



# On the Edge of Meshchera. History of Forest Roads. Some Facts about the History of Construction of Railway Lines Krivandino–Ryazanovka and Sazonovo–Pilevo. Part 1



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## ABSTRACT

The article, based on the archives and other never published materials, discusses the history of design and construction of Krivandino–Ryazanovka and Sazonovo–Pilevo railway lines, which belonged to Moscow–Ryazan branch of Moscow railway. The objective of writing the article is to clarify the circumstances of design, construction and operation of these lines, as well as to identify the reasons that led to their decline and closure in the mid-2000s. To achieve this objective, well-known publications in the press and the Internet were analyzed. In addition to using data from these sources, work was carried out to search for written sources on the issue under study in archival institutions in Moscow. Some documents are published for the first time.

The result of all the work carried out was establishment of the following previously unknown or questioned facts:

Krivandino–Ryazanovka railway line was built in 1943–1944, Sazonovo–Ryazanovka section was built later than the rest of the line. The purpose of Krivandino–Ryazanovka line according to the project and in the first years of its existence was transportation of firewood for heating of Moscow. The date of acceptance of Sazonovo–Pilevo line in full for servicing Kurovskaya distance of the track is January 1, 1978. From the northern neck of Pilevo station, the access road went to the construction yard of Meshcherskoye peat enterprise. According to Kurovskaya distance of the track, the broad gauge transshipment station of Meshcherskoye peat enterprise was called Torfyanaya.

The first part of the paper. The second part is scheduled for the next issue.

**Keywords:** railway line, Krivandino, Ryazanovka, Sazonovo, Pilevo, peat enterprise, Great Patriotic War, transport construction.

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**The text of the article originally written in Russian is published in the first part of the issue.**  
**Текст статьи на русском языке публикуется в первой части данного выпуска.**

# BACKGROUND

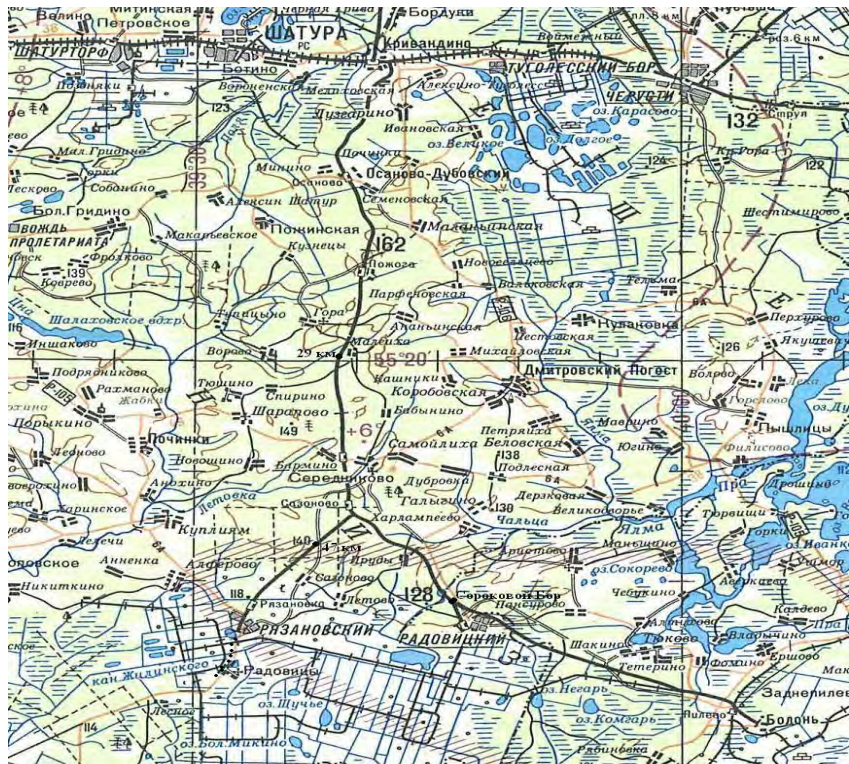
There are practically no publications about the history of creation of inactive lines in the press, which is easy to explain even by the term itself, denoting the nature of the work of these lines – inactive, that is, small.

