Construction in post-war Siberia: Participation of German and Japan prisoners of War

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Abstract. The most important attribute of the existence of the totalitarian regime in the USSR was the repressive policy that influenced almost all spheres of life of Soviet society. The GULAG and GUPVI CAMPS, which spread throughout the country and absorbed millions of innocent human victims, became an integral part of the Soviet repressions. Siberia, which became a place of hard labor and exile in tsarist times, became in Soviet times a huge concentration camp for both Soviet citizens and foreigners. Why Siberia? There are several explanations for this: the extremely harsh climate of the region, which together with hard work had to «re-educate» the lost; huge deserted spaces that had to be mastered; large construction sites, for example, BAM, which is very profitable to use slave, almost free labor of prisoners or prisoners of war.

1 Introduction

After the end of the Second World War, the USSR faced the task of restoring
the national economy and the development of the regions of Siberia and the Far East. In the post-war years, prisoners of war (POW) and interned persons – former soldiers of the enemy armies in the war – Germany and Japan – were widely used as labor. For this purpose, a network of prisoner-of-war camps was established, concentrated mainly in the regions of Siberia and the Far East in the vicinity of large-scale construction projects and industries that were demanded by a large number of workers. In the Irkutsk region, one of the most important construction projects was the railway line Taishet-Lena. The task of the Directorate General for Prisoners of War and Internees (GUPVI) of the USSR Ministry of Internal Affairs was to organize the rational use of prisoners of war in construction and production, as well as to ensure their normal living conditions.

2 Materials and methods

The source base of the thesis consists of published and unpublished documents, journalism, materials of domestic and foreign periodicals, reference books, dictionaries, encyclopedias, etc.

In methodological terms, the basis of the work was the basic principles of historical science: historicism and objectivity, contributing to overcoming the well-known stereotypes that have developed in the public consciousness in relation to prisoners of war. The principle of an objective view of history, orients the researcher to an objective analysis and evaluation of the facts relating to this topic in their entirety. At the same time describes how certain facts of life prisoners and the totality of the relationships of the events. Besides been used, and special methods of research, including comparative, sociological, systematic, chronological, and statistical. Based on the application of these methods, we can talk about the problem of prisoners of war not only as a phenomenon, but also as a system integrated into the development of society. In this regard, the system of pow camps and the entire policy of the Soviet state in relation to them can be considered as a component of a more complex phenomenon – as the internal and foreign policy of the Soviet State.

3 Results
Is it possible to compare the two historical events: Japanese prisoners of war in the Soviet Union and German prisoners of war in the Soviet Union. Possible to compare statistics, the dynamics of repatriation, the situation of prisoners of war in the camp, the relationship with the local community. But how correct to compare the political conditions and the effects of these two phenomena. This is a very difficult question.

As an example, you can map the history of German prisoners of war camp number 199 in the Novosibirsk region and the Japanese POW camp #7 (Tayshetlag) in the Irkutsk region. The author of this report, a long time studying the problem of Japanese prisoners of war, so a description of these camps more detail. As for the camp number 199, its history dedicated to the research of Professor Sergey S. Bukin (In a strange land. – Novosibirsk, 2000).

German POW camp number 199 was established by the order of People's Commissar of Internal Affairs (NKVD) July 21, 1944. The planned number – 15 thousand prisoners. 5 assumed creating camp's branches. The largest of them created at the plant number 179 («Sibselmash»), plant # 65. The first 2,000 German prisoners of war arrived in Novosibirsk on September 19, 1944. Most of the prisoners were enlisted men - soldiers, corporals, NCOs. Many were working professions. The bulk of German prisoners worked on construction and production of building materials (bricks, blocks). A large part of war worked on the improvement of Novosibirsk: built roads, carried out water and sanitation. Some prisoners worked in agriculture. The camp existed until November 1948 the entire period of the camp was profitable, giving the income of the USSR 17.7 million Rubles.

