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Forced displacement and convict labour in Western Siberia, 1879–1953

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Chapter 1

Exile as Imperial Practice: Western Siberia and the Russian Empire, 1879–1900

Complex hierarchical differentiation was a defining characteristic of society during the last decades of the existence of the Romanov empire. The right to choose one's place of residence or occupation, the right to education, property rights, and the exemption from corporal punishment, but also the character of guilt – individual or collective – depended on the estate to which a person belonged.¹ Similarly, penal practices were diverse and differentiated. Estate, gender, ethnicity, and other social characteristics all played a role in how a person was punished.² This chapter presents an analysis of this complex punitive repertoire – that is, the variety of penal practices that were available to the imperial authorities – and the place of exile within it. Initially, the deployment of punishment was not uniquely in the hands of the state; landlords too could punish their serfs, both through corporal punishments and exile. Exile was also available to peasant communes as a way of banishing rowdy, unruly, and unwanted members. The history of the penal system in the late Russian empire is a history of the consolidation of the state's power not only over the definition of crime, but also the deployment of punishment.

¹Boris Mironov. 2003. *Sotsialnaia istoriia Rossii perioda imperii (XVIII–nachalo XX v.): genesis lichnosti, demokraticheskoi semii, grazhdanskogo obshchestva i pravovogo gosudarstva*. Vol. 2. Saint Petersburg, 20.

²For an analysis of these differentiations, see Abby M. Schrader. 2002. *Languages of the Lash: Corporal Punishment and Identity in Imperial Russia*. Northern Illinois University Press.

1.1 Exile to Siberia: Reframing the question

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the legal framework of punishments was defined by the Criminal Code of 1845. This code reflected the social structure of the Russian empire prior to the abolition of serfdom. It implied two separate “ladders of punishment” for the privileged and unprivileged estates, and proposed an intricate system that included twelve types (and thirty-eight degrees) of common punishment, not to count the special punishments such as eternal expulsion outside the empire or confinement in a monastery.³ Some of these punishments, like the workhouses, never became widespread, and were ultimately abandoned.⁴ Moreover, prior to the abolition of serfdom, the overwhelming majority of the population – the serfs – were punished at their landlords’ discretion for a large number of offences and crimes.

As the social changes gathered pace following the Crimean War (1853–1856), the Criminal Code rapidly became obsolete. Over the course of the second half of the nineteenth century, several legal acts, known as *ukase* (in tsarist Russia a decree with the force of law), updated various aspects of the criminal justice system. On 17 April 1863, an *ukase* curbed the use of corporal punishment, both as a separate and as an additional punishment. It flattened out the distinction in the execution of punishment between the privileged and unprivileged estates. Corporal punishment was, however, still

³*Russkoe ugovnoe pravo, in 2 volumes.* 1902. Saint Petersburg, sections 213–214. These eleven types were: 1) death penalty; 2) exile to *katorga*; 3) exile to settlement (*ssylka na poselenie*) in Siberia; 4) exile to settlement in Transcaucasia; 5) exile “for life” (*ssylka na zhitye*) to Siberia; 6) exile “for life” to other distant regions; 7) incarceration in “corrective arrest divisions” (*ispravitelnye arestantskie otdeleniia*); 8) incarceration in prison; 9) incarceration in strongholds; 10) short-time arrest; 11) reprimand (*vygovor*) in court; 12) fine. Numbers 2–4 also implied civil death, or the loss of all estate rights and property. Moreover, additional corporal punishment was frequently executed. The existence of multiple degrees further complicated this system of punishment. The plurality of places of confinement also contributed to the confusion: arrest, for example, could be spent in one of five different types of carceral institutions.

⁴Apparently, by the time the workhouses were abolished, there were only four in the empire: in Simbirsk, Kostroma, Tver, and Kazan. *Polnoe sobranie zakonov Rossiiskoi Imperii. The Third Series.* 1884. Vol. 4. Saint Petersburg, no. 2172 (24 April), 261.

used against convicts and exiles as a disciplinary punishment. On 11 December 1879, a ukase marked the creation of the Main Prison Administration, and thus initiated prison reform, while on 11 June 1885, a ukase abolished the distinction between *katorga* labour in mines, strongholds, and plants. This distinction was obsolete, as only *katorga* labour in the mines was still practiced. Furthermore, on 10 June 1900, a ukase curbed exile to Siberia.

In the chapters dealing with the Russian empire (chapters one to three), I discuss the most impactful of these laws in detail, but I also continuously seek to confront the legal acts with other sources, especially those that describe the practice of punishment. In this chapter, my focus is on exile to Siberia: one of the harshest, and most feared, punishments in nineteenth century Russia.⁵

The first Russian military colonisers arrived in Western Siberia at the end of the sixteenth century, and soon a scattered network of military strongholds was constructed on the shores of the major Siberian rivers. Not long after that, the first exiles from European Russia were banished to these lands. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, both Western and Eastern Siberia had become the primary destinations of exile in the Russian Empire (see the map of some of these destinations on the following page). Within the pan-imperial exile architecture, Western Siberia also played an important role as a convict transportation hub: exiles from European Russia were categorised and distributed across the regions of Siberia only after they crossed the Ural mountains. The persistence of exile for more than three centuries entailed the imagination of Siberia as “hell on earth”, a “vast prison without a roof”.⁶

Representation of exile was heavily impacted by the narratives of the political exiles who were displaced in the last decades of the Romanov Empire. These narratives often completely neglect the “common criminals” and the non-political administrative exiles, and

⁵Galya Diment and Yuri Slezkine. 1993. *Between Heaven and Hell: The Myth of Siberia in Russian Culture*. New York.

⁶For more on the early history of exile, see Andrew A. Gentes. 2008. *Exile to Siberia, 1590–1822*. Basingstoke / New York and Andrew A. Gentes. 2010. *Exile, Murder and Madness in Siberia, 1823–61*. London. Exile during the last decades of the existence of Romanov empire and the conditions of both common and political exiles have been analysed in Sarah Badcock. 2016. *A Prison Without Walls?: Eastern Siberian Exile in the Last Years of Tsarism*. Oxford University Press and Daniel Beer. 2017. *The House of the Dead: Siberian Exile Under the Tsars*. Penguin Books.



