Metizsoyuz, Zagorsk; Moscow region (villages Krupino, Pavlovo-Posadskoye), etc.

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In the Great Patriotic War, from the first day to the end, I was the head of the Emergency-restore unit of the 33rd House Management of Sverdlovskiy ROND (District's People's Guard Team) in Moscow, I was repeatedly appointed the responsible duty in the Presidium of Union Soviet Writers. In July 1941 I was sent on courses to improve knowledge of the commanding staff of MPVO (Moscow Antiaircraft Defense) in Sverdlovskiy district, which I passed in two months, practically fitting in my duty nights at the MPVO (Local Air Defense) courses.

During the war, I worked in the Information Bureau, wrote a cycle of poems about the participation of Gypsies in partisan teams, I was reading my poems and tales in the Red Army units and hospitals (Guchkovo, Lyublino, Chukhlinka, etc. in the Moscow region). In the spring of 1942, I worked in the radio centre for the processing of letters from the fronts of the Patriotic War for radio transmission. In July of that year my creative evening took place in the folklore section at the SSP (Gypsy Tales). In 1943, there was an interest in war invalids who lost their sight on the battlefield. At the suggestion of the All-Union Society for the Blind, I made a research and wrote a number of essays for media, based on the blind witnesses' words about the Braille system (my small article *Return to Life*, about blind persons, was published in the newspaper *Moskovskiy Bolshevik* (Moscow Bolshevik), October 20, 1943).

In the winter of 1942, I worked on the novel *Notes of the Russian Warrior* – which was told by a war participant, a student of the mining institute. (This work was left unfinished,

5 printing sheets were written). My manuscript, featured in 12 printing sheets, *Цыгане в русской художественной литературе (От Державина до Блока)* (Gypsies in Russian Literature: From Derzhavin to Block) also remained unfinished. In 1944, I prepared for publication the *Основы цыганского языка* (Basics of the Gypsy Language), a short guide for teaching Gypsy language in the elementary presentation, 5 printing sheets. I put in a systematic order and an addition to the *Bibliography of Gypsies* (published in 1930), 6 printing sheets [14].

In 1945, I wrote a review of *Fascism and Gypsies during World War II*, 1 printing sheet. In 1946, at the order of VOKS, the other work was done together with Ivan Rom-Lebedev – *A Brief History of Soviet Gypsies*, 3 printing sheets. In 1947, under a contract with the Orel Regional Publishing House, I presented in co-authorship with the member of the SSP V. G. Cherevko, the collection *Comrade Innokenty* (about I. F. Dubrovinskiy), 3 ½ printing sheets; For the 800th anniversary of Moscow, under a contract with the Theatre Romen from July 20th, 1947, I have written *A Brief History of State Gypsy Theatre*, 1 ½ printing sheets; by agreement with VOKS, I prepared for abroad, between December 1947 – January 1948, the work *Gypsies of Soviet Union*, 3 printing sheets. On the occasion of the 30th anniversary of Soviet authority, I wrote an article *Gypsy Theatre* for the book *Soviet Theatre*, 1 printing sheet; in 1946 – for the foreign exhibition *Soviet Book*, I co-authored with V. Cherevko – *Laureates in Fiction Literature*, a collection of biographical critical annotations, 8 printing sheets. All manuscripts were approved and accepted by VOKS [15].

Between 1945 and 1948, I began the work and still gather the material on the Orel region in the libraries and archives of Moscow – *History of Orel Region, On History of Provincial Shows and Local Interests*; City of Orel and its Inhabitants – half documentary, half fictional essays. I finished draft memoirs of the recovery period in the Orel governorate – *From the Notebook of Local Writer*, about 5 printing sheets. For the collection of material, between 1949-1950, I visited Orel, Mtsensk, Zmievka and other Orel region areas. In Orel, on December 8th, 1949, I read my poetry in the Orel Regional Radio Committee. I published some works in *Orlovskaya Pravda* in 1949-1950.

About my work for 1949-1951 herewith I present a creative report in the playwrighters section of SSP.

This year, together with comrades F. D. Zakharkin and I. N. Chinenov I finished *Essays on History of Orel's Party Organisation* (from the 1890s to 1917 to 1917 included) under a contract with Orel Regional Publishers, 25 printing sheets.

Currently, by agreement with the State Moscow Gypsy Theatre Romen, I am writing a 3-act play *Lantsov and Others* (the title is tentative).

There were no detailed critical articles about my art work. This is perhaps due to the lack of literary scholars who know the Gypsy language, with the exception of professor-linguist M. V. Sergievskiy, who published, on the pages of the Gypsy magazine, a general assessment of the young Gypsy fiction literature. Brief information about my work was published in the Great Soviet Encyclopedia. In *Literaturnoe Obozrenie* (Literature Review), 1938 No. 3, K. Zelinskiy wrote in detail about my Russian translation book of

Poems and Songs. The media has written more about the play *Life on Wheels*, especially in places where Theatre Romen toured. The foreign press paid some attention in connection with the interest manifested in the plays of this theatre.

I have been a member of the trade union since 1918, now at the Goslitizdat.

In 1946-47, I attended lecture courses organised by the Communist Party organisation of the SSP and the Council of the Writers Club and listened to the cycles of lectures – on the strategy and tactics of the Bolsheviks Party, the Bolsheviks policy in literature and art, and logic. In 1951-52, at the same location, in the Writers Club, I listened to a cycle of lectures on aesthetics.

In recent years, I lead social work at the House Management No. 34, and I am the Secretary of the Commission of Assistance in two enlarged houses on Stoleshnikov lane; in this function, I am approved by the Presidium of Sverdlovsk district's Executive Committee of Moscow.

I confirm the above with the documents available to me and publications in the press.

I have never been on the territory of the enemy, I have never had and do not have any connection abroad, I did not join hostile parties and groups, I have no relatives – enemies of the people, I was not under trial and investigation and was never subjected to administrative penalties.

May 10th, 1952. City of Moscow.

... [signature] (A. Germano).

Notes

1. Alexander Vyacheslavovich German (official name) uses his family name, written in the Romani language version, as a creative pen-name (Germanó).
2. In another, earlier autobiographical note "Briefly about myself" from 1934 (OGMLT, f. 29, op. 1, d. 1364, l. 1-4), more information is available on Alexander Germano's family. His father Vaclav Germann (in the Russian version Vyacheslav Vyacheslavovich German), was of Lutheran religion, born in Hořovice (at that time in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, today in the Czech Republic). As a young man he enrolled in a mechanic workshop where he trained as a locksmith. He often changed jobs, and so ended up in Russian Empire, where he settled permanently in Orel.
3. Alexander Germano's mother, Karolina German (her family name before marriage was Knoutek) was born in 1850 also in Hořovice and was Catholic. She died in 1919 at the age of 69.
4. The sister of Alexander Germano's was Anna German (her husband's surname was Hildenbrandt).
5. St Petersburg, founded in 1703, was renamed Petrograd in 1914, Leningrad in 1924, and since 1991 its original name has been restored.
6. Герман А. В. (1930). *Библиография о цыганах. Указатель книг и статей с 1780 г. по 1930 г.* Москва: Центриздат.
7. Aleko – the name of a hero in A. Pushkin's poem *Gypsies*; Aleko was a non-Gypsy who lived in a Gypsy tabor.
8. These are the so-called Northern (used by *Ruska Roma*) and Southern (used by *Servi*) dialects of Romani language (see Сергиевский & Баранников, 1938).
9. Alexander German translated the work *Роспхэныбэна дрэ гуля* as 'Three Poems'. A more correct translation will be 'Tales in Poems'.
10. Only two copies of this book (Германо, 1941) are saved in Russian State Library, one of them with pencil editorial notes, probably made by Alexander German.

11. Ivan Rom-Lebedev had become a member of the Union of the Soviet Writers in 1944.
12. The first proposal for the name of the Gypsy Theatre Romen was 'Indo-Roma Theatre' (Бессонов, 2013, p. 454; cf. above), and this is probably the only case of the official use, for a short period of time, of the designation which includes the term 'Roma' instead of 'Gypsy' in Russian language, in the early USSR.
13. A Mobile Gypsy Theatre (or the Theatre of Small Genres) was created in 1930 and headed by Yevdokiya Orlova (Bessonov, 2016, p. 144).
14. This is reference to the unpublished manuscript: *Дополнение к библиографии о цыганах* (Additions to Bibliography on Gypsies),
15. It is not known why all these manuscripts were not published, although they were previously agreed upon and accepted.

Source: OGMLT, f. 29, op. 1, d. 156, l. 1-80б.

Prepared for publication by Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov.

Translated by Viktor Shapoval.

12.5.7 *Ivan Tokmakov*

Н. А. Панков

Памяти Ивана Петровича Токмакова

Есть растения, семена которых развиваются в любой почве, куда бы их не закинула стихия. На культурной почве их, как сорное, выпалывают, на заброшенной – они одиноко цветут.

Подобно этим растениям и цыганская народность, покинувшая по не совсем еще ясным причинам свою родину – Индию, проявляет всюду свою жизнеспособность, но редко где бывает оставлена в покое и не подвергается жестокому выкорчевыванию.

Цыганы везде и всюду живут замкнутым племенем как бы с охранительной формулой на своем знамени: "Ром ромеса, гаджэ гаджеса" (цыган цыганом, чужой всегда будет чужим). Она не давала посторонним проникнуть в шатер, но самого цыгана давила и мешала росту, как мешает росту ноги колодка-башмак китайской женщины. Впервые цыганы – объединенные между собою общностью языка и остатками своей духовной культуры, пусть еще не приведенной в стройную систему определенного мировоззрения – предстают в СССР как народность, где им оказывается всесторонняя помощь, для того чтобы войти в трудовую семью всех народов СССР.

Здесь впервые в истории появляется у цыган общественная мысль и общественная жизнь.

Только здесь в результате завоеваний революции, у цыган начал развиваться хрупкий росток стремления к братскому общению со всеми народами.

Правда, с некоторым опозданием, а именно с 1926 года, цыганы на основе оседлости и труда, медленно и подчас болезненно создают свою хозяйственную культурную и общественную жизнь.

Одним из больших сторонников и страстных агитаторов среди цыган за жизнь на этих началах был Иван Петрович Токмаков.

И. П. Токмаков – цыган по отцу и матери – рос и складывался в рабочем поселке, в рабочей среде. Родители его рано погибли. Они жили в бывшем Екатеринбурге, куда цыганы в то время вряд ли попадали по доброй воле. В воспоминаниях своих он никогда не касался этого пункта. Должно быть ничего отрадного не было в воспоминаниях об этой поре. После смерти родителей он очутился на попечении своей старшей сестры Елены Петровны Токмаковой ставшей ему единственным оплотом.

Сестра его не имела никаких возможностей для продолжения кочевья – не было ни лошади, ни хозяина – цыгана и поэтому стала рабочей на водочном заводе, жила среди русских рабочих и это окружение оказывало влияние и на юношу Токмакова.

Шатры были вблизи него, но они стали чужды ему, и если что мешало и не позволяло ему совсем отойти от шатра, так это преследования и гонения выпадавшие на долю цыган и возмущавшие душу Ивана Петровича.

Грязь, неуютность шатра, невежество и темнота его обитателей отталкивали его. Досадно и смешно ему было их детское бахвальство своим довольством и благополучием, по существу жалким и убогим. Но яркость и динамичность он признавал за цыганами (он сам был ярким и динамичным) и не был к ним равнодушен.

Когда он подросток он не пошел в батраки к цыганам (как бы должно было быть в его положении – в положении безлошадного сироты) – плести чужим коням хвосты за кусок хлеба с попреками, а поступил на завод и стал котельщиком.

В 1918 году Ив. П. Токмаков вступил в большевистскую партию и был ее членом до конца своих дней. [* По рассказу его фронтового товарища, будучи в окружении и видя, что они будут взяты в плен, члены партии зарыли свои партбилеты в землю; Иван Петрович оставил его при себе.]

Ив. П. Токмаков явился в Москву, чтоб учиться в Свердловском Университете; в этом же году получил место инструктором в Отделе Национальностей ВЦИКа по работе среди цыган. Любопытно: самые незначительные события в цыганском мире получают (правда чаще преувеличенное и искаженное) распространение по всему кочевью с быстротой радио, благодаря постоянному передвижению цыган. Так и тот факт, что цыган – партиец работает во ВЦИКе, без особого освещения его в печати, скоро стал общеизвестным фактом для цыган, а во ВЦИКе стали то и дело появляться цыганы-ходоки по самым разнородным вопросам, и имя Токмакова, как по его личным положительным качествам, так и в связи с его работою в этом высокоавторитетном учреждении, стало пользоваться среди цыган большим и заслуженным почетом.

Токмаков сейчас же принялся за организацию колхозов. Правда, и до него возникали колхозы, но это было нечто стихийное и по составу и по организации самих хозяйств; чаще всего эти колхозы после получения помощи или раздела урожая вскоре разваливались, оставляя по себе курьезную легенду. Токмаков всячески изучал каждого члена колхоза, выковывывал актив в каждом колхозе, организовывал

слеты и съезды, привлекал внимание к работе цыганских колхозов местных властей и общественности, и колхозы стали расти не только численно, но и качественно. В 1938 году по СССР насчитывалось уже 52 колхоза. Цыганские колхозы, как, например, в Смоленской области, на Северном Кавказе, стали занимать первые места в районах и областях как по организации хозяйств, так и по разнообразным социальным соревнованиям, и это было обусловлено горячим и беззаветным участием Ивана Петровича.

Конечно, численность цыганских колхозов незначительна по сравнению с количеством цыган, не вовлеченных в коллективный труд. Но это, как и неудачи в другом, мучительном и для него, и для всей передовой части цыган, вопросе – вопросе создания цыганской газеты и цыганского района – есть результат недопонимания на местах и подчас противодействия лиц, которые вопреки всей законности и своевременности для осуществления этих назревших вопросов, всячески противодействовали осуществлению назревших желаний цыган. Лица препятствовавшие решению этих назревших вопросов, и которые позже были разоблачены как враги народа.

В конце концов все получило бы свое удовлетворение, если бы не бедствие постигшее нашу страну в 1941 году. фашисты тяжелой пятой пытались раздавить наш народ и его завоевания.

