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**Jakhongir Tojiboev**  
Namangan State University  
Doctoral student  
Uzbekistan

## POWS IN FERGANA VALLEY, TURKESTAN DURING THE PERIOD OF WORLD WAR I

**Abstract:** This article reveals data about placement of POWs in Fergana Valley's military camps. It also analyzes information concerning POW's living conditions and their contributions to the development of agriculture and industry of the region.

**Key words:** POWs, military camps, Austro-Hungarian prisoners, German prisoners, miners, the Bolshevik Party, internationalists, cavalry, peasant detachments, regiment.

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### Introduction

The history of wars shows that in battles, many soldiers are taken prisoner and forced to spend the rest of their lives either in darkness or at rest. Many soldiers were taken prisoner during World War I. In particular, the process of turning the representatives of the "Triple Alliance" into military prisoners was rapid. Many have been sent to military camps in various parts of Russia. Many prisoners of war spent 3-4 years of their lives in captivity in various parts of Russia from 1918-1919 until their release.

In 1914, Austro-Hungarians, Germans, Slavs, and Romanians captured in Russia by order of the General Staff began to be resettled in the Urals, Siberia, Turkestan, and the Far East[5-6]. More than 400 military camps were set up in Russia during World War I[7]. Russia had planned to place prisoners of war only on the outskirts of major cities. They were mainly sent to the areas where the railway lines reached. Because they knew that rail transport would be a great help in placing prisoners of war in military camps. But suddenly, the Russians' plans to relocate the prisoners changed. This, in turn, is due to the growing number of prisoners of war in Russia.

According to the plan, the territory of Turkestan was not pre-determined for prisoners of war, but, as noted above, the increase in the number of prisoners

led to their relocation to the territory of Turkestan. In the telegram No. 6158 of August 30, 1914 of the Chief of the General Staff to the Chief of the General Staff of the Turkestan District, it was announced that Turkestan was designated as a permanent place of detention of prisoners of war[9]. First, as early as September 1914, a stream of prisoners of war was placed in the urban areas of Turkestan, one of which was Fergana Valley.

### Materials and Methods

During the First World War, Fergana Valley became one of the military-strategic points of Turkestan, where prisoners of war were housed. The capture of prisoners of war in Fergana Valley took place in September-October 1914. They were placed in military camps in all the counties of the valley. Their number exceeded 40,000. In particular, the city of Kokand was a leader in terms of the number of prisoners of war from other cities in the valley. There were more than 2,500 Austro-Hungarian and German prisoners of war in the Kokand military camps[14].

Prisoners of war who were captured in the camps were provided with food. They were guarded by representatives of the Kokand city administration. Prisoners of war in military camps were involved in various activities based on their previous occupations.

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In particular, they worked in large production facilities, factories and plants, hospitals, as well as in private production zones. For example, 40 people in Kokand fortification, 1 in the General Staff, 2 in Ziegel's trading house, 23 in the Potelyakhovsky factory headed by Dombly Crestofer, a prisoner of war named Franz as a caretaker, and Baevsh at the telegraph station, Fritu as a chief physician, Henry Fritz as a worker in the Chemical Plant, 7 people in the District Committee, 102 prisoners of war in the Kokand Hospital, 38 prisoners in the military camp hospital, 9 people in the regimental headquarters, 5 people at the railway workshop, 8 prisoners at the tannery, 14 people in the "Sulimor" chemical plant, 4 people in the nail plant, 5 people in the flour factory, 2 people in the printing house, 6 people in the tobacco factory, 2 people as cooks, 4 people as carpenters, 4 people as hairdressers, 17 people as ordinary workers, 17 people in different corners of railway constructions, 2 people in the brigade headquarters, 4 people in the city hospital, 28 people in Shurab, 17 people in the handicraft production facility in Rishtan[2].

More than 600 prisoners of war worked in the Kokand railway[14]. They worked conscientiously in collaboration with local workers, and also had a special respect among the workers.