Figure 1.1: Map of the Romanov Empire ca. 1900 (created by Annelieke Vries).

present exile as direct expulsion from the central parts of the Russian empire to its Eastern hinterlands. However, the documents produced by the various state and local authorities open up another perspective on exile. They allow us to see other functions of this practice: it was not only a punishment and a tool of social control, but also a paradoxical arrangement of imperial governance. On the one hand, exile perpetuated the profound inequalities of the distribution of power between the capitals and Siberia. It had a nefarious effect on the development of the region and prompted conflicts between local populations and the exiles. Local governors continuously voiced their discontent in their reports to the Tsar. On the other hand, exile was a decentralised practice that heavily relied on the compliance of local authorities, and could only be maintained by them. The history of exile from the Siberian perspective highlights these inequalities and the role of exile within the wider repertoire of imperial policies in Western Siberia.⁷

Looking at exile is crucial for understanding the later Soviet penal camps system, as it allows us to see the emergence and persistence of the power inequalities between the different regions, and to observe the fundamental impact of the state's expansionist agenda on the shape of the penal system. In this first chapter, I pursue a double goal. First, I outline the chaotic landscape of punishments in the Russian Empire in the last third of the nineteenth century. Second, I challenge the view of Russian exile as a mere process of expulsion and foreground the connections between the exile and the practices of imperial government. Until its abolition, exile remained not only a punishment, but also an instrument of maintenance of profound power asymmetry between the European part of the Empire and the regions beyond the Ural mountains. I focus on Western Siberia and trace the various punitive flows that went through this region during the last decade of the nineteenth century. At the heart of this chapter are two interrelated questions: 1) What were the various goals of exile and how were they connected to the relations of power between the central and the local authorities in the Russian empire?⁸

⁷For an introduction to Russian imperial history, see Jane Burbank, Mark von Hagen, and A.V. Remnev. 2007. *Russian Empire: Space, People, Power, 1700–1930*. Bloomington: Indiana UP. On the Siberian case, see Sergei Glebov, ed. 2013. *Region v istorii imperii. Istoricheskie esse o Sibiri*. Moscow.

⁸It is important to acknowledge that referring to “the central authorities” involves a significant, albeit necessary for the sake of brevity, simplification. The

2) How did the exile and incarceration interact within the imperial penal architecture, especially in the borderland regions such as Western Siberia, and what kind of impact did such interactions have on the penal system overall? This double movement foregrounds the decentralized character of exile, and, more importantly, allows us to reconnect the history of Russian punitive practices with the wider imperial history.

As exile implies forced displacement, I seek to be attentive to its spatial dimensions and fluid character, instead of concentrating purely on the legal norms that prescribed it. Looking at exile as a practice rather than a “system” allows me to analyse the practical arrangements of exile and its political implications beyond a legal framework.

Exile to Siberia was the major punitive practice in the Russian Empire throughout the nineteenth century, and, similarly to other imperial contexts, was “a key aspect of imperial sovereignty”.⁹ There are considerable differences between overseas penal transportation, which was typical for Western European colonial empires, and continental exile proper within the Russian Empire. These differences are connected to the wider issue of colonisation in Russian imperial history. The prominent nineteenth century historian Vassily Kliuchevski famously stated that the “history of Russia is the history of a country which colonises itself”, thus inscribing the colonisation of Siberia within the centuries-long history of Russian peasant migrations. Indeed, debate on the nature of Russian policies in Siberia is ongoing.¹⁰

central authorities consisted of various groups with different interests, as is put forward in L.M. Dameshek and A.V. Remnev, eds. 2007. *Sibir v sostave Rossiiskoi imperii*. Moscow. Moreover, the governors general – technically the “local authorities” – represented an ambiguous group, as the envoys of the absolutist monarchy to the regions. For more on the governors and governors general in the Russian Empire, see L. M. Lysenko. 2001. *Gubernatory i general-gubernatory Rossiiskoi imperii (XVIII–nachalo XX veka)*. Moscow, and Richard G Robbins. 1987. *The Tsar’s Viceroys: Russian Provincial Governors in the Last Years of the Empire*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.

⁹Christian G. De Vito and Alex Lichtenstein. 2013. “Writing a Global History of Convict Labour”. *International Review of Social History* 58 (2): 285–325, 303.

¹⁰For an overview of the debate, see Martin Aust. 2004. “Rossia Siberica: Russian-Siberian History Compared to Medieval Conquest and Modern Colonialism”. In *Russia and Siberia in the World-System: German Perspectives*, 181–205. Review (Fernand Braudel Center) and Willard Sunderland. 2000. “The ‘Colonization Question’: Visions of Colonization in Late Imperial Russia”.

The richest case for our understanding of the interrelation between exile and imperial policy at large is provided by developments during the last third of the nineteenth century: the decay of the hard labour penal regime (*katorga*) in the decades following the emancipation of the serfs in 1861, the experiments with various regimes of incarceration and exile that started in the late 1870s, and the eventual decision to curtail exile in 1900.

1.2 Imperial punitive repertoire

The Russian imperial penal system was the opposite of what Michel Foucault called a “monotonous punitive system”.¹¹ Unlike the penal system described by Foucault, dominated by incarceration and based on control and discipline, the Russian penal system throughout the nineteenth century included a wide range of punitive practices with very different premises. A consistent reform of the penal system as a whole was never realised, but over the course of the nineteenth century various punishments were reformed or curbed by separate legislative acts. Exile stands in particularly stark opposition with this ideal of ubiquitous state control: in the overwhelming majority of cases, it meant not only expulsion, but also abandonment by the state.

Exile, confinement, forced labour and corporal punishment co-existed in various forms up until the end of the Russian Empire, yet they emerged under different historical conditions. For instance, exile to Siberia was first used as early as the seventeenth century, while “rehabilitative” intramural prison labour was introduced only in the last decades before the revolution and was tightly associated with the advance of modernity. During the nineteenth century, some legal and administrative aspects of the penal system were subject to change, but these reforms typically either had limited geographi-

Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas 48 (2): 210–232. For a recent discussion of the Russian settler colonialism in Siberia and Central Asia, see Alexander Morrison. 2016. “Russian Settler Colonialism”. In *The Routledge Handbook of the History of Settler Colonialism*, ed. by Ed Cavanagh Lorenzo Veracini, 313–326. Routledge.

¹¹Michel Foucault. 1980. “La poussière et le nuage”. In *L'impossible prison. Recherches sur le système pénitentiaire au XIXe siècle*, ed. by Michelle Perrot, 29–39. Paris, 30.

cal impact, took decades to implement, or were never fully realised. This was the case, most notably, with the legal transformation of exile designed by Mikhail Speranskii in the 1820s,¹² or the limitation of corporal punishment in 1863¹³ as well as the centralisation of the prison administration that started with the creation of the Main Prison Administration in 1879. Some regimes, such as *katorga* – the harshest punishment for common criminals – were never consistently reformed.¹⁴ The history of exile and *katorga* are tightly interconnected.

Prior to 1863, corporal punishment, along with exile, was the dominant type of punishment in the Russian Empire. Despite the fact that Empress Elizaveta Petrovna suspended the death penalty for common criminals in 1754, thus legally making *katorga* the gravest punishment, officials admitted later that punishment by *knout*¹⁵ constituted a qualified death penalty.¹⁶ Knout was abolished by Nicholas I in 1845, and even more change has been brought by the reform of 1863. This reform did not completely abolish corporal punishment, but its use was significantly curbed. Lash (*plet*) was abolished as a separate punishment and as a part of punishment for those sentenced to *katorga* and exile, but it was still used as a disciplinary punishment for those who were already serving their *katorga* and exile terms. In other words, for the wrongdoings that convicts would have committed while serving their term, they could be punished by up to hundred hits of lash. In the same way, birching was abolished as a part of punishment for those sentenced to prison, but it was still used against the male exiles and the *katorga* convicts

¹²Gentes 2008, 165–201.

