

**AMURCON 2021**  
**AmurCon 2021: International Scientific Conference****CARRIAGE LABOR ON THE AMUR WHEEL ROAD  
(KOLESUKHA): HISTORICAL AND LEGAL ASPECT**

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Russia**Abstract**

The article highlights, in the context of the legislation of the Russian Empire, the practice of using convict labor in the construction of dirt roads from Khabarovsk to Blagoveshchensk. The conditions of their work, the amount of work that was performed by them are considered. Work in summer from morning to evening in swamps, waist-deep in water. It was especially difficult in early spring and late autumn, when the convicts had to work in cold water, and lived in unheated barracks or in tents. Manual earthworks belong to the category of heavy work. Logging was no less difficult. Here people were used as draft cattle for the transportation of logs. To this was added the rude attitude and mockery on the part of the guards. Special attention is paid to the effectiveness of the use of forced labor of convicts, the organization of construction management and the results of this construction. Contradictions between the convict superiors and the technical staff aggravated the confusion that reigned in the construction. It is proved that the "cheap" convict labor was labor-intensive and wasteful. The use of forced labor of convicts was considered not as a measure of re-education and correction of convicts, but as a punishment replacing the death penalty.

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## **1. Introduction**

Formulation of a scientific problem. The use of forced labor in various spheres of the Russian economy in the pre-Soviet period has a long tradition. Extensive historical literature (Bortnikova, 1999; Gernet, 1962; Shcherbakov et al., 1996; Ssylka..., 1975) and historical and legal literature (Ivanova, 2006; Kodan, 1984; Korablin, 2005; Plotnikov, 1992) is devoted to this topic. Our article is devoted to the so-called "Amur wheel" - the road from the regional center - Khabarovsk to the regional - Blagoveshchensk. However, it has not received proper coverage in modern historical and historical-legal literature. This was the first experience of attracting a large mass of people of a very specific social composition to dirt road construction in the Far East. For this reason alone, the construction of this road requires a detailed description. On the other hand, the use of convict labor in the construction of the "kolesukha" was regulated not only by the Statute of Exiles of 1896 and 1909, but also by special legislative acts provided for the use of convicts in the road construction of Eastern Siberia and the Far East (Polnoe..., 1891, 1894, 1898, 1899, 1902a, 1902b).

## **2. Problem Statement**

The subject of the study is the use of convict labor in road works in the Russian Empire at the turn of the XIX - XX centuries.

## **3. Research Questions**

The purpose of the study is to analyze the law enforcement practice on the use of forced labor of prisoners in a specific historical context.

## **4. Purpose of the Study**

To achieve the stated goal, the following research objectives are set:

- to identify the main stages of the construction of the Amur Kolesukha and the degree of use of convict labor during its laying;
- describe the conditions of detention of convicts and hard labor;
- to show the economic inefficiency of construction related to the use of prisoners' labor;
- to disclose the construction management system and determine the legal aspects of the use of forced labor of prisoners.

## **5. Research Methods**

In the process of historical and legal research, we used the following methodological principles:

- the principle of historicism, which allows us to consider the events of the past in the context of historical time;
- the principle of objectivity, which allows to reveal the events of the historical past without subjective distortion.

## 6. Findings

### 6.1. Stages of construction

It was assumed that with the completion of the construction of the steel track from Vladivostok to Khabarovsk, the natural continuation of the Great Siberian Railway, will be the construction of the Amur Railway, which will connect Khabarovsk with Sretensk passing through Blagoveshchensk. However, it was decided to lay a railway track through the territory of Manchuria. At the beginning of 1898, six months after the completion of the construction of the Ussuri Railway, the Amur Governor-General filed a petition with the government for the construction of a dirt road connecting Khabarovsk with Sretensk through the city of Blagoveshchensk. First of all, it is a postal tract, with the necessary stations and associated facilities. It was not excluded, but, on the contrary, it was supposed to use the road for strategic purposes.

In the same year, a permit for its construction followed, and appropriate funds were allocated from the treasury. In order to reduce the cost of work, it was decided to use the labor of exiled convicts, who, according to the local authorities, proved themselves well in the construction of the Ussuri railway, as well as the wheeled track from Khabarovsk to Spassk. To do this, 300 convicts were brought to the construction site from Sakhalin Island, who, together with prisoners transferred from the Ussuri Railway, made up a team of 407 people. In 1898 the number of forced laborers reached 800 or more – prisoners from the Nerchinsk convict prison joined the already existing ones.

