



Prisoners of war and women: between loyalty and treason (gender aspects of captivity during the First World War)

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Abstract: The First World War changed the lives of women no less than direct participation in the war for men. In the absence of the head of the family, it was necessary not only to replace him, but also to take responsibility for the maintenance of family members, children or elderly parents. During the war, women had to make some decisions without precedents before. Mostly women started working, but their wages were much lower than those of men doing similar work. There was no great help from the state. In addition, women who were in a civil marriage, according to the law, did not receive anything at all in return for the lost income of a conscripted to the army man. The waiting time for the men was endless, but after 1918, the women hoped that their husbands would return home from the battlefield and from the POW camps. The article cites written primary sources that clearly and figuratively reveal the research problem: petitions, letters, records in metric books. Some statistical data are also given, and relations with the population of Siberia, including the Cossack population, are briefly highlighted. The internal political situation in Russia, the revolution and Hungarian-Russian diplomatic relations made it difficult to return for prisoners of war. The prisoners had to wait a long time for their return to their homeland, where they returned finally in the early 1920s. The women's expectations were complicated by the fact that even after the start of state repatriation, no one could be sure that their husbands would necessarily return home with this or that group of prisoners of war. So women actually had two choices: either they faithfully waited for their husbands to return, or, having rethought the values of marital fidelity, sought new male support periodically.

Keywords: First World War, Russian captivity, prisoners of war, women, waiting, loyalty, infidelity, marriage, missing persons, family

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Военнопленные и женщины: между верностью и изменой (гендерные аспекты плена во время Первой мировой войны)

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Аннотация: Первая мировая война изменила жизнь женщин не меньше, чем непосредственное участие в войне мужчин. В отсутствие главы семьи жене приходилось не только замещать его, но и принимать на себя ответственность за содержание членов семьи, детей или престарелых родителей. Во время войны им пришлось принять ряд принципиально новых решений, ранее не имевших precedents. В основном женщины начали работать, но их заработная плата была намного меньше, чем у мужчин, выполняющих аналогичную или похожую работу. Отсутствовала большая помощь со стороны государства. Кроме того, женщины, состоявшие в гражданском браке, согласно закону, не получали вообще ничего взамен утраченного дохода призванного на службу мужчины. Время ожидания мужчин было бесконечным, но

после 1918 года женщины надеялись, что их мужья вернутся домой с поля боя и из лагерей военнопленных. В статье цитируются письменные первоисточники, наглядно и образно раскрывающие исследовательскую проблему: прошения, письма, записи в метрических книгах. Приведены и отдельные статистические данные, кратко освещены отношения с населением Сибири, в том числе с казаками. Внутриполитическая обстановка в России, революция и венгерско-российские дипломатические отношения затрудняли возвращение военнопленных. Многим пленным пришлось долго ждать своего возвращения на родину, куда они вернулись в начале 1920-х годов. Ожидания женщин осложнялись еще и тем, что даже после начала государственной репатриации, никто не мог быть уверен, что мужья обязательно вернутся домой с той или иной группой военнопленных. У этих женщин на самом деле было два выбора: либо они предано ждали, пока их мужья вернутся, либо, переосмыслив ценности супружеской верности, периодически искали новую мужскую поддержку.

Ключевые слова: Первая мировая война, русский плен, военнопленные, женщины, ожидание, верность, измена, брак, пропавшие без вести, семья

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The First World War changed the lives of women no less than direct participation in the war for men. In the absence of the head of the family, it was necessary not only to replace him, but also to take responsibility for the maintenance of family members, children or elderly parents. Mostly women started working, but their wages were much lower than those of men doing similar work (Zalai Katalin, 2017a; Zalai Katalin, 2017b). There was no great help from the state. In addition, women who were in a civil marriage, according to the law, did not receive anything at all in return for the lost income of a conscripted to the army man. It was especially difficult for women to become the head of the family, because until then they were always forced to be on the sidelines (Kaba Eszter, 2017). During the war, they had to make a number of separate decisions that had no precedent before. Letters, postcards to the front supported family ties, briefly reporting on household chores and the state of the economy (Hanák Péter, 2009).

The waiting time for the men was endless, but after the armistice of 1918, the women hoped that their husbands would return home from the battlefield and from the POW camps. The process of returning home did indeed start from Italy and the Western front, but the situation of those women whose husbands were in Russian captivity was dif-

ferent. The internal political situation in Russia, the revolution and Hungarian-Russian diplomatic relations made it difficult to return for prisoners of war. Russia in 1918 initiated the return of prisoners from the European part, but this did not extend to Siberia and Turkestan, as well as to the Russian Far East. The prisoners had to wait a long time for their return to their homeland, where they returned finally in the early 1920s (Kolontári Attila, 1983; Petrák Katalin, 2012).