¹³Abby M. Schrader. 1996. “The Languages of the Lash: the Russian Autocracy and the Reform of Corporal Punishment, 1817–1893”. PhD thesis, University of Pennsylvania.

¹⁴For a German-language overview of the *katorga* regime, see Markus Ackeret. 2007. *In der Welt der Katorga: die Zwangsarbeitsstrafe für politische Delinquenten im ausgehenden Zarenreich (Ostsibirien und Sachalin)*. Osteuropa-Institut München.

¹⁵*Knout* was a type of heavy whip, somewhat similar to a scourge; it had many varieties, some of which had wires and other metal parts.

¹⁶RGIA (Russian State Historical Archive, Saint-Petersburg), f. 1151 op. 15 d. 196, l. 2. I use the habitual classification of the Russian archives. While referring to the archival documents, I use the common taxonomy fond–opis–delo–list. “Fond” is collection; “opis” is a list of files; “delo” is a file; and “list” is a page.

up until February 1917.¹⁷ From early on, preserving the corporal punishment of the exiles and the *katorga* convicts was argued for with the fact that, according to the head of the Second Section of his Imperial Majesty's Own Chancellery Count D. N. Bludov, "such exiles are already civilly dead [and that] means that corporal punishment is practically the only means by which the justice system can penalise" those who committed further offences while in exile.¹⁸ The severest types of the corporal punishment for the convicts (lash, sticks and running the gauntlet) were only abolished on 3 June 1903.¹⁹ Political prisoners were exempt from corporal punishments until 1888. George Kennan remarked that this exemption from lashing and birching was not regulated by any legal acts, but rather reflected the social differentiation of convicts: up until 1905, the majority of political prisoners were of privileged origin, and the prison doctors have allegedly routinely exempted them from punishment by attesting that the prisoners were not in good enough health condition to survive the beating.²⁰

Corporal punishment, incarceration, and exile were not only used separately depending on the gravity of the committed crime, but could also be combined within one penal regime; this was the case of *katorga*. This hard punitive regime designed for the convicts deemed most dangerous included the terms of forced labour from four to twenty-five years, followed by eternal settlement in Siberia. Initially, in the eighteenth century, this combination of different punitive measures was guided by a complex state agenda. The state was interested not only in the punishment of criminals, but also in the concentration of coerced convict workers in places that would benefit the state's interest, be it naval construction sites in Petrine Russia or the Nerchinsk silver mines of Catherine's reign. In the eyes of central authorities, exile per se was also not purely an instrument with which to punish convicts; the presence of these exiled bodies in the region did itself fulfil the state's goal of colonisation.

One of the main laws that shaped the practice of exile was passed by the Senate on 13 December 1760.²¹ This law allowed landowners

¹⁷Mikhail Isaev. 1926. *Osnovy penitentsiarnoi politiki*. Moscow, 87.

¹⁸Schrader 1996, 211.

¹⁹RGIA, f. 1151, op. 15, d. 196, l. 2.

²⁰George Kennan. 1891. *Siberia and the Exile System: Volume two*. Vol. 1. James R. Osgood, McIlvaine et Company, 262.

²¹*Polnoe sobranie zakonov Rossiiskoi Imperii. The First Series*. 1830. Vol. 15.

to exile “unruly” peasants to the region of Nerchinsk in Eastern Siberia. As noted by historian A. D. Kolesnikov, this law was passed in response to the growing financial needs of the state. In order to satisfy these needs, the government sought to augment the volume of silver mining at the state-owned Nerchinsk silver mines.²² They did so by delegating to landowners the power to punish (perceived) wrongdoers. Landowners were allowed to expel only the healthy male peasants younger below 45 years of age. If these men had families, the law encouraged landowners to banish the families as well, with a monetary compensation from the government provided.²³ Therefore, this law established the legal foundation for two ways of coercing the peasant population (by displacing them and by forcing them to work for the state), while at the same time further privileging landowners, since the decision to banish a peasant remained dependent purely on the will of the landowners, thus extending their power over the peasants. On the one hand, this early form of exile was a response to the labour shortage and took the form of labour coercion; and on the other, it was a way to facilitate the fulfilment of the “state interest in the population (*zaselenie*)” of Siberia, as proclaimed by this law.

The central authorities sought to populate the vast Siberian territories with Russian peasants, and these administrative measures provided a sizeable influx of people. According to Kolesnikov’s calculations, in 1761–1781, exile had a considerable impact on the population of Siberia: at least thirty-five thousand male peasants arrived in Siberia during this time. He suggests that the number of women who followed their husbands typically constituted up to 80% of the number of men, therefore suggesting that the total number of adult peasants was around sixty thousand people.²⁴ According to the censuses (*revizii*) of 1762 and 1782, the total population of Siberia in these years comprised 393,000 and 552,000 males, respectively. The state’s aspiration to use these exiles as workers in the silver mines met with limited success. Only some of them indeed settled down around Nerchinsk in Eastern Siberia, while others were settled

Saint Petersburg, no. 11166, 582.

²²A.D. Kolesnikov. 1975. “Ssylka i zaselenie Sibiri”. In *Ssylka i katorga v Sibiri (XVIII-nachalo XX v.)* Ed. by L.M. Goriushkin, 38–59. Novosibirsk, 42–44.

²³*Polnoe sobranie...* 1830, no. 11166, 582.

²⁴Kolesnikov 1975, 51.

around the Siberian Route (*Sibirskii trakt*) in the southern part of Siberia.²⁵ The bulk of the labour force in the Nerchinsk mines consisted of criminal offenders serving their hard labour *katorga* terms. Again, according to Kolesnikov, despite the hardship of forced displacement, some of the exiled peasants were able to settle down and maintain their families, and in the mid-nineteenth century in the region of Tobolsk the descendants of the exiled constituted up to 10% of the population, while in the more distant regions of Eastern Siberia the percentage was higher.²⁶ At the end of the eighteenth century, therefore, the practice of administrative exile did indeed have an impact on the colonisation of Siberia, albeit a limited one. Kolesnikov convincingly shows, however, that exile lost even this limited importance for the colonisation of Siberia already before the start of the free peasant migration; that is, before 1861.

Prison reform, which is at the centre of the next chapter, began in 1879. It promoted imprisonment, rather than exile, corporal punishment, or hard labour, as the chief type of punishment in the Russian empire. The building of new prison buildings contributed to the growing significance of this punishment, though it remained far from truly dominating the penal system. The plurality of punitive regimes at the end of the nineteenth century resulted from the fact that throughout the whole century, the authorities implementing various punishments were guided not just by traditional goals, such as retribution, deterrence, or, later, rehabilitation. Rather, they sought to fulfil the local goals of social control by expelling and disciplining offenders through administrative exile, and simultaneously solidify imperial expansion to the lands to the East of the Ural mountains.