На защиту своего отечества поднялась все трудящиеся Союза. И цыгане – на протяжении всей истории нигде не получавшие справедливого решения своей судьбы и везде и всюду избегавшее военной службы и участия в войнах, прибегая к многочисленным способам симуляции и членовредительства, здесь широкой волной пошли в качестве рядовых и в качестве командного состава, по мобилизации и добровольно. Эта война не мало числит среди цыган истинных героев, самоотверженно несущих свою жизнь на борьбу с врагом. Ведь цыгане впервые после тысячелетнего скитальчества приобрели в СССР истинную родину. Здесь их колхозы, здесь школы, в которых они уже получили среднее и где они получают высшее образование. Поэтому эта война у цыган приняла характер кровного дела, и цыгане выступили в ней и как защитники, и как мстители за разоряемые цыг[анские] хозяйства, цыг[анские] культурные учреждения, за подло растерзанных родных – растерзанных за то, что они были коммунистами, комсомольцами или за то, что они цыгане.

Иван Петрович Токмаков с первых же дней [войны] вступает добровольцем в ряды Сов[етской] Армии. Для него не важно, что ему шел шестой десяток, что у него одышка, пошаливало сердце, наконец, что у него броня с завода, где он работал начальником цеха – страна в опасности, цыганские колхозы Смоленщины с их довольством под мерзкой пятой.

Разрушается юная и нежная, как молодая поросль, оседлость скитальца-народа, впервые вставшего на путь оседлости и труда, и он не мог усидеть в тылу. 15-го марта 1942 г. он был убит под Ельней. Война отняла у цыган человека, чье сердце жило и билось всецело вопросами цыганской народности.

Сейчас, когда все наши молодые хозяйства, бывшие в зоне военных действий, разбиты и раздавлены, когда буквально все лучшее и передовое перевешано и уничтожено, а остатки снова, как прежде, развеяны по необъятным весям, когда нужно снова начинать все сызнова, смерть Токмакова ощущается острой болью.

Если в сильных и крупных народностях подобные утраты встречаются с горечью, то для нашей народности эта утрата катастрофична, и вырывается вопль проклятия за его смерть и за так много ненужных смертей. В анналах героев записаны [так-же] славные имена цыган как Вишняковы, Сельницкие, Ищенко и др.

[Примечание: Во время написания этих строк Н. А. Панков еще не знал подробности гибели И. П. Токмакова. Позже от одного из его товарищей по партизанскому отряду стало известно, что Токмаков попал в немецкий плен, организовал побег, партизанил, снова попал в плен и во время подготовки нового побега был кем-то выдан и замучен пытками. Умирая, он просил товарища разыскать в Москве его жену Лену и брата Колю. Брата у него не было, поэтому [его] жена решила, что он имел ввиду Николая Панкова.]

[Примечание]: Этот материал получен от Янины Степановны Панковой. Его записал Николай Александрович Панков.

... [подпись] (Н. Саткевич). 1964 г.

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N. A. Pankov.

In Memory of Ivan Petrovich Tokmakov

There are plants whose seeds develop in any soil, wherever they are thrown by fate. In the cultured soil, they, as a weed, are torn away, in the desert soil, they are blooming lonely. Like these plants, Gypsy people, who left their homeland – India, for not yet clear reasons, shows everywhere its vitality, but rarely is this people left alone and is not subjected to brutal uprooting.

The Gypsies everywhere used to live as a closed tribe, hidden under a protective formula on its banner: "*Rom Romesa, Gadžo Gadžesa*" (a Gypsy with the Gypsies, a foreigner will always be a foreigner) [1]. This motto did not allow outsiders to enter the tent, but the Gypsy himself was pressed with it and was not allowed to grow, much as the narrow shoe of a Chinese woman that does not allow the foot to grow. For the first time the Gypsies – united themselves through a common language and the remnants of their spiritual culture, even if not yet brought into a coherent worldview system – started to shape themselves as a nation in the USSR, where they have the full support to enter the working family of the peoples of the USSR.

Here, for the first time in history, Gypsies developed a social thought and social life.

Only here, as a result of the conquests of the revolution, the Gypsies began to develop a fragile growth of the desire for fraternal communication with all peoples.

However, with some delay, namely since 1926, the Gypsies, based on their settlement and labour, slowly and sometimes painfully created their economic, cultural and social life.

One of the big supporters and passionate agitators among Gypsies, promoting life on these new principles, was Ivan Petrovich Tokmakov.

Ivan Petrovich Tokmakov – a son of Gypsy father and mother – grew up and developed in the workers' settlement, in the working environment. His parents died early. They lived in the former Yekaterinburg, where Gypsies at that time hardly got by their own choice [2].

In his memoirs, he never touched this point. There must have been nothing happy in the memory of that time. After the death of his parents, he found himself in the care of his older sister Elena Petrovna Tokmakova, who became his only stronghold.

His sister did not have any opportunities to continue the nomadic life – she had no horse, no Gypsy husband, and therefore she became a worker at the vodka factory, lived among Russian workers and this environment had an impact on the young Tokmakov.

The tents were close to him, but they became alien to him, and the only thing that did not allow him to completely leave and forget the tent, was the harassment and persecution awaiting Gypsies anywhere, which was an insult to the soul of Ivan Petrovich.

The dirt and uneasiness of the tent life, the ignorance and illiteracy of its inhabitants repelled him. Their childish bragging about their life satisfaction and well-being, basically miserable, and poor, was annoying and funny to him. But the brightness and dynamism of their lives, which he recognised among Gypsies (as he was bright and dynamic himself), did not leave him indifferent.

When he grew up he did not go to work as one hired by the Gypsies (as his position was supposed to be, being a horseless orphan) – to weave, with reproaches, someone's horse tails for a piece of bread, but instead he entered the factory and became a boilermaker.

In 1918 [3], I. P. Tokmakov joined the Bolshevik Party and was its member until the end of his days. [* According to the story of his front-line comrade, being surrounded and seeing that they will be taken prisoners, the party members buried their party membership identity cards in the ground; Ivan Petrovich left his card with him.] [4]

In 1932 [5] Ivan P. Tokmakov came to Moscow to study at Sverdlov University [6]; in the same year, he was appointed an instructor in ON TsIK, for work among Gypsies.

Curious: the most minor events in the Gypsy world get (though often exaggerated and distorted) spread throughout the camps with the speed of the radio, due to the constant movement of the Gypsies. And the fact that a Gypsy and a party member worked in the TsIK, without any information in the press, very soon became a well-known fact for Gypsies, and in the TsIK one began to see Gypsies coming – *khodoki* with the most diverse questions, and the name of Tokmakov, either for his personal good qualities, or in connection with his work in the highest institution, began to be used among the Gypsies in great and deserved esteem.

Tokmakov instantly engaged in the organisation of kolkhozes. Indeed, there were Gypsy kolkhozes also before him, but it was something unplanned by their composition and organisation of households; most of these kolkhozes collapsed soon after obtaining financial help, or dividing the harvest, leaving only a curious legend after themselves. Tokmakov studied every member of the kolkhozes in every possible way, created a group of activists in every kolkhoz, organised meetings and congresses, drew attention to the work of the Gypsy kolkhozes from among local authorities and the wider society, and the kolkhozes began to grow not only quantitatively but also qualitatively. In 1938 in the Soviet Union there were 52 Gypsy kolkhozes [7]. Those kolkhozes, as, for example, in the Smolensk region, in the North Caucasus, began to reach the first places in the districts and regions both in the organisation of rural economy and in various socialist competitions, and this was due to the fervent and sacrificial participation of Ivan Petrovich.

Of course, the number of Gypsy kolkhozes is small, if compared to the number of Gypsies not involved in collective work. But this, as well as failures in other aspects, was painful for him, as well as for the whole active part of the Gypsies; the next painful issues were the creation of a Gypsy newspaper and a Gypsy rayon. Its lack of success was the result of misunderstanding in the regions and sometimes the result of a counteraction of persons who, contrary to all the legality and timeliness of the formulation of these urgent issues, strongly opposed their solution. Those who obstructed the solution of these urgent issues were later unmasked as enemies of the people [8].

In the end, everything would have been satisfied, had it not been for the disaster that hit our country. In 1941 the fascists tried to crush our people and their achievements, with heavy heel. All workers of the Union rose up to protect the Fatherland. The Gypsies, who during their entire history never received a fair resolution and who had previously run away from military service and participation in the war, using numerous means of simulation and self-mutilation, now came to enlist as privates and as officers in a massive wave, either mobilised or voluntarily. These many individuals among the Gypsies became the true heroes, selflessly sacrificing their lives to fight the enemy. After all, the Gypsies, for the first time after thousands of years of wandering, acquired a true homeland in the USSR. Here were their kolkhozes, their schools in which they already received secondary education and where they would receive higher education. So, for the Gypsies, this war had the character of a bloody fight to the death, and Gypsies took part in it as defenders and as the avengers for the ruining of the Gypsy farms, the Gypsy cultural institutions, for their meanly destroyed relatives, on account of being Communists, Komsomol members or just because they are Gypsies.

Ivan Petrovich Tokmakov, from the first days of the war, entered the ranks of a volunteer of the Red Army. It did not matter to him that he was in his sixties, that he had shortness of breath, that his heart was not fully healthy, or finally, that he had armour from the army [9], as he had worked as a head of department in the factory [10]. His Country was in danger, the Gypsy kolkhozes of Smolensk with their richness were under the enemy's occupation.

Young and tender as a young grass, the sedentary nature of the wanderer, of the people who had chosen the path of settlement and labour, was being destroyed, and Tokmakov could not stay indifferent in his own safety. On March 15th, 1942, he was killed near Yelnya [11]. The war had taken away from the Gypsies the person whose heart lived and fought entirely for the issues of the Gypsy people.

Now, when all our young farms which were in the war zone, are broken and crushed, when literally all the best and foremost have been hanged and destroyed, and the remains again, as before, are scattered through the vast villages, when we need to start all over again from the very beginning, the death of Tokmakov is felt as a sharp pain.

If strong and large people perceive such losses with bitterness, for our nationality the loss of I. P. Tokmakov is catastrophic. We cannot hold back the cry of a curse because of his and so many other unnecessary deaths. In the annals of heroes are recorded also glorious names of Gypsies, such as those of the Vishnyakovs, Selnitsky, Ishchenko and others [12].

[Note: At the time of writing these lines, N. Pankov did not know the details of the death of I. P. Tokmakov. Later it became known, from one of his comrades in the military unit, that Tokmakov was taken prisoner by the Germans, that he arranged his escape, was captured again and, during the preparation of the new escape, was betrayed by someone and tortured [13]. Dying, he asked his friend to find his wife Lena and brother Kolya in Moscow. He didn't have any brother, so his wife thought he meant Nikolay Pankov.] [14]

[Note]: This material is obtained from Yanina Stepanovna Pankova. It was written by Nikolay Aleksandrovich Pankov.

... [signature] (N. Satkevich). 1964.

Notes

1. Literally translated "Gypsy with Gypsy, non-Gypsy with non-Gypsy".
2. Here Nikolay Pankov wants to say that perhaps the parents of Ivan Tokmakov were exiled to Siberia (criminal punishment in the Russian Empire). The residence in Yekaterinburg is, however, not enough as evidence. Of course, there were not few cases of Gypsies who, together with their families, were sent to exile in Siberia. In the second half of the 19th century, however, such places of exile were already regions far east of Ekaterinburg. Moreover, the Gypsy nomads at this time independently acquired new territories in Siberia and the Far East. We found even a curious historical testimony about Gypsies settled in the Bering Strait in the second half of the 19th century, as hired labourer to hunt seals, walruses, and whales (Бойцов, 1934, p. 137).
3. In his personal data Party form made for the All-Union Party Census of 1927, Ivan Tokmakov states that he had been a member of the VKP(b) since February, 1919 (RGASPI, f. 17, op. 9, d. 3642, l. 37-38).
4. This sentence is added during the transcription and editing of the text (АНБ, ф. Николай Панков), most likely by his daughter Lyubov (Lyuba) Pankova (1925-2019).
5. Three dots are left in the original to indicate that Nikolai Pankov was not sure exactly in which year Ivan Tokmakov came to Moscow (see below for details).
6. This refers to the Sverdlov Communist University in Moscow, which was a School for the preparation of cadres for the Soviet high nomenklatura, 1918-1937.

7. The mantra of the existence of 52 Gypsy kolkhozes in the early USSR is repeated almost everywhere in contemporary academic literature. It is not clear where this figure comes from, however, it is sure that it entered mass scholar circulation after the first publication of passages from this text by Nikolay Pankov (Друц & Гесслер, 1990, p. 285).

To put it in brackets, it is hardly possible to give an accurate and clear answer to the question of how many Gypsy kolkhozes existed in the early USSR. For some of them, there are only mentions in the press; in other cases, there have been repeated changes of names, relocations to other settlements, divisions into separate parts, mixed nationalities kolkhozes, uncertain data, etc. In any case, in 1935-36, when the Soviet state paid serious attention to the Gypsy kolkhozes, their number in the numerous administrative reports varied between 20 and 30 (see e.g. GARF, f. P 3316, op. 28, d. 793, l. 6-8; f. P 1235, op. 130, d. 5). These reports usually lack information on Central Asian republics or they mention only Roma kolkhozes, not those of local Gypsies (collectively called Lyuli or Jugi). In general, the data for this region also varies greatly – in the public reports are mentioned as many as 18 Gypsy kolkhozes only in the Uzbek SSR (GARF, f. P 3316, op. 28, d. 794, p. 81) although, according to other sources, their number was much smaller throughout the whole of Central Asia.

8. The term 'Enemy of the People' was widely used in the early USSR as a designation for class or political opponents, enemies of the socialist construction. The victims of political repression in the 1920s and especially in the 1930s were known under this term. By using this designation here Nikolay Pankov points that almost all senior officials at the ON TsIK where Tokmakov worked were affected by these repressions (see below).

9. The phrase "armour from the army" refers to the practice of offering exemption from army services to special categories of persons, mostly those who worked in the field of defence industry and weapon production.

10. From this, it becomes clear that in 1941 Ivan Tokmakov no longer worked in the Soviet state apparatus. In all likelihood, he lost his seat in the ON VTsIK in 1938 (when the VTsIK was abolished in connection with the formation of the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR) and was transferred to a lower rank in the Soviet party and state hierarchy.