The camp number 199 is widely used Soviet methods of propaganda and indoctrination of prisoners of war: anti-fascist committees were created. The camp pays wages to prisoners of war, who performed normal development, but no more than 200 rubles a month. Of these, a prisoner of war could only get 150 rubles, 50 – skid to the account. Prisoners were able to buy the products or goods in the camp store. The punishment for bad work were: a reprimand, forfeiture to the hard work, deprivation of the right to correspond with relatives or a court martial. The daily routine of German prisoners of war accordance with the Charter of the Red Army. The structure corresponds to the military structure of the camp, as well – platoon-company-battalion. The weakening of the regime at the camp was June 27, 1945. July 13, 1945 was authorized correspondence with relatives – one letter per month through the Red Cross.

However, the situation of prisoners of war was heavy: in Novosibirsk, as elsewhere in the Soviet Union there was normalized distribution system products. The diet was poor – was dominated by cabbage, cereals and flour.
The official daily food intake was the same for prisoners of war of the Japanese or the Germans, but in reality it is rarely true. It was not enough to ensure prisoners clothing and footwear. Use for this trophy property. As housing prisoners of war camp number 199 using multi-seat dugout and wooden barracks. The most difficult period of the camp was 1944-1945. In 1946, the nutritional status has improved markedly. However, the summer of 1945 prisoners of war were to harvest wild plants for use in food. Since 1947, prisoners of war in the camp store Germans could buy bread, sugar, butter, sausage, tea, coffee, tobacco, chocolate and cheese.

The repatriation of prisoners of war from the camp 199 already started in June 1945. The first repatriation of prisoners of war were to be in poor health and suffering from tuberculosis and other diseases. Since 1947 repatriation continued for everyone else.

Mortality in the camp number 199 was quite high in 1945 (died 1662 person or 20%). After that the camp was organized by the hospital and improve living conditions and nutrition main causes of death were similar to Japanese POW camps: pneumonia, dystrophy, diseases of the stomach – «the camp's disease». At the same time medical care was inadequate. In total during the camp's existence it died 2900 people. Prisoners of war until the middle of 1945 were buried in mass graves. With the onset of warm season produces individual burial. In 1948, the camp was closed.

After the end of the Soviet-Japanese War, the fall of 1945 in the Irkutsk region in accordance with the decision of the State Defense Committee on 23 August 1945 was supposed to spend more than 70 thousand. From nearly 540 thousand. Former soldiers and officers of the Japanese Kwantung Army, captured in during the war. Irkutsk prisoner of war camp, under the General management of prisoners of war and interned (GUPVI NKVD-MVD USSR), were the most numerous in the country. The amount of these prisoners of war, according to the encryption of the General Staff of the Red Army on September 1, 1945 in the Irkutsk region were sent to 48 thousand POW’s. In the future, this plan has been adjusted upwards. On February 20, 1947 in the Irkutsk region was 55,011 Japanese [5. P. 292]. In the Irkutsk Region were deployed three large Japanese prisoners of war camp management, one of which – the 7th (Tayshetlag) was in Taishet, Chunsky and Bratsk districts. It was sent to about 39,086 people. The camp was one of the most numerous and included at various times from 48 to 60 the camp’s branch. According to the memorandum Commissar of Internal Affairs Kruglov to Stalin on August 23, 1945 for the most ambitious construction projects of the time - the NKVD was supposed to allocate Baikal-Amur railway (BAM) 112,444 Japanese prisoners of war. It was noted that «to put them in Siberia economic organizations do not have
sufficient housing stock ... and set them in a 2397 calorie ration was insufficient to work» [5. P. 241].