The official aspiration to use exile as an instrument through which to control and facilitate the colonisation of Siberia partially explains the persistence of exile and *katorga*. Several other factors contributed to the complexity of the penal system. First, the estate system of the Russian Empire was reflected in the execution of punishment. Therefore, there existed two separate ladders of punishment: one for the privileged estates, against whom corporal punishment was

²⁵This route is a historic road which connected European Russia to Siberia. Its construction started in the early eighteenth century, and until the construction of the Trans-Siberian Railroad and the Amur Cart road at the end of the nineteenth century, this Route was the primary connection between Russia and China.

²⁶Kolesnikov 1975, 56–57.

not used after 1785, and another for peasants and urban dwellers (*meshchane*). In 1863, corporal punishment against unprivileged urban dwellers was curbed, but it was still widely used as a disciplinary measure for those already serving their terms, both in prisons and in exile, and the peasants.²⁷ This estate-based distinction persisted also for the disciplinary punishment of convicts, even though formally exiles of privileged origin were stripped of all their special rights upon conviction.

Second, legislators' views on punishment and rehabilitation changed over time, but this was rarely consistently reflected in the legislation itself. With the growing desire to modernise the Russian Empire, some new laws and principles relating to the organisation of the penal system were introduced. However, they often contradicted those in practice, which contributed to further complications. While in the eighteenth century ideas of revenge and deterrence guided the modalities of punishment and their execution,²⁸ in the first half of the nineteenth century the Russian penology was heavily marked by John Howard's ideas on prison reform and the moral rehabilitation of criminals.²⁹ On 17 April 1863, a law was passed that brought an end to the branding of *katorga* convicts (who were previously branded on their cheeks and forehead with the letters "KAT") and which also abolished the use of the lash against the majority of convicts. Later on, the idea of rehabilitative convict labour attracted particular attention from officials, resulting in the law of 6 January 1886, prescribing obligatory labour for all prisoners. However, *katorga* labour was not touched upon by this act; it was still, at least theoretically, purely punitive hard labour. In practice, however, the reports of the Main Prison Administration show that the *katorga* facilities were decaying, and many convicts there did not perform any work at all.

²⁷Mironov 2003, 20.

²⁸Sergei Poznyshv. 1914. *K voprosu o preobrazovanii nashei katorgi*. Moscow, 4. For more on early modern Russian punishments, see: Nancy Kollmann. 2012. *Crime and Punishment in Early Modern Russia*. Cambridge University Press.

²⁹John Howard was a British prison reformer. He inspected various British prisons and compiled an influential report that promoted prison reform and the rehabilitation of convicts, published as John Howard. 1780. *The State of the Prisons in England and Wales*. W. Eyres. Michel Foucault addressed Howard's work in Michel Foucault. 1988. *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*. New York, 44–64.

Third, there existed a significant gap between the law and the local practices of the prison and exile administration. This gap could be particularly wide between the newly opened central experimental prisons, where the innovations were successful and the discipline maintained, and the decaying overcrowded prisons in distant regions. This difference was further exacerbated by insufficient funding and the lack of qualified administrators and prison staff, as the prison reform largely relied upon the initiatives of local prison governors to organise the obligatory labour. In a number of reports from the 1870s, the governor general of Western Siberia complained at length about the low level of education of his subordinates. Moreover, combined with the lack of first-hand information about the condition of exile, the implementation of the state's conceptions of punishment could entail additional pain for exiles. Daniel Beer made an important observation in this respect, that "the yawning gulf between the state's own conception of deportation as a strictly logistical operation, on the one hand, and the convicts' experience of it as a brutal ordeal, on the other, reflected the weaknesses and limitations of the autocracy".³⁰

At the end of the nineteenth century, eight official categories of exiles existed that differed in the degree of deprivation of rights and the length of terms, plus the category of *katorga* convicts. Exile to Siberia was not only a punitive measure and, as such, not only a part of the criminal justice system, but was also an embodiment of the central government's aspiration to control the colonisation of Siberia as well as, to a lesser extent, an instrument of communal self-governance. Rural and urban communities (*obschestva* and *meschanstva* respectively) could expel their undesired members to Siberia. In many cases, these expelled community members did in fact try to return to European Russia after serving their term within the penal system, but were prevented by the decision of the community; thus, administrative exile could be a second, non-judicial punishment. By law, administrative exiles became members of communities in Siberia, even though other members of these communities considered them a burden and on multiple occasions opposed this

³⁰Daniel Beer. 2015. "Penal Deportation to Siberia and the Limits of State Power, 1801–81". *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 16 (3): 621–650, here 621–622.

practice by complaining to the local and central authorities.³¹

This legal categorisation of various types of exile might lead to the assumption that it was somehow reflected in the experience of exiles in Siberia. However, even the state officials admitted that in practice the overwhelming majority of exiles of all categories experienced extreme hardship and were generally forced into the same condition of utter penury, which made many of them run away from their assigned places of settlement. For example, in his annual report of 1875, the governor general of Western Siberia complained that out of seventy thousand exiles, more than thirty-six thousand did not live in their assigned place of exile, having left without informing the authorities of their departure.³² There was, however, one crucial difference that these categories entailed for the exiles, as they implied different destinations of displacement. There was a distinct differentiation between the regions within Siberia: according to the administrators, the harsher the punishment a person deserved, the further east they were to be sent.

Quantitatively, the largest category was of “administrative exiles”,³³ who were generally sent to the Tomsk and Tobolsk regions, unless they themselves asked to be sent further East.³⁴ These people were exiled to Siberia because their communities, or (prior to 1861) the serfs’ owners, banished them. They were generally assigned to a rural community in Siberia and were considered by the legislators to be in a favourable situation. After serving their term of at least five years, they were allowed to resettle or go back to European Russia, but not to the communities that had expelled them. In practice, however, the radical experience of uprooting and social and geographical dislocation had a lingering, devastating effect on the majority of the exiles. It also seems from the documents that these consequences were neither intended as part of the punishment nor even predicted by the central government. In 1900, the head of the Main Prison Administration remarked:

Even if it would have been possible to make an as-

³¹RGIA, f. 1149, op. 10 (D.Z.), d. 60, ll. 33-38.

³²RGIA. *Vsepoddaneishii otchet general-gubernatora Zapadnoi Sibiri za 1875 g.*, 25.

³³Kolesnikov 1975.

