PRISON MUSEUMS IN SOVIET RUSSIA IN THE 1920S

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Abstract: The article concerns the Soviet prison museums that were opened in the 1920s and attached to scientific establishments or places of confinement. Their appearance was connected to the institutionalisation of criminological research at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries, and to the growing interest in the 'criminal world' and prison culture. Thanks to the Soviet prison reforms of 1918–1930, and the emergence of Soviet criminology, this tendency to collect and exhibit 'artefacts' from criminals and convicts received a new ideological framework. The Soviet prison museum was not only a scientific establishment, but had wider aims of education and agitation. Exhibitions in such museums conveyed the ideology of early Soviet prison reform. They stressed the revolutionary and 'emancipatory' character of the Soviet prison system, opposing it to 'repressive' imperial and capitalist prisons. The artefacts and norms of the prison subculture were presented in the museum exhibitions as attributes of an obsolete 'prison way of life' which hindered the 're-education' of prisoners. At the same time, the exhibition of products of prison workshops and the prisoners' 'amateur activities' (newspapers or creative work) were intended to demonstrate the 'progressive' character of Soviet places of correctional labour, which reformed criminals by means of work and education. This is the first time that Soviet prison museums have been examined in the historical literature. The research is based on documents from the State Archive of the Russian Federation and personal archives at the Russian State Library and the National Library of Russia, as well as on published sources (academic publications, articles in newspapers and journals, and museum guidebooks).

Keywords: criminological museums, prison museums, prison exhibition, prison reform, Soviet Russia, prison, prisoners.

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The article concerns the Soviet prison museums that were opened in the 1920s and attached to scientific establishments or places of confinement. Their appearance was connected to the institutionalisation of criminological research at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries, and to the growing interest in the 'criminal world' and prison culture. Thanks to the Soviet prison reforms of 1918–1930, and the emergence of Soviet criminology, this tendency to collect and exhibit 'artefacts' from criminals and convicts received a new ideological framework. The Soviet prison museum was not only a scientific establishment, but had wider aims of education and agitation. Exhibitions in such museums conveyed the ideology of early Soviet prison reform. They stressed the revolutionary and 'emancipatory' character of the Soviet prison system, opposing it to 'repressive' imperial and capitalist prisons. The artefacts and norms of the prison subculture were presented in the museum exhibitions as attributes of an obsolete 'prison way of life' which hindered the 're-education' of prisoners. At the same time, the exhibition of products of prison workshops and the prisoners' 'amateur activities' (newspapers or creative work) were intended to demonstrate the 'progressive' character of Soviet places of correctional labour, which reformed criminals by means of work and education. This is the first time that Soviet prison museums have been examined in the historical literature. The research is based on documents from the State Archive of the Russian Federation and personal archives at the Russian State Library and the National Library of Russia, as well as on published sources (academic publications, articles in newspapers and journals, and museum guidebooks).

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In 1923, a prison museum was opened at the Vyatka House of Correction. It functioned as part of a working prison, and the prisoners themselves took part in setting it up. The following year a similar museum was opened at the Pskov House of Correction, and in 1925 a central prison museum was organised at the State Institute for the Study of Crime and Criminals. In October 1928, an All-Union Penal Exhibition took place in Moscow. It was the largest public event to represent the early Soviet prison reform.

With what was the organisation of such museums and exhibitions connected? In this article I would like to answer that question and explain the emergence of this phenomenon from two perspectives. Basing their approach on the tradition of criminological museums with their scholarly interest in 'criminality', Soviet prison museums at the same time conveyed the ideology of prison reform, which declared the superiority of the Soviet prison system to the prerevolutionary and 'capitalist' ones.

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After the October Revolution, the Bolsheviks proclaimed the abolition of the imperial prison and the construction of a completely new correctional system. Beginning in 1918 with the first experiments of the People's Commissariat of Justice, Soviet prison reforms entered their active phase after the publication of the correctional labour codex of 1924, and continued until 1930 [Solomon 1980; Jakobson 1993; Wimberg 1996]. The platform of reforms is still, however, not well known, being overshadowed by the Gulag. It presupposed quite a radical programme, and was intended to embody the avant-garde ideas of world prison theory: a correctional approach and an emphasis on the resocialisation of the convicts, the introduction of a so-called progressive system of serving sentences, and different types of correctional institutions for each category of prisoners. However, it is also important to stress the ideological subtext of the reforms. Positioning itself as an alternative to the 'capitalist' prison system, the Soviet prison was intended to replace the oppressed captive of the time of the tsars with a prisoner who was acquiring a sense of responsibility and being integrated into the new socialist society.

One distinctive feature of the early Soviet discourse on crime and punishment was its 'antiprison rhetoric'. In legislation, in the works of jurists and in the press a rejection of the attributes of the old prison and its terminology ('prison', 'convict', 'punishment cell'), of stigmatising practices, and even of prison discipline, was consistently stressed. Closely connected with this was the motif that the tsar's 'house of the dead', even if it must continue to exist, must exist as a museum or a memorial to the fallen regime. This was the ideology represented by the exhibits of the prison museums.

The term 'prison museum' used in the title to this article has rather a broad meaning. It should be explained that the museums that I am examining here have little in common with today's museums opened in former correctional facilities and connected with so-called 'dark tourism', or with the modern memorial museums that commemorate places of political repression [Ross 2012; Staf 2019: 792–793]. Among the latter we may include the Leningrad Museum of the Revolution, or the Central Museum of Penal Servitude and Exile in Moscow, which were opened in the 1920s [*Muzei i dostoprimechatelnosti Moskvy* 1926: 210; *Leningrad…* 1931: 359; *Moskva…* 1935: 66–67].[1] However, this article is about a different category of museums, which

[1] The best-known prisons of the imperial period, the places where political prisoners had been incarcerated, were turned into branches of the Leningrad Museum of the Revolution: the Peter and Paul Fortress received the status of a museum in 1925, the Shlisselburg Fortress in 1928. The Central Museum of Penal Servitude and Exile, run by the All-Union Society of Political Prisoners and Exiles in Moscow, was operational from 1926, and possibly earlier.

have hardly been mentioned in the historical literature.[1] For convenience I shall call them *prison museums*, while remaining aware of the differences between the different types, the different contexts in which they were set up and for which they were intended, and the different principles of collecting exhibits and exhibiting them. In this last sense too, the prisons examined in this article were not identical. The museums at Vyatka and Pskov were officially termed *prison museums*, were organised thanks to a grass-roots initiative, with involvement of prisoners, and had primarily informative and 'educational' purposes. The Museum of the State Institute for the Study of Crime and Criminals was called a *correctional labour* or *penitentiary museum*, and its functions varied from the scientific to the practical (cataloguing the items made by prison labour) and educational (organising the prison exhibition of 1928). The scientific museums opened at the regional criminological offices all over the USSR in the 1920s were intended for research purposes and for training specialists, but in some cases might be reminiscent of the Vyatka Prison Museum. These museums and exhibitions were united by the fact that they served as a sort of 'shop window' for the early Soviet prison reform.