The construction of the railway Taishet-Bratsk Japanese arrived in the battalion former Kwantung Army, with the former commanders. Here they have new names – the camp offices: 2 km route – 277th Battalion Captain Fujita Tikar of 300 people., 5 km – a battalion of Major Kutsugata Setsuichi – 1200 people., 15 km – 255th Battalion Lieutenant Fukuda Yoshio, 17 km – 252 th construction battalion lieutenant Kato Kyudzo, 18 km – 131 Battalion Captain Igata, 19 km - the battalion Major Inuma Hirayuki, 20 km – 285th Battalion Major Yamazaki Kobori, etc. [11. P. 56]. There they received an order to build dugouts, cut through the glades and erect a mound under the railroad tracks. But before were dug dugout, the Japanese had to live in tents. Former POW Shizuo Yamashita testifies: «We arrived in the 10th camp at the station Nevelskaya that 58 kilometers from Taishet. Our shelter had become a black tent. White smoke rising above them, seemed frozen in the frozen air. Seeing this, our hearts tremble. It was 10 am Dec. 4, 1945 Air temperature – minus 55. So began our life in Siberia» [14. P. 22]. The camp Orlovsky telegraphed the NKVD December 1, 1945 : «... I beg your instructions at any temperature below zero display Japanese on the exterior. For its part, given the climatic conditions of Japan I believe that they can operate at temperatures below 25 in calm weather and 20 with an average wind speed» [5. P. 478].

Housing Fund, which housed prisoners of war consisted of wooden barracks, which previously were prisoners of «Tayshetstroy». In addition, another 15 thousand. POWs were placed in heated tents. There were 360 tents and, on average, in the same tent housed 40 people. As the barracks and tents lit by oil lamps and oil lamps, electric light had only five wards. In most cases, the window because of the lack of windows were sealed with plywood, boards and mica, the furnace is not repaired in the barracks and tents are not equipped with airlocks, the room was dirty and cold, the required fuel reserves were not available. There were no baths, laundries, dryers and washrooms, toilets closed was not all camp offices. Of living space per prisoner had less than 1.3 m². Unable to normalize the situation and during 1946, despite the additional housing and the creation of new towns of the camp as they move under construction railway to the east. Only in connection with the partial repatriation of prisoners of war norm of living space per prisoner was able to raise up to 1.8 m². However, the two branches of the camp prisoners still live in tents. [12] Only at the end of December 1947 prisoners managed to settle in a standard wooden barracks. The whereabouts of camp’s branches can be judged by the archival documents, in particular books cemetery where schemes are binding and offices to the
camp area. The Japanese Ministry of Health in 1990 was released list of places of burial of prisoners of war of the Japanese who died in the Soviet Union after World War II. – (Tokyo, 1990), in which the deployment of the camp offices designated by the memories of war.

Note that this whole system was in constant motion, camp’s branches to move prisoners repatriated. Information about the location of these cemeteries camp’s branches and special hospital # 3370 and its branches, refer to the publication [11. PP. 192-193, 196-198].

The main purpose of the large army of foreign prisoners in the Soviet Union was to use it as a cheap labor force. POW was required not only to compensate the cost of keeping their work in the camp, but also bring income to the state. «The policy of the Soviet Union in respect of prisoners of war was to maximize the use of their work. Actually, this was the main task – to make fuller use of labor in different industries, to maximize the growth potential of the military-economic» [1. P. 1]. The work of Japanese prisoners of war was regulated by the «Regulations on the NKVD labor use of prisoners of war» on September 29, 1945. It said: «Labour the use of prisoners of war by the decision of the State Defense Committee (GKO) and the direction of the NKVD, based on the needs of industry and construction in the USSR, and the goal of eradicating war damage. Work for all prisoners and ordinary junior command personnel required ... use prisoners to work is performed in strict accordance with their physical condition» [5. P. 638].