³⁴Alexandr Petrovich Salomon. 1900. *Ssylka v Sibir. Ocherk eia istorii i sovremennago polozheniia*. Saint Petersburg, 101–102.

sumption (purely theoretical and refuted by practice) that after a certain period of exile the nefarious members of society would lose their nefariousness, then what kind of correction can we expect from a person who spent only three years in exile, considering that the first years of the exile are the hardest time of settlement, the unescapable time of complete penury and extreme privation of necessary things that might engender not correction and repentance, but rather rancour.³⁵

Such critical remarks, as well as the mention of the contradiction between “theory” and “practice”, were only possible at the very end of the nineteenth century, as before that the discussion of exile was dominated by abstract moral arguments. Similarly, the first consistent data on the number of exiles appeared only at the end of the 1870s. By the end of the century (in 1897–8), the province of Tobolsk hosted 103,102 administrative exiles, while the region of Tomsk hosted 35,736.³⁶

The next three categories of exiles consisted of those who were banished following a court decision. “Exiled settlers” constituted the second most numerous category. They were banned from living in the cities altogether, except for those who could not perform any agricultural labour. Unlike administrative exiles, exiled settlers were legally excluded from the social system: they were not assigned to any community (*obschestvo*), but became part of their own estate (*soslovie*) of exiles.³⁷ Until 1822, the children of all exiles, as well as those of *katorga* convicts, were also attributed to this estate from birth.³⁸ Then, there were the “settled workers”, vagrants who were sentenced to forced labour.³⁹ The majority of them were sent to the provinces of Irkutsk, Enisei and Transbaikalia in Eastern Siberia. Finally, there was a particularly small group of the “exiled for life” (*soslannye na zhit'e*): people from the privileged estates who

³⁵Ibid., 102.

³⁶Ibid., Appendix 4, 14–15.

³⁷Ibid., 103.

³⁸L.M. Dameshek and A.V. Remnev, eds. 2007. *Sibir v sostave Rossiiskoi imperii*. Moscow, 277.

³⁹For more on the lives of vagrants in Siberia, see Andrew A. Gentes. 2011. “Vagabondage and the Tsarist Siberian exile system: power and resistance in the penal landscape”. *Central Asian Survey* 30 (3–4): 407–421.

committed crimes for which the punishment for unprivileged people would be incarceration.

The next, and last, categories were quantitatively negligible and included political exiles, those exiled for up to five years under police surveillance, and criminals coming from Finland who were sentenced to long-term incarceration but chose exile instead.⁴⁰

What is visible from this brief list is, above all, the bureaucratic failure of the central administration: the categories were introduced *ad hoc* and the categorisation was not systematic; moreover, it had little impact on the condition of the exiles, who generally found themselves abandoned by the state, rather than closely watched and controlled by state representatives.

1.3 Russia and Siberia: Imperial tensions

Exile can only be understood as part of a wider geometry of power. It was initiated by the central government, but its implementation involved actors located in different places and was generally not coordinated from the centre. Therefore, looking at exile in connection with the practices of governance highlights the fact that this type of punishment was developed not only by the innovations of lawyers and ministerial administrators, but also, in a less direct fashion, by the tensions between central and local authorities and the central government's agenda of controlled colonisation.

In their policies towards Siberia, the central imperial authorities were guided by controversial desires: on the one hand, they strove to better integrate Siberia within the empire, provide it with qualified local administrators, and use the economic potential of the region; on the other hand, they did not want the region to develop too much political and economic autonomy that would lead it to contest central power. Each emperor approached this dilemma differently. Nicholas I appointed the First Siberian Committee to resolve this issue. This committee, dominated by Prince Gorchakov, “made a conscious decision to keep Siberia backward and underdeveloped as the best way of bringing about the firm unification and complete amalgamation of

⁴⁰The Grand Duchy of Finland was an autonomous part of the Russian empire and thus its people were also subject to special policies. The possibility to choose between incarceration and exile was one of their privileges.

Siberia with central Russia”.⁴¹ Alexander II’s government, however, brought a new paradigm of thinking about Siberia and the ways it could be unified with Russia: namely, by breaking its administrative separateness.⁴² This process was accelerated under Alexander III, and by 1887 “the very name Siberia was no longer used as an administrative term”⁴³. On the eve of the twentieth century, the policy of the administrative unification of Siberia with Russia became dominant.⁴⁴

Despite these efforts of integration, the administration of exile remained continually dependent on the local authorities. Their role was crucial: when people were sentenced to exile, the sentence did not state to which location specifically they would be sent. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, in special cases individuals could be exiled within European Russia, but the main flow of criminal and administrative exiles was persistently directed to Siberia. Within Siberia, exile to different regions, as I have already mentioned, was considered to possess a different punitive force: exile further East was perceived to be a harsher punishment.⁴⁵ Therefore, the *katorga* convicts were traditionally sent further to the East, while Western Siberia hosted the administrative exiles. The exiled settlers were confined to the regions around Irkutsk and along the Amur river. Distribution took place once the exiles had already arrived in Siberia; the Tyumen Office of the Exiles (*Tyumenskii Prikaz o Ssylnykh*), the regional Siberian prison inspections, and the regional offices were responsible for this. Originally, the Office of the Exiles was created in Tobolsk in 1822 as part of Speranskii’s reform that attempted to transform the practice of exile,⁴⁶ but in 1869 it was relocated

⁴¹Steven Gary Marks. 1991. *Road to Power: The Trans-Siberian Railroad and the Colonization of Asian Russia, 1850-1917*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 49.

⁴²S. G. Svatikov. 1929. *Rossia i Sibir: (k istorii sibirskogo oblastnichestva v XIX v.)* Prague, 76.

⁴³Marks 1991, 58.

⁴⁴Dameshek and Remnev 2007, 138.

⁴⁵RGIA. *Vsepoddaneishii otchet general-gubernatora Zapadnoi Sibiri za 1875 g.*, 37. Tobolsk and Tomsk provinces hosted only administrative exiles, while the Eastern Siberian provinces (Enisei, Irkutsk, Yakutsk, Amur provinces, Transbaikalia and Sakhalin) hosted criminal exiles and *katorga* convicts.

⁴⁶This reform, inscribed within the policies of Alexander I, was directed towards the systematisation and regularisation of imperial governance. The two main legal acts of Speranskii’s reform were *Ustav o ssylnykh (Polnoe sobranie zakonov Rossiiskoi Imperii. The First Series. 1830. Vol. 38. Saint Petersburg,*

to Tyumen. Before the authorities started experimenting with the installation of *katorga* sites on Sakhalin in 1869, criminal exiles were sent to various places in the southern part of Siberia: Nerchinsk in Transbaikalia and the region of Krasnoyarsk in Eastern Siberia. There also existed a *katorga* prison in Tobolsk, but it was a minor site compared to Nerchinsk and Sakhalin.

The spatial organisation of exile was complex, and the exiles were distributed throughout the region very unevenly. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the presence of exiles in Western Siberia was limited, but concentrated; the highest concentration of exiles coincided with the regions with the highest population density, thus producing discontent among the locals and the otherwise unlikely shortage of usable land.