11. There is no clarity about the exact place where Ivan Tokmakov died. In the military archives, he is noted as "traceless missing" on October 1st, 1941, in the Kaluga region (Книга памяти, 2019).

12. About the Gypsies in the USSR who died in the fight against fascism during the Second World War, see the seminal work of Nikolay Bessonov (Бессонов, 2000).

13. This note is added during the above mentioned transcribing and editing of the text.

14. According to Nikolay Pankov, Ivan Tokmakov died in the prison of a war camp near Yelnya (Smolensk region) and, according to other author (Калинин, 2005, p. 66), in a camp near Bobruisk (Mogilev region, Belarus). Taking into account the gaps and errors in the war documentations, either version may be inaccurate.

Source: LANB, f. Николай Саткевич.

Prepared for publication by Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov.

Translated by Viktor Shapoval.

The text published here takes into account the available three earlier drafts, which are not dated, and also one later corrected version.

Comments

Most of the material published in this section comes from the personal archive of Nikolay Satkevich (LANB, f. Николай Саткевич) who, in the 1960s, collected biographical memories of (or about) leading Gypsy activists who were active in the Gypsy movement in the early USSR.

The texts published here largely exhaust the background and the most important moments in the life of these activists. Naturally, those memories represent more or less subjective interpretations of the past, and the present history of Gypsy activism is seen through the perspective and the fate of their authors. However, when comparing the events described with the available historical documentation, it turns out that silencing or misinterpreting historical realities are relatively rare. The texts are set in the Autobiography model – a genre that was widely used in the USSR – but the authors themselves made wider deviations (to varying degrees) from the established pattern, offering more loose interpretations.

Andrey Taranov's autobiography presents in detail all the most important events of a turbulent life, full of vicissitudes. However, this was no exception to the era. About his life, some authors claim wrongly, that he was a "graduate of a state school in the Urals" (Lemon, 2000, p. 133), but no quotation is given, and this assertion contradicts Taranov's text (published above).

It is interesting to note that the Party sent Taranov for training in KUTV, where students were prepared to become national nomenklatura in their respective Soviet republics, and where foreign students were trained to fight for the establishment of communism in their countries. The subsequent Gypsy activists, such as Ivan Tokmakov and Ilya Gerasimov, were trained in other educational institutions, targeting the preparation of the mainstream Party nomenklatura. After graduating from the KUTV, Taranov was sent, with a Party order, to lead the emerging VSTs. Understandably, he pays little attention in his text to the work of the VSTs and the reasons for its liquidation, for which, being the organisation's chair, he was held responsible.

For the sake of truth, it should be noted that when analysing the large amount of available documentation, it becomes clear that in his capacity as Chairman of the VSTs Taranov was used more as a representative person, probably because he had no sufficient knowledge and managerial skills. The program and administrative documents were, in actuality, prepared mainly by Ivan Lebedev, and the economic activities were led by members of the Polyakov clan and the hired 'experts' (Gypsies and non-Gypsies). Of course, this does not take away from Taranov's responsibility as the head of the Union, for which he was repeatedly punished. Naturally, Taranov skips these moments in his recollections, including the fact that due to problems with the VSTs he received a party sanction – a severe reprimand inscribed in his personal file – which is a relatively mild punishment (GARF, f. P 393, op. 43 A, d. 1763, l. 227-228; f. P 1235, op. 140, d. 498, l. 7-8). Nevertheless, immediately after the liquidation of the Union, he took the lead of the Gypsy journals *Romany zorya* and *Nevo drom*.

In fact, more serious punishment for Taranov was when the Party sent him to do work in Kyrgyzstan in 1934 as part of the low-level nomenklatura, after ceasing the publication of the journal *Nevo drom* in an attempt to transform it into a newspaper (see above). During this time, he was removed from the activities of the Soviet institutions targeting the Gypsies, and he was not even invited to the extended SN TsIK USSR Meeting held on 04-05.01.1936.

This punishment was relatively short-lived, and in 1937 he was returned to Moscow. Here, he received a new job, formally linked to the job placements of Gypsies. Here, again, there is an obscure moment: the Sovnarkhoz system was abolished in 1932, and the VPK was transformed in 1936 into the Resettlement Department of the NKVD. Thus, it is not entirely clear exactly where Taranov worked at that time. Perhaps it was his work in the NKVD that he did not want to speak about since at the time when he wrote his autobiography, in the 1960s, was the time of anti-Stalinist discourse in the USSR when NKVD became a symbol of Stalin's repression.

The dispatch of Taranov to Moldova immediately after its liberation from the German army shows that he still enjoyed the Party's confidence, though he remained in the low levels of the Soviet nomenklatura. There is little information about his fate in the new Moldavian USSR. According to data from oral history, for a short period of time, he was the director of a kolkhoz near the city of Rezina, but the local Moldovians began to write complaints to various institutions asking why was a Gypsy appointed as a director. In the end, he was replaced.

Andrey Taranov lived the rest of his life as a respected pensioner, who often met with pioneers, with whom he shared stories and recollections of his time. In the 1970s, a large essay was published about him in the local press, in which his life was presented as a role model (Цопа, 1978, pp. 14-22).

The autobiography of Nikolay Pankov, published here, was provided by his relatives to Nikolay Satkevich; and several other versions are preserved in his personal archive (LANB, f. Николай Панков). As the text shows, his life's destiny is quite different from that of other Gypsy activists of the time. To say it in modern terms – unlike them, his occupation was not of a 'Rom by profession', and the only exception was the period 1933-1938 when he worked as Romani language and literature teacher at the Gypsy Pedagogical College. After the end of the affirmative pro-Gypsy state policy in 1938, he remained socially active for the rest of his life (he died in 1959).

In 1953, after Stalin's death, Nikolay Pankov sent a letter to Petr Pospelov, Secretary of the TsK KPSS (Друц & Гесслер, 1990, pp. 304-305); in 1954 he sent a letter to the new First Secretary of the TsK KPSS Nikita Khrushchev (PAVK, f. Nikolay Pankov); the same year he sent a letter to Kliment Voroshilov, Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR (Ibid.); in 1955, together with Andrey Taranov he sent a letter to the TsK KPSS, to the Council of Ministers of the USSR and to the central Party publication, the *Pravda* newspaper (Иващенко, 1996, p. 43); on May 14, 1956 he sent a new letter to Nikita Khrushchev (Друц & Гесслер, 1990, pp. 304-305). In all these letters, Nikolay Pankov called for the resumption of the 1920s and 1930s state policy towards the Gypsies: in particular, he paid most attention to the policies of sedentarising the Gypsies, to re-open Gypsy schools, to resume the mass publication of literature in Romani language, etc.

Nikolay Pankov was the only Gypsy activist who, in the 1930s, together with other representatives of the Soviet academia, became a member of the Gypsy Lore Society, that was, and continues to be, a renowned and reputable scholarly organisation for Gypsy/Roma research. In general, he stands out among other Gypsy activists through a strong

interest in Romani language, folklore, and literature. This interest did not leave him for the rest of his life. An incredible amount of diverse material was stored in his personal archive—academic publications, press articles, folklore and language recordings, etc. (LANB, f. Николай Панков). He maintained extensive correspondence on these topics with other activists and various scholars, including from abroad, such as Jan Kochanowski (known as Vania de Gila Kochanowski) and Milena Hübschmannova.

This correspondence continued to be conducted by his family, after his death: in 1974, Valery Sanarov (about him, see Марушиакова & Попов, 2016, pp. 87–91) asked his family for materials on his activities. Sanarov requested it on behalf of Grattan Puxon from the UK, who was preparing an article about the *Gypsies and the October Revolution* in which the description of the life and work of Nikolay Pankov should occupy an important place (LANB, f. Николай Панков).

It is worth saying a few words about Nikolay Pankov's family. His wife, Yanina (Yana) Stefanovna, was an ethnic Polish woman. They met in St Petersburg, at the famous Public Library, which they both frequently visited (LANB, f. Николай Панков). She was a faithful fellow of Nikolay Pankov throughout his life, and after his death, she continued to maintain and enrich his archive. She authored memoirs about him, which are preserved as an unfinished manuscript (Ibid.). His two daughters, Natalia (Natasha) and Lyubov (Lyuba) were also publicly active in the 1960s and 1970s. They collaborated with Nikolay Satkevich in his initiatives to engage the Soviet authorities in an active policy towards Gypsies (Ibid.). Lyubov Pankova (born 1925) defended her Ph.D. thesis and became the first Roma woman with a scientific degree (Candidate of Biological Sciences).

Very little is known about Nina Dudarova's biography other than the text presented here. In the preserved historical records of Gypsy activism in the early USSR, her name is mentioned only a few times as part of the leadership of VSTs. She is listed as one of the authors of the Appeal of VSTs to Gypsy population by 1927, published above. However, in the membership card of VSTs, Nina Dudarova's date of entry into the Union is written as October 12, 1926, and her membership card number is 167: i.e. she became a member of the Union at a relatively later stage in its creation. The overall impression from the available historical sources is that her position in the VSTs was rather demonstrative – in order to offer her as a public example (to both Gypsies and to the Soviet society) pointing to the equal position of a Gypsy woman.

However, this does not in any way mean that Nina Dudarova's place in the development of the processes of Roma civic emancipation in the early USSR should be underestimated. On the contrary, her active work should be especially emphasised: namely, her work as a teacher in the Gypsy schools in Moscow, and especially her published poetry and teaching materials (see Romani Publications in USSR), as well as her translations and editing of the Romani language texts.

Diametrically opposite is the case of Mikhail Bezlyudskiy, about whom a very large amount of additional material is preserved. His Autobiography itself is very comprehensive, including large sections, which are rather close to a literary form. However, he has concealed some things, a fact that became clear after cross-checking other historical

sources. Such is, for example, the fact that during the period 1926-1927, he worked as an agent in the Moscow Criminal Investigation Department of the NKVD and, as such, he signed his Report Notes to the ON VTsIK and the Economic Department of the OGPU on the occurring violations of socialist legitimacy in the activities of the VSTs (GARF, f. P 393, op. 43 A, d. 1763; d. P 1235, op. 140, d. 498, l. 227-228).

Another interesting fact from the biography of Mikhail Bezlyudskiy, about which he is silent, was brought to our attention by our colleague Viktor Shapoval. As Bezlyudskiy himself writes in his article *My Literary Way* (Нэво дром, 1932с, pp. 22-23), the first poem he wrote was in 1929 in the corrective labour colony in Liazonovo (now a suburb of Moscow). Judging by his numerous publications in the prison newspaper *К трудовой общешитию* (To the Labour Dormitory), he was in prison during the period 1928-1929.

No information has been found on what grounds Mikhail Bezlyudskiy was convicted, but in any case, this did not in any way affect his career as a Gypsy activist. On the contrary, as discussed above, he enjoyed the particular confidence of the Soviet institutions that sent him, to a leadership position, to the Gypsy selsoviet and kolkhoz of the North Caucasus. However, after the descent of the Gypsy theme from the state agenda, and after the Second World War, his career path suffered a downfall and he ended at the lowest possible levels the Soviet nomenklatura.

Concerning the life of Ilya Gerasimov, there is also a rich documentary heritage in the Soviet archives – both in the state archives in Moscow and especially in Smolensk (the centre of the Western Oblast). In fact, he is the only prominent Gypsy activist in the early USSR who (beyond his training periods in Vyazma and Moscow) remained employed at the local (Oblast) level. In general, one can say that his career was successful, and he spent the rest of his life as a respected personal pensioner of Republican significance (i.e. of a medium level).

The available materials concerning Ilya Gerasimov make it clear that he was the most ardent supporter of the idea of a Gypsy national autonomous region, and was constantly trying to convince the Soviet state of the need for its realisation. He also persistently promoted the notion that it was the Western Oblast with the center of Smolensk that was the most appropriate place to create such a Gypsy autonomy, where its basis had already been set (i.e. Gypsy kolkhozes, Gypsy schools, presence of party and Komsomol Gypsy cadres, etc.).

The question of Ilya Gerasimov's connection with Trofim Gerasimov is an interesting one. It seems very likely that they were brothers since their family and father's name (Yakovlevich) coincide. Both are from the Smolensk region. However, since there are no other confirmations of this fact, the issue cannot yet be considered as resolved.

As for Trofim Gerasimov, his life path is also worthy of attention. Sent by the Party for training in Moscow in 1926-27 as a promising Gypsy activist, he had repeatedly criticised the activities of the VSTs, sending memos to the TsK VKP(b) and the NKVD (GARF, f. P 393, op. 43 A, d. 1763; f. P 1235, op. 120, d. 27). In 1932-33 he worked as an instructor at Kolkhozsoyuz of Western Oblast and in OblZU (GASO, f. P 2360, op. 1, sv. 181, d. 2067; f. P 2360, op. 1, sv. 130, d. 1482). In 1933, he left for Moscow and began to work as an

inspector in MOZO on the organisation of Gypsy kolkhozes (GARF, f. P 1235, op. 123, d. 28, l. 143-146, 158-170, 189-196). However, there he also entered into conflicts with various soviet institutions. He accused them of paying insufficient attention to the problems of the Gypsies and circulated several memos in this sense to higher authorities (Ibid.). As it became clear from his letter to Stalin, published above, in 1935 he worked as an engineer in Vagon Plant in Zaporozhye-Kamenskoye, Dnepropetrovsk Region. Unfortunately, no other information is available about him after his transfer to work in Ukraine. His name was not found in the database of those repressed in the USSR or those who died during World War II, and his fate remains unknown.

The text presented here for Alexander German is one of many variants of Auto-biographies he wrote in different periods of time. His personal archive, preserved in his hometown of Orel, contains a wealth of diverse material (OGMLT, f. 29). Especially impressive (and maybe even shocking) is his diary, which he wrote for four decades (from 1912 to 1952). In this diary, he has only recorded his literary activity over the years, and there are only two insignificant remarks of a personal character. All other societal events (the First World War, the October Revolution, the Civil War, the Second World War), and his two marriages, proved to him to be less significant than his literary work, which, it would appear, was the important thing in his life. This diary reveals Alexander German as a person who, from his schooling years, had a passionate dream of becoming a famous writer, and devoted his entire life to the realization of this adolescent dream.