One of the largest construction projects in the Irkutsk region of Siberia, and became the first postwar years the BAM – Railroad Taishet-Bratsk-Ust-Kut. The construction of this started back in the 30s, stopped with the beginning of the war. By this time it was built 70 kilometers of highway travel without buildings and office space. In 1942 he laid the rails removed and sent to the Volga. September 21, 1945, in accordance with the Resolution of the State Defense Committee (GKO) and Government (SNK) N 9936 established the Office of the Angarsk construction, which was to continue and complete the construction of the railway Taishet-Lena. Construction at the site led Tayshetsstroy Main Directorate of railway construction camps (GULZhDS) MIA USSR. It was part of one of the largest departments of Japanese prisoners of war camp – # 7 (chief – Colonel I.I. Orlovsky, Chief Engineer – Major Sanyukevich). The number of prisoners here in different years was different - someone died, someone repatriated or transferred to other camps. According to the department for the use of prisoners of war of the Irkutsk Department of the Interior in the January 1946 payroll totaled 38,535 Japanese prisoners of war, among them Labour Fund amounted to 33,413 prisoners out to work – 20,698 people, or 62% [6. P.30]. The rest of the troops are not used due to lack of front work.
In Angaralage, to build the path from Bratsk to Ust-Kut and participate in the
work at the site of Taishet-Bratsk, at the end of 1947 was listed at 11,799
POWs 24,424 prisoners and 3,396 civilian employees [4. P. 298-299].

In January 1946 ended the organizational period, certain Interior Ministry
for receiving and placing on the track of the future railway officers, technical
staff, placement of a contingent of Japanese prisoners of war and their
arrangement. Commissariat set the task as soon as possible to include the
Japanese prisoners of war «directly to the main construction work» [8. P. 5].

In 1946-1951 was defined development plan 1.5 billion rubles
investment. We had to do a lot of excavation – up to 30 mln. cubic meters of
soil, to reach 710 km of communication lines, build 600 km of vehicular
roads, and most importantly – finish laying the path length of 850 kilometers
[7. P. 49]. Much of what has been planned, fell to the Japanese. They
generally perform all earthwork, although in winter 1946 7th camp was the
laggard of using of labor of prisoners of war. There poorly organized labor,
inef
deed deployed scope of work, lack the tools, guidance and even called
for «prisoners to organize work so that the cost of maintenance was justified
and offset by government spending». Not surprisingly, the average daily
earnings of Japanese prisoner of war camp in the winter of 1946 was only 2
rubles 18 kopecks. While in «Irkutsklag» it was 6 rubles 45 kopecks., In
«Cheremhovlag» – 5 rubles 76 kopecks. [9. P. 30]. The majority of working
prisoners was used on excavation works (50%) and timber, where missing
even the most primitive mechanization, all the work up to the logging of the
forest at a distance of four kilometers performed manually. Technically
competent, experienced professionals who could use to organize and labor
were not available. The required scope of work are not prepared in a timely
manner, so, according to the camp authorities, the surplus labor force in 1947
was 32%. As a result, in 1947 only 40% of prisoners to meet their standards,
and in 1948 – 70%. Only at the end of 1949 the proportion of prisoners who
do not meet standards, was reduced to 7%.

In general, for the whole period of the camp # 7 the cost of maintaining
prisoners exceeded revenues from their activities. Sustainability camp for
years is characterized by the following data: in 1946 – 60.0%; 1947 – 63.0%;
1948 – 71%; 1949 – 86%. [12] Only seven camp divisions (## 11, 12, 13, 27,
38, 39, 41) in the second half of 1948 and during 1949 have provided a cost-
effective operation of its departments. Each year, the camp was in need of
substantial subsidies from the state to cover the expenses for the
maintenance of prisoners of war.

The bulk of the prisoners used all year round in the open ground and
logging operations, so clothing and shoes, received prisoners of war, because
of the lack of uniforms, quickly wore out. Repair shops repair clothes and
shoes made written off salvage property. After such a repair outfit could be
worn in less than a month. Spent in the camp # 7 in August 1947 audit
found that up to 50% of clothing and footwear property is unfit to wear,
warm clothing prisoners of war were provided by 70%, bedding – 60%.
These problems were solved only for the winter 1947-1948.