The women's expectations were complicated by the fact that even after the start of state repatriation, no one could be sure that their husbands would necessarily return home with this or that group of prisoners of war. So women actually had two choices: either they faithfully waited for their husbands to return, or, having rethought the values of marital fidelity, sought new male support periodically. It's interesting, women sometimes found such support among Russian prisoners of war in Hungary, while male prisoners of war sought it in Russia itself. It is important to note that the study of different models of behavior of wives of prisoners of war can be considered as a description of the gender aspects of the captivity of the First World War. It is an integral part of new approaches to the history of captivity, starting from the analysis of captivity as a complex socio-cultural phenomenon associated with the

problems of identity, loyalty, adaptation of prisoners of war. A number of recent studies have allowed a new approach to this topic. Captivity in this case is considered by historians as an integral part of the history of the First World War (Davis, Gerald H., 1983; Davis, Gerald H., 1987; Davis, Gerald H., 1993; Gergileva A.I., 2007; Grekov N.V., 1997; Herwig, Holger H., 1997; Kalvoda Josef, 1983; Krammer Arnold, 1983; Moritz Verena, 1998; Pastor Peter, 1983; Rachamimov Alon, 2000; Shleikher I.I., 2001).

Waiting women

A model of faithful wives can be considered Camilla Telkessi, the wife of army captain Cornel Karcis. The captain, who was born in Budapest in 1882, was captured along with his partner in March 1915 after the assault on Przemyśl. He escaped from captivity in 1920. By his own admission, his escape was like "in the movies". First, he traveled from Siberia for 25 days to Petrograd. But when he got there, he was unlucky, he was arrested by the Cheka. After his arrest, he was forced to work, unloading firewood from ships on the Neva. He, like many other officers, was held hostage by the decision of the revolutionary Tribunal. The prisoner was sent to a military prison, where he fell ill with scurvy, and then underwent surgery for appendicitis. As soon as he began to recover, he ran again. In the summer of 1921, after crossing lake Ladoga, he found himself in Finland, from there he returned home to Hungary, where, like his fellow prisoners, he was first placed in a filtration camp in Chot. It was there that he informed the family of his return home. During the seven years of his absence, the spouses wrote countless letters to each other. In letters full of love, he called his wife: "My sweet chamomile!" and his wife addressed him: "My good Cornel!" Despite the absence of his father, two children (the eldest Clara and the youngest Janicek, born after his departure to the front) were brought up to love him. The son in his letter to his father in the camp wrote: "Dear dad! I wait for You, to see You and to kiss Your hand!"¹ It is clear that a high

¹ Family correspondence is available to E. Kaba with help of János Karcis.

social position and material wealth of Camilla Telkessi gave her more opportunities and made it easier fate in comparison with those women when the husbands have gone to the front, were the sole breadwinners. Better living conditions and the possibility of regular written contact with the husband it made possible for the image of the father to persist in the family and even more widely among the people around the family. The situation was different with women who were forced to work. There was little time left in the face of constant financial difficulties. The image of the head of the family was often preserved only in a single photo. The fate of the rural population was especially difficult – for those who were engaged in agriculture, workers were worth their weight in gold. And often during the war the prisoners of war from Russia were involved in such agricultural activities by the state. And sometimes such prisoners could take the place of the absent head of the family.

Lovers of prisoners of war

In private Hungarian letter of this time there is a statement: that love knows no national borders and the relationship between Eva Yalinek from Laskafalun and the Russian prisoner of war Stepan Eremko is evidence of this. And this was not unique case (Mohács newspaper. 18 number. 1917. May 6). So it became widely known the case of Miss Dimitris Nicolein suffering of parting with his Russian lover. However, the police then found the body of a dead baby in a basket with land. Police began questioning a woman who initially claimed the baby was still-born. Then she confessed to killing her own child. Miss Dimitris arrested (Mohács newspaper. 23 number. 1917. June 10). But her story wasn't unique either. Often children grew up and men returned from captivity treated them as their own. But often the infidelity of women did not go unnoticed, and it could end the tragedy. In March 1918, Maliy Jene, a 32-year-old former infantryman who was described by his neighbors as an exceptionally friendly man, returned from Russian captivity and learned that in his absence, his wife was looking for happiness in someone else's arms. It was reported that at first

this man accepted the situation, but a few days later he cut his wife's throat with a bayonet. The former prisoner of war was court-martialed. Based on the testimony in court, it can be concluded that his wife during the war practically became a prostitute – apparently, she was pushed to this by the need to support the children, and then himself. But the husband was not sentenced to death or to a long term of imprisonment. The killing was described as a consequence of the trauma and shock of participating in the war actions. The judges found that he was in a state of mental disorder at the time of the murder, it is interesting that most often military trauma was considered as “temporary problem” but at this case, rather as an exception, it was considered as a cause of mental disorder (Ferenc Erős, 2015).