The Tyumen Office assigned the precise location of exile only to those who were exiled in the Tobolsk region, while in all other cases it recorded only the region of destination, leaving the assignment of the place of exile to the local authorities. Just like the Tyumen Office, some of the regional authorities relied upon information about available land provided by the local governors.⁴⁷ The area of exile changed significantly over time. In Western Siberia, in particular, it gradually shrank. This was first due to the organisation of the Altai Mountain District (*Altaiskii Gornii okrug*) in 1808.⁴⁸ This District belonged personally to the Emperors, was a significant source of profit, and thus was governed directly by the Imperial Cabinet. Another limitation was related to the imperial policy concerning indigenous people: convicts were not exiled to the regions of Akmolinsk and Semipalatinsk, that is, the southern part of Western Siberia. This was related to the central government's conception of the local population: as the imperial authorities were gradually seeking to christianise the Kyrgyz nomadic tribes, they assumed that "any contact with the vicious (*porochnyi*) element would make the Muslim Kyrgyz horde stay in the depth of the Steppe, aloof from all things Russian and Christian",⁴⁹ thus undermining all governmental effort

no. 29128, pp. 433–469) and *Ustav ob etapakh v Sibirskikh guberniakh (Polnoe sobranie zakonov Rossiiskoi Imperii. The First Series. 1830. Vol. 38. Saint Petersburg, no. 29129, 469–488)*. For an analysis, see Gentes 2008, 179–180.

⁴⁷Salomon 1900, p. 117.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, 121.

⁴⁹RGIA. *Vsepoddaneishii otchet general-gubernatora Zapadnoi Sibiri za 1877 g.*, 29.

towards sedentarisation and Christianisation. The northern regions of Western Siberia did not host any exiles either, as it would have required too much logistical effort to preserve the exiles from “dying of biting frost and hunger”.⁵⁰ In other words, only a small area (compared to the overall surface of Western Siberia) hosted exiles in the last third of the nineteenth century, but their concentration there was high.

The ratio of exiles and to the local population was also an issue for the local administrators. Upon settlement in Western Siberia, the exiles and their families were granted land allotments of three *desiatiny* (8.1 acres) of arable land per person. According to legal prescriptions, the proportion of exiles to the local population was supposed to be limited to 1:5.⁵¹ Research initiated in 1875 by the Western Siberian governor-general Kaznakov, however, showed that in the majority of regions, this proportion was far from being respected. After he addressed this issue to the central government, the latter stated that the relocation of those already exiled once, as well as the future regulation of the installation of exiles, should remain within the jurisdiction of the local governors general. The result of this was not, of course, a change in the condition of exiles, but rather the legal normalisation of the situation. In 1881, the governor general issued an instruction that the new normal proportion of exiles to the local population (*starozhily*) should be 1:3.⁵² In 1889, the governor of Tobolsk reported to the Minister of the Interior that:

the exiles were settled to the region that was entrusted to me, in recent years, with a lot of tension (*s nati-azhkoi*) and without any consideration of whether the land was suitable for farming or any kind of exploitation, and whether a certain peasant community had any land available – and, moreover, they were sent to the regions such as the Tobolsk district (*okrug*), where the settlement of exiles has been considered impossible for many

⁵⁰Ibid. Sending the exiles to the North of Western Siberia did occur later, during the Soviet times. For a case covering the catastrophic and deadly failure of this endeavour, see Nicolas Werth. 2007a. *Cannibal Island: Death in a Siberian Gulag*. Princeton University Press.

⁵¹Salomon 1900, p. 123.

⁵²Ibid., 125.

years due to the lack of arable land.⁵³

The local authorities sought to change the role of Siberia as the main exile destination of the Russian empire, but did not succeed and had to continuously accommodate the exiles and adapt to their growing numbers.

1.4 *Katorga* and the changing role of Siberia

Among all the flows of punitive relocations to Siberia, the case of those convicted to *katorga* is the most complex one, and it allows us to trace the interrelations between forced relocation and imprisonment. Thus the case of Tobolsk *katorga* prison – an imperial institution where exile and incarceration overlapped – deserves a closer look, as exploring the history of its installation and functioning allows us to grasp the uneasy relationship between these two types of punishment.

Before the development of railroads in Siberia, the main roads of commerce and communication were the rivers. The town of Tobolsk, situated at the confluence of the Irtysh and Tobol rivers, was one of the main outposts of the Russian presence in Siberia since the end of the sixteenth century. However, the decision to construct the “Southern route” of the Trans-Siberian Railway at the end of the nineteenth century led to the growing importance of the towns located more to the south, such as Tyumen and Omsk, and brought to a halt the economic development of Tobolsk. Over the first decades of the twentieth century, it completely lost its commercial and administrative influence to Tyumen.

Nevertheless, at the end of the 1870s, Tobolsk was still the centre of general governance and hosted several distinctly imperial institutions, including two relatively new *katorga* prisons. They were organised due to prison overcrowding in the European part of the empire.⁵⁴ As the prison population grew in the 1860s and 1870s after the emancipation of the serfs and the curtailment of corporal punishment, the existing prisons became insufficient to cope with the influx of new convicts.

⁵³Ibid., 126.

⁵⁴State Archive of the Russian Federation (GARF), f. 122, op. 5, d. 743, l. 11.

The decision to create new *katorga* prisons in Tobolsk dates back to 1874, when a former wine cellar was designated to be refurbished into a gigantic prison cell for two hundred inmates. It is unclear who exactly initiated this decision, but most likely it originated within the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Before construction work could even start, however, 250 *katorga* convicts were sent to Tobolsk. As a convict transportation hub for prisoners heading further East, Tobolsk hosted a prison stronghold (*tiuremnyi zamok*), and a temporary jail for these inmates was set up in the empty space provided by this stronghold. In September 1876, a new and bigger *katorga* prison was opened in another part of the stronghold, where previously a military prison had been located. The military prison, in its turn, was relocated to the town of Ustkamenogorsk in June of the same year. The new *katorga* prison could accommodate 550 convicts, and the temporary jail was transformed into its special section. At the end of 1878, the construction of the second *katorga* prison (for 300 prisoners) was completed.

Large groups of *katorga* prisoners from European Russia were confined in Tobolsk prison for the first part of their punishment. The principles governing the sorting of convicts between those who would stay in the European part of the empire and those who would be displaced further to the East were outlined in an ordinance from 18 April 1869, drafted by a special committee responsible for a project of exile reorganisation.⁵⁵ These principles, once again, reflected the use of convicts as an embodiment of Russian imperial expansion in Siberia. The mere presence of Russian men and especially women in Eastern Siberia was already considered to fulfil the goal of colonisation. Therefore, male convicts with families were sent to Siberia directly after their conviction, while single convicts stayed to serve their term in Europe. Convicts with families were deemed more capable of settling down and turning into well-established colonists after their release from confinement in a *katorga* prison. Female convicts from all over the empire, independent of their marital status, were also to be sent to Eastern Siberia. Abby Schrader discusses in detail the high officials' conception of the socio-sexual order of the Siberian exiles and the instrumentalisation of women with the purpose of domesticating of the male exiles, thus underlining the

⁵⁵“O predstoiashchem preobrazovanii katorgi”. 1910. *Tiuremnyi vestnik*, no. 6: 897–922.

role of gender in the policies of using exiles as colonists in Siberia.⁵⁶ Single prisoners, as well as those who were married but not accompanied by their families, generally stayed in European Russia to serve the first part of their sentence, and were displaced to Siberia after that in order to serve the second part of their punishment – eternal settlement.