The labor of the captured soldiers was used in various fields of industry and agriculture. In

November-December 1914, for example, prisoners of war were exploited in all coal and oil mines in Fergana Valley. The captives included highly skilled miners, mine blasters, builders, road builders, engineers, and other professionals. This, in turn, had contributed to the rapid development of the agricultural and industrial sectors.

Researchers have reported that since 1916, the practice of division in national camps has been recorded. Thus, while the camps in Tashkent were predominantly Slavic (Croatians, Slovenes, Czechs, etc.), the Germans, Austrians, and Hungarians settled in Skobelev (Fergana)[12]. If the camps were of a mixed type, the Slavs were appointed to senior positions in the internal administration of the prisoners.

With the arrival of the POWs, the coal mines were equipped with new machinery and equipment, and special mechanical workshops were set up. As a result, the technical equipment of the Kyzylkiya in Fergana became almost the same as those in Donetsk. In 1917, coal production amounted to 125,000 tons. Prisoner of war miners were the first to use powder to mine coal.

The growth of coal production due to prisoners of war and new technologies is shown in the following table[10]:

**Table 1.**

1	Years	1910	1911	1912	1913	1914	1915	1916
2	Pud	3427540	6631622	5994464	8406562	9900877	10314214	12315105

From the data in the table above, it can be seen that the arrival of prisoners of war did not stop the development of the country's mining industry. By the end of 1916, 4,020 people were working in the coal mines[3]. The miners were mostly prisoners of war from Russia or European countries. The locals were mostly black laborers. In 1917, there were the following coal deposits in Fergana Valley, in the development of which the share of prisoners of war was significant:

1. Sulukta (30 km from Dragomirova station)
2. Shurob (35-40 km from Melnikov station).
3. Kyzylkiya (35-40 km from Skobelev station).
4. Andijan (25-35 km from Jalal-Abad station).
5. Naryn (30-40 km from Uchkurgan station).

The most active of them were in Kyzylkiya and Sulukta[3]. Former miner Anatoly Nikolaevich Neudachin (born in 1937) said that his father, Nikolai Petrovich Neudachin (born in 1890), worked with prisoners of war in the Kyzylkiya mine[10]. In his memoirs, he remembered them as true professionals who knew their profession perfectly, emphasizing that

they had a reputation among miners and that everyone respected them.

The October Revolution of 1917, the nationalization of the entire coal and oil industry, including Kyzylkiya, Sulukta, Chimgan, Santo, Shurob, and others, as well as Fergana Railway, all intensified class conflicts in the region. In the Kerensky's government, bilateral rule has worsened the situation in the Fergana Valley.

Beginning in April 1918, the new government in Turkestan began to form new detachments of prisoners of war - Germans, Austrians, Czechs, Hungarians, Romanians, Yugoslavs, the total number of which exceeded 23,000[13]. The miners of Kyzylkiya formed armed cavalry detachments to protect the mines from counter-revolutionary foreign intervention and "peasant detachments".

In the spring of 1918, two military detachments were formed in Kokand, including former prisoners of war Janos Guzic, Arpat Schwartz, Mikhail Novikov, Laku Lapsh, and dozens of others[10].

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After the October coup, many Czech prisoners of war joined the Red Army: some because of their common beliefs, some under the influence of Bolshevik propaganda, and others simply for the sake of trying to find a way home. who chose Ini. In September 1920, the first Congress of Czechoslovak Communists was held, on the basis of which the Czechoslovak Regional Bureau was established. However, most of its members returned to Czechoslovakia, and in 1921 the bureau was disbanded. Some Czechs remained in the Red Army in Turkestan to fight the oppression. One of the most prominent members of this category was Yuray Smeyrek, who served as police chief in Fergana region from 1918-1924[4].