The problem of fidelity / infidelity did not concern only women living at the rural area. The war contributed to the emancipation of sexual life, which, in particular, was reflected in the increase of the number of sexual diseases. Sometimes this, due to the need for long-term treatment, affected the non-recognition of soldiers as fit for military service. In turn, this could be one of the sources of the shortage of manpower for the army of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. The topic of loyalty and infidelity, the discussion of casual relationships, often became part of the correspondence between the front and the rear. Women wrote to the front about the “weight of war” when discussing their female acquaintances. At the same time, fearing infidelity, they asked if their husbands found comfort in communicating with women. The years of war, the time spent apart, look like a heavy burden on a marriage, especially if you look at it from the point of view of women. Women get used to living in the same environment, so even their possible infidelity in accordance with the mores of that era looked like the destruction of this environment. The problem of infidelity of men or their sexual relations with prostitutes (including at the front) was most often not considered by society as a threat to marriage.

The relationship of the sexes in the village was quite complicated. In the period 1914-1918, a new generation of women who did not have husbands,

who went to the front, grew up. But often in the village you could meet Russian prisoners of war as potential male partners. They were in Hungary for many years – the revolution in Russia affected their return to their own homeland as well as the Hungarian prisoners of war. In 1922, one of the last Russian prisoners of war recorded in writing his thoughts about returning to Russia. Prisoners during their stay in Hungary, thanks to their economic activities, integrated into the life of the villages that received them, many of them found wives. There is no exact information about the number of marriages of prisoners. The Ministry of Defense in 1918 mentioned the need to regulate the marriages of prisoners of war, referring to the experience of Russia. In Russia, it was always necessary to inform the relevant authorities about the desire to marry. It was also required to note information at the personal documents of both parties.

Relatives and friends often opposed marriages with Russian prisoners of war, at many cases interested families even tried to prevent the lovers from meeting. In Baimok (now Serbia), the ban of the head of the family, Simon Kollar, on his daughter meeting with a Russian, led to a tragedy. The Kollar family had a Russian prisoner of war for two years, and during that time he fell in love with the owner's daughter, who reciprocated. When Mika Elemani (in other places Gelovani) Zacharias asked daughter to marry him, Simon Kollar refused to marry his daughter to a Russian, whom he sent away from his farm then. The man found a new job nearby and continued to date the girl. One day when the parents went to the city, the man decided to visit his beloved on a farm in Baimok. But after the unexpected return of the parents, a heated quarrel began. The prisoner of war drew the weapon with which he shot his fiancée and her parents. He himself was badly wounded. Zacharias fled the scene, but after a few hours he voluntarily surrendered to the police and was arrested. Some people who lived in mixed marriages later settled in Hungary. However, this was only a small part. After the beginning of the exchange of prisoners, many of them returned to their homeland in the hope of a better life. So did our hero, he went

to Russia. This was reported by the newspaper "Pesht" in May 1922. The article also claimed that in addition to the Russian prisoners, a former Hungarian prisoner of war returned to Russia, because he was confused in calculations and faced financial difficulties (Pesti newspaper. 107 number. 1922. May 12).

The fate of the wives of soldiers who went missing

There was also a group of wives who saw their husbands last when they were going to the front and when they said goodbye to them at the train station. The women continued to wait endlessly. It was hard both psychologically and financially. After all, a family with remaining children did not fall under the category of war widows and orphans who could claim benefits. After the agreements on the exchange of prisoners of war and after the return of prisoners of war, it became clear that the number of missing persons was more than ten thousand people, so that a significant number of families were in such an incomprehensible status.

As we have said before, the return of prisoners of war from the Russian captivity continued for years. Officially, the state completed the transportation of prisoners in September 1922. In 1921, the Ministry of Interior issued the Decree on the preparation of National census (Metropolitan Gazette. 36 number. 1921. August 26). According to this census, it can be seen that many missing persons made themselves known for the last time in 1918 and earlier. The previous practice of declaring a missing person dead was revised in 1922. On June 13, the press announced that the Minister of Justice had issued a new decree on the issuance of a death certificate. Such legislation existed before, but it has been expanded. Under the new regulation, relatives could demand that missing persons be declared dead if this happened before January 1, 1920. In practice, this meant that their husband and father had not shown any signs of life since. A death report could also be filed if someone was captured, but there was no news since January 1920.

This provision was especially important for those whose husbands had not returned from Rus-

sian captivity by the specified date, since if they initiated the process of declaring the missing person dead, then the woman who remained a widow after the war and the children were considered war orphans and had the right to help. The aid itself was ridiculously small - 12 crowns a year for war orphans who lost their fathers, but even then, only for a limited period: boys could receive this benefit until the age of 16, girls - until the age of 14. But many were forced to go to the beginning of such a procedure for purely financial reasons. There were other people who decided otherwise, and until the late twenties and early thirties hoped for the return of their breadwinners – they carefully followed the short news reports from the Soviet Union that appeared in Hungarian newspapers, hoping to meet the names of their relatives.