In the east of Moscow region, a railway line departs south from Krivandino station of Moscow–Murom main line, which crosses Yegoryevskoye Highway and comes to Ryazanovskiy urban-type settlement and Ryazanovka station. A little before reaching the final point, near the settlement of Sazonovo, another one departs from the line – steeply to the right, to the southeast. This line approaches Sorokovoy Bor station near the village of Radovitsky, from which it turns north, skirting the village, and then again to the east and ends at Pilevo station already in Ryazan region. The described picture can be seen only on maps issued in the 2000s and earlier, while modern maps show only Krivandino–Ryazanovka section.

Only one printed source is known that mentions the considered lines [1]. It is dedicated to Ryazan–Vladimir narrow-gauge railway, it contains the following information: «The narrow-gauge railway brought these two sides

of the history of the region together, since 1952 peat trains rumbled along the bridges over Zhilinsky Canal. The peat deposits turned out to be so powerful that, in addition to narrow-gauge lines reaching a length of about 200 km, a branch from Krivandino was laid here in 1974 to transport peat to Shaturuskaya GRES» [1, p. 140]. Thus, the purpose of one of the lines is transportation of peat, which can be assumed about another line passing nearby.

There is a source on the Internet [2], in which the page «Railway line Krivandino–Ryazanovka» [3] reports the following: «The length of the railway line Krivandino–Ryazanovka is 53 kilometers. The railway line runs through the territory of Shatursky and Yegoryevsky districts of Moscow region. From 1976 to 2008, the existing Sazonovo–Pilevo railway line adjoined Krivandino–Ryazanovka line at Sazonovo station. As of the end of 2009, Sazonovo–Pilevo line was mothballed, its future is unclear. As of 2019, it is completely disassembled. The decision to build this railway line was made in 1943 (Decree of the State Defense Committee No. 3599 dated June 17, 1943 «On construction of Krivandino–Radovitsy railway line») (RGASPI F. P-68, op. 2, d. 7, l. 20). Before the Great Patriotic War, the construction of this line was



Pic. 1. Railway lines Krivandino–Ryazanovka and Sazonovo–Pilevo on the map of 1987 [3].



not included in the immediate plans, which is indicated, in particular, by the fact that on the topographic map at a scale of 1:100,000, published in 1941, there is no designation of a railway under construction or projected, leading from Krivandino station in a southerly direction. The following fact speaks of how important this construction was: for speedy implementation of construction of Krivandino–Ryazanovka line, it was decided to dismantle Verbilka–Bolshaya Volga railway line. The Krivandino–Sazonovo section was put into permanent operation as part of the network of the People's Commissariat of Railways in 1944 (according to the reference book «Railway Stations of the USSR»<sup>1</sup>, published in 1981). The date of commissioning of Sazonovo–Ryazanovka (Radovitsy) section into permanent operation has not been established with accuracy (from 1948 to 1951). This does not mean that Sazonovo–Ryazanovka section was built later – the date of commissioning for permanent operation may differ significantly from the date of opening of temporary traffic. In the first few years of operation of Krivandino–Ryazanovka railway line, its length was about five kilometers longer – there was a section from the current Ryazanovka station to the village of Radovitsy. The construction of the village near the village of Radovitsy began, but then it was decided to move it five kilometers to the north. A central settlement was built on this site, now known as Ryazanovka (the official name is Ryazanovskiy). The station near the village of Radovitsy, most likely, was called Ryazanovka – like the current station. Not later than 1952, a decision was made to move Ryazanovka station five kilometers to the north. The section from the «old» Ryazanovka station (near the village of Radovitsy) to the «new» station (at its current location) was then dismantled. In the 1950s or 1960s, a departmental access road of the broad gauge Sazonovo–Radovitsky Mokh was built. In 1976, the public line Sazonovo–Pilevo was opened, partially laid on the site of the access road Sazonovo–Radovitsky Mokh. Peat was the main cargo on Krivandino–Ryazanovka railway line from the moment it was opened until 2009. Mass loading of peat was carried out at Ryazanovka and Pilevo stations, where powerful, fully mechanized peat transfer complexes were located. Non-mechanized loading of peat was

also carried out at Sorokovoy Bor station. Until the early 1970s, peat was loaded at Osanovo station».

