

Original article

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From Crime to Re-Education: Activity of the Caucasian Society of Agricultural Correctional Facilities for Juvenile Criminals at the End of the 19th Century

ALEKSANDR E. EPIFANOV

State University of Management, Moscow, Russia

Moscow University «Synergy», Moscow, Russia

mvd_djaty@mail.ru, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5686-5770>

Abstract

Introduction: the article is devoted to activities of the Caucasian Society of Agricultural Correctional Facilities for Juvenile Criminals in the late 19th and early 20th centuries engaged in solving the problem of child crime in the region. The article considers historical and socio-economic conditions that contributed to the growth of youth crime, as well as analyzes the efforts the society took to correct juvenile offenders. Special attention is paid to the organization and functioning of juvenile correctional facilities. The article describes detention conditions, methods of teaching crafts and moral education, as well as interaction with children's families. The author touches upon the problems the Society faced, including those related to a lack of funding and qualified personnel, as well as insufficient infrastructure. It is emphasized that solving these problems required an integrated approach and efforts on the part of the state, society and the family. *Purpose:* to study activities of Russian pre-revolutionary correctional institutions on the example of the Caucasian Society of Agricultural Correctional Facilities for Juvenile Criminals at the end of the 19th century. *Methods:* legal, analytical, descriptive, historical and comparative, as well as the method of deconstruction. *Results:* the study showed that the Caucasian Society of Agricultural Correctional Facilities for Juvenile Criminals has created a unique model of work with juvenile offenders based on an integrated approach. *Conclusions:* the analysis shows that the Society's experience demonstrates effectiveness of a humane approach to the re-education of juvenile offenders. A comprehensive system of education, vocational training and moral re-education made it possible to successfully rehabilitate difficult teenagers. Despite objective difficulties, the pre-revolutionary Society laid foundations of a modern social rehabilitation system for juvenile offenders.

Keywords: Caucasus; child crime; juvenile delinquents; correctional institutions; juvenile correctional facility; social rehabilitation; moral education.

5.1.1. Theoretical and historical sciences.

5.1.4. Criminal law sciences.

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Introduction

The second half of the 19th century was a period of active reforms and modernization for the Russian Empire. However, these processes did not always lead to an improvement in the lives of all segments of the population. On the contrary, economic and social transformations were often accompanied by an increase in poverty, social tension and, as a result, crime, especially among young people. The Caucasus, a region with a rich history and complex ethnic structure, was no exception. The economic development of the Caucasian region was uneven in this period. On the one hand, mining, agriculture, and trade were developing. On the other hand, many peasants and artisans went bankrupt, unable to compete with larger enterprises. This led to people's migration to cities, where people often faced unemployment, poverty and lack of prospects.

Historiographical analysis of juvenile delinquency problems and ways to overcome it and re-education of juvenile offenders in pre-revolutionary Russia is presented in the works of Russian researchers from various periods. Pre-revolutionary authors, in particular, M.I. Kravsovskii [1], V.N. Nikitin [2], I.Ya. Foinitskii [3], N.S. Tagantsev [4], A.F. Kistyakovskii [5], D.G. Tolberg [6], A.N. Miklashevskii [7], A.G. Bat' [8], mainly considered legal and statistical aspects of juvenile delinquency prevention and re-education of juvenile offenders. Soviet researchers N.I. Kufayev [9], P.I. Lyublinkii [10], Yu.V. Gerbeev [11] and others focused mainly on class causes of juvenile delinquency. Modern Russian historiography on the subject under study is represented in the works of L.I. Belyaeva [12], A.P. El'chaninov [13], R.V. Pushilin [14], T.A. Kattsina, N.V. Pashina and L.E. Mezit [15], I.S. Kara [16], S.V. Kara [17], M.V. Lavrent'eva [18], Ya.N. Polyakova [19],

A.E. Epifanov [20], S.L. Kuras [21], V.I. Ignatenko [22], E.Z. Bikchurina [23] and others, who significantly expanded the problem field of studying the system for correcting juvenile offenders.

The scientific novelty of the presented research lies in the comprehensive analysis of activities of the Caucasian Society of Agricultural Correctional Facilities for Juvenile Criminals based on specific materials introduced into scientific circulation for the first time. Organizational, pedagogical and social aspects of juvenile correctional facilities are studied in terms of an interdisciplinary approach. Fundamentally new is the consideration of the correctional system not only as a punitive, but also as an educational mechanism aimed at social rehabilitation of juvenile offenders.

Research

Poverty has historically been one of the main causes of crime, especially among minors. Statistical data from the end of the 19th century confirm this pattern: in 1891-1896, in prisons located in economically developed regions of the Russian Empire (the Kuban region and Baku province), the average number of juvenile delinquents per year reached significant figures – 109 and 147, respectively [24, p. 195]. At the same time, prisons in the less economically developed Dagestan region, Elisavetpol and Black Sea provinces held only 2, 9 and juvenile offenders. This trend pointed to a direct relationship between the economic development of regions and the increase in juvenile delinquency.