The aim of this article is to examine the context and circumstances in which Soviet prison museums came into being and functioned, so as to show that in postrevolutionary Russia the model of a criminological museum was transformed into an establishment for agitation. I shall in particular demonstrate how the scholarly research practice of collecting criminological artefacts, which began at the end of the nineteenth century, acquired ideological functions in the early Soviet context.

Unfortunately, it is not known where these museums' archives and collections are, nor indeed whether they have survived at all. The present research is based on documents located in the State Archive of the Russian Federation, the Central State Archive of the City of Moscow and the archival collections of the Russian State Library and the National Library of Russia, as well as published sources: academic publications, articles in the press, and museum handbooks and guidebooks.

The article has three parts. The first section examines the appearance of criminological museums at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The second part deals with the early Soviet prison museums opened at the places of detention. Finally, the third section examines how these museums' collections were exhibited at the All-Union Penal Exhibition of 1928: in this case I shall be

[1] An exception is the mention of prison museums in E. M. Wimberg's dissertation on Soviet penal policy of the 1920s [Wimberg 1996: 134–135].

interested in the exhibition narrative and how it conveyed the ideology of prison reform.

Criminological museums

Criminological museums came into being at the same time as positivist criminology at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In this case I understand by 'criminological' also the scientific and 'cabinet' museums whose collections were used for research and training purposes and to represent various forms of deviancy [Regener 2003].[1] Like other scientific museums, the genealogy of criminological museums may be traced back to the so-called cabinets of curiosities (*Wunderkammer*, *Kunstkammer*), the encyclopaedic collections of objects that appeared in Renaissance Europe in the sixteenth century [Ystehede 2016]. Since criminal anthropology claimed to follow the methodology of the natural sciences and medicine, it was no accident that these museums reproduced to form of museums of the natural sciences with their systematisation of 'natural' objects [Ibid.]. It is important here also to indicate the wider context. The formation of new scientific disciplines in the nineteenth century led to the appearance of narrowly specialised collections, while the museum became a necessary attribute of science and scientific method. The phenomenon of the modern public museum came into being at the same time. In practically every European capital, museums of the natural sciences and ethnographical museums were opened, and world exhibitions aimed to demonstrate the might and attainments of the great powers.

The Italian psychiatrist Cesare Lombroso (1835–1909) is known not only for the controversial concept of 'innate criminality', but also his pioneering effort to treat criminals as 'natural' objects of study and analyse them using the 'objective' methods of anthropology and medicine. In Lombroso's thought, a 'criminal man' could be a 'museum object' in himself / herself, since (s)he illustrated characteristic anatomical, physiological and psychological features [Renneville 2014: 22]. This very fact made it necessary to collect and systematise related exhibits. Therefore Lombroso concentrated on collecting specific objects that could, in his opinion, represent one or another 'criminal type'.

Lombroso's famous collection, which he had assembled over several decades, was first shown to the public in 1884 at the *Esposizione generale italiana* in Turin [Montaldo 2013: 100]. An even fuller

[1] Even though such museums are sometimes called crime museums or criminal museums, I use the term 'criminological museums' in order to stress their 'scientific' (criminological) character, since the term 'crime museum / criminal museum' is used in the case of those museums and collections that were created not so much for scientific purposes as for entertainment.

exhibition was presented at the First Congress of Criminal Anthropology in Rome the following year: several dozen skulls, death masks, examples of tattoos, anthropological photographs and even the skeleton of a criminal [Ibid.: 100–101]. As a result, this collection formed the basis of the most famous criminological museum, the Museum of Psychiatry and Criminology, opened in Turin in 1889 and now known as the Museo di antropologia criminale Cesare Lombroso [Montaldo 2013; Gibson 2019: 232, 234–235].

At the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, criminological museums were opened at universities all over Europe and America: in Berlin, Dresden, Graz, Hamburg, London, Rome, Vienna, Buenos Aires, Prague and other cities. Naturally, many of the organisers did not accept Lombroso's concept and had other views on the selection of exhibits. Thus, the museum organised by the French criminologist Alexandre Lacassagne, a well-known opponent of Lombroso, at the Lyon University Institute of Forensic Pathology (Institut de médecine légale de Lyon), represented a 'museum of crime' rather than a 'museum of the criminal', and demonstrated sociological diagrams and the tools of crime [Knepper 2018: 62].

Such museums were also opened at university centres in the Russian Empire. After the International Prison Congress of 1890 at St Petersburg, the exhibits were transferred to St Petersburg University on the initiative of the jurist and prison specialist Ivan Foynitskiy. A Cabinet of Criminal Law, headed by Foynitskiy, was set up to preserve and systematise them. By 1896 the Cabinet's collection included up to a thousand objects: models of prisons, photographs, diagrams, the output of prison workshops, and so on [*Katalog kabineta…* 1896: III, 1]. In addition, the Central Prison Administration gave the cabinet objects that had gone out of use in prisons: branding irons for convicts (branding had been abolished in 1863), various instruments of corporal punishment and even an executioner's sword. Strictly speaking this was a prison rather than a criminological museum, and had little in common with Lombroso's museum either at the level of its concepts or at the level of its objects. In the mid-1920s this museum became part of the Leningrad Museum of the Revolution [TsGA Moskvy, collection 1609, box 7, folder 104, p. 20]. In 1905 the young jurist Mikhail Gernet (1874–1953) organised a museum of criminal law and criminality at Moscow University [FR RGB, collection 603, box 1, folder 16, p. 1]. The museum continued to exist after the revolution, and became the museum of criminology attached to the Law Department of the Faculty of Social Sciences of Moscow State University [Ibid., p. 2].[1]

[1] The subsequent fate of this museum collection is unknown. There is no information about its existence after the 1930s, which makes one suppose that it was closed. At present there is a museum (founded in 1980) attached to the Law Faculty.

