

Between the Front Line and the Rear: The Position of the Jewish Evacuees of the First World War in Eastern Siberia in the Russian Empire

Abstract:

Based on contemporary historiography research, as well as on archival records and released documents, this article reveals the problem of social assistance to the Jewish people who were exiled by force from the areas of the Eastern Front in European Russia to Siberia. The analysis is restricted to the Yeniseyskaya and Irkutskaya Provinces of Eastern Siberia. As exemplified by these regions, we present a concept of how social support measures to the cohort in question were arranged in the regions of the Russian Empire. The chronological framework covered by the article includes the period from autumn 1914 (when the first evacuees arrived in Eastern Siberia) to September 1917 (when the Temporary Government announced the Russian Republic). Aiming to draw together a complete picture of the practices of social assistance to the Jewish evacuees, we analysed the content of state policy and the experience of local charity organisations in this sphere, in terms of how results corresponded to social expectations. Applying methods of general scientific and concrete-historical research helped find a solution. We come to the conclusion that during the period under study the Jewish evacuees in Eastern Siberia represented a vulnerable community in social, political and economic terms. Local authorities deliberately sent the evacuees to isolated or economically under-developed districts with poor employment opportunities. In such conditions, the evacuees became directly dependent on humanitarian assistance. However, the communities that accepted the evacuees could not help them effectively, since they too were some of the most vulnerable populations. All these facts complicated the ability to solve quickly and efficiently the problems which occurred. The life strategy of the majority of Jewish evacuees to the territory of Eastern Siberia during the First World War was directed at simple survival.

Keywords: *The First World War, social assistance, refugees, deported Jews, social support, forms of social support.*