In these circumstances, children from poor families were particularly vulnerable and could easily embark on a criminal path. It was not so much the presence of juvenile delinquents themselves, but rather the fact that without timely correction they became adult, hardened

criminals that posed the threat to the society. Harsh conditions of prison environment made minors especially dangerous to society. In conditions when the number of juvenile delinquents had not yet reached its critical values, there was an urgent need to take corrective measures in relation to minors.

However, the existing punishment systems and correctional institutions often proved ineffective. Prisons, overcrowded and unsuitable for holding children, contributed to their further criminalization rather than correction [25, p. 1,918]. In those circumstances, there was a need to create new, more humane and effective methods of dealing with juvenile offenders. One of them was the establishment of the Caucasian Society of Agricultural Correctional Facilities for Juvenile Criminals.

On April 30, 1895, a general meeting of its members was held in Tiflis. The society was called upon to curb incarceration of juvenile offenders in prison. Instead, they were supposed to be sent to a specialized institution (juvenile correctional facility) to be corrected.

The society included well-known state and public figures from Transcaucasia, including the "Most Reverend Exarch of Georgia", Archbishop Vladimir, newly appointed Bishop Arseny of Sukhumi, commander of the Caucasian Army Corps, Lieutenant General I.G. Amilakhvari, trustee of the Caucasian Educational District K.P. Yanovskii, Tiflis Governor G.D. Shervashidze, Chairman of the district court F.A. Bykov and others [18, p. 73]. The society set itself the goal of not only isolating juvenile offenders from society, but also giving them the opportunity to improve, get an education and a profession so that they could return to normal life.

Unfortunately, the juvenile correctional facility was opened only on September 16, 1896. The institution, established by the Society, faced many problems. The main reason that slowed down its opening was the lack of a place suitable for its location. Therefore, initially it was located in the manor rented from a private individual in the village of Okrokany, Tiflis district. Then, a significant amount was spent on the purchase of a suitable plot of land and its "adaptation" [24, p. 196].

Initially, the juvenile correctional facility held only 25 minors. Over time, their number

reached 50. However, only 1/5 of all young prisoners were sent to this institution. In 1894–1896, only 245 minors (approximately 82 persons per year) were held in prisons in the Transcaucasian Krai. Taking into account these data, as well as the need for each pupil to stay in the facility for at least 2 years, the Caucasian Society of Agricultural Correctional Facilities for Juvenile Criminals decided that the Caucasian juvenile correctional facility was to keep at least 120 people to meet urgent requirements of the region [24, p. 197].

The problem of staffing the facility was crucial under those circumstances. The challenging task to find people willing to work with difficult teenagers for a small fee and without guarantees of public service and the constant change of educators, though negatively affecting the stability and effectiveness of the educational process, did not prevent the facility from fulfilling its tasks.

Due to the continued difficulties in selecting a qualified head of the facility, it was managed directly by the Society Board, headed by F.A. Bykov. The actual leadership was entrusted to K.K. Chkoniya, who simultaneously performed many functions: carried out economic activities, was engaged in educational work and taught general education subjects.

According to the Society's report for 1898, K.K. Chkoniya's situation was complicated by the lack of effective support from the staff. Qualifications of tutors and supervisors (referred to as "dyad'ka") were extremely unsatisfactory. However, this situation had its objective reasons. Service conditions were not attractive for competent specialists. The staff worked around the clock with minimal financial remuneration, without taking advantage of the benefits of public service. This led to the fact that the positions of educators were occupied by people who did not have alternative employment opportunities. As a rule, employees viewed work in the facility as a temporary occupation and left the institution at the first opportunity, having barely mastered the necessary skills [24, p. 197]. P. Humbert noted in his observations that such a personnel problem was a "sore spot" for most correctional institutions for minors of that time.

On June 13, 1897, the Board of the Society acquired 39 desyatinas (approximately 39 hect-

ares) of land in the village of Zemo-Avchaly, Tiflis district, for 7,778 rubles 85 kopecks. The acquired site was located near the platform of the Transcaucasian Railway near the Kura River and was an almost level place with a small spring of drinkable water. Unfortunately, it turned out to be insufficient for irrigation and agricultural cultivation of the entire site. Attempts to use water from the Kura River for this purpose proved to be excessively expensive and were unsuccessful.