This museum was open for external excursions (in 1927, for example, it had more than three hundred visitors) and had an extensive collection of several thousand exhibits, including over a thousand photographs, several dozen prison magazines and newspapers, albums of tattoos, prisoners' artefacts, and so on [TsGA Moskvy, collection 1609, box 7, folder 7, pp. 9–12; TsGA Moskvy, collection 1609, box 7, folder 104, pp. 15–21].

The 'discovery' of the criminal as an object of study produced a curious 'ethnographical' approach that was expressed in the description and collection of artefacts connected with the experience of imprisonment. It was supposed that the study of prison culture could give the key to understanding the psychology of the criminal. Enthusiasts (mostly jurists and psychiatrists) began to collect and study prisoners' cultural artefacts: tattoos and graffiti, folklore, examples of argot, and letters, drawings and other creative output. In 1888 Lombroso published his book *Palimsesti del carcere*, in which prison graffiti were reproduced and analysed [Gibson 2019: 232–233]. In 1896 the French psychiatrist Charles Perrier published *Les criminels* [Perrier 1900], presenting photographs, tattoos and examples of prison creativity. In 1926 the German psychiatrist and well-known collector of art brut Hans Prinzhorn published his book *Bildnerei der Gefangenen* [Prinzhorn 1926]. Similar publications came out in Russian. In 1929 Pavel Ivanovich Karpov (1873–?), a psychiatrist and member of staff at the State Institute for the Study of Crime and Criminals, who was also engaged in the collection of art produced by the mentally ill, published his book *Tvorchestvo zaklyuchennykh* (The Art of Prisoners) [Karpov 1929; Gavrilov 2005; 2013; Galtsova 2011]. This work was based on the study of drawings and sculptures from the collection of the Moscow State University criminological museum.

This tendency was developed further in Soviet Russia. A key role was played by the rapid and unprecedented institutionalisation of criminological research that took place over the period from 1918 to 1930 [Kowalsky 2009; Pryanishnikov et al. 2015: 18–33]. The State Institute for the Study of Crime and Criminals was organised in 1925 in Moscow under the patronage of the NKVD of the RSFSR, and became a centre for research and expertise of the Central Administration of Places of Detention. This institute united several regional criminological cabinets in Saratov, Rostov-on-Don, Leningrad and other cities. Museums were as a rule opened at such establishments. At the initiative of the jurist Aleksandr Zhizhilenko (1873–?), a museum was opened at the Leningrad criminological cabinet in 1927. Its collection included photographs of criminals, tools for burglary and murder weapons. The plan was further to expand the museum to give it a more 'penitentiary' character and collect examples of tattoos and jargon, art, prisoners' diaries,

newspapers, etc. ['V kriminologicheskom kabinete…' 1927; OR RNB, collection 283, box 1, folder 17, p. 1v]. It is known that the museum was in existence at least until 1933. The Museum of Criminal Investigation was functioning in Leningrad at the same time [*Leningrad…* 1931: 468]. Criminological museums were organised at the All-Ukrainian Cabinet for the Study of Crime and the Personality of the Criminal (in Odessa) and the section for criminal psychology of the Kyiv Scientific Research Institute of Forensic Expertise [FR RGB, collection 603, box 3, folder 19, p. 21; Zivert 1927: 839]. In 1929 the Belarusian Cabinet for the Study of Crime was planning to organise a museum of the life and art of prisoners. The categories of exhibits that the staff of the cabinet were collecting are instructive: artefacts made of wood, bread and bone; diaries, correspondence, printed newspapers and wall newspapers; pictures, etc. [Slupskiy 1929: 151].

All these museums were mainly intended for specialists and were scientific and educational in character: they were frequented by students and also by the staff of judicial, detective or penal institutions. Sometimes there might be excursions for the 'outside public' (as was the case in the criminological museums in Leningrad and Moscow), but they nevertheless remained narrowly specialised and were not on the popular excursion or museum routes of the second half of the 1920s.

Prison museums

Besides the criminological museums opened at the scientific cabinets, there was another category, prison museums attached to working places of imprisonment. It is known that at least two such museums were opened in the 1920s in Soviet Russia: in Vyatka (1923), and in Pskov (1924). Finally, in a category of its own, there was the museum of the State Institute for the Study of Crime and Criminals. I shall show later on that these prison museums transformed the model of the criminological museum: in assembling their collections they were pursuing not so much the aims of science (the study of crime and criminals) as those of education and agitation.

The prison museum at the Vyatka House of Correction was opened in 1923. The initiator of its creation was Yuri Bekhterev (1888–?), the head of its teaching and educational section[1]. The other organiser was a prisoner, Konstantin Ukhtomskiy, who, when Bekhterev was transferred to a post in Moscow, was appointed his successor as the head of the museum. The figure of Bekhterev should be mentioned separately, since he was to play one of the key roles in the early Soviet

[1] Yuri Bekhterev is not to be confused with the famous neurologist, Vladimir Bekhterev (1857–1927), the Psychoneurological Institute's founding director [Eds.].

prison reform, having in 1925 taken up the post of head of the cultural and education section of the Central Administration of Places of Detention.

Bekhterev was a graduate of the Faculty of Law of Kazan University (in 1910), after which he studied at the St Petersburg Psycho-neurological Institute. After the revolution of 1917, Bekhterev first became the chairman of the local congress of justices of the peace and of the district bureau of justice of Vyatka Governorate and in June 1921 he was appointed head of the teaching and education section of the inspectorate of places of detention of the administrative section of the Vyatka Governorate Executive Committee [GARF, collection R-393, box 86, folder 72].

While occupying this post, Bekhterev undertook a criminological investigation of the prisoners and took on the leadership of the journal of the Vyatka House of Correction *Za zheleznoy reshetkoy*. This was both a scientific publication, printing reviews and articles on criminology, and the prisoners' journal, where they published their own 'everyday' prose, journalism and poetry. The 'ethnographical' approach mentioned above also manifested itself here: an interest in prison life, the subcultures and everyday existence in the prison. The journal's aims were formulated as: 'demonstrating the output of prisoners' creativity in the most varied branches of human knowledge and art, studying questions of criminal anthropology and criminal policy with the friendly co-operation of the prisoners themselves and an account of the most striking phenomena of Russian prison life' ['[Za zheleznoy reshetkoy]' 1923: I].

