

# DEVELOPMENT OF GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC ASSISTANCE TO DISABLED VETERANS IN 1914–1921 (EVIDENCE FROM YENISSEYSKAYA PROVINCE IN RUSSIA)\*

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**Abstract.** *The article reveals the peculiarities of interaction between Russian government and public institutions during the process of development and realization of social policy towards disabled veterans of the First World War (1914–1918) and the Civil War (1917–1921). The research embraces the territory of Yenisseyskaya Province; within the borders of the province Krasnoyarskiy Krai of modern Russia is situated. The authors based the conclusions on the achievements of contemporary historiography and a number of primary sources. The conclusions allow estimating the organization of social assistance to disabled people, war veterans under the conditions of the repeated shift of power, resource shortage, ideology and basic values modification, and actors change.*

**Keywords:** *Siberia, First World War, Civil War, disabled veterans, rehabilitation, social assistance, charity organizations.*

## Introduction

The World War of 1914–1918 served as one of key events in the development of European civilization in the beginning of the twentieth century: within four years the economy, communications, national organization, world social system underwent significant changes. During the war in Russia the power changed twice, the Civil War started, and the country found itself in the epicentre of “great headwinds.” In the contemporary historiography of Russian revolution special attention should be paid to D. Beyrau’s<sup>1</sup> point of view. According to him, October 1917 should not be considered as a critical stage any longer, but as a part of a whole row of catastrophes and policy errors caused by the First World War.

As it joined the armed conflict, the Russian state had to mobilize the economy and population for the opposition to military adversaries and for the elaboration of a system of measures to mitigate the consequences of the

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<sup>1</sup> Beyrau 2001, p. 7.

extremely increased social mobility. According to V. M. Rynkov, it assumed the shape of captivity, malicious desertion, disability, and fleeing.<sup>2</sup> The years of defence economy were characterized by the appearance of new focus areas of social assistance. This sphere suffered a considerable modification of conceptual basis, ideology and basic values, redistribution of client groups and actors (subjects) of social policy.

It is noted that war consequences are not yet widely discussed or studied in the historical society with references to rehabilitation of those people who got disabled in the battlefields.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, the problem of treatment and social integration of this cohort is sensitive in any country. It becomes particularly urgent in time of war and is connected with a person and society social safety issues and accessibility of social environment. The experience of these issues solution differs in socio-political systems and at the level of separate regions and cities, as well.

The present article states the problem of analytical reconstruction of government and public institutions interaction character in the process of development and realization of social policy towards disabled veterans from the beginning of the First World War until the end of the Civil War and the political regime stabilization in Yenisseyskaya Province. Anti-Bolshevist governments activity period (June 1918 – December 1919) occupied a special place in the history of the province. They were Temporary Siberian Government and Temporary Russian Government of the Supreme Governor of Russia Admiral Kolchak that claimed the status of sole legitimate government of the Russian state.

A wide aspect of anti-Bolshevist governments social history in Ural, Siberia and the Far East was studied by V. M. Rynkov.<sup>4</sup> He analyzed the combination of particular solutions connected with regulation of property rights, social labour sphere, and social aid to the poor with a foundation of the legal framework of their realization. But it is to be supposed, that successful realization of socially targeted measures by any government depends not only on the forethought of parameters, but on their consistent performance under particular conditions, on coordinated actions of all the welfare service suppliers and the resources they possess, as well.

### **Sources and research methods**

General survey of basic tendencies and special nature of social assistance to disabled veterans in 1914–1921 was conducted on the basis of governmental documents. The department participation of the papers had a

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<sup>2</sup> Rynkov 2016, p. 835.

<sup>3</sup> Muraveva 2012, p. 151; Stepanov 2013, p. 4.

<sup>4</sup> Rynkov 2008.

significant influence on the information character. That is why we found the mass response to the performed measures in non-governmental sources (periodicals). Basic methodology centres around social philosophy (social justice, social contract, etc.).

## **Results**

### **Search for mechanisms of social assistance to disabled veterans**

By 1 October 1917, number of disabled veterans achieved 700,000,<sup>5</sup> i.e. 4.5% of the 15.4 million people called to arms, and if compared to the overall strength of the army – about 10%.<sup>6</sup> The disabled group consisted of the people discharged from the service because of an injury, chronic disease or neurotic disorder after concussion. It included also those who maimed oneself, since it was complicated to prove the fact of self-injury.<sup>7</sup> The received traumas were often united, which allowed soldiers and officers leaving the battle front, but they also complicated adaptation to peaceful life. Occasionally men turned from breadwinners into a burden on their families, if ever they managed to save the marriage.<sup>8</sup>

That is why the interest to the problem of the disabled people rehabilitation grew significantly. Rehabilitation measures aimed at improving a disabled person's health, adjusting him to social life, and creating correspondent conditions for involvement into common workflow by help in restoration or development of his professional skills taking into consideration the specific character of his trauma or disease. Functions of some pre-war charity societies or institutions were extended. For example, the Committee on the grant of benefits to disabled veterans named after general adjutant M. D. Skobelev (Skobelev Committee) began arranging homes, trade shops and schools for its customers.

