

RE-EVACUATION OF MILITARY PRISONERS FROM TURKESTAN

Saidmurod Saidvokkosovich Turakhujaev

Basic doctorate at the department "History of Uzbekistan" of Andizhan State University,

Republic of Uzbekistan

[*saidmoxidil@gmail.com*](mailto:saidmoxidil@gmail.com)

Abstract: *In this article, the conditions established during the re-evacuation of German and Austro-Hungarian soldiers and refugee citizens captured by the Soviet authorities during the First World War (1914-1918) from the Turkestan ASSR to their countries, that is, prisoners and refugees information on the delivery of food, clothing, and medicine for At the same time, the article describes the life and work activities of the re-evacuated prisoners in Turkestan and the measures taken by the leadership of the country in the process of sending the prisoners, based on archival sources.*

Key words: *prisoners of war, First World War, country, camp, Soviet power, re-evacuation, Turkestan.*

INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of the 20th century, the Soviet government and its socio-political and economic policy in Turkestan left an indelible mark on the history of the Motherland. Because in the studies written during the Soviet period, the relations between Turkestan and Russia were highlighted in accordance with the requirements of the ruling ideology. With the honor of independence, this period of the history of the country is being objectively researched by historians free of ideological pressure and influence, relying on existing archival sources. This article describes the policy of re-evacuation of soldiers and citizens of Austria-Hungary and Germany captured by the Russian Empire during the First World War from the territory of Turkestan under Bolshevik rule to their countries.

RESEARCH METHODS

Some aspects of the issue of the re-evacuation of prisoners and refugees to their country, which was carried out by the Soviet authorities in the Turkestan ASSR

in the 20s of the 20th century, are reflected in separate studies. In the early years of the Bolshevik rule, several measures were taken to re-evacuate prisoners and refugees in Turkestan. These processes were described in several literatures and studies during the Soviet period. They help to scientifically research and understand the essence of the topic related to this period of study. In the years of independence, the attitude towards the history of the Motherland changed radically, and it became possible to illuminate it in a way free from ideological biases, through a deep study of historical sources. In particular, there have been many studies on the history of the policy of re-evacuation of prisoners of war in the Turkestan ASSR by the Soviet authorities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The issue of prisoners of war was mentioned in the Hague Convention of 1907 and explained as follows: a prisoner of war is a citizen serving in the army of a belligerent country, who is captured by the army of a rival country and brought to the territory of that country and kept there [1]. Relying on the requirements of this convention, the Russian Empire during the First World War developed regulations on the settlement of military prisoners and citizens without military rank on the territory of the empire, the establishment of a military camp for them, and the use of their labor. The Russian government placed those captured from enemy territory in military camps established in Siberia, Urals, and Turkestan regions of the empire [2]. In general, more than 400 military camps were established on the territory of the Russian Empire for keeping prisoners of war and housing them [3]. The prisoners in Russia consisted of German, Austrian, Hungarian, Romanian, Slovenian, Polish and other nationalities.

The government of the Russian Empire began to relocate the captives to Turkestan in September 1914 [4]. That is, during the First World War (1914-1918), 50,000 captured prisoners who served in the German and Austro-Hungarian armies were transferred to the territory of Turkestan [5]. Also, by the end of 1915, 8-10 thousand Poles from the territory of Poland and 1500-2000 inhabitants from the

Baltic states, who came to the Russian Empire as refugees, were evacuated to Turkestan [6]. The resettlement of a large number of such captives and fugitives to Turkestan had a negative impact on the lifestyle and financial resources of the local population. In addition, the lack of infrastructure for the reception of prisoners and refugees transferred to the country and the occurrence of crop failure after the cooling of the climate in the country have caused the local people to face food problems and worsen their financial situation, in addition, the presence of various diseases among the evacuees has caused the deterioration of the medical and sanitary conditions. has been However, since Turkestan was a colony of the Russian Empire at that time, it was forced to accept and maintain the exiled captives.

After the collapse of the Russian Empire, the Bolsheviks, who took power, also established governance in Turkestan. In the early years, the Bolsheviks, who came to power, created a committee of foreign citizens in order to regulate the large flow of prisoners and refugees in the country and to re-evacuate them to their countries. At the same time, the Soviet of People's Commissars of the RSFSR adopted a special decree on April 23, 1918, establishing the "Central Collegium dealing with prisoners and fugitives" under the People's Commissariat for Military Affairs of Russia [7]. This Central Collegium resolved the issues of re-evacuation of prisoners evacuated to the territory of Soviet Russia to their homelands. Its departments were also established in Turkestan and performed tasks related to the re-evacuation of prisoners in the country. Because the prisoners of war kept in Russia and its territories, especially in the territory of Turkestan, became a problem for the new government.

The emergence of a food problem in Turkestan and the occurrence of crop failure following the cooling of the climate at this time and the appearance of a famine made it necessary to re-evacuate the prisoners held in Turkestan to their own country. In addition, on March 3, 1918, the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was signed and Russia withdrew from the First World War. In November 1918, the First World War ended completely. As a result, peace agreements were signed between the countries,

and the process of returning prisoners of war to their homeland began. In particular, after the signing of the peace treaty between Russia and Austria-Hungary, the re-evacuation of most of the prisoners of war from Austria and Hungary to their homelands in Turkestan began.