At the same time, Bekhterev began to assemble a collection of items for exhibition. Keeping abreast of the current scholarly literature and periodicals, he was aware of the contemporary criminological museums abroad, though it is not known whether he had the opportunity to visit any of them. It is however evident that museums in Russia (in particular, Petrograd and Moscow) and abroad served him as models or points of orientation. As Bekhterev wrote as early as 1922, 'the collection of these exhibits <…> may provide very valuable material for the use of science, society and prison activists with the purpose of attaining the aims of the penal service as well as possible' [Yu. B. 1922: 15].

The first exhibition was organised within the framework of 'an evening of prison atmospherics', intended to 'evoke in the spectators images of the dark past in the sphere of prison life'. It exhibited works of art made by the prisoners in their workshops, and also drawings, diagrams and placards [Yu. B. 1922: 15]. As Bekhterev indicated, the aim of the exhibition was to 'acquaint wide sections of Vyatka society with what is being done at present in the Republic's correctional labour institutions' [Ibid.].

The formal reason for the organisation of the museum was that the administration had accumulated quite a large collection of home-made playing cards confiscated from the prisoners [Ukhtomskiy 1923: 28]. Besides these, the core of the collection was made up of specimens of prison tattoos (stencils and drawings) [Bekhterev 1924: 93]. It is interesting that an offer was made to the tattoo artists to set up a studio under the leadership of a professional artist [Ukhtomskiy 1923: 29–30]. Another group of exhibits was made up of 'cell artefacts', secretly made while prisoners were locked up in their cells [Ibid.]. As Ukhtomskiy remarked, while prisoners in the common cells made objects for everyday use or decoration (knives, razors, purses, soap dishes, salt cellars, beads, necklaces, rosaries, etc.), those in solitary confinement were more likely to make less practical objects:

He [the prisoner] *spent whole days smoothing down a stick in the form of a beautiful, thin, painstakingly carved spiral, or made a whole series of concentric rings turning about a common axis. Various tricks — puzzles made out of pine shavings and chips, various models of castles made without glue or nails, rattles, and so on strike one for the subtlety and meticulousness of the work and the pointlessness of the time and labour spent on them. For example, a prisoner in solitary will sit cross-legged with an object only distantly resembling a penknife in his hands, and spend whole days ruining his eyesight meticulously carving out of a pine log the microscopic feathers of a tiny dove with a duck's head, or modelling the figures of people and animals — often very attractive and lifelike — out of bread. <…> Everyone's attention is attracted by a pair of bast shoes so tiny that they will fit on a fingernail, which were made by a mad prisoner while he was being assessed in hospital. Looking at this completely insane work, one cannot help being struck by the subtlety and exactitude of its execution and the store of patience of which here, in the prison, particularly in solitary confinement, only a prisoner or a madman is capable* [Ukhtomskiy 1293: 30].

In addition, the museum exhibited a collection of prisoners' letters which had been seized by the censor or confiscated during searches, including letters from prisoners condemned to death, a collection of prison songs recorded by a circle studying prison life, and an album of photographs of people sentenced to penal servitude under the tsars, grouped according to the nature of their crimes [Bekhterev 1924: 93].

The Vyatka museum was visited by excursions of schoolchildren, workers and medical professionals. There was even, in January 1924, a delegation from the Governorate Congress of Soviets [Bekhterev 1924: 94; 'Vyatka…' 1924: 3]. The fact that the museum of the Vyatka House of Correction was open to the public was not unusual.

Although the practice of prison tours (visiting of model prisons) had its roots in the nineteenth century, in the Soviet Russia of the 1920s prison tourism grew to an unprecedented scale. Formally, anybody could visit a Soviet house of correction. As indicated in the commentaries to the exhibits of the Central Administration of Places of Detention for the exhibition of the All-Union Society for Cultural Ties with Foreign Countries on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the October Revolution, 'entry into Soviet places of detention is free to anyone who desires to visit them <…> every foreigner who comes to Russia, irrespective of his social or party position, is given the opportunity of examining any place of detention in detail' [GARF, collection R-4042, box 4, folder 158, p. 57]. At the same time, ordinary Soviet citizens also took part in excursions to places of detention. The leadership of the Central Administration of Places of Detention specially collected copies of visitors' responses, and attached great significance to the public image of the new correctional facilities.

The selection of exhibits shows that the Vyatka museum was following the model of the criminological museum. However, it is important to examine how the organisers of the museum themselves explained their aims. As Ukhtomskiy emphasised, the creation of the museum was necessary in order 'in a scholarly manner to record the life [of the prison and its inmates with its peculiar order] and <…> all its events and experiences' [Ukhtomskiy 1923: 28]. Other authors also stress the pragmatic necessity of studying the artefacts of 'prison culture'. As the art historian Karpov explained, prisoners' art must be studied to 'identify the psychological peculiarities' of criminals and to understand 'the conditions that give rise to crime' and take measures 'to eliminate the causes of crime' and reform the criminals [Karpov 1929: 3]. The author of an article published in *K trudovomu obshchezhitiyu*, the prisoners' newspaper of the Taganka House of Detention in Moscow, wrote more or less the same thing: 'The study of prisoners' art helps to study more deeply and in more detail not only the inner workings of the <…> prisoner's personality, but also particular characteristic and typical features of the life and lifestyle <…> of the entire prisoners' collective' [Filippov 1928: 1].

However, Bekhterev himself added the function of agitation to that of collecting and research. He wrote that one of the tasks of the museum workers was the 'propaganda' of new penal ideas [Bekhterev 1924: 94]. In addition, he stressed that many of the exhibits should be understood as 'relics of the tsarist prison' with its 'uncultured diversions', the only aim of which was 'to kill time' [Bekhterev 1925: 38]. From the point of view of Soviet prison policy, such diversions should be eliminated and replaced with rational, cultural educational work, which would order the prisoner's free time and fill it with education and cultured leisure.

The museum of the Pskov House of Correction was opened on 7 November 1924 and orientated on the example of the Vyatka museum, which by that time was well known throughout the RSFSR. The museum consisted of three sections, organised on a chronological principle: (1) the period of serfdom; (2) the period from the judicial reform of 1864 to the October Revolution of 1917; (3) the section of 'Soviet culture'. The exhibits included branding irons, prison clothing from the tsar's prisons, a chain, a three-tailed whip, photographs and drawings of the pillar of shame and the corporal punishments used in imperial Russia, and photographs of the places of detention and the prisoners' work [Bekhterev 1925: 38]. As the governor of the Pskov House of Correction wrote, contrasting the sections of the old and new way of life of the prisoners, 'the museum clearly shows <…> to the prisoners the conditions in which detainees in the tsar's prisons lived and the aims of the Soviet government when it subjects prisoners to the effects of educative work in modern houses of correction' [Ibid.: 40].