The same source on the page «Railway line Sazonovo–Pilevo» [4] contains the following information: «The length of the railway line Sazonovo–Pilevo is 33 kilometers. The railway line runs through the territory of Shatursky district of Moscow region and Klepikovo district of Ryazan region. To the south of Pilevo station there is a short access road to Meshchera station, owned by Meshchersky peat enterprise (about 1500 meters long). As of 2006, the railway line belongs to Moscow–Ryazan branch of Moscow railway. The railway line is single-track throughout, nowhere is it electrified. There is one intermediate station on the line – Sorokovy Bor. The starting point of the line is Sazonovo station, located on Krivandino–Ryazanovka line. The history of the line began with construction of an access road from Sazonovo station to the village of Radovitsky Mokh. It was built in the 1950s or 1960s. Sazonovo–Radovitsky Mokh line was a departmental one. The owner of the line is unknown. The main purpose of the line is to service a woodworking plant and other enterprises in the village of Radovitsky Mokh. In the 1970s, a decision was made to build Sazonovo–Pilevo line using part of Sazonovo–Radovitsky Mokh line. In the place from which Sazonovo–Pilevo line used the new alignment (instead of using Sazonovo–Radovitsky Mokh line), Sorokovoy Bor station was built. The previously constructed section from Sazonovo to Sorokovoy Bor was reconstructed. Radovitsky Mokh has become the terminus of a small branch. The railway line was built mainly for export of peat mined by Meshchersky peat enterprise. Meshchersky peat enterprise is located in the village of Bolon, near Pilevo station. According to the reference book «Railway Stations of the USSR» (published in 1981), the date of commissioning of the stations Sorokovoy Bor and Pilevo (broad gauge) is 1976. The uniqueness of Sazonovo–Pilevo line was that Pilevo station was actually «embedded» in the station of the same name of the narrow-gauge public railway (Ryazan–Vladimir narrow-gauge railway) that had existed since 1899».

I would like to make some comments on the first quote. Firstly, the text of the State Defense Committee Resolution says that the line is being built to supply Moscow with firewood and organize peat extraction, that is, the author of the source [2] claims that «The main cargo on

1 Arkhangelskaya, A. S., Arkhangelsky, V. A. Railway stations of the USSR. Moscow, Transport publ., 1981, 380 p.

Krivandino–Ryazanovka railway line since its opening (*highlighted by the author*) and until 2009 there was peat» is not entirely true. This will be confirmed below.

Secondly, in the full text of the State Defense Committee Resolution, available at the link in the source [2], one can read the following: «In order to provide Moscow with firewood from Radovitsky forest area and forests of local importance in Shatura–Radovitsy region and organize extraction of peat from peat of Radovitsky Mokh massif, the State Defense Committee decides:

a) To build a railway line Krivandino–Radovitsy with a length of 50 kilometers with the necessary sidings, station and loading tracks, water supply, track buildings and telephone communications, with the calculation of the passage of 8 pairs of trains per day.

b) To lead the route of the railway line in the direction that ensures the maximum development of all forests located between Shatura and Radovitsy. To begin railway construction in June and to open the working train traffic in September 1943.

c) To carry out construction of the specified railway line according to light technical conditions, without an approved technical design and estimates.

... 3. To oblige Moscow Regional Executive Committee (comrade Tarasov), Ryazan Regional Executive Committee (comrade Mamonov) and Moscow City Executive Committee (comrade Pronin) to mobilize from June 20, 1943, for duration of construction of Krivandino–Radovitsy railway line in Moscow Region – 3,000 workers and 500 carters with horses, along Ryazanskaya – 750 workers and 200 carters, in the city of Moscow – 1500 workers. To establish that the collective farmers mobilized for the specified construction, from August 15, 1943, are released from work on the construction site for harvesting.

4. To oblige the Committee for Higher School Affairs under the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR (comrade Kaftanov), together with the relevant people's commissariats, to send no later than July 15, 1943, 5000 students for construction of Krivandino–Radovitsy railway line for a period of 2 months, of which 2000 at the expense of the number provided by Resolution of the GOKO (as in the document – *author's note*) dated March 24, 1943 No. 3073 and 3000 additionally.

5. To establish that for workers and employees mobilized for construction of Krivandino–Radovitsy railway line and workers' settlements in accordance with this Resolution, wages are retained at their place of permanent work in the following amounts: 80 % of wages – for workers who have dependent disabled family members and 40 % of wages for all other workers and employees.