The summer road works of that year consisted mainly in the construction, leveling of the roadbed, digging of lateral and longitudinal drainage ditches, construction of dams, bridges, station buildings, the device of crossings across large rivers, carrying out a telegraph line along the way. Winter work was preparatory in nature: harvesting lumber, construction of wheelbarrows, stakes, etc. In the first summer construction season, 52 versts of road were laid.

The laying was more successful in 1899, as it was preceded by a preparatory winter period. In summer, up to 400 people participated in the work every day. They went on three separate sections:

- I - Khabarovsk - art. Transverse;
- II - art. Transversal – the village of Nadezhdinsky;
- III - the village of Nadezhdinsky - Mikhailo-Semenovskaya station.

Up to 75 versts of road have been laid, 43 versts have been repaired. In the next season, that is, in 1900, another 95 versts of road were laid. In addition, 31 large and 5 small bridges were built. In 1900-1901, more than 600 people carried out the main road works in the summer. 103 versts of canvas were carried out on all three sites, 10 station buildings were put up, including one - two-storey. 6 new bridges with a total length of 225 linear fathoms were built, temporary bridges were replaced with permanent ones. As a result, the first and second sections were finally rebuilt, and the third was prepared for commissioning. In the autumn of 1901, some of the builders were transferred to the IV site (Chirki station - Bijanriver).

Since the beginning of the winter of 1901-1902, the main forces of the road teams have been focused on harvesting timber in the upper reaches of the Bijan River, near the Babstov farm, for artificial and civil structures, both for the fourth and the next, fifth section of the road (the Bijan river - Pompeevsky Pass). At the same time, there was a sawing of the forest for ties, the preparation of telegraph poles, hand wheelbarrows were made. Up to 300 people were engaged in logging directly, the rest were engaged in

carpentry work along the highway (post stations, guard booths, summer premises of the Pokrovsky postal and telegraph office were completed).

In May 1902, a new batch of exiled convicts (200 people) arrived from Sakhalin Island, who were immediately transferred to the fourth site for the construction of the roadbed. By the end of the year, 57 versts of canvas were laid here (out of 63), hummocks were cut off on the rest of the way, gates were laid. In addition, 38 small bridges were built, with a width of 1 to 5 fathoms and one large one - 30 fathoms. Preparatory work has begun on the construction of a bridge over the Bijan River in 78 fathoms. Of the three projected station buildings, two have been completed.

The experience of the construction of the first two sections of the route confirmed the need for thorough survey work. When conducting surveys, first of all, attention was paid to the need to reduce the distance between the final destinations. The direction of the wheeled highway from Khabarovsk to Blagoveshchensk was designed to pass through the Churki station, bypassing the village of Mikhailo-Semenovskaya, from the Churki station to the Bijan River (section IV), from Bijan to the Pompeevsky pass of the Khingansky Ridge (section V), from the Pompeevsky Pass to the Saturdays on the meridian of the Cossack village of Radde (section VI). Then the road went through the village of Arkady-Semenovskaya with two options for crossing the Bureya River (either at the village of Malinovka, or at the village of Astashikhinsky) to the village of Raychikha (VII section). From Raychikha to Blagoveshchensk (section VII) there was an area already populated by peasants, where, according to the designers, the costs of laying the road should be less than in the deserted and sparsely populated mountain-taiga distances of the tract (Korablin, 2017). As a result of this tracing, the path from Khabarovsk to Blagoveshchensk was 730 versts, turned out to be 124.7 versts shorter on the new road than the former postal tract that ran along the Amur River (Obzor..., 1904).

Most of the prisoners in the winter of 1903-1904 were engaged in preparatory work for further and very difficult work on the V-VII mountain sections in the Khingan ridges. In this regard, in the summer of 1904, it was supposed to bring the composition of road teams to one and a half thousand people. Moreover, it was supposed to attract 300-400 exiled settlers from Sakhalin. For this purpose, 245 thousand rubles were requested from the treasury. Only 150 thousand rubles were allocated, and the involvement of settlers had to be abandoned. But in 1904, for the first time in the practice of building the Amur Kolesukha, 396 exiled convicts were sent from the Mikhailovsky resettlement prison. They were joined by prisoners of local prisons (Blagoveshchensk, Khabarovsk and Vladivostok). Thus, the average composition was brought in the summer of 1904 to 1052 people. For their arrangement, camps with a capacity of 300 to 400 people are being built on the Sutarsky and Lugovsky passes, as well as on the Ashikan River. A temporary road was laid from Amur and between them.