At the end of 1925, at the initiative of two prisoners, an art studio was opened at the Pskov House of Correction. It worked 'freely' and took commissions for pictures, portraits, drawings and formatting wall newspapers [GARF, collection R-4042, box 4, folder 177, pp. 11–16]. In August 1926 the first exhibition was organised, 'with the aim of popularising the idea of correction', and more than a hundred exhibits were collected for it. In the course of four days the exhibition was visited by 1,500 people, which was quite an impressive figure for Pskov, with its 40,000 inhabitants. Some of the pictures were bought by visitors [Ibid., pp. 12–14]. A second exhibition, where 206 objects were exhibited, was opened on 20 February 1927. It was visited by over four thousand people, including well-known foreigners, in less than two weeks. As the head of the Pskov House of Correction explained, the exhibition was opened 'to show the citizens <…> that [Soviet] places of deprivation of liberty are not the former tsarist prisons, where a person [lost his / her] human dignity' [Ibid., p. 10].

It is not known whether similar museums were opened at other prisons, but there is evidence that there were such proposals. In 1926 a prisoner at the Orel Detention Centre proposed organising a museum 'of the old tsarist prison' there. In his opinion, the building of the old 'central prison', in which the detention centre was housed, 'could tell a great deal about the past' and would be 'a striking expression of the difference between tsarist prisons and Soviet houses of correction' [Kamkor 1926: 2]. It is telling that the initiative in this case came from below, although the prisoner used the 'official' discourse in justifying it.

In July 1925, when he was already head of the cultural and educational section of the Central Administration of Places of Detention,

Bekhterev wrote a methodological article about 'museums of correctional labour'. This was a watershed article, since it indicated a change in the official position towards prison museums and shifted the accent to their 'educational' function. As Bekhterev indicated, traditional criminological museums 'are museums that only preserve special exhibits, they serve a narrow circle of specialists and are incapable of answering the needs of the broad masses, still less of fulfilling the role of agitation and propaganda that we consider fundamental in the work of museums of correctional labour at places of detention' [Bekhterev 1925: 40]. Instead of them, Bekhterev proposed creating museums of correctional labour.

Every such museum was to have a workshop-store and an exhibition area. Following the example of the Pskov museum, Bekhterev proposed dividing the exhibition into two basic sections (the 'old' and 'new way of life' of the prisoners) which would in turn be divided into subsections. These last would have the following themes: accommodation, clothing, labour, cultural and education work, tattooing, 'prison folklore' (prison songs, verses, jargon, games), etc. [Bekhterev 1925: 41–42]. The basic principle of the exhibition should be the contrast between the 'prerevolutionary' and the 'Soviet'. For example, in the 'accommodation' subsection Bekhterev proposed comparing photographs of Soviet penal facilities with those of 'tsarist casemates, caponiers, and fortresses, and also various kinds of prison accommodation for the privileged classes ("gentlemen's cells") and for the "plebs" (cells for workers and peasants)'. In the 'clothing' section he recommended comparing the prisoners' donkey jackets with the rhombus on the back and leg-irons, 'degrading for human dignity', with the clothing of Soviet prisoners, who did not wear a prison uniform [Ibid.: 42]. Only museums like this could convince their visitors that 'modern Soviet correctional labour facilities are no longer the dungeons of the West nor the old casemates of the tsars, but living hives of human labour, where, to the encouraging noise of the workstations, the human personality, twisted by its hard struggle for survival, is straightened out in its own factories and workshops or by mental labour in the school or club, and adapted to the conditions of an honest working existence' [Ibid.: 40].

This case reproduces the universal narrative on which the post-revolutionary Bolshevik project as a whole was built, and which was disseminated everywhere in Soviet museums, consisting of the contrast between the Soviet and the prerevolutionary. Thus, at the end of the 1920s, ethnographical museums began to use an analogous principle of exhibition, stressing the superiority of the Soviet nationalities policy over that of the tsars [Baranov 2010: 36–37; Petriashin 2018: 148].

For coordination, in accordance with Bekhterev's plan, these museums needed to be subordinated to a special museum centre attached to the State Institute for the Study of Crime and Criminals. Such a centre would be concerned with allotting funds, distributing methodological literature and seeing to the exchange of exhibits [Bekhterev 1925: 43]. In the same place Bekhterev expressed the desire to combine the efforts of the Central Criminal Investigation Department and the Central Administration of Places of Detention to create a single State Criminological Museum [Ibid.: 44].

Bekhterev was not the first to propose the idea of organising a single prison museum. At least, in 1921, Sergey Poznyshev, a jurist and consultant to the Central Correctional Labour Section of the Commissariat of Justice, was preparing to open at that office a Penal Institute with a museum, but this plan was not put into practice [GARF, collection A-2307, box 2, folder 234, p. 19v; Poznyshev 1926: 264]. However, in 1925, Bekhterev was given the opportunity to realise his own recommendation. A prison museum was organised at the State Institute for the Study of Crime and Criminals that year. To all appearances it was supposed to bring into existence Bekhterev's idea of a museum centre.[1] At the request of Mikhail Gernet, the well-known jurist and deputy director of the institute, the Central Administration of Places of Detention requested from the places of detention in Moscow objects connected with the old prison: leg-irons and their linings, suits of old prison clothing, etc. [GARF, collection R-4042, box 4, folder 136, pp. 25–26]. In addition, photographs, wall newspapers and printed newspapers, prisoners' journals and albums of tattoos and songs were supplied by prisons. Thus, collections of prisoners' songs were given by the Sokolniki House of Correction and the Women's House of Correction, and albums of tattoos from the Moscow House of Labour for Juvenile Delinquents. The director of the museum, Boris Pavlovich Ilinskiy, even obtained a pass to places of detention to examine and select for the museum objects that had been confiscated from the prisoners [Ibid., p. 57]. By 1929 the museum collection included over 2,500 objects [Ibid., p. 64].