Alexander German also edited his Autobiographies and public presentations according to the requirements of the time. For example, he has repeatedly said that during the Civil War, he claimed to have fought in the Civil War “almost on all fronts” (this standard phrase was repeated repeatedly), but in fact, he had served in the army as a clerk – initially in Petrograd (Saint Petersburg) as a clerk and head of the army warehouse, then in Orel as a clerk at local military establishments.

Despite claims found in literature that “Pan-Russian Romani Union”, was “under the leadership of Alexander Germanov” (Hancock, 1991a, p. 257; 1991b, p. 140) the archives lacks any evidence of ever being a member of the All Russian Union of Gypsies, though he was involved as its representative in many artistic councils and editorial boards. Generally speaking, in all his activities and in his work, he was not so much a generator and implementer of new ideas and policies, but a talented and extremely workable propagandist of the already defined ideas and policies.

In his literary work, Alexander German (spelled Germano in Romani language texts) constantly adhered to the societal requirements of the time: his first texts were written in the spirit of patriotic military literature; after the October Revolution, they were already in the mainstream of proletarian literature; and after starting to work in the field of Gypsy activism, his publications actually lay the foundations of Gypsy national literature in USSR. In this respect, his fruitfulness is impressive, and he worked in almost all literary fields – poetry, prose, dramaturgy, journalism, translation, editorial work, etc. (see Annex I). He also ran a literary group to train Gypsy authors, prepared two Gypsy poets’ Almanacs (Ibid.), participated in various public committees, boards, councils

and committees. In 1929, he organised a Gypsy Literary Group *Ромэнгиро лав* (Gypsy Word) and became its chair. He participated in the Initiative Group on the organisation of the Gypsy theatre, and he was the author of the first play *Джибэн прэ роты* (Life on Wheels), presented on the stage of the newly created in 1931 Gypsy Theatre Romen; until the end of his life, he was a member of the Artistic Council of the theatre. From 1934 to 1938 he worked as an editor in the National Sector of the State Literary Publishing House (Гослитиздат) for the production of literature in national languages, and thus actually managed and coordinated all publishing activities in the field of Gypsy literature in USSR. So there is every reason to accept that the place of Alexander German in the history of Roma literature as a whole is indisputable, and he is de facto one of its main progenitors (Marushiakova & Popov, 2020b).

Undoubtedly the most intriguing question is the one about the ethnic origin and identity of Alexander German. Moreover, in this direction, there are various mystifications and free interpretations that introduce additional misconceptions on the subject.

His father's name was Václav German, he was from Czech origin, was born in Hořovice (today in the Czech Republic, near Prague). His mother, Karolina, with maiden surname Knoutek, was also from Hořovice. These are the testimonies of German himself and there is no other documentary evidence of these data. In any case, the searches in the metric books and the administration documentation in Hořovice of his father's names (according to German the original surname of the family was spelled 'Hermann') and his mother did not lead to any result and no documentary evidence of the birth and the existence of such persons during this historical period is indicated. There may be several explanations for this mystery – the loss of documents, inaccurate memories of German, even conscious mystification by German himself. The latter should not be ruled out because there are other similar examples in his CV, e.g. the claim that he was “a street child” for a few years, which is a romanticising mystification, following the example of Maxim Gorky's book *My Universities*; in fact, he had lived with his relatives, and as he mentions that his sisters took care of him, and even paid the cost of his education.

Generally speaking, nowadays, it is generally assumed by authors who wrote about A. German, that he was of mixed (Roma and non-Roma) origin, as his mother was a “Moravian Roma woman”. According to Milena Hübschmannová:

Although Germano was not brought up like a Rom and was a Roma only on his mother's side but his Roma identity was revived because of the prestige of the official task [...]
(Hübschmannová, 2002, p. 80)

Nevertheless, for Milena Hübschmannová, Germano was a Roma writer in spite of his mixed origin and the fact that he learned the Romani language in adult age (Hübschmannová, 2002, pp. 79-81). Milena Hübschmannová emphasises the fact that Alexander German did not learn Romani in his family and thus indicates that a national writer may also become a person for whom the relevant national language is not his native one. It is not clear why the question of the mixed origins of Alexander German (for

Hübschmannová is indisputable) is raised at all in this context since it is widely known that many Roma activists and writers (both in the past and nowadays) are of mixed origin (and some have doubts as to whether they are Roma at all). The very idea of questioning the affiliation of individuals with mixed backgrounds to Roma activism and/or Roma literature is absurd, because if this logic is accepted, then the whole Gypsy movement and the Gypsy literature in the early USSR could also be called into question, as both the President of the All-Russian Union of Gypsies, Andrey Taranov, and the Secretary of the Union Ivan Rom-Lebedev were Gypsies only from their fathers side, and the most famous star of Theatre Roman, Nadezhda Kiseleva (with artistic pseudonym Lyalya Chyornaya) had only one Gypsy grandmother (Bessonov, 2016, p. 146).

According to Brigid O'Keeffe, who also accepts, without any doubt or hesitancy, the Roma origin of Alexander Germano's mother, it was quite characteristic of him to play a game with his identities (Roma and non-Roma) depending on the social and political situation. She argued that in the early Soviet Union, when an active pro-Gypsy policy was being conducted, he emphasised his Roma origin and Roma identity, and when the leading paradigm of Soviet national politics changed, he demonstrated a Russian ethnic identity (O'Keeffe, 2013, pp. 239-254).

However, this interpretation is quite controversial because documentary evidence does not confirm the existence of such a game of identities. In several Autobiographies written by German himself, the first one written in 1925, and the last in 1952, he has consistently declared himself a 'Gypsy writer', but not a 'Gypsy', and the second does not follow automatically from the first. As for the passages written by Alexander German himself, which Brigid O'Keeffe accepts as evidence of his identity game, they are also unconvincing. In fact, he never wrote, anywhere (sic!), that he was of Gypsy origin or with a Gypsy identity. The only wordings that could be interpreted as a hint of such an origin of his mother was written in 1925, in Orel, when he wrote:

My mother didn't like to be in one place, she loved to travel, and because of her, my father changed jobs, sold all home junk and travelled away without knowing what will happen. (OGMLT, f. 29, op. 1, d. 137, l. 2).

Firstly, if Alexander German wants to play with his origin, it is not clear why he should use such a complex metaphor instead of directly indicating his mother's Gypsy background. Secondly, much more important, there is no logical explanation for why this game was needed at all. This version of his autobiography was written in 1925, i.e. at that time when Alexander German did not think at all that he would become a 'Gypsy writer' (as stated above, he leaves for Moscow next year). And something more, no one at the time even imagined that there would ever be an affirmative pro-Gypsy policy of the Soviet state and that a Gypsy literature would emerge, i.e. such an identity game with Gypsy origin and identity was not needed. Much more logical is the explanation that here again there is a romanticising metaphor about love for travel, without it having ethnic dimensions.

In the next few variants of the Autobiography of the 1920s and 1930s, i.e. just at the time when Alexander German established himself as a 'Gypsy writer', he never mentioned a single word about his mother's Romani background. On 16th of May 1928 in a letter to his friend, namely the writer Iosif Kallinikov, describes his first impressions from Gypsies:

When I arrived in Moscow, I took up work among Gypsies. Do not think about "stealing horses". The Gypsies are not the same [as before]. Craving for culture, the desire to become settled, build Gypsy schools, clubs, organise Gypsy farms, etc. – this is what the current Gypsies are striving for. It's even becoming strange that a half-tramp Gypsy reaches into the ranks of an organised population. ... In two years of studying the Gypsy people, I have gathered quite valuable material about Gypsies. (RGALI, f. 267, op. 2, d. 96, l. 1; Шаповал 2020: 332).

As can be seen from this quote here he is speaking as an outsider, stranger, and not as a member of the community.

In the Autobiography published here, Alexander German himself answers, in sufficient detail, the direct question: was he a non-Gypsy or a Gypsy? There was also no need for an identity game in 1952 either when he wrote this version of his Autobiography, which unambiguously answers the question of Alexander German's ethnic origin and identity. It is unclear what might press an author, who was widely known in the public domain as the most prominent 'Gypsy writer', to resort to such 'identity games', i.e. to pretend to be an ethnic Russian without being one. And to do so in documents that are not public, but for official use only (his autobiography was prepared for his personal dossier in the Union of Soviet Writers). The natural question here is what would have happened to Alexander German if he had written that he was a Gypsy, as did, for example, Ivan Rom-Lebedev in the same questionnaire (RGALI, f. 2928 op. 2, d. 246), which in no way disrupted his professional and public career (for several decades he has been the permanent artistic director of the Theatre Roman). Moreover, he formally adds to his family name Lebedev a first part (Rom), with which he wants to publicly emphasise his ethnic origin and his identity. Therefore, it is much simpler (and more logical) to assume that Alexander German expressed his real ethnic origin and identity, which, as it turns out, was no obstacle to him being 'the Gypsy writer', as he became publicly known throughout the USSR and on which his entire career is built. To say it in brief, there was nothing that could push him to play such complex games of identity within the Union of Soviet Writers, especially in this case when the dossier was prepared only for internal administrative documentation.

Discrepancies between the actual real-life internalised ethnic identity of certain individuals or communities, on the one hand, and the public ethnic label that is attached to them by the others, on the other hand, is not something unique and unusual in world history. In the case of Alexander German we do not see any reasons for an over-interpretation and for connecting the issue of his ethnic identity with the Soviet national policy. In fact, Alexander German's entire literature career is built on this very foundation. The circumstance that he was getting a job at the All-Russian Union of Gypsies should not be taken as something unusual. With the same success, he could turn to another nationality

that was in dire need of well-trained staff to support the construction and development of their national identity and culture, which was the main trend of nationalities policy in the early USSR. At the time, it was a common practice in the USSR to hire the so-called professionals who were not only of different ethnicities, but even experts with 'foreign' class origin were accepted (including even in the Red Army command staff). Based on the same principle, many 'specialists' of other ethnic backgrounds were hired by the 'All-Russian Union of Gypsies', including Evgeniy P. Ivanov, who headed the 'Ethnographic and Scientific Section for the Study of the Gypsy Language' (Вся Москва, 1927, p. 233; Вся Москва, 1928, p. 211; Друц & Гесслер, 1990, pp. 294-295).

Chronologically, for the first time, the alleged 'Gypsy origin' of the Alexander German (in particular the determination of his mother as a "Moravian Gypsy Woman") appeared only in 1960, five years after his death, in the new edition of a collection of his novels and stories, published by his second wife, Maria Vardashko, in the Afterword written by Boris Turganov (Германо, 1960, p. 237); the same statement is repeated in the second edition of this book, in the Preface, written by Zinaida Sidelnikova (Германо, 1962, p. 3). There appears also for the first the patronymic surname of the mother of Alexander German, Vasilievna, which is quite strange (it is not clear what Czech name could be given this Russified form). In 1964, the statement about her 'Gypsy origin' was made official in the entry on Alexander Germano, written by Edvard Sholok, in the *Concise Literary Encyclopedia* (Шолок, 1964, p. 138), and since then, it has become dominant to this day. Given that Alexander German professed his origin himself, there is no need to discuss it any further.

The emergence of allegations of the Gypsy origin of Alexander German's mother can be explained by the efforts of his widow, Maria Vardashko, to promote his work after his death (her archive is also included in the OGMLT's Alexander German Fund). For many years after Alexander German's death, she has been trying to persuade the Soviet institutions and publishers to print his multi-volumed collected works. In her letters to the Union of Soviet Writers and to various publishers, as well as in her articles and press interviews, she makes statements in the public domain that seek to present Alexander German's image in a favorable light, e.g. he was declared by her to be the creator of Gypsy alphabet (though in fact, he was involved in it), he is presented as an active participant, and almost a Civil War hero, who "fought on almost all fronts" (cf. above about the actual nature of his service in the Red Army), etc. An important part of this, marketing strategy (to put it in contemporary language) is the emphasis on its Gypsy origin. This is a widespread practice since the times of the Russian Empire (and continuing to present-day), where a re-discovery of 'Gypsy origin' among the artistic elite (quotation marks here are not accidental as there is usually no real basis for such claims) was often met because of Gypsies' exotic and romanticised public image.

The case with Alexander German is a relatively rare case of divergence between the origin and identity, on the one hand, and the national dimensions of someone's literary work, on the other hand, but it is not without any analogies in the history of world literature. It is enough to recall the case of Sandor Petöfi, the renowned Hungarian national

poet, from Slavic origin (his father was Serbian, mother Slovak). This case clearly shows that the emergence of national literature does not necessarily need to always be correlated with the ethnic origin and identity of the particular author. The significance of an individual author for the development of national literature must always be judged based on their literary work, and especially in relation to its public dimensions, and public effect.

We know only very little about the life (and even about the death) of Ivan Tokmakov outside the text published here, despite his undoubtedly crucial position among Gypsy activists (especially concerning Soviet state policy towards the Gypsies). Additional information in this regard discloses his personal data form filled in for the All-Union Party Census of 1926, which is stored in the Party archive (RGASPI, f. 17, op. 9, d. 3642, l. 37-38). According to this form, Ivan Tokmakov was born in 1888. His birthplace is not specified – it could be both Ekaterinburg (as Pankov writes) and Kamyshlov, which is located nearby and where he spent his childhood and his young years. In Kamyshlov he studied for one year at a parochial school, and from the age of 8 became a wage labourer (starting a job at such a young age was not uncommon in the Russian Empire). Before the October Revolution, he worked for 6 years as *konopatchik* (a worker who is plugging cracks in the wooden surfaces).

After the revolution of 1918, the life and career of Ivan Tokmakov are a typical example of the social elevators created by the Soviet state for the proletariat. From March 1918 till November 1919 he works at Kamyshlov railway station arranging the railway track wood and as charcoal-burner. In November 1919 he became a member of the party and then a check man. He then completed a three-month training course at the local Soviet Party School and was promoted to a Party secretary of collective. In January 1924, he was sent for two and a half years to study at the Ural-Siberian Communist University in Yekaterinburg. After completing the study in 1926 he was promoted again and appointed Party secretary for the whole Ural Agricultural Machinery Plant in the city of Votkinsk (now in Udmurt, Republic of the Russian Federation).