In connection with the beginning of the Russian-Japanese war, the imperial governor in the Far East ordered the need for the rapid opening of through traffic between Khabarovsk and Blagoveshchensk. In order to fulfill the governor's order, it was decided to lead the entire way through Khingan according to the type of railway temporary, adhering to the V and VII sections of the direction of the projected highway, on the indispensable condition that the roadbed will be made thoroughly enough to drive along it at any time of the year. Since June 1, 1904 most of the prisoners were put on the construction of new and on the arrangement of existing temporary shelters throughout the V and VI sections.

There are also lightened requirements for the arrangement of temporary roads. The clearings were cut with a width of no more than 7 fathoms, ditches were carried out from two sides only where it was extremely necessary, the width of the roadway decreased minimally – to 3 fathoms and only with cleaning from stumps, roots and stones. In the lowlands and swamps, a sprinkling was made, gati were arranged. In the second half of the summer, additional work was carried out to survey the route on the VII-VIII sections of the way. Since only 2 thousand were allocated for these rubles, it was necessary to recruit prisoners to the survey parties, who were given additional remuneration and leather shoes. According to the authorities, in the 1904 season, the task was completed – a "rough" through route from Khabarovsk to Blagoveshchensk was carried out.

With the onset of cold weather, most of the prisoners were distributed to winter camps on the Khingan passes, the rest – in small batches along the route (Obzor..., 1905).

On January 1, 1905, there were 733 prisoners in the road teams. During the year, 485 exiled convicts were sent from the Moscow central transfer prison ("central"), 145 prisoners from local ones, by the end of the year the same number of Sakhalin convicts evacuated from the island as a result of its capture by the Japanese. However, during the year, the loss amounted to 737 people (the majority after serving their sentence) and, thus, the average number of employees reached 749 people. In 1905 they carried out the following works:

- 1) traversed by a clearing, with stumps uprooting - 38 versts 419 fathoms;
- 2) passed the layout of the roadway - 145 versts;
- 3) earthworks were carried out in the amount of: a) 8,4 thousand cubic fathoms were poured onto the canvas; b) carts of slopes, slopes, ditches were dug, etc. – 5,9 thousand cubic fathoms.

Due to the lack of carpenters and stoves among the prisoners, in 1905, as well as last year, they resorted to the work of freelancers. In summer, the convict road teams were distributed in small batches over 300 versts from the Solonechnaya station to the village of Pashkovskaya and further along the Gryaznaya River. To improve the supply of prisoners and construction, the central warehouses of builders from the village of Mikhailo-Semenovsky were transferred to the village of Radde. Cargo was transported along the construction line by a state-owned wagon train, which included 56 horses and 52 oxen in 1905.

In 1906, the prisoners working on the road were divided into two large teams: Sutarskaya and Pashkovskaya. The Sutar team was located in the Khingan passes, initially in tents with wooden bunks, and by winter it was transferred to semi-underground barracks. The Pashkov team was formed in July 1906. In September, most of the prisoners from this team were transferred to a winter camp on the Feklistikha River (8 versts from Pashkovo), where they were placed in wooden barracks. The rest is in dugouts, in the vicinity of the village of Innokentievsky. A distinctive feature of the 1906 season: Sakhalin convicts were replaced by prisoners of the Moscow and Alexander central transit prisons – the famous "central", about which so many "convict" songs were composed. As in the previous year, a freelance carpenters' artel worked at Kolesukha, which built bridges over the Lagar and Dichun rivers, and a stable in Pashkovo. The construction and layout of the canvas was carried out from the Churki station to the Bijanriver. In total, that year, 26 versts were passed through the clearing and with its uprooting from the stumps and the layout of the canvas – another 60 versts. In addition, temporary shelters have been laid from Pashkovo to the camp on Khingan 8.5 versts and from the village of Innokentievskaya to the village of Arkady-Semenovskaya – 28 versts. At the same time, the road from the village of Radde to Pashkov (38 versts) was repaired. Along

with road construction, the prisoners were engaged in the construction of station buildings, laying telegraph lines, digging wells.