The museum was divided into four sections:

— the prison section: this presented cultural and educational work, labour and production at places of detention;

— the criminological section, which collected the tools of crime;

[1] In his article Bekhterev mentions the opening in Moscow in June 1925 of the Central Museum of Transportation and Correctional Labour. He probably meant by this the Museum of the State Institute for the Study of Crime and Criminals, for the opening of which the official order came out at the same time [Bekhterev 1925: 44]. However, the institute actually began to work in October 1925, and the museum no earlier than December that year, since it was only then that a place was found for it in the former dental surgery of the Ivanovo House of Correction. Collection of exhibits began at the beginning of 1926 [GARF, collection R-4042, box 4, folder 7, pp. 121–122].

— the old prison section;

— the general section, which collected statistics, albums of tattoos, prison art, etc. [GARF, collection R-4042, box 4, folder 136, p. 64].

The range of exhibits at the Museum of the State Institute for the Study of Crime and Criminals was still wider than traditional criminological collections. As early as August 1926, the Central Administration of Places of Detention decided to organise a permanent exhibition of products of places of detention at the Museum of the State Institute for the Study of Crime and Criminals. It was explained that this was necessary not so much for scientific purposes as for practical ones. The collection of models of artefacts was to ease the collaboration between the initiatives and workshops of places of detention and their potential customers. A special circular requiring the work sections of places of detention to send in an example of each of their products was sent out [GARF, collection R-4042, box 3, folder 296, pp. 1–2]. By December, the museum had received several hundred examples from over forty prisons. As a result, a respectable collection, including the most diverse items — clothing, footwear, furniture, groceries, toys, models of prisons, bricks, boxes, chessmen and even a lightning conductor, was built up [Ibid., pp. 58–63, 82–88].

The Museum of the State Institute for the Study of Crime and Criminals was most probably closed in the 1930s. In 1931, the institute was transferred to the RSFSR People's Commissariat of Justice and, as a result of the 'crushing' of Soviet criminology as a science, and the ousting of key scholars in this field, gradually lost its research character. In February 1931, Mikhail Gernet, who had previously held the post of the head of the socioeconomic section and was essentially the ideological leader of the institute, was appointed director of the museum [FR RGB, collection 603, box 1, folder 2, p. 18; Pryanishnikov et al. 2015: 47–48]. The fact that the post of director of the museum was a 'demotion' can be understood as meaning that that establishment had lost its former significance. After this the museum is hardly mentioned in publications or archival documents. It is known that in 1935 there was a plan to organise a museum of crime at the institute (renamed by that time as the Scientific Research Institute for Criminal Policy) [GARF, collection A-353, box 10, folder 67, p. 151]. It is not known, however, whether it was intended to be part of the old museum or to replace it. In December 1935 the People's Commissariat of Justice issued a circular requiring prosecutors and judges on the ground to send items of material evidence to the museum: the tools of crime, implements for breaking and entering and stealing, equipment for forging seals, stamps or official requisitions, false documents, photographs of crime scenes, etc. As may be seen from

this list, by this time the museum had become a museum of crime, and its collection was used exclusively for training legal and investigative officials [GARF, collection A-353, box 10, folder 67, pp. 151–153]. In the last place on the list were objects 'characteristic of the criminal world': specimens of tattoos, drawings, poems, and also codes and special signs [Ibid., p. 151]. It is evident, however, that these were also intended for use in training employees and not for research purposes or for exhibition.

It is hard to draw a firm distinction between Soviet criminological and prison museums. Even scientific museums would quite deliberately convey ideological content. Thus in 1927 the museum at the Kyiv Scientific Research Institute of Forensic Expertise organised a special prison section, which had 'political' aims and was to 'give an idea of the bourgeois prison, our prerevolutionary prison and sum up the experience of our Soviet work in the field of penitentiaries' [Zivert 1927: 839].

On the one hand, the Vyatka and Pskov prison museums reproduced in their approach the model of the classical criminological museum, collecting and systematising artefacts connected with prison and with the experience of imprisonment. On the other hand, however, these collections were interpreted and presented through the prism of the ideology of Soviet prison reform. In the exhibitions of such museums the contrast between the repressive tsarist prison and the Soviet house of correction was emphasised. In its turn, the Museum of the State Institute for the Study of Crime and Criminals also went beyond the ordinary scientific museum, having at the same time organising and applied functions.

The prison exhibitions in Imperial and Soviet Russia

The All-Union Penal Exhibition opened on 19 October 1928 at the Polytechnic Museum in Moscow. Organised by the Central Administration Places of Detention and State Institute for the Study of Crime and Criminals, and coinciding with the First All-Union Prison Colloquium, it was open for visits by anyone who so desired for several weeks. The exhibition was intended to demonstrate the successes of Soviet prison reform.

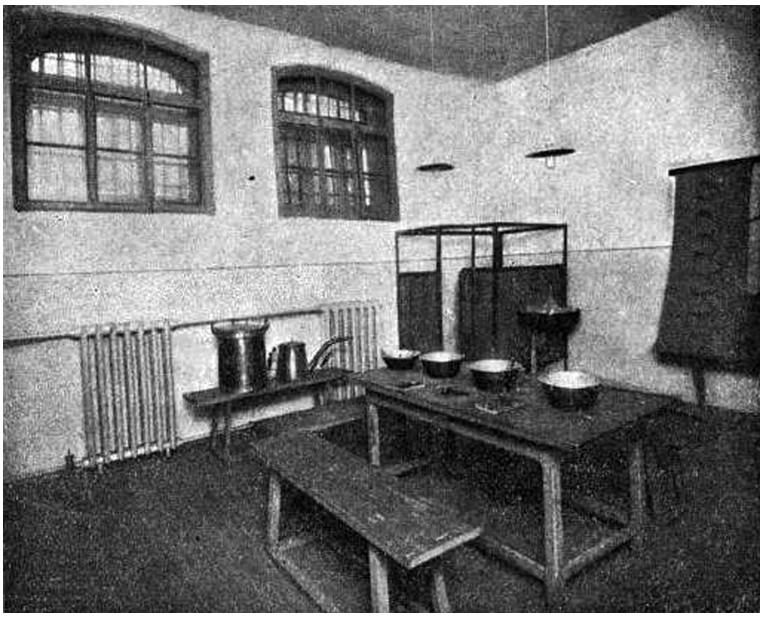
The tradition of prison congresses and exhibitions had existed at least since the last quarter of the nineteenth century. It is hard to say to what extent the Soviet reformers relied on it, but the very coincidence is telling. In this section, I shall examine how the collections of the Museum of the State Institute for the Study of Crime and Criminals were exhibited at the Prison Exhibition of 1928, first comparing the last with two major exhibitions organised by the tsar's Chief Directorate of Prisons — the international prison

exhibition of 1890 and the prison section of the Tsarskoye Selo exhibition of 1911.