After the First World War, the aggravation of the economic situation in the country did not allow prisoners to be kept for a long time. That is, it was difficult for the leadership of this country to provide prisoners with food, clothes, medicine and work. However, the crisis that occurred at that time caused problems even for the local population to find food, medicine and work. For this reason, on May 24, 1919, the Council of People's Commissars of Turkestan established a special department of the Central College within the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs of Turkestan, based on the decree of the Council of People's Commissars of the RSFSR "On Amending and Supplementing the Regulations on the Central College Dealing with Prisoners and Fugitives"[8]. The task of this department includes the registration of prisoners and fugitives and the implementation of measures for their re-evacuation. In addition, on May 6, 1919, the Council of People's Commissars of the RSFSR issued an order to the Turkestan SSC to "form a list of prisoners of war in the country as soon as possible, and resolve organizational issues for their re-evacuation" [9]. Therefore, on June 4, 1919, under the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs of the Turkestan ASSR, a department dealing with the re-evacuation of prisoners of war was established, and it was assigned the task of registering the prisoners in the country and creating conditions for their re-evacuation. The newly established POW centers were overcrowded with too many POWs and it became a problem for the Bolsheviks to quickly repatriate the POWs being held in the country.

Since January 1920, the Central Administration dealing with prisoners and fugitives was transformed into the Central Evacuation Department of the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs of the RSFSR[10]. According to the decision of the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs on February 20, 1920, the Central Evacuation Department was transformed into the Central Department for Population

Evacuation of the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs of the RSFSR [11]. On March 20, 1920, the Regulation on local bodies of the Central Evacuation Department was developed, according to which the order of organization of gubernia and uezd evacuation management was approved under the departments of the relevant executive committee, while keeping the small offices of the Central Evacuation Department of the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs of the RSFSR [12]. In particular, in the Turkestan government system, special representative departments, commissions or departments for the evacuation of the population have been established. The Central Evacuation Department made a plan for re-evacuees' transportation to designated areas, managed the financing of the evacuation bodies, and controlled the spending and distribution of material resources by them [13].

In February-March 1920, the 1st Congress of All-Russian Labor Cossacks was held in Moscow [14]. At this session, an appeal to the All-Russian Central Executive Committee for amnesty of prisoners of war on the territory of the RSFSR was developed. In March 1920, the All-Russian Central Executive Committee made a decision "On the release of prisoners of war on the territory of the RSFSR from the camps on the basis of amnesty" according to this petition [15]. At that time, more than 40,000 prisoners of war were kept in camps in Turkestan [16]. In the summer of 1920, the process of re-evacuation of 34,000 prisoners of war from Turkestan to their own country began according to the amnesty [17]. Most of these reevacuated prisoners of war were citizens of Germany and the former Austro-Hungarian Empire. All-round medical and humanitarian assistance for the return of the prisoners to their homeland was carried out by the central evacuation department specially organized under the Turkestan ISS. Transportation of prisoners of war was organized quickly, that is, in June 1920, 1,400 prisoners of war were sent to their country, and by December of this year, another 16,000 prisoners of war were re-evacuated [18]. The conditions in Turkestan led to the re-evacuation of prisoners of war to their country as soon as possible.

The Soviet-Finnish peace agreement signed on October 14, 1920 played an important role in the re-evacuation of prisoners from the country. A joint commission for the exchange of prisoners and fugitives was established to implement the agreement. The commission fulfilled the obligations of the People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs within the government of Turkestan ASSR, that is, it dealt with the procedure and conditions of re-evacuation of prisoners and refugees, as well as repatriation of persons who could be re-evacuated. Under the pressure of the Bolshevik government in the center, the leadership of the Turkestan government, being “stingy” in allocating money to overcome the complications of economic hardship and famine in the country, spent a large amount of money on providing food, clothing and medicine to the re-evacuated prisoners. For example, according to the decision of the Turkestan Security Council on October 16, 1920, the government of Turkestan will allocate food, clothing, money, medicine and provide state social welfare support to prisoners of war from their own funds in order to reach the border to the prisoners of war who are being re-evacuated from the country [19]. By November 1920, with the permission of the Central Evacuation Department in Turkestan, 1,200 prisoners of war from the Kattakurgan uezd of the Samarkand region were re-evacuated [20]. Also, 2,000 prisoners of war from Germany, Austria, and Hungary who were kept in military barracks in the cities of Tashkent, Namangan, Kokand, and Samarkand of the Turkestan ASSR were re-evacuated in December 1920 with the permission of the central evacuation department [21].

According to the instructions of the Bolshevik government, the People's Commissariat of Health of Turkestan carried out a lot of work on the medical and sanitary conditions of the prisoners of war being re-evacuated from the country, and on the return of the prisoners to their countries in a healthy state, as well as on the treatment of sick prisoners. For example, German prisoners of war in Tashkent were vaccinated against various diseases (mainly cholera and typhus- T.S author.) with the help of representatives of this commissariat when they were being sent to their country [22]. In addition, the commissariat staff cleaned the sanitary trains, provided

them with clean sheets and beds, a certain amount of medicine, and thoroughly disinfected them. In addition, the prisoners were constantly under the supervision of doctors and nurses until they reached their country.

CONCLUSION

The Soviet authorities faced several problems during the re-evacuation of the prisoners of war in Turkestan. Because famine began to occur in Turkestan as well as in many provinces of Russia, and the task of rescuing the population from the famine was the most urgent for the Soviet authorities. In addition, the presence of representatives of different nationalities in the territories of Soviet Russia had an impact on the ethnic composition and culture of local peoples. Therefore, the Soviet Bolsheviks carried out re-evacuation of prisoners not only in Turkestan, but also in the territory of Soviet Russia. The leadership of the Bolsheviks paid much attention to the re-evacuation of the prisoners, rather than to eliminate the scourge of famine that started in Turkestan and its consequences. It should be noted that the prisoners being re-evacuated to their country enjoyed the hospitality and humanitarian qualities of the local population in Turkestan, and therefore some of the prisoners decided to stay in this country and contributed to the development of all areas of the country.

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