The use of Japanese prisoners of war as forced labor in the interests of the
economy of the USSR was an important item on the agenda to do with
prisoners of war. The principle of slavery and forced labor exploitation in
relation to the Japanese incompatible with the norms and international law.
With the Japanese were not concluded labor agreements. They were sent to a
disciplinary procedure for employers who make an application for labor.
Working hours are often regulated by the employer, depending on the
existing needs, and this led to the fact that the working day could not exceed
8 hours, and in addition, they often worked on weekends. In agriculture, the
working day in the summer could last 18 hours in the winter – 12. This led to
physical exhaustion Japanese. Many of them during the years of captivity
have lost the ability to work due to permanent loss of health or injury. The
indicators help the work of the Interior Ministry GUPVI of 1945-1946,
recognized that in the camps are not prisoners of war were created normal
living conditions, lacking fuel, sanitation requirements are not met.
Therapeutic and preventive and control measures carried out are not clear. In
December 1945, the camp commander reported: «Medical Camp # 7 in a
very difficult situation ... We have only one hospital without the hard and
soft equipment, medicines and tools. In the hospital today, 564
hospitalizations and the number of 195 surrogate blankets. If the doctor
needs 62 have 11 staff in srednemeditinskogo needs 186 have 35». [5. P.
478]. There were shortages of food, absent the required range of products,
insecurity and poor quality clothing and shoes. Labour practices in a number
of camps have been organized without the physical condition of the
contingent, proper control over using of labor absent [5. P. 673]. All this plus
the unusual harsh climate of Siberia has led to numerous casualties as a
result of disease, hunger and cold, accidents at work and at home.
According to the Japanese Ministry of Health in the camps of the Irkutsk
region died more than 6500 prisoners of war [13. PP.1-14]. Former prisoners
of war testified, «from 4,000 Japanese prisoners of war who worked at the
station Nevelskaya Taishet district of Irkutsk region in 1946 died in 1500»
[2. P.28-29]. In the Irkutsk region there are about 71 Japanese prisoners of
war cemeteries and graves about 10 singles. Among the largest – cemetery
of 7th camps – Nigne-Udachniy Taishet district (437), near the village
Gogolevka Taishet area (344) in the Taishet district, village Kvitok (342),
and others.
The food ration of prisoners of war in 1945 – early 1946's, many camps were virtually devoid of protein, especially animal. Food consisted mainly of carbohydrates, often poorly digestible Japanese. In such circumstances, the body rapidly losing its own energy reserves. The weakened body easily develop infections: tuberculosis, inflammation, sores, fever. Lack of food in the camps of prisoners of war was aggravated by the numerous thefts from the camp administration. The Japanese themselves were told that sanitary conditions of camps was such that of typhus, spotted fever, pneumonia, have become commonplace. The consequence of these illnesses has become a large percentage of deaths – up to 10% even in the most prosperous camps. This is compounded by the general apathy of the camp authorities, indifference to the plight of the Japanese. Weakened by hard work and malnutrition, they are easily fell ill and died, even from such diseases, which in normal conditions are considered easily treatable [1. P. 26]. It required the establishment of special medical institutions that were supposed to improve the situation. The camp was organized by the number 7 Special Hospital #3370 1000 beds, with offices in the village. Toporok and Kvytok Taishet district st. Chuksha, Chunsky district hospitals №1 and 2 st. Novochunaka Chunsky area recreation department № 7 camp near pos. Kvitok. MIA task set before hospitals «to save the Japanese as labor in the construction and restoration of the national economy» [9. P. 16]. Special hospital prison faced the same difficulties that the whole country after the war – did not have enough doctors, instruments, medicines. Despite the difficulties of the postwar period, most of the doctors and nurses of hospitals prisoners carried out their professional duty as best they could to alleviate the suffering of patients, and many of them have saved lives. President of the Japan Association of Former POWs Rokuro Saito, was in hospital Tayshetlag, gratefully said: «I remember not only the horrors of Stalin's camps. In 1946 I got into Special hospital in the Siberian village of Novochunka. I saved from death Soviet doctors and nurses. Thanks to him in my mind is constant. Thousands of Japanese people the same feeling toward your people» [10].