To keep for the students sent to construction of the railway line Krivandino–Radovitsy, the scholarships they receive for the entire period of their work on construction.

... 7. To permit the People's Commissariat of Railways to use the chord-bonus (as in the document – *author's note*) wage system in construction of Krivandino–Radovitsy railway line in accordance with the Resolution of the State Defense Committee dated January 3, 1942 No. 1095s. <...>

... 11. To oblige the People's Commissariat of Railways (comrade L. M. Kaganovich) to allocate 40 kilometers of rails with fasteners and turnouts for construction of Krivandino–Radovitsy railway line, for which the People's Commissariat of Railways is allowed to disassemble Verbilki–Bolshaya Volga railway line.

12. To oblige the People's Commissariat of Forests (comrade Saltykov) to ship in June 1943 for construction of Krivandino–Radovitsy railway line 10 kilometers of rails with fasteners due to the dismantling of logging tracks and to allocate 8 tractors».

As can be seen from this quote, a significant number of civilians were involved in construction, who did not work for free.

From the source [4], it is obvious that the history of Sazonovo–Pilevo railway line began with construction of an access road to the village of Radovitsky Mokh to service a woodworking plant and other enterprises. However, from the same source it follows that this settlement was built as a worker's settlement for a peat enterprise, which seems illogical. In this regard, it was necessary to find other information about the lines under consideration.

An appeal to the archive of Moscow Railway made it possible to establish the fact of transfer of all historical materials to the State Budgetary Institution «Central State Archive» of the city of Moscow (SBI «CSA» of Moscow). In the course of work in this organization, it was possible to find some information on the lines under consideration, which are presented below.



## The Beginnings. War years

As already noted, Krivandino–Ryazanovka railway line was built in accordance with the State Defense Committee Resolution, which, among other things, ordered construction to be carried out without a technical project. However, such a project was nevertheless drawn up and has survived to this day – «The technical design of the railway branches of Krivandino–Radovitsky» [5]. It follows from this:

In accordance with the paragraph «Destination of the line», the railway line is intended for «...providing firewood to Moscow from the Radovitsky forest area and forests of local importance in Shatura–Radovitsy region and organization of peat extraction from Radovitsky Mokh peat massif (SBI «CSA of Moscow» F. T. 51 op. 62 d. 232 l. 5) (Here and further spelling and punctuation preserved – *author's note*).

In the paragraph «Basic technical conditions adopted in the design of the branch» we read: «Krivandino–Radovitsy railway branch is designed for one normal gauge track according to the technical specifications for design of lightweight railways, using the railway design instructions in wartime conditions. The length of the branch is 50 km. The guiding slope is 12 ‰ in both directions. The placement of separate points was carried out for a given throughput, with the loading of firewood, in the first years of operation of the branch, on hauls along the entire length of the line. The upper structure of the track: rails – old-fashioned different types; ballast – sandy, 0,15 m thick under the sleeper on station tracks – 0,10 m; sleepers – untreated 1440 pcs. per km on curves with a radius of 300 m – 1600 pcs. Basic provisions for design of the railway branch of Krivandino–Radovitsy, approved by the Chief Engineer of STP comrade Efimov, and the instructions of Soyuztransproekt on design of artificial structures for the branch, are attached to this note in appendices №№ 2 and 3» (SBI «CSA of Moscow» F. T. 51 op. 62 d. 232 l. 9).

Regarding the direction of construction, the project [5] states the following:

### «4. Choice of the main direction.

The Radovitsky forest area is the main point where the railway branch Krivandino–Radovitsy is brought.

At the same time, along the way, in its middle part, the projected line is laid in the direction that ensures the maximum development of all forests located between Shatura and the Radovitsky forest area.

The project for development of the Radovitsky forest area, as well as all the forest areas located between it and Shatura, is compiled by Moslesprom trust of the People's Commissariat of Forests, with which the direction of the line «...» was coordinated. The operation of Prudovsky forest dacha of the Radovitsky forest area served by the final section of the route (42–50 km) is tentatively calculated by Moslesprom in 2–3 years, after which it becomes necessary to build a new «mustache», the direction of which is determined by Moslesprom towards block No. 102.

This is the second direction of the line, we examined it in kind with a breakdown of the route on the ground, but construction is currently not being carried out and belongs to the future» (SBI «CSA of Moscow» F. T. 51 op. 62 d. 232 l. 9).