The situation of wives brought from Russian captivity

A separate group of women who came to Hungary with their husbands who returned from Russian captivity also deserves attention. The surviving diaries and memoirs show that the endless life in the camp and the constant longing for female companionship was hard for all prisoners. For example, food, money or other aid items intended for prisoners were often delivered to the camps by Red Cross representatives. And the sight of these ladies from the Red Cross turned into a ritual for the prisoners. After the visits, they spent days discussing the appearance of the ladies, their voices, and those prisoners who were able to get a gentle female handshake (Ehrenstein Leopold, 1937). Such an unnatural situation was sometimes overcome by choosing a girlfriend in Russia. Women were often searched even with the help of the newspapers (Kaba Eszter, 2018). But when the prisoners wanted to bring their girlfriend with them to Hungary, due to a number of legal issues, this led to problems and rested on financial issues.

The government needed certain funds for the repatriation of captured residents of Hungary, these funds were always not enough. Therefore, Hungarian officials often turned to both citizens of the

country and compatriots abroad to collect additional assistance. As an example, it can be cited a fundraising campaign in America from Hungarians there, which was conducted by former Prime Minister Karol Husar (Karol Husar's agitation journey in America // Pest newspaper. 128 number. 1920. May 29). Naturally, such events also worked to unite society. But in such limited financial conditions, the additional costs of Russian women and children born in marriage meant that it was impossible to send someone else from the captured soldiers and officers to their homeland. But even in the event of a possible joint return to Hungary, there was no guarantee that the family would survive. But the possible divorce of the spouses created new problems, because women who were left alone could hardly find work and integrate into society without knowledge of the language. A similar situation was also observed if the husband fought in Russia in the Red army and was a member of the Communist party, or fell under another "suspicion of sympathy for the Bolsheviks" and as a result ended up in prison or in an internment camp – which also led to the loss of the "Russian family" breadwinner. However, many prisoners of war fought hard for the preservation of their families, so in the end, the government decided after the conclusion of prisoner exchange agreements in 1920, that women and children should be included in the total number of returning prisoners.

At the end of the summer of 1920, the press first reported that nine prisoners of war returning from Siberia had married in captivity and their wives were traveling with them (Pesti newspaper. 183 number. 1920. August 3). Later, the flow of such news increased. There were reports of children (Pesti newspaper. 184 number. 1920. August 4). In 1921, the report on the return of one of the groups was already about 44 women (Pesti newspaper. 63 number. 1921. March 21). Then, such reports have become commonplace. Then the politicians' concerns about Russian wives began to be confirmed. Many men grew cold to their Russian women and "forgot" their soulmate in the filtration camp. An illustrative situation is given in one of the newspa-

pers of 1921 (Pesti newspaper. 138 number. 1921. June 25). There was talking about crossing in a boat from the filtration camp. When one of the women tried to climb into the boat after her betrothed, he suggested that she go away, because there was no room for her in the boat. And if she did not agree, then she could return to her Siberia. An old boatman, the prisoner's brother, who was present, asked why the man did not want to take the woman with him. Brother replied that he was not going to drag her to his village, so that everyone would laugh at him because of this "ugly". The boatman replied that the Russian was a woman with arms and legs like all the Hungarian women in the village. Soldier asked: "Who? That "muska", the cow with the eyes of fish?" The boatman philosophically remarked that if it was ground, there would be flour. The prisoner stood his ground, declaring that he did not want it. But boatman asked brother why she was so good in captivity. To which he received the answer that it was a completely different situation. Boatman: "Why the other one? Did she cook for you, did laundry, was she affectionate and loyal?" The soldier answered all these questions affirmatively. But then his brother Gabor, the boatman, asked what the prisoner wanted else. The article continues further. But in the brief given dialogue, the widespread attitude of Hungarian prisoners of war to their Russian wives is clearly visible. Such mixed marriages (according to the Soviet definition) often ended by divorce, even if the obstacles to return were overcome. In this case, the question about the recognition or non-recognition of the institution of Soviet marriage in Hungary arose.

Bela Furtkovits, Deputy Director of the United Capital savings Bank, served as a senior Lieutenant in the war, and after being captured in Russia, he met a Russian woman in Moscow, who according to the local law, was also supposed to marry. He brought his wife Claudia Kostina to Hungary, where they had two children. But then amorous feelings of Furtkovits have cooled, and he married second time. Russian wife filed for Furtkovits to court for child support. The court of first instance dismissed the petition, finding that Furtkovits married was not

officially. She did not recognize the court's decision and appealed to the Royal Court. The Royal Court ordered compensation for the damage caused to the woman. At the same time, the court pointed out that a marriage concluded under Soviet laws should be considered valid until the court recognized it as invalid. Then it was held a new trial, and the woman's judgment was set the contents in the amount of three million crowns at the expense of the monthly income of Forthwith in the amount of fifteen million crowns (All Soviet marriages are valid until the court breaks it down // Pesti Review. 122 number. 1926. June 2).