Later he was sent for further training to Moscow, and in 1932 he was an aspirant (a designation of persons prepared for academic and teaching positions) at Sverdlov Communist University for senior Party leadership. Because of restructuring of the University the TsK VKP (b), Department for Agitation and Propaganda, directed him to work at ON VTsIK. This appointment was connected to “the planned reorganisation of the Gypsy journal *Nevo drom* into a newspaper” and ON VTsIK recommended Ivan Tokmakov for chairperson of the future newspaper (GARF, f. P 1235, op. 123, d. 27, l. 266). The reasons for this decision were complex. In his letter to the ON VTsIK from October 20, 1933, the editor-in-chief of the journal Andrey Taranov requested converting the journal into a Romani language newspaper, which would be published three times a month. He argued that, for this purpose, a larger editorial team (i.e. more people on the payroll) would be needed. Taranov justified his request with the bureaucratic problems encountered in the transition from the publishing house of Tsentrizdat to the National Department of Uchpedgiz (Ibid., l. 260-265). At the same time, a number of letters from Gypsy activists had been

sent to Soviet institutions, with serious critical comments on the work of the journal. Among them was a letter by Mikhail Bezlyudskiy and Georgiy Lebedev indicating specific 'gross political mistakes' and concluding that the journal had largely failed to meet their task of 'organising the thoughts and class consciousness of the Gypsy working masses' (Ibid., l. 243-248).

In his new position, Ivan Tokmakov made considerable efforts to implement the decision to issue a Gypsy newspaper. He prepared and sent memoranda to various institutions (GARF, f. P 1235, op. 121, d. 31, l. 61), and repeatedly initiated decisions that recommended the publication of such a newspaper. He arranged a decision in this sense to be included in the Decree of Presidium of TsIK USSR from April 7, 1936, but it was dropped in the edited final version (Ibid. l. 47-50). The issue of the Gypsy newspaper continued to shift between the various institutions for years and, in the end, a final decision was never reached. In the meantime, the year 1938 arrived, when a turning point in the national policy of the USSR occurred, and the issue of a Romani language newspaper became obsolete.

The circumstances surrounding the death of Ivan Tokmakov are unclear, and we can rely only on information in the text prepared by Nikolay Pankov. Pankov probably relies on information obtained from Ivan Tokmakov's army fellows, but there is no other documentary evidence to prove the accuracy of the information provided. The Soviet Army archives contain only the following brief information about him: "Ivan Petrovich Tokmakov; year of birth 1898" (in fact Tokmakov was born in 1888; probably he himself specified a later date in order to be taken into the army – authors note); "date of death 10/01/1941"; "gone missing" (Книга памяти, 2019).

One cannot help but notice that in the materials gathered by Nikolay Satkevich, among the Gypsy activists from the interwar period presented, is absent the name of Ivan Rom-Lebedev (1903-1991). We can only guess why he was omitted. May be Rom-Lebedev himself did not want to provide material about himself and was unwilling to be associated with Satkevich's repeated attempts in the 1960s to reconstitute the Soviet state pro-active Gypsy politics from 1920s-1930s. In any case, Rom-Lebedev himself, towards the end of his life, published a memoir, *From the Gypsy choir to the theatre Romen* (Ром-Лебедев, 1990). This book contains a wealth of information about early Gypsy activism as well as the entire biography of its author.

Ivan Rom-Lebedev's book is interesting in various aspects, including even descriptions of the life of the Gypsy music elite before the October Revolution. He describes a two-storey mansion in Moscow, where he grew up, owned by his family, the servants they had (cook, maid, and concierge), and the guests who visited them – great princes, millionaires, and even Grigori Rasputin (Ром-Лебедев, 1990, pp. 94-95).

Rom-Lebedev's memoirs were written before the collapse of the USSR and, for understandable reasons, there are some silenced issues in it. He explains his departure to southern Russia in 1918 by means of romantic motives ("to see the sea"). He presents his participation in the General Denikin's Volunteer Army, then in the army of Baron Wrangel in the Crimea, as mobilisation by force, and his later inclusion in the Red Army

as a conscious choice (Ром-Лебедев, 1990, pp. 143-144). Among Gypsies in Moscow, however, rumors had floated that the truth was quite different. Until today still, doubts remain as to what that truth actually was.

Already in the early stages of the development of Gypsy activism, Ivan Rom-Lebedev held leading positions in the leadership of the VSTs. He authored (or at least co-authored) all the key visionary texts of the time. After the abolition of the VSTs, however, he ceased all his activities in this field and started to work in the newly created Theatre Romen, where he held a leading artistic and leadership positions for the rest of his life. Of course, this particular life choice did not mean his exclusion from public life. In the 1930s, Rom-Lebedev actively participated as a representative of the Theatre Romen in a number of meetings and discussions with Soviet institutions on various issues concerning the Soviet policy toward the Gypsies. He also took part in discussions of the work of the Theatre Romen; e.g. at one such debate, in 1933, he was among the speakers who publicly crushed, in the spirit of the times, the so-called Lebedevshchina (from the name of Georgiy Lebedev, who was his colleague and friend from the Yegor Polyakov's choir), which came to signify "booze, domestic corruption and lack of discipline" (GARF, f. P 1235, op. 123, d. 28, l. 183-186).

After the Second World War, Ivan Rom-Lebedev organised (and was the first among the signatories) a collective letter to Stalin, calling for the restoration of the Soviet state's affirmative policy towards the Gypsies (GARF, f. P 7523, op. 17, d. 132 l. 124-127). This letter remained without any negative consequences for the signatories, and Ivan Rom-Lebedev himself continued to gain public fame at the Theatre Romen for the rest of his life.

The question of the relations between the Gypsy activists in the time of the early USSR is undoubtedly an interesting one. Quite natural in a demarcated system was that in Gypsy activism arose some internal contradictions and collisions.

As was already argued, some Gypsy activists (and especially Mikhail Bezlyudskiy and Trofim Gerasimov) sent numerous memoranda to Soviet institutions, filled with accusations towards other activists for making mistakes, being ineffective, and even for the incorrect implementation of the Soviet state's policy towards the Gypsies. Similar criticisms appeared, though less frequently, on the pages of Gypsy journals. In the 1920s, the subject of these criticisms was most often the leadership of VSTs (Andrey Taranov and Ivan Lebedev), as well as Gypsy activists in different regions, e.g. Ruzya (Yefrosinya) Tumashevich, from the *Svoboda* (Freedom) kolkhoz in Western Oblast (Нэво дром, 1930a, pp. 9-10).

However, the reason for the widespread distribution of this epistolary genre in Gypsy activism should not be considered to lie in personal or career motives (of course, we cannot exclude that there may have been also such cases). The main reasons for this phenomenon were the already existing diverse visions concerning the best ways and modes in which the policy of the Soviet state towards the Gypsies should be pursued, and the desire to help make this policy more effective, as well as to produce faster results, which would radically alter their lives. In this context, the relationship between Nikolay Pankov and Alexander German deserves special attention. When German presented his book *Gypsies*

Yesterday and Today (Герман, 1931) to Pankov, he wrote a dedication: "To dear Nikolay Alexandrovich Pankov. My first experience about Gypsies is at your trial". Under the dedication, Pankov wrote with a pencil: "We need only marvel at our goodwill, which allowed such disgrace without any rebuke" (ЛАНБ, ф. Николай Панков). In spite of everything, the relationship between the two remained good, and in many cases, they collaborated.

In fact, it should be noted here that, despite the mutual accusations (often quite grave), disagreements between Roma activists have never been made public, but were overall silenced in the name of the common goals pursued in favour to the Gypsy community. This is something that is very different from what happened during the same period of time in other countries in Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe (especially Romania and Poland).

The note quoted above can be interpreted in another discourse: from the point of view of the question of the origin and identity of Alexander German. It is clear from this note that "we" means 'we Gypsies', i.e. for Pankov (as well as for other activists) there was no doubt about the non-Gypsy origin and identity of German. This issue was, however, never raised publicly (or at least no evidence has been found to this effect). This makes it clear that the presence of non-Roma in the field of Gypsy activism was accepted without any problems, in the name of the goals pursued, and for the benefit of the community. This situation is also different from the reaction in similar (real or imagined) cases in the region of Central, South-Eastern and Eastern Europe at that time; moreover, it is also different from the situation in the field of Roma activism nowadays.

Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov

Summarising Comments

To understand the development of the movement for Roma civic emancipation in the interwar period in the USSR, it is not enough to present and analyse the relations 'community – society' (Gypsy activism – Soviet state) placed in the whole social and political context. More than this is needed: namely, to consider the overall national policy of the Soviet state in the early USSR, and to reveal the comparative place of the Gypsies in this policy. In other words, it is necessary to answer the question about the specific dimensions of the policy towards Gypsies in the overall multinational discourse.

Historical data give immediate, unambiguous response. The stigmatisation of Gypsies and their differentiation from other nationalities in the USSR has never (sic!) existed – neither in theory nor in practice. On the contrary, as illustrated, in many cases Gypsies enjoyed more privileges than other nationalities. The fact that the Gypsies have not been able to establish their national administrative-territorial unit at a higher level than the village council was grounded in their diasporic settlements and the existence of a very high proportion of nomads. Moreover, dozens of other nationalities were in the same situation (i.e. lacking their own administrative-territorial unit) and quite a few others were even worse off (i.e. they did not even have a national selsoviet).

When talking about the Soviet national policy towards the Gypsies, the following important circumstance must be considered, which is usually not taken into account by

researchers. The Gypsies in the early USSR were its equal citizens, and this also applied to the so-called foreign Gypsies (i.e. the holders of passports for foreign citizenship), who have been mentioned above more than once, and who, in practice were treated like other 'local' Gypsies. Thus, all Gypsies living in the USSR, in fact, enjoyed the same civil rights as other Soviet citizens and, as such, were subject to common state policies relating to all Soviet citizens. Only in addition to that, as representatives of a separate nationality, the Gypsies were subject to a special nationalities policy, which was also built on the same common soviet basis. In other words, in the early USSR, the special state policy towards the Gypsies was an inseparable part of the general nationalities policy during this historical period, which, according to the precise definition of Terry Martin (Martin, 2001), can be collectively called the policy of affirmative action.

Some authors make arbitrary interpretations, according to which the Gypsies in the early USSR had a position that distinguished them from other nationalities. The complete ignorance (or misunderstanding) of historical realities leads to such interpretations that are in the spirit of contemporary concepts and legal categories and this is what makes them inadequate and misleading in understanding historical realities. A typical example in this direction is the statement: "In 1925 the State classified Roma as a 'national minority', devoting special departments to Romani affairs within the National Minorities Sector of the Ministry of Culture" (Lemon, 2001, p. 228; 2000, p. 132-133). Analysing this text we can tolerate such a 'minor' mistake, as the one that disregards the fact that, in fact, in 1925, there were no ministries. They only appeared in 1946. Before that, the People's Commissariats (Narkomats) had similar functions. In 1925, the Ministry of the Culture did not exist at all, being established for the first time in the history of the USSR only in 1953. More importantly, in Narkompros (which included in its portfolio also cultural institutions and activities) there were no "special departments to Romani affairs" either in 1925 or throughout its whole existence. Another issue is the terminological one: even if such departments were created, they would be defined as *Gypsy* and not *Romani*. Otherwise, in principle (at least as it is accepted in historical science), such claims should be supported by a quotation of the relevant historical sources (which, for comprehensible reasons, is lacking in the statement above). In this case, however, we even have historical evidence for exactly the contrary – all historical sources clearly and unequivocally show that Gypsy activism in the early USSR throughout the period of its official existence was invariably supervised (and in fact led) by ON VTsIK.

The mistake here is due to the ignorance of historical realities, which leads to confusion and replacement of two different Soviet institutions. – ON VTsIK and SNK / Sovnarkom. With a Decree of SNK RSFSR from March 22, 1921, at Narkompros was established Council for the Education of the Peoples of the Non-Russian Language. With the liquidation of the Narkomnats, led by Stalin, by decree of the SNK RSFSR of October 5, 1925, the Council was transformed into the Central Council for the Education of the National Minorities of the RSFSR, which was often abbreviated as Sovnatsmen. Thus, the term 'national minority' began to be used in education, but the official term that

continued to exist (including in the numerous forms and questionnaires that Soviet citizens were required to complete) remained ‘nationality’.

The claim that there was a special department responsible for Gypsy issues is also not correct (Ibidem). And, moreover, in 1926 the Central Council for the Education of National Minorities of the RSFSR (Центральный Совет по просвещению национальных меньшинств РСФСР) in response to the intercession of the ON VTsIK to provide a permanent position for the responsible person for the education of Gypsies to a representative of VSTs, answered, that “even larger nationalities” (i.e. Gypsies were considered one of all nationalities in USSR – authors note) do not have their representatives in the Council, so the VSTs’ request cannot be accepted and the Council will delegate the respective activity to someone from its staff (GARF, f. P 1235, op. 120, d. 27).

The problem, in this case, is in the inaccurate translation of the term ‘национальность’ as ‘national minority’ and not as ‘nationality’, as would be the correct form. However, the issue of translation is not only linguistic but concerns also the field of legal and political history. The early USSR was not built on the principles of the Versailles system. Just on the contrary, it was a multinational state, as stated in both the 1924 and the 1936 USSR Constitutions. Thus, there was no one leading nation and accordingly, there was no ‘national minority’ category. For this reason, the official names of the Soviet institutions were as follows: the Department of Nationalities at the VTsIK, the Council of Nationalities at the TsIK of the USSR, etc. Even the euphemism “senior brother”, which was widely used after 1937 referring to the Russian people, was not present anywhere in the official jurisdiction of the Soviet state (Вдовин, 2010). The fact that the term (but not the legal category) national minority (*национальное меньшинство*) can be found in official records and public discourse (including as an acronym for the Council of Narkompros, mentioned above) does not attach any legal and political value to it, because its use does not mean the repealment of the basic legislative acts. In this sense, defining Gypsies in the USSR as a national minority is completely unjustified and leads to further mistakes, such as the statement: “In reality, the status of national minority has been withdrawn from the Gypsies in the Soviet Union in 1936 along with the associated schools, newspapers and even independent collective farms and workshop co-operatives” (Stewart, 2001, p. 74). It is not possible to withdraw something which was not attributed. The astonishing thing, in this case, is that this obvious absurdity continues to be repeated in scholarly publications to this day (Dunajeva, 2020, p. 107).