The International Prison Congresses (which had been held since 1872) attracted national delegations from all over the world, who aimed to demonstrate the 'modern' and 'civilised' nature of their prison systems, and thereby to enhance their country's reputation on the world stage [Shafir 2014: 72–93]. Since they combined the forms of industrial exhibitions, scientific congresses and prison tours, it is not surprising that within the framework of each congress there were excursions to model prisons, and some of them included full-scale exhibitions. Thus, at the Stockholm Prison Congress of 1878 there was an exhibition of prisoners' artefacts, and for the next congress, in Rome, a special gallery was constructed with life-size solitary confinement cells with their furnishings reproduced in full [CP 1879: 727–752; CP 1888: 7–100]. Nevertheless, the St Petersburg prison exhibition exceeded them all both in its scale and its ambitions. It was opened in June 1890 at the Mikhailovsky Manège, within the framework of the International Prison Congress which was taking place at that time in the Russian capital.

The exhibition had three sections: the first was devoted to establishments for juvenile delinquents, the second to prisons for solitary confinement, and the third for ordinary places of detention. These sections were divided among the seventeen pavilions of the participating countries. It is natural that the host — the Russian Empire's Chief Directorate of Prisons — had the largest exhibition area, three fifths of the whole exhibition [*Katalog Mezhdunarodnoy tyuremnoy vystavki…* 1890: I]. The most diverse exhibits were displayed at the exhibition: photographs of penal institutions and prisoners, cartograms and diagrams, models of prisons and prison transport, mannequins (of prisoners and warders), etc. [Krylova 2017: 288]. The item that attracted visitors' attention most of all was a life-size model of the lead and silver mine at the Nerchinsk penal settlement. An artificial hill had been constructed in the hall of the manège with a shaft driven through it and a hut on top from which a truck filled with ore emerged; the picture was completed by mannequins of convicts [*Progulka po Mikhaylovskomu manezhu…* 1890: 22]. However, the basis of the exhibition was formed by the products of prison workshops: hundreds of objects made by prisoners' hands. Visually effective and on a grand scale, the prison exhibition nevertheless lacked any clear ideological content.

The exhibition that marked the two-hundredth anniversary of Tsarskoye Selo was opened on 10 August 1911. The Chief Directorate of Prisons had prepared specially for it an exhibition in a separate pavilion. The concept of the prison section and the choice of exhibits show that the leadership of the Directorate were emphasising the



Ill. 1. The prison section of the Tsarskoye Selo exhibition.
A common cell complete with contents [*Tyuremnyy otdel…* 1911: 10]

success of prison reform, the modernisation of the penal system and the construction of new prisons based on 'scientific' principles [*Tyuremnyy otdel…* 1911: 3]. Thus, a cell from the St Petersburg solitary confinement prison was reproduced there, provided with modern equipment, and even examples of prisoners' food, made out of papier-mâché, on the table. This was probably meant to demonstrate that the Directorate aimed to provide prisoners with a high level of sanitary and living conditions (ill. 1).

The main emphasis was on prison production. As the section catalogue indicated, the exhibits 'were a brilliant indicator, to a great extent unexpected by the public at large, of the present state of this work in our prisons, which many people imagined to be a place where time was spent in idleness and a school of vice and dissipation' [*Khudozhestvenno-illyustrirovannyy istoricheskiy albom…* 1911: 200]. Here artefacts from prison workshops and young people's institutions were shown. One section was made up as a workshop for producing military uniforms as ordered by the state.

The All-Union Penal Exhibition of 1928 was obviously on a smaller scale than the exhibition of 1890, but it had a more consistent ideological conception. The State Institute and the Central Administration of Places of Detention had requested exhibits from various places specially for it. Altogether more than a hundred exhibits from twenty penal establishments were exhibited there [GARF, collection

R-4042, box 4, folder 189, p. 66]. As indicated in the report published in the institutional journal *Administrativnyy vestnik*, 'the aim of the exhibition was not only to popularise the principles of correctional labour among the broad masses of Soviet society, but also to give a clear demonstration of the working methods of Soviet correctional labour establishments' ['Khronika…' 1928: 65]. The exhibition got a good press and quite a wide audience: in the course of a few weeks it was visited by over 40,000 people, including excursions from factories and various state institutions [Ibid.]. There was also a shop of the union of trading enterprises of the Moscow places of detention, which sold 14,000 roubles' worth of goods [Ibid.: 66].

The first pavilion was devoted to the tsarist prison, and therein were displayed 'the inevitable attributes of the old penal servitude': the scourge, the birch, leg-irons, handcuffs, linings for leg-irons, convicts' clothing, stocks, chains for prisoners in transit, mannequins of convicts, models of penal colonies in Siberia and on Sakhalin, photographs of the Shlisselburg Fortress, etc.

The other three pavilions illustrated Soviet correctional labour policy [GARF, collection R-4042, box 4, folder 189, pp. 64–66]. They displayed the products of the enterprises and workshops of places of detention, diagrams prepared by the State Institute, albums, etc. [Ibid., p. 66; Filippov 1928: 1]. The 'emancipatory' principle of the Soviet house of correction was to be emphasised by the prisoners' 'recreational' products, including newspapers and magazines.

Prison art occupied an important place in the exhibition. Early Soviet penal theory supposed that 'artistic activities' and creativity should be part of the process of the 're-education' of prisoners. In addition, the Soviet regime had as it were 'legalised' previously forbidden prison creativity.

It is interesting that in his response, N. P. Filippov, a prisoner in the Taganka prison, criticised the art section of the exhibition for its 'prison' character. In his opinion, the articles made out of bread and straw that were presented at the exhibition, had a 'hackneyed and primitive character'. Filippov called for a rejection of the old prison methods and materials, and proposed opening full-scale artistic studios in places of detention: 'the chewing of bread and the tortuous mixing of it with poisonous pigments by hand should be got rid of <…> chewed bread should be replaced by mastic, paste, clay, gypsum, etc.' [Filippov 1928: 1].