In 1907, the number of prisoners on the highway under construction reached a maximum of 1,252 people. They are already divided into four teams: Sutar, Pashkov, Raichikhinsky and Bijan. Road builders, as planned, took to the road from the village of Mikhaylovka to the village of Raychikha and from it to the village of Astashikha on the Bureya River. Similarly, the builders were divided into four teams the following year. However, their number has already somewhat decreased to 974 people. In 1909 the builders came to a connection with the existing wheeled highway, connecting the two largest cities on the Amur – Blagoveshchensk and Khabarovsk – by a wheeled route. The prisoners worked on the construction of the "kolesukha" until the winter of 1909. Then the last two prison camps were disbanded – Pashkovsky and Bijan. The completion of the road in 1909 was planned to be carried out by the forces of freelance workers, the practice of using their labor had been acquired four years earlier.

The mass use of convict labor in road works began with the construction of the Ussuri railway. Up to one and a half thousand forced laborers worked there in 1891-1897 (Gallyamova, 2000, p. 97). The Amur "kolesukha" was decided to be built exclusively by the labor of prisoners and convicts. Initially, mainly Sakhalin. Since 1904, convicts of the Moscow central transit prison, as well as the Alexandrovsky "central" (Irkutsk), Nerchinsk, and prisoners of local Amur prisons were joined to them. After 1905 the Sakhalin penal servitude was liquidated and by the end of construction, the main contingent engaged in the construction of the highway were Alexandrovsky and Nerchensk convicts. In 1907, the number of builders reached a maximum of 1,2 thousand people. Then it gradually decreases. Freelance workers are also involved. Nevertheless, the "kolesukha" from beginning to end was built mainly by forced labor.

In 1905, the last batch of Sakhalin convicts arrived for construction – 145 people. They were brought directly from Mariinsk, where they got after the evacuation from the island Sakhalin because of the Japanese invasion (the last major operation of the Russian-Japanese war, conducted in July 1905). Most of them turned out to be without any documents. For the first time, the organizers of the construction faced group actions of disobedience. The "Sakhalin residents" refused to go to work under the pretext that their term of hard labor had expired, they needed to be transferred to the category of exiled settlers or released altogether. Many claimed to have been in the militia and participated in the defense of the island from the Japanese invaders. And some were able to defend their rights, and they were released from hard labor, while others were forced to go to work by force (Rossiyskiy..., 1861-1920a).

## **6.2. Working and living conditions in construction**

The protest of Sakhalin residents is not a random episode. The working conditions at the construction site were extremely difficult. The author of an article about the Amur Wheeled Road in the Siberian Soviet Encyclopedia wrote that "it is built ... on convict bones, and is watered with convict blood" (Dubinskij, 1929, p. 101). It can be assumed that this is an exaggeration. Work in the summer went on from morning to evening, among clouds of mosquitoes and midges, among swamps, waist-deep in water. Early spring and late autumn were particularly difficult periods, when prisoners had to work in cold water and live in unheated barracks, or, worse, in tents. By themselves, manual earthworks belong to the category of heavy work. Logging was no easier, where people were used as draft cattle for transporting logs. The situation

was aggravated by rough treatment, bullying by the guards. Perhaps this is an exaggeration. But it was only in 1905 that the guards received special instructions on the treatment of convict workers. Before that, they were not limited in their actions by anything. Although the sources do not give complete information about the number of escapes, but their uniqueness is not obvious. In 1899, 29 people escaped, and in 1905 – 47. The peak occurred in 1906, when 80 people were already on the run. Only not many managed to escape. So, in 1899, only three could do it. In summer, a fugitive could easily get lost in the impassable taiga or in swampy swamps, where his death awaited him. In 1903, 18 people died in this way. In winter, they could easily be found by footprints in the snow.

The dispersion of sites, the mass of escapes, cases of disobedience required the reinforcement of the convoy team. In 1905-1908, the number of guards increased from 125 to 261 soldiers and officers. This can also be explained by the fact that after the suppression of armed demonstrations of workers and soldiers in the first Russian Revolution, "political" appeared among the new convicts. The ordeal of the revolution was replaced for them by the ordeal of hard labor (Rossiyskiy..., 1861-1920c).