There is no point to pay special attention to the statement that following the logic of “Stalin’s rather mechanistic model of what constituted a nation” Gypsies were considered “a ‘social’ and not an ethnic layer who needed to be drawn into the proletariat” (Stewart, 2001, p. 71). This interpretation (which is later repeated by several other authors) is based on an analysis of the post-war period in Eastern European countries, but the transfer of data from one historical epoch to another is methodologically unjustified. An overview of the overall Soviet policy on the Gypsies shows the apparent insolvency of such interpretation, which underlines the contradiction between two imaginary alternatives. These, in fact, are not alternatives, but manifestations of the two simultaneously existing basic dimensions (community and society) in the life of the Gypsies.

In the same range is also the interpretation that Gypsies in the Soviet Union had a distinct status, inequitable to other nationalities because they did not meet Stalin's notorious definition of a nation. The statement "According to the Stalinist definition, Gypsies were no longer to be considered a national minority as they had no territory and no 'economic life'" (Klímová-Alexander, 2005a, p. 164) is unfounded and has no corroboration either as documentary evidence or in terms of actual political practice. If Stalin's definition of a nation was used as a basis in the design and implementation of nationalities policy in the early USSR, then it would be interesting to ask how many of the 150 nationalities at that time met the criteria to be considered as such and how the policy towards Gypsies differs from the policies towards other nationalities. In fact, reflections on which nationalities fit Stalin's definition of a nation and which did not, began after his death, and they were made in the markedly anti-Stalinist discourse that had been a leading party ideology in the USSR after the dismantling of Stalin's cult of personality in 1956.

We must note here that throughout the vast written heritage of Joseph Stalin, repeatedly published and reprinted, on a wide variety of topics, there is not a single word about Gypsies. There is neither any other historical evidence that he ever displayed any interest in Gypsies. Moreover, Stalin has not even once visited a performance of Theatre Romen, although he very often attended theatre performances in various other theatres in Moscow, and attended many times performances of plays he particularly liked (e.g. *The Turbin Brothers* of Mikhail Bulgakov).

Against this background, the following statement seems quite odd: "In 1928, Stalin's ascent to power lead [sic! – authors note] to the disbanding of the PRGU [meaning VSTs – authors note] ... The Party and NKVD (later the KGB) took over the task of the PRGU". (Klímová-Alexander, 2005a, p. 164). The impression from this text is that, for Stalin, after he won the party-internal struggles in the VKP(b) in December 1927, which led to Trotsky's expulsion from the Party, one of the most important tasks was the closure of the VSTs. This is a typical example of a 'Roma-centrist' interpretation of history. As the materials published above show, after the dissolution of the VSTs, the policy concerning Gypsies continued to be coordinated by the ON VTsIK, the SN TsIK of the USSR, and it was not until 1936 that the NKVD undertook part of this task (especially in regard to the creation of a Gypsy national rayon).

A Roma-centrist approach to history in academic texts has its parallels in narratives of the community. Today, in the post-Soviet space, among Roma there are many widespread legends about how Stalin rejected a request of Hitler to give him the USSR's Gypsies. There are even published "memories" of how Stalin promised the famous Gypsy artist Lyalya Chernaya that he would make a Gypsy Republic in the USSR (Калинин, 2005, pp. 45-47). All these examples from oral history, however, represent a secondary construction of the community's quasi-history.

As already mentioned, the key concept used for the characterisation of Gypsies in the social fabric of the early USSR is *backward* (or *culturally backward*). This definition was used when referring to all peoples who were oppressed in Tsarist Russia, who were an object of special care of the Soviet state and for whom the nationalities policy was

designed. Already in 1903 the famous ethnographer Lev Sternberg formulated the reason for including Gypsies in this category: “Gypsies to a large extent, and perhaps even completely, are victims of the historical injustice imposed on them by the surrounding nationalities” (Штернберг, 1903, pp. 304-308). In the early USSR, the authorities repeatedly determined the various privileges that disadvantaged nationalities should enjoy; de facto all nationalities in the USSR including the Gypsies, except the Russians, Ukrainians, Georgians, Armenians, Jews, and Germans, were considered “culturally backward” (Martin, 2001). Moreover, among all ‘backward nationalities’ a race ensued concerning which of them was more backward. This was expressed in the best way in the speech of Alexander Khatskevich at the Consultative Meeting of SN TsIK USSR that was convened on 04-05.01.1936: “That is why we must take special care of Gypsies as the most backward in the past” (GARF, f. P 3316, op. 28, d. 794, l. 77).

For the sake of truth, it should be noted that this characteristic of the past position of Gypsies is quite controversial (to put it mildly). Under the Russian Empire, Gypsies were not at the lowest levels of social structure at all. Firstly, as already Nikolay Stieber pointed out: “According to our legislation, the Gypsies are not singled out as a special tribe, nor as a special class, they are not even included anywhere in the composition of ‘inorodtsy’ (inorodtsy, meaning ‘foreign-born people’, was a special category-defining many subjugated peoples in the Russian Empire, with more or less limited civil rights – authors note)” (Штибер, 1895, p. 550). Secondly, in the complex structure of the Russian Empire, the majority of Gypsies in the 19th century (including nomads) were assigned to the categories of ‘state peasants’ and ‘meshchane’ (city dweller, small producers). In modern language, this can be expressed approximately as belonging to ‘lower middle class’ and ‘upper lower class’. A relatively small number of Gypsies (the so-called musician elite in the big cities) even registered at the lower levels in the upper merchants’ estate. The main problem for the authorities in the Russian Empire, which determined its overall policy towards the Gypsies, was how to get them to fulfill their tax obligations as members of certain estates (a task at which successes were negligible).

In early Soviet times, the social position of the Roma was not unambiguous and in many cases was determined by a particular context. In this regard, particularly noteworthy is the letter to Nikolay Pankov written by Lyuba Mikholažhina (who had graduated from the Gypsy Pedagogical College), who went to work in a local (non-Gypsy) school in the Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic. What makes this letter interesting are the thoughts of the newly-created Gypsy intelligentsia and their social positions within the Soviet realities:

I strongly dislike those ... who not only do not help their nation but also give it up. I managed to reach the level of the Russians and to prove that we do have abilities too. Now I am working in the Caucasus and not among my Gypsies. [...] What made me come here is that I wanted to learn about the life of the Caucasian people. It is very difficult and dangerous to live here. For example, an inspector was murdered today up in the mountains on his way to our regional centre Vedeno. There are many such occurrences here: murders, robberies, raped girls thrown down from the high banks into the river. Going out in the yard at

night ... is dangerous because somebody may hit you on the head with a stone. They [the local Chechens – authors note] hate the Russians and treat us as conquerors. They have no idea about the existence of Gypsies and think that I am Russian. (Друц & Гесслер, 1990, pp. 301-302)

It can look strange at first glance, but in some cases, Gypsies could be on the other side of the barricade, on the side of the 'invaders', seen in post-colonial discourse. This is not something unique in the history of the Gypsies: it would be enough to think of the Calon Gypsy slave traders of the 18th century in Brazil (Fotta, 2018).

To be able to properly understand the reasons that determine the place of the Gypsies in the common line of the nationalities policy of the Soviet state during the interwar period, different factors must be taken into account. First of all, these are demographic data, and more specifically, the number of Gypsies in the USSR at that time.

The population census in the USSR in 1926 reported 61,234 Gypsies (plus 31 'Bosha', i.e. *Lom*, who lived in the Caucasus, who were considered a separate nationality), of whom 12,823 lived in cities and 48,411 in villages (Всесоюзная перепись, 1926). The census recorded Gypsies according to their residence, and because at that time permanently settled Gypsies in villages were relatively little and only in some regions, it can be assumed that the majority of Roma registered as living in villages were nomads. The total population of the USSR was 146,637,530 people, i.e. Gypsies represented about 0.42 per cent of this population and therefore occupied 44th place in the ranking of nationalities in the USSR in their numbers.

The Census of the Population in the USSR in 1939 reported 88,242 Gypsies (Всесоюзная перепись, 1939). With a total number of the entire population of the USSR 170,557,093, Roma represented about 0.05% of it and placed in the 43rd place in the ranking of nationalities in the USSR by their size (i.e. the changes from the 1926 data were insignificant).

As discussed above, the VSTs' leadership in the 1920s disputed this data and claimed that the number of Gypsies was significantly higher, indicating different figures – most often around 500,000, also 600,000 and even 800,000 (GARF, f. P 393, op. 43 A, d. 1763, l. 80; f. A 259, op. 96, d. 4233, l. 22; f. P 3316, op. 17, d. 188, l. 3). The activists pointed out two main arguments in this regard. The first was that in the Census many Gypsies self-identified as Romanians, Hungarians, Bulgarians, etc. because they had foreign passports. This is quite misleading because, in the Census, all foreign nationals were accounted for by their nationality, not by their ethnicity; and those Gypsies who were foreigners (mainly *Kelderari* and *Lovari*) could not be counted in the total number of Gypsies. The second argument for claiming higher numbers was that Gypsies could be covered by the Census because they were not domiciled. This argument is not convincing enough because Gypsy camps were usually on the outskirts of the settlements and thus were easily covered by census takers. Most probably not all Gypsies were covered by the census but they were hardly enough to significantly alter the total number. Besides, it should be borne in mind that, at that time, Gypsies as a whole were clearly distinguished from their surrounding

population, not only in appearance but also in their traditional clothing (or some elements of it) used by the majority of them, and could hardly mislead the census takers, even if they wished to do so. Thus, even with the widest acceptance of all the inaccuracies and incompleteness admitted in the Census of 1926 and 1939, the real share of Gypsies from the total population of the USSR in the interwar period could not exceed 0.1%.

Given the real number of Gypsies in the early USSR, one can also evaluate how effective the Soviet policy toward them actually was. The Soviet archives contain a wealth of information about Gypsies with arranged employment (in Gypsy kolkhozes and artels, as well as working in various fields of production), which cannot be analysed here, so we will give as an example only the summarised data obtained as a result of a special study organised by the ON VTsIK in 1936: of the 6,220 Gypsy families living in the USSR, 1,100 were organised in the Gypsy kolkhozes, and 1,020 worked in the Gypsy artels and production (GARF, f. P 1235, op. 130, d. 5). It is striking, however, that another study, conducted at almost the same time (1936-1937) and organised by the VPK, reported quite different data – 1,425 families in 45 Gypsy kolkhozes, out of a total of 9,047 Gypsy families (Платунов, 1976, p. 271). Comparing these data with others (e.g. the number of Gypsy families in individual kolkhozes), as well as with the total number of Gypsies in the USSR at that time, it is clear that the share of Gypsies not covered by Soviet politics (mostly nomads) was quite high.

In this situation, when Gypsies appear to be a very small proportion of the total population of the USSR and their economic importance to the Soviet state was even smaller, it is only natural that in the general context of Soviet policy during the interwar period the 'Gypsy issue' occupied quite an insignificant place. The USSR during this period solved extremely important internal and external political tasks, and the problems of the Gypsies were very far in the periphery of the state policy. In this context, it seems more than strange to claim that "the Bolsheviks viewed the Romani population of the Soviet Union with dread" (O'Keefe, 2019), especially given that it was a Party that was not afraid to oppose the entire "old world" in the name of his ideals (Slezkine, 2017). The real attitude to the Gypsy issue of the VKP (b) is most clearly shown by the fact that for the entire period of the early USSR this topic was not discussed even once at a meeting of the Politburo of TsK VKP(b), which was the highest Party and state authority, especially given that at that time the Politburo was discussing thousands of the most diverse (and insignificant, from today's point of view) issues. In fact, the Gypsies in the entire history of the USSR were mentioned only once (sic!) at such a high level. It was in 1956 when, at a meeting of the Presidium of the TsK KPSS (an analogue of the Politburo at that time), the issue of their sedentarisation was decided (Фурсенко, 2003, p. 161). Furthermore, as mentioned above, in the Decree *On the Reorganisation of National Schools* of the Orgburo of the TsK VKP(b) from 1938, which is an important starting point in the turn in Soviet national policy, the "German, Finnish, Polish, Latvian, English, Greek, Estonian, Ingrian, Veps, Chinese, etc." schools are explicitly mentioned, but not the Gypsy schools (about whose existence Narkompros reminisces about half a year later).

The logical question here must be why the Soviet state paid so much attention to Gypsies and go to so much effort to integrate them into the “new life”. The answer here is in two dimensions, which are not mutually exclusive but, on the contrary, mutually compatible.

On the one hand, Gypsies are by no means a particular exception to the general discourse of the leading Soviet national politics during this period. The declared basic principles of this policy were not just propaganda slogans without real coverage; and the number of established national territorial-administrative units at different levels in the early USSR (more specifically, until the turn in the 1930s) is impressive. In addition to the Union and Autonomous Republics and National Autonomous Okrugs and Oblasts, there were also national rayons (about 250 in 1933), and national selsoviets in 1933-1934 being 5,400 and over 19,000 in 1937; every tenth rayon in the country was national one and also every eighth to the ninth was selsoviet (Вдовин, 1992, pp. 36-37).

On the other hand, Gypsies, unlike many other nationalities with similar demographic and economic parameters, had some clear advantages in terms of being able to be used by the Soviet state for propaganda purposes, both at home and abroad. The proof of this are the dozens of articles in the central and local press in the USSR itself, and even more in various countries around the world. Some authors overestimated this propaganda aspect as the most important reason for the Soviet policy towards the Gypsies (Деметер et al., 2000, pp. 206-207). There is no reason for such interpretation because the attitude towards them was within the framework of the common nationalities policy during this period which was no different from the attitude towards all other nationalities. It is true, however, that the examples of changes in the lives of Gypsies in the USSR would have been much more comprehensible to the world, where Gypsies were known as a people, while only a very limited circle of people would have heard about the dozens of other nationalities in the USSR, even within the country, not to mention abroad. This propaganda effect should not be overestimated, because these articles, and especially those abroad, were either in the pro-communist press or rather attributed to the ‘Curiosities’ headings; this attitude was also valid in cases where other forms of mass propaganda are sought, e.g. in the distribution of the film *The Last Gypsy Camp* starring Lyalya Chernaya in the United States. Nevertheless, though limited, this effect was visible. Of course, in spite of this, hardly anyone in the Soviet leadership had hoped that the example of Gypsies in the Soviet Union will contribute substantially to the expected ‘World Proletarian Revolution’.