From the «Minutes of the meeting under the chief engineer of Moslesprom trust of the People's Commissariat of Forests of the RSFSR on the choice of the main direction of the railway branch projected by the People's Commissariat of Railways» (SBI «CSA of Moscow» F. T. 51 op. 62 d. 232 l. 72) it follows that the volume of available wood in the Radovitsky forest area is approximately 410 thousand m<sup>3</sup>.

To illustrate the above fragments, let's get acquainted with the scheme of the projected railway line (Pic. 2). It follows from it that the actual route of the line under consideration to Sazonovo (Lesnaya) station corresponds to that in the project. In accordance with the project, the construction continues in a southeast direction up to the 50<sup>th</sup> kilometer, and the continuation in a southwest direction towards the village of Radovitsy, that is, where the construction of Ryazanovskoye peat enterprise will later unfold, «belongs to the future». Therefore, the statement of the author of the source [3] «...This does not mean that Sazonovo–Ryazanovka section was built later – the date of commissioning for permanent operation may differ significantly from the date of opening of temporary traffic» can be considered refuted in terms of the non-simultaneity of the construction of Krivandino–Sazonovo and Sazonovo–Ryazanovka sections.

Also, it can be argued that at least the first kilometers of Sazonovo–Pilevo line were built not in the 50s–60s, as stated in [4], but earlier, in 1943.

Taking into account the subsequent development of the peat industry in Radovitsy region, the question arises: was it planned, when



Pic. 2. Plan of the route of the railway branch Krivandino–Radovitsy (SBI «CSA of Moscow» F. T. 51 op. 62 d. 232 l. 8. Published for the first time).

designing Krivandino–Radovitsy line, to use it in the future for peat transportation?

The answer is contained in Draft [5]:

«5. The question of the further direction of the line to the Radovitsky peat massif.

The projected railway branch Krivandino–Radovitsy, in addition to developing the Radovitsky forest area and forests located in the area of the route, can and should also be used to organize the extraction of peat from the Radovitsky peat area



«Radovitsky Mokh», located directly behind the Radovitsky forest area, to the south of the latter.

However, this issue has not been developed to date, and Giprotorf refused to give its reasons ... to report.

In view of the above, further development of the question of the continuation of the line to the Radovitsky peat massif was terminated at this point.

«...»

It should be noted that when drawing up the general scheme for development of the Radovitsky forest area by the Roslesproekt of the People's Commissariat for Forests in 1938–1939 the question was raised about construction of the Radovitskaya narrow-gauge railway on the cooperative basis of Narkomles with the Main Directorate of the peat industry, but, ultimately, did not receive any permission, due to the lack of more or less definite outlines and considerations in Giprotorf on the location of peat enterprises based on development of the Radovitsky Mokh peat massif, as well as in view of clarification of the directions of the main cargo flows of peat and its products ...» (SBI «CSA of Moscow» F. T. 51 op. 62 d. 232 l. 10).

Here is the text of a letter from the Giprotorf Institute regarding construction of peat enterprises on the Radovitsky Mokh peat massif:

«To the head of the Mostransproekt expedition, comrade Kuchin.

To your letter dated 29/VII this year No. 49, we inform you that the project for organizing a peat enterprise based on the Radovitsky Mokh peat massif is not currently being drawn up, and therefore it is impossible to indicate the direction of the continuation of Krivandino–Lesnaya line to the final peat station. For drawing up considerations, please submit a plan of the route at a scale of 1:100,000.

August 2, 1943.

P/p Manager of Giprotorf – Varlamov. The chief engineer of Giprotorf – Nikolsky» (SBI «CSA of Moscow» F. T. 51 op. 62 d. 232 l. 73).

However, the draft also contains the following letter:

«15.XI.39

Glavtorf reports that according to the preliminary plan of the III Five-Year Plan, on the basis of the Radovitsky Mokh and Ryazanovka peat massifs, it is planned to build a plant for artificial peat dehydration with the projected power of 300 t. per year and a peat briquette plant with the projected power of 300 t. briquettes per year.

In 1940, it is planned to start drawing up design tasks: and technical projects for the specified tasks and raw materials base.

The directions of the main cargo flows from these peat massifs have not yet been finally established.