Gyorgy Bartoszek's wife, who was left with a child, was also given a good allowance. She gave birth to the child in the clinic and recognized Bartoszek as the father of the child. In court after the verdict in favor of the woman, Bartoszek allegedly said: "Why did you follow me to Hungary? After all, I will not go to Russia if someone calls me?" (Russian-Hungarian marital tragedies before the Criminal Tribunal // Órai newspaper. 206 number. 1926. September 12).

Shandor Lovassy was prosecuted for bigamy, but was acquitted on the grounds that the institution of the Soviet marriage was considered invalid in Hungary. Shoemaker Shandor also married in Russia in 1920 and was married according to the rite of the Orthodox Church. Together with his wife a year later, he returned to Hungary. A few months later, his wife gave birth to a little girl, Lovassi wanted to register his child, but all attempts were in vain. All the priests declared the marriage invalid, so the child from this marriage was declared born outside the law. He was named only by the name of the mother. Lovassy did not attach much importance to this issue (Siberian love before the Budapest tribunal // Pesti newspaper. 207 number. 1926. September 12). He left his family then, went to Budapest, and married once more. In this case, it is particularly shocking that the new wife knew about the Russian wife and even about the child.

The existing contradictory judgments strongly influenced public opinion, the question of the legality of a marriage concluded in Russia was also im-

portant for those who returned to Hungary with their wives and children. The unclear legal situation baffled notaries and civil servants, for example, when it was necessary to find out whether children born in mixed marriages and registered on the basis of Russian documents should be recognized or not? Often interested persons were invited to the Ministry of Internal Affairs on an individual basis to answer specific questions there. For a long time, even lawyers did not come to a common conclusion on this problem. In 1926, the court adviser Kornel Stehlo expressed an opinion on this issue that differed from the opinion of the member of the Royal Court Laszlo Sömjén.

In October 1926, in a column in the Budapest newspaper, K. Stehlo gave clear legal arguments in favor of the legality of the Soviet marriage. In his view, legitimacy should be assessed, starting from a purely legal and unemotionally moral basis. In order to clarify the legal situation, it's enough to know the Hungarian act no. 34 of act No. 113. § 4. It states about "the validity of the marriage in respect of formalities related to marriage, during marriage itself". Legality must be assessed in accordance with the current legislation, so it is not necessary to ensure that marriages in Russia meet the formal requirements established by Hungary. They must comply with the requirements of (Soviet) legislation in Russia. This legal provision applies even if – as it was in one case – Russian law was not known at all (Stehlo Kornél: The question of the validity of Soviet marriage // Budapest newspaper. 239 number. 1926. October 9). L. Sömjén held the opposite view and defended it in the Ministry of Justice. From his point of view, marriages concluded in Soviet Russia were just an administrative forced action. Therefore, in Hungary, it can only be a question of considering mixed marriages. Prior to this, one of the Church denominations also came to the conclusion that Soviet marriages in Hungary were invalid, even if the conclusion of marriages under Soviet laws was considered legally binding. When it asked about the rule of law in the Soviet Union and the immorality of Soviet morality, Sömjén explained that he had a very specific argument in favor of the insignificance of

Soviet marriages. He claimed that a lot of prisoners of war did not consider such a marriage valid, as they were limited in their means of subsistence, and there was also the influence of Russian wives and relatives on their minds. In addition, in the case of consideration of this circumstance, a prisoner of war would not have received permission to return to his homeland with his wife from Russia, if before the draft he was already married and cohabited with a woman (Sömjén L., 1926).

K. Stehlo responded to the article of L. Sömjén in Budapest newspaper (Sztehlo Kornél: Soviet Marriages // Budapest newspaper. 249 number. 1926. November 26). He pointed out that, as it could be seen from the article by L. Sömjén, the Ministry of Justice considered the appropriate legislative section unsuitable for the consideration of Soviet marriages. This is done on the grounds that the Soviet government is considered as an established state entity, which is temporary, so Soviet laws cannot be considered state legislation of the Russian people. That is, the Soviet law contradicts the “spirit of European civilization”. In this case, there is no Christian moral conviction as a basis for regulating marriage. That is, it may not even be about marriage, but about consent to the institution of a concubine. Based on this logic, a Hungarian citizen who formally enters into a Soviet marriage, in fact, does not marry and cannot be considered married. According to K. Stehlo, it contradicts the reality of Soviet legislation in accordance with which marriages are concluded by mutual consent and in the presence of the registering party. In fact, compliance with these conditions is a sufficient reason to consider these relations legal in Hungary as well. In his answer K. Stehlo also stressed that his opponents, while not recognizing the legality of marriages concluded in Russia, actually favor men who return home and leave their wives and children or their families in Russia, while forgetting about their possible bigamy and not considering it as a crime.