In their work with the Gypsies, the Soviet institutions applied the policy model common for other relatively small and dispersed nationalities, which did not have territorial-administrative structures (except at the lowest level), and first and foremost the Assyrians. On the recommendation of the ON VTsIK, the Statute of the VSTs was prepared following the model of the Statute of the Koreans in the USSR (GARF, f. P 1235, op. 119, d. 10, l. 17). In many cases, the documentation of the Gypsy organisation is stored together with that of the Assyrian organisation in the record-keeping of Soviet institutions (GARF, f. P 3316, op. 64, d. 1637; NARB, f. 34/133c, op. 1, d. 727). In its activities already in the

1920s, the leadership of the VSTs has repeatedly called on the Soviet institutions to deal with the Gypsies, taking into account the experience of working with the Soviet Jews. However, this does not appear as a realistic request. Jews at that time were the 7th largest nationality in the USSR (Всесоюзная перепись населения, 1926; 1939) and in determining the national policy towards them played many other important factors (including international ones), which were absent in the case of the Gypsies. Therefore, the aspirations of Gypsy activists to be treated by the Soviet state as a nationality of the same order as the Jews were doomed to failure.

In general, state policy towards the Gypsies in the early USSR was a composite and inseparable segment of the common national policy of affirmative action. We prefer to use this term, 'Affirmative Action Policy' (Martin, 2001), because to us it is more general and more relevant to the substance of the process than the term 'korenizatsiya' used in recent years. The term 'korenizatsiya' is a creation of the Soviet bureaucratic language and reflects only part of the process (the appointment of indigenous representatives at the Soviet authorities on the ground). And, more importantly, in the case of the Gypsies, affirmative action policy most accurately expresses the attitude of the Soviet state towards them, while the term 'korenizatsiya' in the case of Gypsies, is meaningless because they did not have an administrative apparatus to be 'korenised'. The use of this term in relation to the Gypsies is in itself ridiculous, as they can in no way be defined as an 'indigenous people', as historically relative new migrants in the Russian Empire.

The many historical sources available clearly show that in many cases Soviet-era Gypsy politics not only fitted organically into the mainstream of the Soviet common affirmative action but the Gypsies often even enjoyed some additional privileges compared to many other nationalities. It has already been said that many of the decrees of Soviet institutions repeatedly equated the status of the Gypsies who wish to settle with that of the so-called resettlers (a privilege that almost no other nationality enjoyed). The same attitude occurred also in other fields: the numbers of publications of fictional and educational literature in Romani language were more numerous than in the languages of many other nationalities; the remission of loans to Gypsy kolkhozes and artels was almost a regular practice. Moreover, strange as it may sound, the privileged attitude towards Gypsies is visible even in the sphere of political repression.

The very topic of Stalinist repressions towards the Gypsies deserves a separate study, in which these repressions must be placed in the general context of mass terror during this era to reveal to which extent they were ethnically motivated. To say it in other words, it is necessary to specify whether the Gypsies were repressed as members of a particular community or as 'ordinary' Soviet citizens. Here we will only briefly state that the Gypsy case is, if not unique to Soviet realities, at least one of the few exceptions. Unlike the general practice, when huge sections of the new national elites, created by the Soviet state, were annihilated during the repressions of the 1930s, Gypsy activists as a whole (with some controversial exceptions, which will be discussed below) did not fall victims to these reprisals. Only some of them received a surprisingly minor punishment, as for instance the already mentioned case of Andrey Taranov, who after two failures (as the

head of the VSTs and of the journal *Nevo drom*) was punished by being sent to work for a short time to at a low-level nomenclature position in Kyrgyzstan.

We can consider the case of Georgiy Lebedev as one of the few exceptions in this regard, although the case is not entirely clear. Georgiy Lebedev was one of the founders of VSTs, after which he was appointed to a leadership position at the Theatre Romen, determined to exercise the 'political leadership' of the theatre (GARF, f. P 1235, op. 123, d. 28, l. 183). In 1933, on several public events repeatedly organised by the Moscow city authorities, severe political charges were raised towards him (Ibid., l. 98-99, 183-187). In the end, however, Georgiy Lebedev was convicted on charges of criminal nature, which led to a relatively light sentence. The widespread practice at that time was the opposite: to shape criminal offenses as political, which resulted in much more severe penalties. In addition to Georgiy Lebedev, a few more young actors of the theatre were sentenced with criminal offenses, but Theatre Romen continued to exist. A comparison with the fate of the Latvian State Theatre *Skatuve* in Moscow shows radically different results in a similar situation: in 1937 the theatre was closed down, the entire staff of the theatre arrested, 32 people were shot dead and the rest were sent to GULAG.

The lists of members of the VKP(b), victims of political repression in the 1930s, include the names of only two people who indicated their nationality as 'Gypsy'. The first of these was Grigoriy Lutsenko from Kiev (1906-1937), sent to the GULAG camps on charges of Trotskyism, where he was again convicted and shot. Lutsenko was a teacher of Marxism-Leninism and there is no information about him having any activity in the field of Gypsy activism. The second case, which is more complicated, is of Velya Pashun, who wrote under an alias Volodimir Zorin (born in 1904 in Bessarabia, shot dead in 1937 in Kharkiv), a participant in the Civil War, a member of the VKP(b) since 1919, graduated from a High Party school for leadership training, a journalist in the *Vesti* (News) newspaper, and a writer, author of several collections of short stories and stories about the Civil War. He is the author of an article on Gypsy-topic in the press (Зорин, 1927), as well as of the books titled *Rom*, mentioned above. The interesting question here, to which we have no logical answer, is why, despite this impressive (by Soviet standards of the time) biography and education, he was attracted neither to the VSTs nor to central Soviet institutions or local Ukrainian governments to work with Gypsies, especially given the apparent shortage of trained personnel in this area.

Unclear remains only the case of Averyan Voytsehovskiy from Leningrad, whom some authors pointed as a victim of political repression among Gypsy activists (Калинин, 2005, p. 38; Kenrick, 2007, p. 260-261). The lists of victims of political repression, however, lack a person with that name; it is possible for various reasons (e.g. a conviction for a criminal article, an error in documentation, loss of documents, etc.) that his name is not included in these lists.

There are other personalities involved in Gypsy activism whose fate is almost unknown. In April 1926, preparatory work began in Kazak ASSR (the official name at the time) for the establishment of the Gypsy kolkhoz 'Put' Stalina' (Stalin's Way) (GARF, f. P 1235, op. 123, d. 27, p. 63). In 1927, 27 nomadic groups united into the National kolkhoz

in the Alma-Ata rayon (Ibid., l. 150; Платунов, 1976, pp. 265-266). This was, in fact, the first Gypsy kolkhoz in the USSR; it was established on the initiative of a "Gypsy Order Holder", A. I. Vishnevsky. He was a holder of the Order of the Red Banner (GARF, f. P 1235, op. 123, d. 27, l. 273-274), the highest Soviet order at the time, awarded to the heroes of the Civil War. Unfortunately, there is no more information about A. I. Vishnevsky and, when in 1931 the collective farm was moved to Kyrgyz ASSR, the sources already indicate as its chairman the "Comrade Tsiulsky (a Gypsy)", and the kolkhoz is already mixed, dominated by Russian families (Ibid.).

It is not possible to discuss the very topic of Stalinist repressions without mentioning the most often quoted case in this regard, especially after publications of the respective documents of NKVD (Поболь & Полян, 2005, pp. 49-50). This refers to the mass deportation of "foreign Gypsies" (this is the term used in the documentation) from the vicinity of Moscow, about which detailed description can be found in the archives of the NKVD. In the period from June 28 to July 9, 1932, 1,008 Gypsy families (or a total of 5,470 people) were sent to the city of Tomsk, in the then West Siberian region, with five special trains. The Gypsies had to be resettled there in separate Gypsy national settlements. The deportees took with them all their belongings, including 338 horses and 2 cows; on the way, they were provided with hot food, medical care, and fodder for the animals (GARF, F. P 9479. op. 1, d. 19, l. 7).

The deportation of "foreign Gypsies" (i.e. supposedly those Gypsies who had foreign passports) was not a special anti-Gypsy event, but part of the general action of the authorities to cleanse the capital from the so-called 'declassed elements' by virtue of the Resolution of the SNK USSR On the Organisation of Labour Settlements of the OGPU of April 20, 1933 (GARF, f. R 5446, op. 57, d. 24. pp. 2-12). The enlisting of the deported Gypsies to this category, however, was not made on an ethnic base, but in accordance with the existence of permanent registration and personal passports. Thus, it turns out that the real 'foreign Gypsies' (mainly *Kelderari*), who had lived in Moscow for a long time, and where they created their own artels, were not subject to deportation. However, Gypsies from different groups, who led a nomadic way of life, were (Бессонов, 2002b, pp. 2-3).

In the spring of 1933, numerous Gypsy camps moved in the vicinity of Moscow. This was a consequence of the adoption of the Decree of the TsIK and SNK USSR of 27.12.1932 on the Establishment of a Unified Passport System in the USSR and Mandatory Registration of Passports. As passports were issued only to limited categories of citizens, large numbers of Gypsies (without residences and nomadic) were deprived of the opportunity to obtain them. The situation was further complicated by the acute shortage of food products due to the mass collectivisation of agriculture, which led to the introduction of a card system in 1931, from which large sections of the population (including the majority of Gypsies) were excluded. At the same time, in 1932, the restriction for settlement in several cities was introduced, which included Moscow, Leningrad, Minsk, Kharkov, Kiev, as well as other large cities, which were privileged in the supply of food.

According to the OGPU documentation in the Western Siberian kray (GARF, f. П 3, op. 1, d. 540a, l. 51-53), from the spring of 1933 until August 7th of the same year, a total of

119,426 “labour settlers” (this was the official term used at the time) were deported. The vast majority of these deportees were victims of the mass collectivisation of agriculture (the so-called *kulaks*). In addition to these, were those separated as special categories, such as ‘recidivists’ and ‘declassified elements’ (a total of 20,940 people) and Gypsies (a total of 5,651 people). The two separate categories of ‘labour settlers’ – ‘recidivists’ and ‘declassified elements’ on the one hand, and Gypsies, on the other hand – are clearly distinguished and do not overlap. The latter clarification is important because in some publications (e.g. Courtois et al., 1999) these two categories are not clearly distinguished when describing this deportation, which leaves the door open for interpretation.

The Gypsies deported from Moscow were lodged in the settlement designated for them, which no longer exists today. It was a village called Yevstigneevka, which was located in the former Pyshkino-Troitsky (now Pervomaisky) rayon of today’s Tomsk region, on the banks of the river Chichka-Yul (За советскую науки, 1991, p. 3; Неволин, 2014, p. 54). Living conditions there were hard, local authorities failed to prepare accommodation, thus the new settlers lived in dugouts (several barracks were built later). The Gypsies were not very ethnically enthusiastic about their settlement, and because the regime was not particularly strict (or because of other reasons) the guards turned a blind eye to escapes and “already in the autumn of 1933, this contingent of labour settlers virtually ceased to exist since almost all the Gypsies fled; no indication was found in the documents of the measures taken to return them to the place of deportation” (Земсков, 2014: p. 87). Sneaking through the taiga and overcoming many difficulties along the way (many memories of this are preserved), the fugitives managed to reach the European parts of the USSR.

Another interesting issue that also deserves attention is the domestic and international dimensions of Gypsy activism during the interwar period. In particular, this includes the attitude of Gypsy activists, on the one hand, to the communities included in the category Gypsies (others than Roma) living in the Republics of the USSR, and, on the other hand, to Gypsies living abroad. In the first case, these are the *Lom* (referred to as *Bosha*) and the *Dom* (referred to as *Garachi*) living in the Caucasus, as well as the diverse communities living in Central Asia, referred to collectively as *Lyuli*. In general, Gypsy activists considered all these communities to be Gypsies, especially when they needed to underline high numbers of the Gypsy population in the USSR (Романы зоря, 1927, p. 34; GARF, f. P 3316, op. 28, d. 793) but, in fact, they carried out no activity among them. However, an important factor determining activities or lack thereof in this regard was the policy of the local authorities in the Republics to all these communities.

Series of documents including correspondence between the Secretariat of the Presidium of the USSR and the TsIKs in the respective Republics (RSFSR, Ukrainian SSR, Belarussian SSR, Transcaucasian SSR, Uzbek SSR, and Turkmen SSR) on the implementation of the Decree of TsIK and SNK USSR from October 1, 1926, *On measures to facilitate the transition of nomadic Gypsies to a settled way of life*, reveal striking details in this direction. On March 1, 1927, the Armenian USSR reported that the Gypsy nomads had obtained land in Novo-Mykolaivka, Chatkran, and Sagmosavan, but this is the only

evidence of this sort. From here on, all three republics (Azerbaijan SSR, Armenian SSR, and Georgian SSR), united in Transcaucasian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic, as well as Turkmen SSR, responded to all questions from Moscow concerning the allocation of land to nomadic Gypsies who expressed a wish to be settled uniformly: in the Republic, there were no nomadic Gypsies who wanted to settle, no applications were received from Gypsies for land allocation, etc. Only more evasive was the response from the Uzbek SSR. The authorities there explained the specificity of the *Lyuli* and declared that they were working on moving with the matter (GARF, f. P 3316, op. 19, d. 588).

The situation in the Uzbek SSR and the newly established, in 1929, Tajik SSR, however, gradually changed, and Gypsy kolkhozes and artels started to be created (Назаров, 1969; Marushiakova & Popov, 2016d). Furthermore, even a local activist elite began to emerge, albeit in a relatively small number, comprising mainly the chairmen of the kolkhozes and artels, as well as individuals who have received higher public positions. Such was Mizrab Mahmudov from the Kokand region, a member of the TsIK of the USSR of Uzbekistan and the created *Governmental Committee for Land Allocation to Gypsies* (Назаров, 1969, pp. 120–121). However, there is no historical evidence of any attempts for contact and coordination between Gypsy activists in Moscow and those in Central Asia.