Therefore, Glavtorf does not consider it possible for itself to take part in the joint construction of Radovitskaya narrow-gauge railway until the end of technical projects and until the directions of the main cargo flows are clarified.

II / n.a. head of Glavtorf – Samsonov» (SBI «CSA of Moscow» F. T. 51 op. 62 d. 232 l. 73. Reverse side).

Consequently, the assertion of the author of the source [2] that the main cargo on Krivandino–Ryazanovka line from the moment of construction was peat can be considered reasonably refuted.

The Draft [5] reports the following on the operation technology of Krivandino–Radovitsky line: «The line itself is serviced by steam locomotives of O<sup>a</sup> series, also assigned to the depot of Cherusty station.

Two shunting areas are provided on the branch: one area from station Krivandino to station Pozhoga and the second district from station Pozhoga to station Lesnaya, including the continuation of the branch up to 50 km. Each shunting area has its own locomotive with a drafting brigade.

The arrival of empty cars for loading on the branches is provided from Moscow by one-piece trains or separate groups with combined trains, the acceptance of these trains at the station Krivandino is planned to be produced on the additionally laid track No. 4.

After uncoupling of empty cars, their technical inspection and registration of acceptance and delivery, supply for loading onto the branch is carried out by the branch locomotive of the first shunting area.

The locomotive enters the head of the empty train, 38 conditional two-axle cars are unhooked, which corresponds to two loaded trains plying along the branch / 19 in each / and, with the locomotive forward, sends them to the station Pozhoga. Here it makes an uncoupling of all the cars, and returns to the station Krivandino behind the next cars.

The next coupler, in the amount of also 38 conditional two-axle cars, the steam locomotive upsets on the stage to the station Pozhoga, or to the last point – loading of this area, from where,

on the return journey, it arranges the cars at the places of loading.

According to arrangement of cars, the locomotive returns to the station Krivandino and at the designed dead end No. 13, is waiting for completion of loading.

Meanwhile, the steam locomotive of the second area, in the same order, displays the empty from the station Pozhoga at the station Lesnaya, some of them settle on the branches, and the rest, on the return journey, arranges for loading points on Pozhoga–Lesnaya haul. It itself returns to station Pozhoga and waits for the end of loading.

At the end of loading, both steam locomotives, each in their area, by consistent upset and coupling, collected 19 cars and, in two journeys, withdrew them to the stations: the first to station Krivandino, the second – to station Pozhoga.

After withdrawal of two loaded trains at station Krivandino and liberation of Krivandino–Pozhoga haul, the first locomotive leaves to the station Pozhoga for equipment, and the second locomotive takes one of its two ready-made trains to station Krivandino, after which it returns to the station Pozhoga. And the first locomotive, having passed the equipment, returns to the station Krivandino with the remaining laden train.

Remaining at station Krivandino unloaded four conditional cars are placed by the 1<sup>st</sup> steam locomotive for loading on Krivandino–Pozhoga haul and, upon completion of loading, they are brought to the station Krivandino.

This completes the full cycle of daily shunting operations, lasting, in total, about 20 hours.

To ensure a given capacity of eight pairs of trains per day, the places of loading from hauls are transferred to separate points, where the track development expands to the limits indicated on the drawing.

Reception of loaded trains from the branch to station Krivandino is made on a new track No. 5, where, with the help of parallel ramps, a sequential accumulation of branch trains weighing 570 tons is carried out up to a full train of the main line, weighing 1800 tons.

As can be seen from the ratio of weight norms of trains, three branch trains form one full-weight train of the main line.

The share of the first shunting locomotive also falls on shunting work at station Krivandino, which consists of:

- a) Possible sorting of empty cars into covered cars and platforms.
- b) Formation of a train for Moscow/selection by weight.
- c) Pushing off of individual cars/patients and local loading and unloading.

For this purpose, station Krivandino is provided with an extractor hood and a dead end for pushing off of the cars.

When the full train is ready, a train steam locomotive is sent from the station Cherusti, with which the train leaves for Moscow.

General regulation of the distribution of empty cars for supply to the places of loading and cleaning of loaded cars at the station Krivandino, is carried out by the branch manager located at the station Pozhoga, by telephone» (SBI «CSA of Moscow» F. T. 51 op. 62 d. 232 l. 17-18. Reverse side).

**To be continued**

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