Important elements of the activities of the Ministry of Interior in relation to prisoners of war were their «re-education» and «ideological training». A CIA report «Soviet indoctrination Japanese prisoners of war» noted that «under the control of the Interior Ministry were not only the life and health of prisoners of war, but also their views. It was a giant task – to change the ideals and completely turn the Japanese outlook. The program is ideological preparation was complicated mechanism that I had to subdue the future life and activities of prisoners. The system of indoctrination carefully adapted to the Japanese national characteristics and penetrate into the heads of prisoners of war, step by step. The instrument of the Ministry of Interior were a group
of Japanese Communists operating under Soviet control» [3. P. 1]. The Soviet MVD established in different camps, «Democratic Committees», «Democratic circles», «school of war» in which activists are members of the Communist Party of Japan, or sympathetic to it. The activities of these groups and committees has received considerable attention. The report of the Political Department of the Office of the construction of the Taishet (Tayshetststroy) in September, 1946, for example, said: «The political education of prisoners of war contingent tasked the 2nd department of the camp # 7. We create an environment of war Democratic circles, which now give good results in the education of prisoners. In them we have a section of the labor competition, run by the heads of departments of the camp and the Communists. As a result, in the 18th camp’s branch, which created such a section, there are indicators of the board, is preparing for the gathering of leaders of manufacture, the plan was fulfilled by 105% against the previous 80% [7. P. 27]. In fact, the effectiveness of the «democratic committees» in terms of improving labor productivity was low, much more effective stimulus was the norm of bread, which could vary depending on the plan. «Democratic Committees» was performed, rather another function – as a rule, they maintained close contact with the administration, warned her about possible escapes or disturbances in the area, were advocates of the administration's policies in the mass of prisoners of war. Hence, the negative attitude of the majority of prisoners in these committees and their members. The Committee is composed of the democratic people, confused or sincerely believed in Communist propaganda and those who believed that cooperation with the administration of the camp it will facilitate their life.

Recalling the relations with the local population, former prisoners of war invariably mentioned kind, sympathetic attitude on his part. President of the society of former prisoners of war «Angara-kai» Koichi Harada recalled: «In Irkutsk, Russian often helped us with bread, although the rate card on the day then was 200 grams per person» [15. P. 346]. Another prisoner Yagisita Hirose writes «Russian treated us with compassion to prisoners of war. Those were difficult post-war years, but we believe that the last war will be the last» [15. P. 212]. Reasons for a sympathetic attitude to the prisoners of war were not only in the short duration of the Soviet-Japanese War and the small of her victims. It will be recalled and the characteristics of the Siberian character, willingness to forgive the evil rather than punish him. Last Post in reporting on the SVS POW camp #7 dated to May 10, 1948 [5. P. 1029].

Staying in the 40s of the Irkutsk region of tens of thousands of Japanese prisoners of war was a page in its history. Young Japanese physical health for several years, to some extent joined the labor collectives of enterprises and construction industry, agriculture, significantly depleted during the war.
Prisoners of war camp number 7 among other camp workers finished construction of the railway Taishet-Bratsk length of 326 km with all the necessary railway services, telephone, negotiable locomotive depot, car-repair shops. In the town of Taishet repair plant was built with a capacity of 30 vehicles a month. Annually prisoners harvested and exported 200 thous. m³ of wood.

Siberian prisoner of the Japanese and as Germans too – a unique phenomenon, and its uniqueness is caused by the attitude of former prisoners of war to the years of captivity, to the country where they had to live temporarily, its people, customs and culture. However, the events of II WW related to the capture of the Kwantung Army, Army of Germany and the movement of tens of thousands of prisoners of war in a POW camp in Western and Eastern Siberia and the Far East is an important page in the history of the countries: Russia and Germany, Russia and Japan.

4 Conclusion

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