In practice, Gypsy activism in the USSR was confined mainly within the RSFSR, Ukrainian SSR, and Byelorussian SSR, in the frames of the large Roma community, and particularly among the subdivisions of *Ruska Roma* and *Servi* (possibly locally also *Vlaxi* from southern Russia and region along Volga river). Representatives of *Kelderari* and *Lovari* (often referred to as *Vlax Rom* by Western authors, which is not an adequate designation in the case of the USSR and the post-Soviet space, where this term is not used by members of these groups) were involved mainly in the creation of the Gypsy artels in cities, but their role in Gypsy activism during the interwar period was more or less ambiguous.

From a more global perspective, Gypsy activism in the early USSR was actually limited within the country. As mentioned above, already on the 1st of May Manifestation of 1923 on the Red Square, the Gypsy activists raised the slogan “Gypsies of the world, unite!”; the same text in Romani language (a paraphrase of the famous slogan of the Communist Manifesto) was written on the membership cards of the VSTs. In practice, however, nothing beyond these public messages, intended for internal use (within the USSR), happened. Of course, Gypsy activists were aware of the existence of their fellow ethnics abroad and published many materials about them both in Gypsy journals and in the central, mainstream press. However, these materials were not aimed at creating an international Gypsy movement but were presented in another (rather propagandistic) sense, and contained mainly examples of the persecution and tragic plight of the Gypsies under capitalism. Another topic reflected in the press was highlighting the influence of communist ideology on Gypsies abroad, such as the example of Gypsy musicians from Medzev (at that time part of Czechoslovakia), who were members of the local Communist Party, and refused to play music in the venues after learning about Lenin's death (Рабочая Москва, 1928, p. 2). According to the Soviet ideology and politics of that time, all nationalities issues (including the Gypsy problems) would be resolved in the

way of the class struggle of the future world proletarian revolution, and Gypsy activists remained within this general ideological line; for them, the movement for civic emancipation was restricted within the society of which they were an integral part.

In this context, the attitude of the Soviet state to the manifestations of the Roma civic emancipation movement in foreign countries becomes understandable, because it was evaluated primarily from the point of view of the potential that this movement held for the class struggle. A large article entitled “Gypsies: Two Worlds, Two Systems” described the preparation of the Gypsy Congress in Bucharest in 1933, highlighting the plight of the Gypsies in Romania, showing the changes in the life of the Gypsies in the USSR under the care of the Soviet state, and revealed the attempts of the bourgeoisie through their mercenaries, “one priest” (referring to Archimandrite Calinic Ion Popp Șerboianu) and “one journalist” (referring to Gheorghe A. Lazărescu-Lăzurică) to divert the Gypsies from their path towards the Proletarian Revolution, which alone can solve their problems; in the editorial, it was added a note that the police had dispersed the congress (Красная Бессарабия, 1933, pp. 19-22).

Gypsy activists in the USSR also wrote according to this discourse. An article in the journal *Nevo drom* exposed the ‘kulaks’ from the Gypsy artel in Moscow, who set up their criminal courts (referring to the traditional *Romani Kris*) and emphasised that the chairman of this ‘court’ is Toma (I. N. Mihai) and that the ‘illegal’ Gypsy King in Poland is from the same family (Нэво Дром, 1932b, p. 12): i.e. the suggestion was that the Gypsy Kings in Poland were also kulaks who exploited their working class fellows. In the case of the Gypsy King in Poland, the Soviet press reported about Gypsies in foreign countries but displayed a more reserved attitude, which, however, quickly turned negative. In 1934, an article was published in the central party organ, *Pravda* newspaper, announcing the coronation of “Gypsy King” Mikhail Kwiek I in Warsaw, which did not contain any evaluative comments (*Pravda*, 1934, p. 3). Only a year later, in 1935, during the trial of six members of a Gypsy artel in Moscow, one of the allegations against them was: “Through the Crowned King of the Polish Gypsies, the Kwiek’s organisation had made contact with the 2nd Division of the Polish General Staff and conducted intelligence activities in the USSR at the request of the latter.” (GARF, f. 10035, op. 1, d. 74091, l. 188). Thus, in the end, the Gypsy Kings in Poland were presented as enemies of the Soviet state – both according to class and geopolitical lines.

Seen in the general context of the affirmative action policy of the early USSR, it is clear that it facilitated the emergence and development of Gypsy activism. However, this process had its downsides too, because it presupposed the linking of Gypsy activism with the general leading tendencies in the development of the nationalities policy of the Soviet state, and hence its dependence on these trends. This was clearly evident in the case of the shift in Soviet national politics in the 1930s. The changes did not occur immediately; their first manifestations became visible already in 1932 within the processes of the so-called Ukrainisation (Martin, 2001) and became even clearer when the new Constitution of the USSR from 1936 omitted to mention national rayons and selsoviets (Вдовин, 2002). The endpoint was reached after the decisions on the reorganisation

of the national schools in 1938 and the liquidation of the national rayons and selsoviets in 1939 (see above). Naturally, the shift in the general nationalities policy reflected also in the policy towards Gypsies and Gypsy activism.

In the Soviet policy regarding the Gypsies in the early USSR, five leading priorities can be distinguished, namely: 1. Encouragement and assistance to nomadic Gypsies to pass to a sedentary lifestyle and to create national Gypsy kolkhozes; 2. Establishment and development of national Gypsy artels; 3. Creation and development of national Gypsy education; 4. Creation and development of national Gypsy literature and art; 5. Creation of a national Gypsy elite.

This policy has been scrutinised many times as different authors offer own interpretation and assessment of its general characteristics (see e.g. Друц & Гесслер, 1990; Crowe, 1994; Деметр et al., 2000; Калинин, 2005; Иващенко, 2011; Бугай, 2012; O’Keeffe, 2013). Without entering into details, we need to notice that in all previous research, no attention is paid to a very important point, namely the fact that the special policy towards Gypsies was only of minor importance in the frames of the general Soviet civil policy of the state. In this sense, for the Gypsies in the early USSR (and beyond) there was not only one (the special Gypsy policy) but also other social elevators and roads for social realisation. Therefore it is very difficult to determine what exactly was the impact of the Soviet state policy on the Gypsies’ lives in general. It was the two-dimensionality of the Soviet policy towards the Gypsies (as an integral part of Soviet society and as a separate nationality) that allowed the ordinary Gypsies to perceive the change of the overall paradigm in Soviet national politics in the second half of the 1930s without much upheaval (which was not the case of the activists). This change, which de facto puts an end to the overall national policy of affirmative action, was not a one-off act, but a process stretched over several years. It was not a radical and complete reversal, a number of the achievements of the previous nationalities policy have been preserved or modified according to the transformed realities and the initial stated aims were gradually realised (although sometimes in adjusted forms).

Sedentarisation of the Gypsy nomads was finalised two decades later (after the Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR from 1956), although the former nomads mostly settled in the cities and only small parts of them became peasants. The Gypsies in the conditions of the so-called “real socialism”, and even without national artels, eventually joined the “socially useful labour”, and this was valid even in cases when this was done under not entirely legal forms because they satisfied certain social deficits (Marushiakova & Popov, 2003, pp. 289-310). Although through the forms and mechanisms of general (and not special) education in individual Gypsy schools, the illiteracy of the Gypsies in the USSR, as a whole, was eliminated. One can argue a lot about the advantages and disadvantages of general and special education for Gypsy children, but nowhere in the world did education in segregated schools (or classes) lead to better results comparing with the general mainstream education.

In fact, the only area in which the turn in nationalities policy reflected negatively was the development of the Romani language and Gypsy national literature. By 1938, a

total of over 250 titles had been published in the Gypsy language (Русаков & Калинин, 2006, pp. 266-287; Shapoval, 2021); many of them (71 titles) are original works by Gypsy authors – fiction (32 titles), journalism (15 titles), textbooks and educational materials (24 titles), and the rest are translations into Romani of Russian and world literature, political and propaganda materials, practical manuals, popular publications, etc. This unique phenomenon in the history of the Gypsies was crossed out by the shift in nationalities policy. Sometimes in academic writings, preposterous statements can be met, such as “Romani literature and culture were unofficially banned” (Kozhanov & Makhotina, 2019), which simply do not fit the historical reality. Works by Roma authors were also published after the second World War until the collapse of the USSR in 1991, e.g. Alexander German’s collection of selected short stories and short stories has been published in two editions (Германю, 1960; 1962). Even in some cases, Roma literature books have been published print runs that were incredibly numerous for their time (and even more so than present-day), for example, the collections of children’s poems by Leksa Manush (Alexander Belugin) were published in 300,000 copies (Мануш, 1980; 1983), and the children’s book *The Little Star: Gypsy Folklore Kid’s Songs* (Мануш, 1976) were published in a circulation of 1,500,000 (sic!). Restrictions in the development of Roma literature in the USSR at that time were in another sphere – firstly, greatly reducing the number of publications of Roma authors (when compared with the period of the 1930s), and secondly, stopping publication in the Romani language, the only exception to this being the academic editions of Gypsy folklore (Кантя, 1970; Деметер & Деметер, 1981). So, we cannot say that the Roma literature of the early USSR ended in 1938; moreover, the collection of poems by Gypsy poets (Саткевич, 1974) includes works by authors of the 1930s as well as contemporary poets of the Roma, i.e. continuity in the development of Roma literature is undeniable. However, this development is no longer the same as in the early USSR; although new forms of Romani literature continue to emerge, it is no longer possible to speak about the development of the Romani language, which is a significant disadvantage in the development of any national literature as one of the main pillars of its national identity.

The situation with the Gypsy Theatre Romen after 1938 is somewhat similar, but at the same time quite different. It is commonly written that the Romani language was banned in the theatre’s repertoire and replaced with Russian, but this is not the most precise wording. It is more accurate to say that the performances were in two languages – Russian (used in stage dialogues) and Romani (in numerous songs, as well as in individual words and expressions). On the one hand, this approach stops the development of the Romani language but, on the other hand, it makes theatre performances much more accessible to the general public, which in turn raises the public prestige of Gypsy art and Gypsies in general.

Moreover, the Theatre Romen (along with the dozens of Gypsy music and dance groups created over the years by its artistic models) became the main pillar around which the Gypsy identity in the USSR was preserved and upgraded and their ethnoculture developed (even today in the post-Soviet space Gypsy music and dance folklore is entirely built

on its patterns). The research of the ideological basis and the pursued political aims of the Soviet state concerning the Theatre Romen (Lemon, 2000; O'Keefe, 2019) undoubtedly has its place in academic studies, but from today's point of view, these have all long been forgotten. What remains is the role and significance of Theatre Romen for the shaping and awareness of Gypsy identity. Whether this is an 'invented tradition' (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1992), and based on a certain ideological basis, is irrelevant because for the Gypsies themselves this tradition is the only one that really exists; whether this tradition is a product of an exotic approach to the Gypsies is also irrelevant because, from this point of view, it can be said that in practice they have long been part of a process of self-exoticisation (the same process, to some extent, also occurs among many other nations). The most recent confirmation of the extremely strong influence of the phenomenon of Theatre Romen that continues today even outside the former USSR is the case of the Hajde Te Khelas Dance Contest, announced by the European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture in 2020. The video, sent by Broumov, from the Czech Republic, not only includes a popular song from Theatre Romen's repertoire but is made in the overall style of the theatre, with the corresponding 'traditional' patterns of Gypsy women's costumes and dances; many other participants also used women's costumes based on this model (ERIAC, 2020). The latter is not a surprise, because of this type of theatrical women's costumes is considered 'traditional' and used by Romani music and dance ensembles throughout the region of Central and Southeast Europe, including even among Roma Muslims (Marushiakova & Popov, 2016c, p. 53). This shows, once again, that real life always turns out to be stronger than any academic interpretations and assessments because, in the end, 'authentic' is exactly what the Roma themselves accept as such.

A turn in the USSR nationalities policy was, in fact, a predetermined end of Gypsy activism during the interwar period. After the Second World War, the Gypsy activists had made many unsuccessful attempts to restore the pre-war policy towards the Gypsies (concerning the letters to high-level Soviet leaders, see above). All these letters plead for a return to the active policy of affirmative action towards the Gypsies during the interwar period (and, accordingly, raising the social position of the Gypsy activists themselves). These letters had a substantial result, and it was very quick. On the 5th October 1956, the Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR "On the Admission to Labour of the Gypsy Vagrants" was issued. But at first glance, it seems that Gypsy activists, after more than three decades, have finally been able to convince the Soviet state of the need to eradicate the nomadic way of life of the Gypsies. However, the ban on nomadism does not entail any other changes in the Gypsy policy. Thus, with one blow, the Soviet authorities deprived the Roma elite of its main argument (the need to fight the nomadic way of life), which they have constantly used in trying to convince the authorities of the need for pro-Gypsy policies.

The endpoint of all these attempts of the old Gypsy elite from the interwar period came with the letter of Nikolay Satkevich (graduate of the Gypsy Pedagogical College), entitled *Gypsy Problem in the Soviet Union*, written in 1964, to Anastas Mikoyan, President of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR (LANB, f. Николай Саткевич).

In his letter, Satkevich described the entire Soviet state's experience of working with Gypsies and proposed the creation of special boarding schools where Gypsy children will be educated. The answer was quick and unambiguous: "The experience of creating a special class of Roma children ... has not justified itself ... Parents spoke in favor of educating their children in mainstream education schools by place of residence" (Ibid). Memories of contemporaries also confirm that Satkevich's attempts to establish a special Gypsy boarding school have been met with strong resistance by Roma women who accused him publicly of wanting to take away their children. This led to a situation in which the community rejected the ideas of its own elite and made this elite entirely meaningless because community representatives whose ideas are not supported by their community cannot be defined as an elite. In its place, a new, quite different Gypsy elite began to emerge, the predominant part of which is connected in one way or another with the Theatre Romen: i.e. this new elite, although without direct continuity with the old one, still builds on what was achieved in the early USSR.

As it is clear from all that has been said thus far, the attempts of the Gypsy elite formed in the 1920s and 1930s in the early USSR to become an active subject in the policy of the Soviet state regarding Gypsies, through an active dialogue with the state institutions, ultimately proved to be unsuccessful. This was because the two sides of this dialogue were from the very beginning in unequal positions, with one of them (the Soviet authorities) being the leading and determining one, and the other (the Gypsy elite) being placed in the former's dependence. Thus, in the end, Gypsy activism proved to be a loser in its relations with the Soviet state; however, whether the Gypsy community itself was a loser or a gainer, in this case, is a question that deserves another, separate study.

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