Thus, we see the absence for many years of a unified position on Soviet marriage. But in the debate about its legality, the scales were clearly tipped in favor of men. The marriage was considered truly

valid only when it was re-confirmed by the Hungarian authorities, and it was legalized that after marriage with a man, there were those whom he personally recognized. In 1929, the Royal Court finally issued a ruling stating that it considered Soviet marriages invalid, since they were concluded in the Registry Office, but before that they were not consecrated by the Church (Catholic or Orthodox), which was considered a necessary condition for the legality of marriages. Interestingly, this ruling was contradicted by a decree issued at the same time by the Ministry of Justice that Russian citizens (in this case, women from Russia) in Hungary cannot claim that their marriage is invalid as long as the Soviet Union uses Soviet legislation, that is, as long as it exists. On this basis, they cannot marry once more in Hungary. This created a paradox – it turned out that Hungary recognized the marriage of a Russian citizen concluded under Soviet laws as valid, but this marriage turned out to be concluded with a formally “non-existent” Hungarian citizen (Szász I., 1938).

In the 1930s, news about Soviet Russia related to prisoners of war reappeared on the pages of newspapers. But this time it was not only about divorces, but also about joyful events. It was about families who returned from captivity and were accepted by Hungarian society and the law. In one of the evening newspapers in 1938, a special photo report was published about the baptism of four children born in a Hungarian-Russian marriage. Their godparents were the Commissioner of police and the famous aristocrat count Bethlen Martha (Az Est. 178 number. 1938. August 9).

Women and prisoners of war in Russian captivity

The events of 1917 destroyed a fairly rigid wall separating prisoners of war from the local population. Of course, much depended on the location of the prisoners of war. In large camps separated from cities (Irkutsk, Verkhneudinsk, Krasnoyarsk), contacts were reduced to a minimum, and in places where prisoners of war were placed outside the garrisons in the settlements themselves (Sretensk, Nerchinsk, the camp in Chita itself), such contacts became commonplace. Isolated from their homeland

and family, the prisoners of war also sought contacts with local women. In the Central and regional archives, you can find a variety of documents that present a whole range of different stories. The authorities tried to prevent close contacts of prisoners of war with the local population and were extremely negative about official marriages and the desire of prisoners of war to accept Russian citizenship. But it was impossible to completely eradicate the contacts. The files of the Irkutsk provincial Gendarme Department contain a huge amount of factual material: from reports about contacts with prostitutes and sentimental stories "about eternal love" and common parties to material about the alleged "propaganda" of the local garrison. So, on March 7, 1916, when peasant of Verkhneudinskaya County Matrona Linareva tried to send a parcel to the prisoner S. Schwartz, she was detained. The investigation revealed that the parcel was intended for officer of the Austro-Hungarian army Novatny which Linareva "has a close affair and often visited him in Peschanka" (State Archive of Irkutsk Region. F-600. Op. 1. D. 1262. L. 67), in the same case file there is a report of the gendarme captain Popov that: "the canteen" Petrograd "in the city of Chita is visited by prisoners of war accompanied by the lower ranks of the guard, where drunkenness occurs, together with the ranks of the guard" (State Archive of Irkutsk Region. F-600. Op. 1. D. 1262. L. 103).

In contacts with prisoners of war, quite high-ranking persons were also noticed, so the head of the provincial Gendarme Department noted: "... the apartment of the widow of major General Moskvina was visited by prisoners of war officers ... Mrs. Moskvina is Polish and all prisoners of war officers are poles; not suggesting anything illegal, still feel uncomfortable for a Russian woman to enter into compromising relations with the officers of the warring us States" ended writing a proposal to the military Governor of Transbaikalian area "to remove named entities (she and her sister) from outside Berezovsky's garrison" (State Archive of Irkutsk Region. F-600. Op. 1. D. 1262. L. 164). In Chita on February 12, Maria Stelman was detained while trying to hand over to the prisoner of war Max Heine a

package in which there were 4 letters, two bottles of beer, sausage and lard, on the letter Geike's hand was written "after all, after the war I will leave you". In Troitskosavsk, the gendarmerie came to the attention of engineer S. Vasiliev, who with his cohabitant-a black woman Alice Blyash: "Arranges drinking parties in his apartment to which he invites prisoners of war" (State Archive of Irkutsk Region. F-600. Op. 1. D. 1062. L. 529).