Unlike some *katorga* facilities in Eastern Siberia, such as the prison at the silver and lead mines of Nerchinsk, the Western Siberian *katorga* prisons were not dedicated to one particular type of forced convict labour in the interest of the state. Despite the fact that forced labour constituted the core of *katorga* as a punitive regime, the organisation of convict labour in these prisons was clearly of less importance than the accommodation of the incoming convicts. The author of a report on the condition of the Tobolsk *katorga* prisons, junior official (*mladshii chinovnik*) Merkushev, mentions that discussions about the necessity of well-established convict labour started as early as 1875, with the opening of the temporary *katorga* jail. One of the types of work that was discussed was the canalisation of the town, a typical example of extramural convict labour. However, these discussions did not have an actual outcome at the time the report was written (February 1882), and the convicts were mostly forced to perform the daily work within the prisons, such as cleaning, cooking, and laundering. There existed some artisanal workshops, but their production was limited and destined mostly for private clients.

The overall impact of forced labour on prison life at the time of the report was very limited. Both prisons together could contain 1100 people. These prisons, unlike most in the Empire at that time, were not employed at full capacity.⁵⁷ However, the report states that the number of people forced to work both in the workshops and for prison maintenance almost never exceeded 250 altogether, while other prisoners were not performing any work at all. Most likely, at this point neither the funding nor the qualifications of the local prison managers allowed for the installation of larger-scale works. In other words, although the prison wardens in Tobolsk were not

⁵⁶Abby M. Schrader. 2007. “Unruly Felons and Civilizing Wives: Cultivating Marriage in the Siberian Exile System, 1822-1860”. *Slavic Review* 66 (2): 230–256.

⁵⁷GARF, f. 122, op. 5, d. 743.

confronted with overcrowding, making labour obligatory was still far beyond their reach.

These reports from this local prison show the lack of coordination between the different parts of the penal system, with the practice of exile placing additional strain on the *katorga* prison. That the convicts were sent to Siberia without the facilities being even constructed is just one example of mismanagement. More importantly, these discrepancies and lags seem to be inherent to the prison and exile management system as a whole, rather than specific to Tobolsk. The shape of prisons on the eve of reform was largely defined by the problems of administration and communication: bureaucratic inconsistencies together with fragmented and insufficient funding produced a penal system within which, depending on the location of the facilities, conditions would differ dramatically.

Regular prisons were intended as institutions for convicts serving shorter sentences, while exile and especially *katorga* were intended as longer, harsher punishments. By the beginning of the twentieth century, the condition of the *katorga* regime was considered critical and provoked a public outcry.⁵⁸ The gap between the modernising conceptions of punishment and the theoretical premises of *katorga* was growing. Together with the continuous protests of the Siberian authorities and communities, this made the crisis of the whole system of *katorga* colonies increasingly visible.

The absence of a consistent reform of *katorga* in the nineteenth century is ostensibly related to the installation of the penal site on Sakhalin island: rather than reform this regime of punishment, the officials of the Main Prison Administration opted to install a major new site. In other words, they reached a certain agreement that in the 1860s and later, the *katorga* system was still valid, and only needed to be installed in a more consistent manner and in better suited conditions. Some of these officials, and most notably the head of the Main Prison Administration Mikhail Galkin-Vraskoi, whose activities I will discuss in the following chapter, considered Sakhalin Island to be an ideal location for a penal colony due to its remote geographical position, hostile weather conditions, and relatively small local population. In practice, however, it transpired that the es-

⁵⁸Public discussions around *katorga* were kindled by the publication of Chekhov's *Sakhalin Island* (1893), Doroshevich's *Sakhalin* (1903) and Tolstoy's *Resurrection* (1899).

establishment of a stable penal settlement based on the agricultural labour of convicts was hardly possible: the weather conditions were too unfavourable, the settlers needed a constant supply of alimentation, transportation was expensive (prior to the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, the convicts were transported from the Black Sea on ships all the way around Africa), and escapes were not as rare as the officials of the Main Prison Administration had predicted. The case of Sakhalin is just one example, though probably the most striking, of the gap between the imagination of the Russian state officials and reality.

1.5 Penal reforms and their limits

The economic backwardness of the Russian Empire became painfully evident after its defeat in the Crimean war. Shortly after Alexander II succeeded his conservative father, the tsarist regime started to implement radical new policies in order to spur economic, administrative and social modernisation.⁵⁹ The most transformative of these policies was the abolition of serfdom in 1861, but the financial reform (1863), the reforms of higher (1863) and middle (1871) education, the judicial reform and the reform of local governance (both from 1864) also changed the political and social landscape of the Russian Empire. However, not all of these reforms, which were introduced in European Russia, were introduced in Siberia; Siberia, being a borderland region, existed under a different regime of governance, and the rhythm of change was different there as well.

The prison reform, which I discuss in greater detail in the following chapter, marked the beginning of the transition towards making incarceration, rather than other types of punishment, the foundation of the penal system. This reform was aimed at the centralisation of the prison management in the Russian Empire. Prison officials, however, were confronted with the imperial reality, where the prisons were permanently lacking funds and qualified wardens, the prison administrators preferred to use convicts for unqualified extramural labour, and the local authorities were unwilling to invest in the building of new prisons, relying on exile instead. Neverthe-

⁵⁹Dominic Lieven. 2006. *The Cambridge History of Russia: Volume 2, Imperial Russia, 1689-1917*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 12.

less, the spread of prisons in the last third of the nineteenth century was slow, but consistent. It was, however, much more prominent in European Russia, and especially in the densely populated regions, than in Siberia. The whole architecture of exile proved itself less susceptible to these efforts towards centralisation, and impeded the spread of incarceration as the dominant punishment.

Exile in general proved to be largely untouched by the reforms until the beginning of the twentieth century. Only by that time did it gradually lose its appeal as an instrument of colonisation of Siberia: the natural growth of the population and especially the explosive increase in the rates of peasant colonisation during the last decade of the nineteenth century came to play a far more important role.