The prison department was not limited to repressive measures only. In official reports, more and more attention is paid to the medical care of prisoners, their household arrangements. It is simply impossible not to do this: on the one hand, escapes, acts of protest, and on the other, due to diseases, the construction site lost workers, which were not so easy to replace in conditions of a shortage of people in the Amur Region. Here are a few facts. So, in 1906, 724 workers left the construction site, of which half were due to the expiration of the sentence, and 237 people (a significant part) were simply "written off" due to poor health. Hard work required increased nutrition, but even officially approved norms did not assume this. Each prisoner was entitled to: bread – 3 pounds, cereals – 16 spoons, onions – 8 spoons, potatoes or cabbage – 8 spoons, meat – 40 spoons. Meat was often replaced with fish – a pound for each. However, these norms were not maintained either, as the products were stolen, or because of careless storage they became unusable (Gosudarstvennyy..., 1927-1930). A weakened body is easily susceptible to diseases. In particular, in 1906, as stated in the official report, convicts with scurvy arrived from the Alexander Central. Acute colds and outbreaks of typhoid fever were not uncommon.

Control over the sanitary condition was assigned to the medical inspector of the Amur region. Two emergency rooms were deployed at the construction site, and in each team, there were medical districts. The first were headed by two medical paramedics, the second by junior paramedics. As a rule, both were illiterate not only in medicine, but in general. The doctor visited the work teams only twice a year and examined only the seriously ill. If first aid could not be provided on the spot, then they were taken to the Blagoveshchensk prison infirmary.

The balance of the use of labor of exiled convicts can be found in the "Report on the construction of the Amur wheeled road Khabarovsk-Blagoveshchensk 1898-1913." Here is the data:

- a) the number of "unemployed for various reasons" (employed as servants of various names by the ranks of administration and supervision) averaged 19.3%;
- b) the number of household day laborers (baggage, cooks, duty and others) – 20.4%;
- c) weak and sick – 6%;
- d) employed by "productive day labor", that is, used strictly for their intended purpose - 54.3% (Rossiyskiy..., 1861-1920c).

Thus, only a little more than half of the convicts were engaged in what they were sent to the "kolesukha" for. Every fifth person sent for construction was not used at all for its intended purpose, but in the servants of its guards and the authorities of the road. The proportion of patients is not as significant as one might assume, but it should be borne in mind that it was the information about them that was most distorted in the official reports.

A little bit about the pay of prisoners. They went to work in "dozens", accompanied by 1-2 escort guards. The work was carried out according to the so-called lessons, that is, norms. Each "ten", depending on the soil (sand, clay, stone) and the time of year, the amount of work was set: in summer – 0.35-0.8 cubic fathoms of excavated earth, in winter in frozen ground – 0.25-0.5 cubic fathoms. The lesson cost only 3 kopecks, that is, the price was even at that time – scanty. 7 kopecks were already due for overfulfilling. The exact same rates were for carpenters and sawyers. In other jobs, the lesson was estimated at 2 kopecks, and overtime – 6 kopecks. Exiled convicts received immediately only what they had done overtime. The earned "installments" were transferred to a special account, and were issued only when they were transferred to the category of exiled settlers. Prisoners of the prison category, that is, those who got on the "wheel" from local prisons, received both the lesson earned and overtime on their hands at once. Prisoners were turned out to work from dawn and stayed there until they completed the "lesson", often with lanterns. Often, comrades who were exhausted after such work were taken to the camp in wheelbarrows. If, and in this case, the norm was not fulfilled– they were driven on holidays. The guards could arrange a mass flogging on such an occasion (Gosudarstvennyy..., 1927-1930).

After 1905, the road became a kind of "university" for "political". The experience left a deep mark in their hearts, received a response across the country. The memories of Bravsky (1905), published back in the magazine "Russian Wealth", were heartbreaking. In order not to go to truly hard labor, they resorted to self-mutilation – they cut off their fingers or even their hands. Some, in desperation, rushed to the logging site under large trees. Outcome – the unfortunate person was either killed by log, or he remained permanently crippled. They also tried to simulate syphilis by rubbing vinegar essence or lime under the skin (Bravsky, 1905, pp. 40-41). More than twenty years later, a former political convict Kidal (1927), in his memoirs confirmed what R. Bravsky described and added that they were glad even that after losing their ability to work they could return to the Nerchinsk penal servitude, since the "kolesukha" was rightly dubbed "convict hell".

A strange logic is found in the behavior of not only the convoy commanders, but also the commanding officials who examined the results of the construction of the "kolesukha". Thus, engineer S.A. Mankovsky, referring to one of the convoy officers, wrote that the guards had to listen every day to how the prisoners reviled both the prison authorities and the emperor himself with the last words, not having the right to enter into conversation with the detractors of the "crowned one". However, the influence of the guards on this was: beating prisoners and even "accidental" murders "while trying to escape. "It is characteristic that in the margins of Mankovsky's report they wrote in pencil: "I do not know such an accident" (Rossiyskiy..., 1861-1920b). The whole of Russia knew about it, and someone, probably the Governor-General, or some other top official of the Amur Region, who had access to confidential documents, "did not know" about all these outrages (Rossiyskiy..., 1861-1920a).