In order to save money, a barrack or pavilion system was chosen for the construction of residential and business premises of the correctional institution, which had a number of advantages. At the same time, each barrack was a completely independent, habitable house. Their number depended only on financial capabilities of the facility administration [24, pp. 197–198]. The barrack system made it possible to divide minors into specialized groups depending on pedagogical techniques used to correct them, was characterized by comparative cheapness of each barrack (the cost was about 6,000 rubles) and the absence of “spirit of military barracks that does not have a good effect on children” [24, p. 198].

On June 7, 1898, in the presence of the Board, some members of the Society, local intelligentsia and peasants, buildings of the Caucasian juvenile correctional facility were laid on a new site in the village of Zemo-Avchaly. One of them was a large three-storey building, erected with A.I. Mantashev’s charitable funds. This architectural structure was located opposite the main entrance to the facility. Its upper storey was designed for living quarters for administrative staff, namely a head of the institution, his deputy and two teachers-educators.

On the ground floor there was a communal dining room, a medical unit, a room for receiving visitors and separate apartments for one of the tutors. The basement space was used to house a kitchen complex, a bakery for baking bread, storage rooms and a specialized cellar for storing wine, since a vineyard was laid on the territory of the facility in order to teach pupils the basics of winemaking [26, p. 195].

The infrastructure was characterized by quite modern technical equipment at that time. There was a functioning water supply system and a sewage network. The minors were di-

vided into four separate buildings depending on their age characteristics and individual inclinations. Various production workshops were equipped in the same buildings: for woodworking, shoe making, metalworking and tailoring. As it follows from the publication in the newspaper “Kaspiy”, with proper financing, the management in the future planned to build separate buildings to expand the production base and introduce additional handicraft industries.

Due to the commissioning of a new building, it became possible to increase the number of pupils from 61 to 100 [27, p. 352]. However, large-scale construction work, the acquisition of a land plot, the costs of adapting the territory to agricultural use, as well as the costs associated with the relocation of the Caucasian juvenile correctional facility from Okrokan to Zemo-Avchaly, led to significant depletion of the Society’s financial resources.

By January 1, 1898, the number of students in the facility had reached 32. A year later, there were already 50 of them. With the exception of one boy, who was admitted by order of the Board of the facility, all the others were admitted by court verdicts. There were 4 repeat offenders among them. “According to the degree of literacy”, the minors held in 1898 were distributed as follows: 4 illiterate, 26 illiterate, 18 able to read and write. Only 2 had certificates of primary school graduation [24, p. 199].

In the facility, the minors received education, learned crafts, and were engaged in agriculture. Special attention was paid to moral education and the formation of children’s sense of responsibility and duty. The facility applied a comprehensive approach to educating juvenile offenders. On the one hand, the children were given a general education: they were taught to read, write, count, and were introduced to the basics of history, geography, and natural sciences. On the other hand, they were taught crafts that could be useful to them in later life.

In the education system, pupils were divided into 4 age groups. The curriculum was differentiated. Three senior groups learnt the Law of God, Russian, Slavic reading, arithmetic, history, geography, natural science in the form of conversations and drawing. In the younger group, the training included the Law of God, Russian reading and writing, and cell drawing. Gymnastics with marching and choral singing

were conducted jointly for all groups. Singing was taught by the Acting Head, gymnastics – by one of the teachers. Special attention was paid to craft apprenticeship and agriculture.

Craft apprenticeship was organized in such a way that the children could gain practical skills and feel useful. Eleven boys studied at the carpentry workshop, which existed for only a year. Despite the short time, the minors achieved significant success in woodworking. They made a library cabinet, a desk, an icon stand, desks, workbenches and other products. All the children showed interest in the craft.

A shoe workshop had been operating since 1896. Up to 14 pupils worked in it, who sewed shoes for themselves and other children; 2 boys were trained in tailoring; 20 students were engaged in gardening.

After the facility moved to Avchaly in October 1898, the administration, educators and pupils were engaged in arranging the garden and vegetable garden. In bad weather, the gardener conducted theoretical classes with them and taught the basics of gardening. The grown crops were used for the facility's needs.

Special attention was paid to minors' health. Everybody underwent a medical examination. The children washed themselves every week. Linen was changed regularly, and mattresses were ventilated.

Meals were three times a day and hot. Work was carried out to eliminate the habit of smoking without the use of penalties. Mild cases of diseases were treated in a special room for patients. In serious cases, they visited specialist doctors in Tiflis or were treated in the Tiflis Mikhailovskaya Hospital. Doctors T.M. Tarsaidze, D.V. Kikodze, S.V. Voino and dentist P.D. Maisurians provided the minors with free medical care.

Along with strengthening physical health of minors, great attention was paid to their moral development. Two lessons of the Law of God were taught to them every week. The priest conducted spiritual conversations with the children. Teachers treated the minors warmly. The children were given a certain independence in their work. They might resolve minor conflicts on their own.