Throughout the nineteenth century, the remoteness of Siberia, both physical and imagined, was one of the reasons for the persistence of the regime of exiling people, both administratively and following a trial. The central administrators could argue that this practice should make the “real” Russia, by which they meant its European part, safer. Already early in the nineteenth century, some dissenting voices considered this system violent and costly, as it led to social dislocation and as well as many deaths and injuries while people were on their way to Siberia,⁶⁰ but the discussions to curb it did not bring a rapid resolution. First started in 1835, attempts to reform the exile system went on in a haphazard manner for more than sixty years. For example, the administrative banishment of offenders by their communes was abolished in 1865, and then re-introduced the next year. Aleksandr Margolis has discussed in detail the preparation of the 1900 reform and has demonstrated that it was long overdue.⁶¹ The central authorities had ample evidence that exile served poorly as an instrument of social control and caused suffering among exiles that was far more intense than what was intended by the legislators, but this alone did not lead to the abandonment of the practice. A major shift in the perception of the position of Siberia within the empire was needed in order to achieve an agreement to curtail the exile as a practice.

⁶⁰For more on the experience of sickness and injury in exile, see Sarah Badcock. 2013. “From Villains to Victims: Experiencing Illness in Siberian Exile”. *Europe-Asia Studies* 65 (9): 1716–1736.

⁶¹Aleksandr D. Margolis. 1995. *Tiurma i ssylka v imperatorskoi Rossii: Issledovaniia i arkhivnye nakhodki*. Moscow, 15–21.

At the end of the nineteenth century, the efforts of the Russian state to reinforce its position in Siberia were channelled into strengthening the region economically. These efforts included increasing the connectivity of the region (by building the Trans-Siberian Railroad) and facilitating the peasant resettlement from the European part of the Empire. In the final decades of the Russian empire's existence the primary role in empire building was ascribed neither to the military nor to the officials, but to the peasant colonists.⁶²

The unprecedented waves of free migration, with approximately three million people going to Siberia in just fifteen years (1895–1910),⁶³ contradicted the lingering image of Siberia as a barren place of exile. Consensus among elites labelled the peasants as the chief driver of Russian colonisation.⁶⁴ Not only the highest ranking officials such as Prime Minister Petr Stolypin (1863–1911), but also the middle ranking technocrats⁶⁵ and scholars like Matvei Liubavskii (1860–1936), defined the degree of integration of a region within the Russian state by the degree of the peasant colonisation of these regions.⁶⁶ Promotion of the peasant colonisation of Siberia was thus connected to the administrative changes of the position of the region within the empire and the movement from administrative separation to integration. These changes provided administrators with stronger arguments for the abolition of exile in the discussions of reform.⁶⁷ First, they insisted that greater integration made exile less punitive for prisoners; second, according to them, Siberia was becoming more and more Russian, and thus peasant colonisation should be encour-

⁶²Anatolii Remnev. 2003. "Vdvinut Rossiu v Sibir. Imperii i russkaia kolonizatsiia vtoroi poloviny XIX — nachala XX veka". *Ab Imperio*, no. 3: 135–158.

⁶³P. A. Stolypin and A. V. Krivoshein. 1911. *Poezdka v Sibir' i Povolzhie*. Saint Petersburg, 2.

⁶⁴For an overview of the views on colonisation, see Willard Sunderland. 2000. "The 'Colonization Question': Visions of Colonization in Late Imperial Russia". *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 48 (2): 210–232.

⁶⁵Peter Holquist. 2010. "In Accord with State Interests and the People's Wishes: The Technocratic Ideology of Imperial Russia's Resettlement Administration". *Slavic Review* 69 (1): 151–179.

⁶⁶Matvei Liubavskii. 1996. *Obzor istorii russkoi kolonizatsii s drevneishikh vremen i do XX veka*. Moscow.

⁶⁷Extensive discussions on the abolition of exile can be found in *Zhurnalnyi vysochaishe uchrezhdennoi Komissii o meropriiatiakh po otmene ssylki. Zasedaniia 3 iunია, 9 i 16 dekabria 1899 goda, 10 ianvaria i 7 fevralia 1900 goda*. 1900. Saint Petersburg.

aged instead of the forced population of this region with convicts. At last, the law of 12 June 1900 abolished judicial exile and curtailed administrative exile: according to some estimates, these categories together constituted 85% of all exiles.⁶⁸ Minister of Justice Nikolai Muraviev was one of the most vocal critics of exile and stated in spring 1900 that abolishing it had become an “extreme necessity” (*sovershennaia krainost*).⁶⁹

This considerable reduction in the number of exiles facilitated the advance of prison reform. In the next decades, prison administrators were able to achieve an increasing uniformity of conditions between the prisons in European Russia and Siberia, especially Western Siberia. In 1913, the head of the Main Prison Administration still lamented the conditions at the *katorga* sites in Transbaikalia, but found the Tobolsk prisons sufficiently developed.⁷⁰ Despite the fact that exile and *katorga* existed until the 1917 Revolution, they lost their importance as common punishments and, especially after 1905, became more prominent as instruments of repression against political militants. This instrumentalisation of exile and *katorga* as a means of fighting dissent is discussed in chapter three of this thesis.

1.6 Conclusion

The final decades of the nineteenth century were a time of rapid social and economic change in the Russian Empire, and the penal system, too, was changing, albeit at its own pace. Exile remained the cornerstone punitive practice throughout the nineteenth century, despite the attempts of prison administrators to promote the penitentiary as the dominant punitive regime. Even though exile de facto had a very limited impact on the colonisation of Siberia, the central authorities still relied on this alleged potential as they used exile in order to forcefully displace thousands of peasants and their families. Only as Siberia acquired a new role within the Russian empire did exile lose its appeal to the central administrators. With

⁶⁸L.M. Dameshek and A.V. Remnev, eds. 2007. *Sibir v sostave Rossiiskoi imperii*. Moscow, 288.

⁶⁹Margolis 1995, 18.

⁷⁰P. K. Gran. 1913. *Katorga v Sibiri. Izvlecheniia iz otcheta o sluzhebnoi poezdke Nachalnika Glavnogo Upravleniia P. K. Grana v Sibir v 1913 godu*. Saint Petersburg, 7.

the unprecedented peasant migration during the last third of the nineteenth century, Siberia, and especially Western Siberia, increasingly became to be considered a part of Russia's "core" rather than a colony. These changes were embodied in the law of 1900, which curtailed the use of administrative exile.

Looking at exile from a Siberian perspective provides several insights not possible otherwise. First, an analysis of the precise spatial organisation of exile demonstrates the multitude of flows of punitive displacement and the differentiation of these flows across space, with displacement further East considered to be more punitive. It also underscores the variety of goals that exile was supposed to fulfil: punishment, labour coercion, and colonisation of the border territories. Second, the case of the Tobolsk *katorga* prison demonstrates the limits of control of the central government, as well as the ways in which the persistence of exile thwarted the advance of prison reform. The reform was also impeded by severe bureaucratic inefficiencies and misled experiments, strong asymmetry of the administrative and political structures, and persistent local practices of punishment and governance.