Persons found to have illicit relations with prisoners of war were punished administratively. M. Kormiltseva for "relations with prisoners of war without proper permission" by the decree of the Irkutsk Governor-General of 30.04.1916 was subjected to "a fine of 50 rubles, and in case of insolvency-arrest for 2 weeks" (State Archive of Irkutsk Region. F-600. Op. 1. D. 1062. L. 238). Over time, the position of the official authorities softened, first easing in terms of accepting Russian citizenship and officially marrying local residents the Slavs received, prisoners of war of the Austro-Hungarian and German armies, who were traditionally considered close by blood and religion. Similar processes were noted by Russian prisoners of war in Austro-Hungarian captivity. According to an eyewitness: "Everyone who could, signed up for field work, mines or factories. By the end of the war, hundreds of thousands of prisoners were living in Czech, German and Hungarian villages without any supervision, under the responsibility of their masters. Many of them returned to the camp for the winter, but there were lucky ones who broke out of the camps forever and stayed in the villages for years. Widowed or out of touch with their husbands, peasant women soon got along with new workers, and the simple order of village life took its toll... And since all this happened everywhere and took on a mass character, the neighbors also ceased to be shy, the prisoner put on the clothes of the absent owner and became completely his own" (Levin K., 1936).

In September 1918, the "Rules on the admission of foreign prisoners to Russian citizenship" were approved. And in April 1919, there was an order for the Irkutsk military district, regulating the issues of marriage between prisoners of war and

local residents. In accordance with this document, all restrictions on marriage for Slavic prisoners of war were removed, and other prisoners of war could marry in "case of moral necessity", this term meant, first of all, the presence of common children or the pregnancy of a woman. However, the prisoner of war was obliged to provide:

- 1) a document on the absence of a registered marriage in the homeland
- 2) the petition of the woman herself
- 3) some kind of characterization (either from the pow community, or from the camp commandant, or from the organization where he works).

In a personal petition, candidate had to justify his desire to marry (most often this was accompanied by a request for acceptance of Russian citizenship) and indicate further plans for life. Formally, the first point was the most difficult, because often prisoners of war did not have such documents, and it was virtually impossible to request them in the most difficult situation of 1917–1920. Authorities often counted for this document a guarantee of other prisoners, so officers – prisoners of war camp in Krasnoyarsk testified that the ensign of the Austro-Hungarian army Albert Lett blank and has no restrictions on marriage with the girl Serafima Nikitina (Russian State Military Archive. F. 39515. Op. 1. D. 301. L. 246), sometimes the priest could give such a document, after a conversation with the couple, the Dean of the Irkutsk Church has allowed the marriage of a Catholic pow F. Sabo with girl M. Vdovina (Russian State Military Archive. F. 39515. Op. 1. D. 301. L. 216–217).

It should be noted that marriages were absolutely officially concluded before. But for this it is necessary that a serious advocate stands behind the prisoner of war. So at the beginning of 1919, a prisoner of war officer of the Austro-Hungarian army, Hungarian by origin Andrei Wilhelmovich Hamburger, married the girl Zoya Petrovna Silantieva, the daughter of a national teacher. By this time, he was living freely in Irkutsk (the house on the corner of Troitskaya and Basninskaya No. 5/55) and he was the chief engineer of Irkutsk.

By education, he was a hydraulic engineer, since 1916 he worked as a specialist in the Zairkutny camp (it was he who designed and built artesian wells in the pow camps of Irkutsk), since 1917 he was invited to the engineering service by the Irkutsk mayor. During the year, he prepared a project for the settlement of the Ushakovka riverbed, carried out the repair of the Znamensky and Prison bridges, and was also responsible for the operation of the pontoon bridge. In his petition to the commander of the district, the Irkutsk mayor gave the following description of Andrei Vilhelmovich: "he showed himself as an outstanding technical worker, highly educated, talented and exceptionally able-bodied".

In his personal petition, A. Hamburger asked not only for marriage, but also for the adoption of Russian citizenship, pledging to become Orthodox. The request was granted, the applicant was granted citizenship and officially married (Russian State Military Archive. F. 39515. Op. 1. D. 301. L. 65–69). Petitions of this kind from qualified specialists (engineers, doctors, etc.) were not exception, but the norm. The local authorities of Eastern Siberia needed such professionals, tried to "get" them out of the camp, offered various preferences; and the young girls, who were not spoiled by male attention, saw in these prisoners of war "a beautiful candidate for marriage". Several such examples can be cited at once (engineer Y. Kraus (an officer – prisoner of war of the Krasnoyarsk camp) asked permission to marry a woman doctor A. Ivanova, saying that they were expecting a child; a prisoner of war doctor of the same Krasnoyarsk camp A. Prakhner married a girl A. Silina and took Russian citizenship; a pilot, a prisoner of war R. Miller married a girl F. Khukalenko, indicating the reason that the bride was expecting a child). Sometimes the story of the relationship resembled an exciting tabloid novel, so the prisoner of war officer of the Austrian army E. Fabra, petitioning in December 1918. about the marriage with the girl L. Yushkova, reported that they met in the Kurgan camp, fell in love with each other, and after his transfer to the Krasnoyarsk camp, the bride followed him, in July they got engaged, and now they are asking for permission to enter into a legal marriage

(Russian State Military Archive. F. 39515. Op. 1. D. 301. L. 277–279).