### **6.3. Economic efficiency of construction**

The construction of the Amur Road lasted more than 10 years. A kind of record of "long-term construction". In total, about 1.02-1.5 million rubles were spent (Rossiyskiy..., 1861-1920c). At that time, the amount was not small, but by no means as significant as it might seem. For comparison, we note that 46.2 million rubles were spent on the construction of the Ussuri Railway. Both roads are comparable in length: the Amur "kolesukha" – 730 versts, the Ussuri railway – 721 versts. But the last one was built four years faster. The builders of the steel highway connected Khabarovsk and Vladivostok in a reliable way, and the builders of the Kolesukha did not bring the road to Blagoveshchensk, but brought it to the previously existing wheeled road. The use of "cheap" labor of prisoners did not justify the hope. And it was not so cheap: for every 6 prisoners there was one guard guard. The prisoners also had no incentive to work conscientiously. So, when constructing bridges, instead of driving piles into the ground, they simply dug them in, reporting to the supervisors for the lesson they had completed. After the first flood, most of the bridge over the river Argali was demolished. Forced labor was characterized by high cost and low quality (Rossiyskiy..., 1861-1920c). This was shown by the experience of both pre-revolutionary Russia (Degaltseva, 2019) and the Soviet period (Ryabova, 2018).

### **6.4. Construction management**

The technical and organizational side of construction management causes complaints. It was under the supervision of the Amur governor, who assigned direct duties to the Vice-governor S.N. Taskin. In 1901, he officially became the head of construction and the manager of the monetary loan. Technical management was entrusted to the manufacturer of the works, who in 1898-1900 was engineer Berke, and then he was replaced by engineer I.I. Sokolovsky (worked until 1907). I.I. Sokolovsky was a competent and dedicated engineer. However, S.N. Taskin, considering the construction of the road as a continuation of hard labor, put the case in such a way that the prison authorities could ignore the instructions of the manufacturer of the work. Moreover, it was in his power to displace and appoint lower technical personnel, and at the construction site these are foremen. Between Sokolovsky I.I. and Taskin S.N. there was an incessant enmity. In 1907, S.N. Taskin was replaced by the head of the county police, G.I. Murashev. The last producer of works on the construction of the road was a junior architect under the Amur military governor, V.A. Alexandrov, a mechanical engineer by education, who did not have the relevant knowledge. As before, the organization of prisoners' labor remained with the prison authorities, who did not get along with the technical staff and did not take into account their instructions (Rossiyskiy..., 1861-1920b).

## **7. Conclusion**

At the beginning of November 1909, the exiled convicts stopped work on the construction of the Amur Wheel Road and only seven months later the road camps were liquidated. Forced laborers were transferred to the construction of the Amur railway (Arestantskie..., 1912). But the work on the "kolesukha" did not stop. Until 1913, freelance workers under the guidance of the work producer, senior technician Nekrasov, completed the Khinganskymountain section of the road (45.4 versts) and repaired the first three (eastern) sections of the road (222.8 versts). In 1910-1913, 305.6 thousand rubles were spent for these

purposes. Despite all the shortcomings, the road certainly played a role in the development of the Amur region. By 1914, 10 new rural settlements and 4 mines were formed on the highway. During the construction of the Amur Railway, cargo for construction was delivered by "kolesukha". Ironically, the western section of the wheeled road (Raichikhinsk-Blagoveshchensk) was of particular importance, which from a country road was adapted for the highway not by the labor of prisoners, but by the labor of freelancers with a minimum cost of 136 thousand rubles (Rossiyskiy..., 1861-1920c). This section of the road, unlike all the main ones, did not lose its importance in the 20s of the twentieth century (Gosudarstvennyy..., 1927-1930).

The experience of the construction of the Amur "kolesukha" has clearly shown the inefficiency of the use of forced labor, not only in road works, but also in general in the national economy of the country. The road, built with great difficulty and numerous human casualties, quickly fell into disrepair. In principle, hard labor is not humane, which often replaced the death penalty in tsarist Russia (Degaltseva, 2019, p. 8), was not designed at all for the re-education of the convict, and in the conditions of the Amur Region literally physically maimed and killed people.

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