Over time, the minors developed personal hygiene skills and careful attitude to clothes and bedding. In turn, this testified to the effec-

tiveness of educational work. The facility's authorities understood that successful correction of juvenile offenders was impossible without participation of their parents. Therefore, much attention was paid to maintaining contact with the minors' families. The children were allowed to correspond with their parents. The facility provided the children with the necessary paper and postage stamps. Parents were also allowed to visit their children. However, at the beginning of the child's stay in the correctional institution, such meetings were held under the supervision of educators, since the identity of the newcomer and his parents were not yet known to the administration and educators [25, p. 1,915].

If a child deserved the trust of his teachers, he was given more freedom in communicating with his family. Well-behaved children were even allowed to take short vacations home if their parents lived in Tiflis.

In letters to parents, the children usually emphasized their professional training and wrote about the craft they were learning. The children regularly informed their parents about their successes and described the products they had made. The parents, in turn, praised their children and advised them to work even harder and obey their supervisors in order to grow up decent people having an honest income. Filled with warm feelings, hopes and gratitude to the facility's leadership, correspondence between parents and children served as one of the most effective factors in the educational process. Recognizing the beneficial educational value of such a bond, the administration of the facility sought to maintain and strengthen such relations in every possible way.

As for punishments for misconduct, the administration of the correctional institution avoided excessively strict measures. There was no question of using corporal punishment. The most frequent punishments were reprimands and the prohibition of guilty pupils to participate in games with their peers. The deprivation of the right to visit parents was used only twice.

Despite all the difficulties, the Caucasian Society of Agricultural Correctional Facilities for Juvenile Criminals achieved some success in correcting juvenile offenders. Many minors were able to get an education, learn a profession and return to normal life. At the same time, it must be recognized that the system for cor-

recting juvenile offenders in the Caucasus at the end of the 19th century was far from perfect [28, p. 41].

The lack of funding, qualified personnel, and effective working methods significantly limited possibilities of correctional institutions [29, p. 71]. Nevertheless, the experience of the Caucasian Society of Agricultural Correctional Facilities for Juvenile Criminals is a valuable contribution to the development of the juvenile delinquent correction system. It shows that even in difficult and unfavorable conditions, positive results can be achieved if a humane and integrated approach to dealing with difficult adolescents is applied.

Conclusions

Despite good intentions and great efforts, the Caucasian Society of Agricultural Correctional Facilities for Juvenile Criminals faced a number of serious problems that adversely affected its effectiveness. One of them was financial instability, as the Society depended on irregular and often meager donations and government subsidies. The lack of funds directly affected the quality of food, clothing, education and maintenance of pupils. Staff shortages significantly complicated activities of the Society and its correctional institutions. Thus, low wages and a lack of social guarantees discouraged qualified teachers and educators. Frequent staff changes had a negative impact on the stability and effectiveness of the educational process.

In addition, the Society faced the problem of an insufficiently developed infrastructure. The lack of land and necessary equipment, cramped and dilapidated rooms created unfavorable conditions for the life and education of minors. Social factors such as poverty, unemployment, lack of education and family support contributed to the growth of juvenile delin-

quency and made it difficult to correct juvenile offenders.

The activities of the Caucasian Society of Agricultural Correctional Facilities for Juvenile Criminals in the late 19th and early 20th centuries represent an important experience in combating child crime in the complex socio-economic context. Despite limited resources and numerous difficulties, the Society managed to create a system of correctional institutions aimed not only at isolation, but also rehabilitation of juvenile offenders. The juvenile correctional facility created by the Society became a place where children received education, mastered crafts and acquired the skills necessary to return to normal life.

Under the circumstances considered, special attention was paid to moral education of minors and strengthening of ties between children and their families, which contributed to the formation of their sense of responsibility and duty. Although the system of correction of juvenile offenders in the Caucasus at that time was far from perfect, it laid the foundation for further development of more effective and humane methods of dealing with difficult adolescents.

The experience of the Society shows that even in difficult conditions, positive results can be achieved if an integrated approach is applied, combining education, vocational training, moral education and social support.

The study of activities of the Caucasian Society of Agricultural Correctional Facilities for Juvenile Criminals is of interest not only to historians, but also to modern specialists dealing with the problems of child crime and social rehabilitation. Analyzing the successes and failures of the Society allows us to learn valuable lessons and use them to improve existing systems for correcting juvenile offenders.

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE AUTHOR

ALEKSANDR E. EPIFANOV – Doctor of Sciences (Law), Professor, professor at the Department of Public Law and Legal Management of the Institute of Public Administration and Law of the State University of Management, Moscow, Russia, professor at the Department of Fundamental Legal and Socio-Humanitarian Disciplines of the Moscow University «Synergy», Moscow, Russia, mvd_djaty@mail.ru, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5686-5770>

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