

About the Jewish Refugees in Turkestan Region and Their Occupation

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ABSTRACT: This article examines the Jewish people who lived in the Russian Empire and their rights and obligations. Also, the article analyzes the available historical sources about the Jewish refugees.

KEYWORD: archive, population, Jews, Empire, provinces, rights and freedoms, occupations, citizenship, law, land, housing, settlements, policy.

INTRODUCTION

It is known from history that Jews have been living in the Russian Empire and the region of Turkestan for many centuries. From the 16th century, indigenous Jews were called “Jews of Bukhara”, regardless of which region of Central Asia they lived in. The Jews who fled from the central regions of the Russian Empire in the regions of the Turkestan General Governorate were collectively called “local Jews” [1]. In 1892, the collection “Alphabetical list of the population living in the Russian Empire” was published. According to this collection, 126 million people lived in Russia in 1876, and 133 million in 1886. This population belonged to 140 nationalities and ethnic groups. This population belongs to 140 nationalities and ethnic groups, with Jews ranked 33rd on the list. The listed Jews are divided into 2 groups. The first is the “ancient Jews” in Central Asia, and the second is the “new Jews” who moved to Turkestan from the European part of Russia [2].

DISCUSSION

At the end of the 19th century, about 4.5-5 thousand Bukhara Jews lived in Central Asia. According to the 1897 general population census in the Russian Empire, 5,000 new Jews lived in the provinces of the Turkestan General Governorate and Russian settlements in the Bukhara Emirate. These numbers are also confirmed by an archive document [3].

It was not easy for Jews to spread throughout the territory of the Russian Empire, to move freely after gaining their rights and freedoms, to acquire real estate, various occupations, and to engage in entrepreneurship. As the “untrustworthy layer” of the population, Jews lived under strict control and persecution. Migration from one area to another, changing the place of residence, is observed in the history of the Jews. Privileges and rights were given to them step by step.

According to the Russian Government Act of 1833, Jews in the empire were entitled to become “guild merchants” and were granted permanent residency. However, in 1842, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia issued a special circular, stating that the Jews were untrustworthy, and the representatives of this people living in places near the customs and exchanges, border and port cities were instructed to move to the interior regions of the country [4]. Also, if the Jews of Bukhara engaged in trade, they should only deliver

caravan trade goods to Russia from the Orenburg line, and not leave that area. From Orenburg and Troitsk, goods were sent to Nizhegorod and Irby fairs. Jews could only take part in the Orenburg trade [5].

From 1840-1850, Jewish merchants began to participate in the fairs of Nizhegorod and Irbi. In 1865, the Governor General of Orenburg allowed them to accept Russian citizenship, seeing it as a means of entering the Khanates of Bukhara, Khiva, and Kokan. In 1866, a law was passed aimed at softening the attitude of the Russian government towards the Jews [6].

Taking advantage of the unequal treaties between Russia and Bukhara in 1868 and 1873, Russian refugee Jews turned their backs on the “Bukhara Jews” and entered the territory of the Emirate. They received protection from the “Jews of Bukhara” and in subsequent additional agreements (1889, 1891, 1896, etc.) they received preferential real estate, land, housing, shops, and warehouses.

According to the 1886 Turkestan Land Management Regulations, they were forbidden to own real estate in emergency situations. For this reason, the area of land given to them should not exceed 26 sajins (1 sajin is 7 km), and Jewish entrepreneurs controlled that they should not exceed 15% of the population [7].

Jewish requests to open shops, industrial enterprises, liquor stores, and makeup shops were often denied. Because the regulation related to not more than 15 percent of businessmen from the Jewish people was followed. Also, some Jews paid a fine of 500-1000 rubles for minor crimes and were released after the Russian government needed to cover the costs of building churches [8].

RESULTS

From time to time, the Jews were subjected to persecution and surveillance, and in 1900 they were ordered to leave the lands of Bukhara in an emergency. Despite having a valid reason, they were forced to leave the lands of Bukhara for a period of 5 years (1900-1905). Although the Jews of the Bukhara Emirate were denied the right to own real estate in the Russian settlements, they appealed many times to live there. However, these requests were left unanswered, and only the deadline for relocation was extended until December 31, 1908. This period was extended to January 1, 1910 after long disputes [9].

On December 11, 1909, the head rabbi (priest) of the Turkestan region of the Jews sent the following letter to the Russian Minister of Military from room 154 of the Northern Hotel in St. Petersburg: “Jews live in communities in almost all regions of the Russian Empire. Many of them fled and settled in the regions of the Turkestan General Governorate under the pressure of local governments. They applied for Russian citizenship according to the Government Circular of December 22, 1908. In particular, “Jews of Bukhara” asked to be transferred to Russian citizenship in order to protect their right to move to Russian territories. In their applications, they consider not only the happiness of being a Russian citizen in their place of residence, but also the pride of political affiliation, with which they want to get rid of humiliation and flight.” [10] Therefore, the above opinion shows that in order to escape from various discrimination, constant persecution and escape, Jews tried to accept Russian citizenship, renounce their faith and convert to Proto-Slav religion and move to a more peaceful place. Archival sources contain information about Jews who were baptized in Russian pro-Slavic monasteries and converted to Christianity [11].

Moreover, in 1900-1905, 352 “Jews of Bukhara” moved to Margilan and Ko'kan uezds of Fergana region. The archive source provides the following information: “In the next 4-5 years (1900-1904), 50 families of Jews immigrated or fled to Fergana region. They are mainly known for their commercial activities” [12].

Also in this source it is reported that these Jews accepted Russian citizenship, among them, along with trade, they were engaged in small crafts (craftsmanship, watchmaking, shoemaking, hairdressing, etc.), brokerage, teaching, doctors, usury [13].

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, in the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, Jews were the majority among the population who were forced to move and flee throughout the provinces of the Turkestan region and the Russian Empire. The reason for this, of course, was the wavering, changing policy of the government towards the Jews, who often changed their places of residence.

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