The motif of the contrast between the tsarist prison and the Soviet house of correction is exemplified by specific works. Thus, a prisoner at the Lefortovo remand prison sculpted the figure of a convict, depicting a typical image of the tsarist penal system: the convict is dressed in a tunic with a rhombus on the back, is in leg-irons and

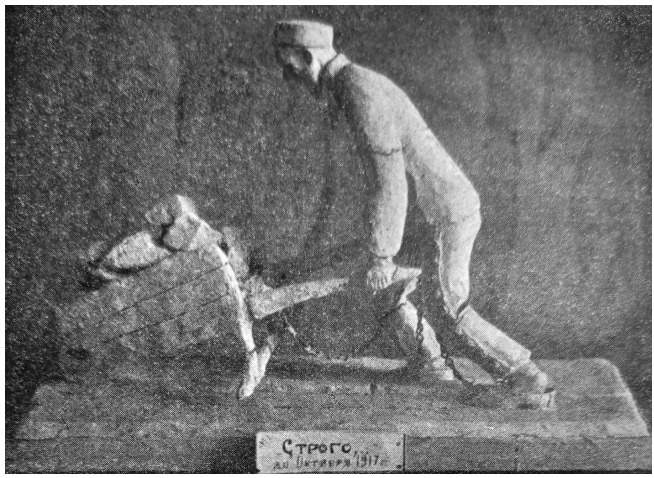
Ill. 2. Exhibits from the All-Union Penal Exhibition of 1928 (made from bread) [RGAKFD, item 241-195]

is chained to his wheelbarrow. And, although penal servitude had been abolished by the Provisional Government in March 1917, the label read 'Strict, until October 1917' (Ill. 3). The same prisoner sculpted two prisoners playing chess (Ill. 4), opposing the cultured leisure of the prisoners in a Soviet house of correction to the forced labour of the convicts in the time of the tsars [Karpov 1929: 71].

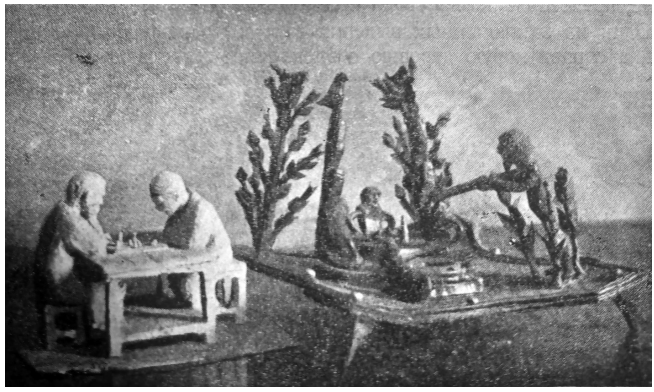
The responses recorded and collected by employees of the Central Administration of Places of Detention show that the exhibition's ideological subtext was grasped by visitors without difficulty. While one of them noted the colossal difference 'between the present position and that which was before the October Revolution', another wrote that the leg-irons exhibited 'evoke the horror of the old Romanov regime' [GARF, collection 4042, box 1, folder 72, pp. 16–17, 24].

Conclusion

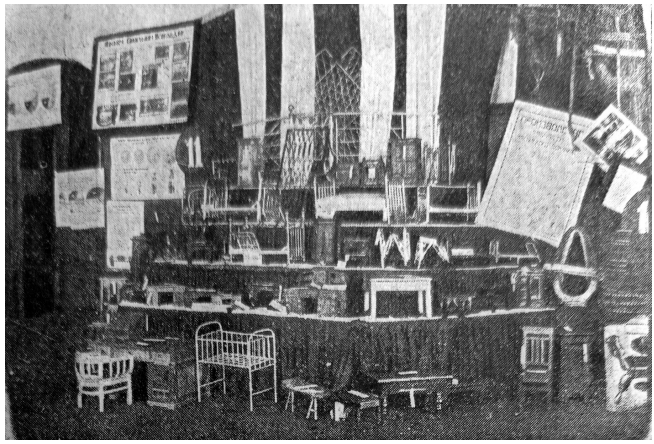
Criminological museums became universal in connection with the institutionalisation of criminological research at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries and the growth of scientific interest in crime and prison culture. In this article, I examined the appearance of early Soviet prison museums in the 1920s in this context. Prison museums, which came into being thanks to grass-roots initiatives by individual enthusiasts (criminologists, prison administrators or even prisoners), turned out to answer the needs of the Central Administration of Places of Detention, which saw in them an opportunity to disseminate and



Ill. 3. Convict (sculpture) [Karpov 1929: 71]



Ill. 4. Chess players (sculpture) [Karpov 1929: 71]



Ill. 5. Exhibits from the All-Union Penal Exhibition of 1928: products of the furniture workshop ['Khronika…' 1928: 65]

popularise new penal ideas. As a result, a museum of correctional labour was created at the State Institute for the Study of Crime and Criminals in 1925, and the All-Union Penal Exhibition took place in 1928.

The functions of Soviet prison museums were not limited to collecting and research. These establishments were not merely repositories for artefacts, but pursued aims of education and agitation. The museums conveyed the ideology of Soviet prison reform and presented the Soviet penal establishments to the public as an alternative to pre-revolutionary / capitalist prisons. The exhibition narrative, the choice of exhibits and the commentaries on them were arranged in such a way as to emphasise the difference between the 'repressive' tsarist prison and the 'progressive' Soviet penal system.

When they displayed the objects (cards, tattoos, artefacts) and social norms of prison subcultures, the museum exhibitions denounced them as attributes of prerevolutionary 'prison life' that prevented prisoners from being 're-educated' and acquiring a 'socialist' awareness. The products of prison workshops, prisoners' art, and the newspapers and magazines of places of detention put forward the image of the 'ideal' Soviet penal establishment, in which the prisoner was given the right to work, initiative, 'amateur activities' and the realisation of his / her creative potential.

At the end of the 1920s the political climate of the country changed. In 1930, as a result of the abolition of the NKVD of the RSFSR, the Central Administration's prison reform was wound up, the State Institute for the Study of Crime and Criminals was transferred to the People's Commissariat of Justice, and the scientific research of its members practically ceased. With the rejection of the Central Administration's reform, the exclusion of experts from this field, and the beginnings of Stalin's Gulag, criminological and prison museums were no longer required. What happened to their collections afterwards remains unknown.

Abbreviations

FR RGB — Manuscript holdings of the Russian State Library

GARF — State Archive of the Russian Federation

OR RNB — Manuscript Department of the National Library of Russia

RGAKFD — Russian State Film and Photo Archive

TsGA Moskvy — Central State Archive of the City of Moscow

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