A cavalry regiment named K. Libknecht was formed in Andijan district, and former Czech prisoner of war E.F.Kujelo was appointed its commander. He was also involved in the operation of kidnapping Madaminbek, who was one of the leaders of the independence rebellion in Fergana Valley. He remained in Turkestan and in the 1920s and 1930s worked as the director of several factories in the Uzbek SSR and the Far East. During the Soviet era, School No. 48 in Namangan was named after him[4]. In addition, the 2nd Cavalry Regiment was formed in Namangan district under the leadership of former prisoner of war M.Vrobets[10]. As the political situation in Fergana Valley deteriorated, in mid-1918 the new government began to actively recruit prisoners of war into the ranks of the Bolshevik Party, calling them internationalists.

There were 166 internationalists on the Kokand artillery-machine-gun route, cavalry squadron and castle garrison. In October 1919, about 4,000 internationalists served on Fergana and Caspian fronts alone[11]. Prisoners of war - Eingern, Bergar, Litvinenko, Gen (Skobelev), Suda (Kokand), Zimich, Wizner (Namangan), Rats (Osh) and others actively participated in the socio-political, economic and cultural life of Fergana Valley[10].

The cavalry of Kyzylkiya not only protected the coal mines, but also helped Uchkurgan, Karvon, Tak-Tek and even Fergana. Attempts by enemies of foreign internationalists, "peasant detachments", to enter the mines and destroy them had been unsuccessful. Prisoners of war and many internationalists had also suffered casualties in these unequal struggles.

A monument had been erected in memory of former Austrian, German, Hungarian and other prisoners of war who died in the Miners' area, and the following words were inscribed in Latin under the monument: "Tell our Motherland that we have come here in obedience"[10].

In the high mountains where the BIS-BIS No. 6 mine is located, a monument had been erected to those who died and remained forever in this foreign land.

The graves of those who died in the course of work near the BIS-BIS mine No. 6 were arranged in a flat order, decorated with crosses. Nowadays, although there are no crosses, the tombs on the hills are preserved. Hundreds of Austrian, German, Hungarian soldiers and officers lie at the foot of the hills[10].

During World War I, the city of Kokand served as a point of distribution of prisoners of war to military camps in other parts of Fergana Valley. From here, prisoners of war were sent to Andijan, Skobelev (Fergana), Osh, Namangan, Jalal-Abad and Khojand. Many soldiers returned home after Austria-Hungary and Russia signed an agreement on the issue of prisoners of war. There is a lot of archival information about the evacuation of prisoners of war. In one of the sources in Fergana State Archives, the head and assistant of the Kokand evacuation center for the evacuation of prisoners of war sent a telegram to the evacuation point of Fergana branch No. 192 on the activities of prisoners of war. "In pursuance of your order No. 149 of 1 July, I have compiled a list of names No. 187 and an application No. 172 for 170 disabled prisoners of war sent to Tashkent on 12 June 1920. I will submit a report on acceptance. They will be provided with food and clothing for 14 days. The salaries of prisoners of war at the Santo and Shurob small-scale production facilities were fully calculated. The number of prisoners of war sent is as follows: 57 prisoners from Santo, 26 prisoners from Shurob, 85 prisoners from Kokand and 2 prisoners from Namangan, a total of 170 soldiers. These disabled prisoners of war will be delivered to their addresses in 6 wagons numbered 422040, 882352, 228665, 331300, 448165, 280178[2].

### Conclusion

In 1922, a decision was made to fully evacuate all former prisoners of war. According to him, it was announced that prisoners of war in Turkestan, including in Fergana Valley, would be re-evacuated to their homeland free of charge until August 31, 1922[1].

Austro-Hungarian prisoners of war who did not want to return to their homeland chose to stay in Turkestan. Fergana Valley was almost the second home of prisoners of war. Thanks to the efforts of the research team in Kokand, a monument to the eternal memory of prisoners of war was found in Kokand. This 4-meter monument has the following two inscriptions in Latin: The first inscription says "COMMILITONES AUSTRO-HUNGARIS!" ("Austrian-Hungarian comrades!"). The second inscription is "MORTUIS PROCUL PATRIA 1914-1917" ("The Dead in Their Home 1914-1917")[14]. The monument in Kokand Cemetery serves as an example of humane treatment of the captured enemy and is the best call for peace for modern society.

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