The petitions of prisoners of war for marriage are also of interest. So POW from Zairkutny town Walter Trenchard requesting marriage with Mary Kinder and explained the need to justify marriage through the bride's family in running the household: "a large farm is breeding ... keeping such a huge economy without male labor hard for her. They have no men" (Russian State Military Archive. F. 39515. Op. 1. D. 301. L. 271). But the most popular reason was either the bride's pregnancy, or already having a common child. The record holder in this regard was the Irkutsk prisoner of war E. Eleshir, at the time of the petition for marriage in December 1918, he lived with E. Fedorova for 4 years and had 2 children together and reported that his wife was "pregnant again from me" (Russian State Military Archive. F. 39515. Op. 1. D. 301. L. 286). It is worth noting the characteristic of the future husband, which is given by the bride, in the document of consent to marry. Usually it was a standard document stating that "the Maiden *name* agrees to marry a prisoner of war *name*. *Date, signature*". But there were exceptions, so inhabitant of Irkutsk P. Koshkina, describing the prisoner of war Yu. Grkovich in his receipt says: "Knowing Julius Alexandrovich Grkovich as an honest man, I agree to marry him" (Russian State Military Archive. F. 39515. Op. 1. D. 301. L. 264). There are a lot of interesting facts for analysis in the metric books of Irkutsk churches. Until 1917, the authors failed to identify in them the facts of marriages of local residents with prisoners of war. But already in the metric book for 1919 of Irkutsk Transfiguration Church contains records of the marriage of the prisoner of war Hungarian engineer Szécsény Desideria with I. Afanasyeva Elena Nikolaevna and the captain of the Czechoslovak troops of Franek Vyacheslav Iosifovicha with Nesterevov Anna Agafonova, Elias Ludwig Yakovlevich paramedic of Czech-Slovak army with Titova Cleopatra Petrovna, Janda Jan Pavlovich, Dr., Colonel of the medical service of the Czech-Slovak army with Polivanova Natalia Filippovna, the Lieutenant of the 2nd Czechoslovak regiment Hare Franz Antonovich with

Kurbatovoj Mail Afanasyevna. Total of all 107 records of marriages there are 5 records of marriages of former prisoners of war, and this is only in one of the churches of Irkutsk (State Archive of Irkutsk Region. F. 266. Op. 3. D. 49, 77, 95, 105, etc.).

Thus, it is worth noting that there is much less contact with the local population (compared to the Western part of the country). POW camps in Eastern Siberia were located in military camps, with a fairly strict (until 1917) access regime. The camps, which were "overloaded" with prisoners of war, lost a significant part of their inhabitants in the summer of 1916. They were sent to agricultural work in the Volga region. Some of the prisoners of war were used for work on the territory of the camps, and the rest, for the most part, worked in teams in large settlements. The use of prisoners of war in agriculture on the territory of the Irkutsk military district was extremely rare. An interesting feature is due to the fact that most of the large camps of the Irkutsk military district were located on the territory of the Trans-Baikal Cossack army. The attitude of the local (primarily Cossack) population to the prisoners was sharply hostile. P. Krasnov, describing the Cossack units, wrote: "Especially many of the Cossacks fled. It should also be said that the Cossacks in captivity were treated strictly. In the Austro-German army there was a belief that the Cossacks did not give mercy to the enemy, that they did not take prisoners, and therefore in the camps they took revenge on the Cossacks. And one more thing. In the Cossack units, captivity, according to tradition, was considered not a misfortune, but a disgrace, and therefore even wounded Cossacks tried to escape in order to wash away the shame of captivity" (Krasnov P.N., 2006). Naturally, in these conditions, even widowed Cossacks tried not to irritate the village society, and if there were contacts with prisoners of war, they were not advertised. After the February revolution, with the gradual return of front-line soldiers (wounded, vacationers, deserters) to the village, prisoners were not so much needed in farms. Therefore, in 1917, the prisoners were expelled from the village to the city. To this must be added the hostile attitude of the front-line soldiers towards the enemy

and their confidence that all the prisoners slept with Russian women while their husbands fought with the same Germans (Lyukshin D., 2002). Often, unlike

in the European part of Russia, prisoners of war in Siberia were not able to return home, but they were involved in the vicissitudes of the Civil War.

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