The disabled rehabilitation activity was developed by newly formed committees under the imperial family egis. For instance, Her Imperial Highness Grand Duchess Elisabeth Fedorovna Committee on the charity support to the families of the called to arms (Elizabethan Committee) had a special department to supply the disabled with artificial limbs, prostheses and mechanical devices. The committee possessed a widely spread branch network. By the end of 1915 only in Yenissey'skaya Province it united more than 100 local departments with similar clients and tasks, including small charity associations.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Golovin 1939, p. 173.

<sup>6</sup> Counted in Shilovskiy 2015, p. 153.

<sup>7</sup> Astashov 2012, p. 55–56.

<sup>8</sup> Zumpf 2014, p. 59.

<sup>9</sup> Pavlova et al. 2016, p. 66.

The Supreme Soviet on the maintenance of the families of the called to arms as well as the families of the wounded and fallen in action (Supreme Soviet), founded in August 1914, had a task to combine all the government, public and private organizations working in this sphere of custody. As opposed to charity committees created under the imperial family egis, Supreme Soviet did not have any local departments. On 8 January 1915, special Committee on the care for army ranks and other people suffered in war, as well as their families, was included into the structure of the Supreme Soviet. It was headed by Grand Duchess Kseniya Aleksandrovna. The activity of the committee focused on the development of labour assistance (i.e. assistance in job placement, acquiring of some technical and professional knowledge) to disabled veterans, development or restoration of their ability to social functioning. Nevertheless, as I. P. Pavlova notes, no joint centre to coordinate the assistance to the disabled during the imperial period was created.<sup>10</sup>

According to K. A. Tishkina, establishment of the departments of Siberian association for assistance to the sick and wounded soldiers and suffered in military actions (Siberian Association) contributed to the development of the integrated system of Siberian soldiers support.<sup>11</sup> The association itself was founded in September 1914, in Petrograd. Within a year it formed 34 departments, including 29 departments in Siberia. Five departments of the associations in Yenisseyskaya Province were situated in the towns (Krasnoyarsk, Achinsk, Kansk, Yenisseysk and Minusinsk), three departments – in villages (Tashtypskoye, Ust-Abakanskoye and Askyszkoye).<sup>12</sup> As M. V. Shilovskiy thinks, Siberian Association became “the basic regional public organization working with wounded and sick soldiers.”<sup>13</sup> However, almost 75% of its means it directed to the needs of the frontline.<sup>14</sup>

According to the aims stipulated by the charter, Siberian Association established meal stations for wounded and maimed soldiers in the recovery areas. Such work started already in December 1914. Meal stations in Yenisseyskaya Province opened in the towns of Krasnoyarsk, Achinsk and Kansk contiguous to public railway tracks. Temporary reception camps were organized along the road (almost 400 km) between Achinsk and Minusinsk. In those camps wounded soldiers received cash allowance (50 kopek for each 50 km of the road) and in winter – a warm clothing set.

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<sup>10</sup> Pavlova 2013, p. 18.

<sup>11</sup> Tishkina 2015, p. 172.

<sup>12</sup> Kattsina 2014, p. 141.

<sup>13</sup> Shilovskiy 2015, p. 154.

<sup>14</sup> Kattsina 2014, p. 142, 145.

There was a health resort for wounded and sick soldiers per 100 persons open at Lake Shira, famous for its curative properties. But the resort did not gain popularity due to the remoteness from the railway tracks, underestimation of climatic and resort therapy, wish of the wounded to get back to their families as soon as possible. Legal support, offered by the Committee of Siberian Association Krasnoyarsk department, played a much more significant role.<sup>15</sup>

Pre-war system of pension provision for the disabled and veterans remained in effect. It consisted of three basic components: pensions from Department of Treasury, from Aleksandrovskiy committee on the wounded and from additional pension funds. The allowance was appointed by five categories, correspondent to the determined functional loss and self-service capacity degree (from 10 to 100%). The disabled of the first disability category received the pension in the amount of 216 rubles per year, the disabled of the fifth disability category – 30 rubles per year.<sup>16</sup> According to the academic specialists estimates, the level of disabled veterans pension provision was not high.<sup>17</sup>

On 14–15 July 1916, the joint conference of district councils and towns union doctors took place. At the conference they noted that there was still much to be done as regards to the assistance to the crippled soldiers. At the same time they brought out the main idea of “labour assistance” to the disabled, so that they could sustain themselves and keep their families.<sup>18</sup>

The first home for the invalids of the World War Yenisseyskaya Province was founded by Krasnoyarsk committee of the All-Russian Union of Cities for assistance to sick and wounded soldiers in March 1916. They put the disabled to shoe trade. In September 1916, the newspaper *Yenisseyskiye Gubernskkiye Vedomosti* reported that the department of Elizabethan Committee opened two eparchial homes for the sick, wounded and maimed soldiers asylum: one home affiliated with Uspenskiy monastery, another home affiliated with Znamenskiy priory. Both homes were established simultaneously (before the war ended) and each could hold 20 persons. It was planned to occupy the disabled with farming, bee breeding, vegetable gardening, to attract them to courses of cooperation and other branches of learning “available for the crippled and could give them their bread and butter.”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 143–144.

<sup>16</sup> Pavlova et al. 2016, p. 28.

<sup>17</sup> Shcherbinin 2005, p. 231; Toropkin 2015, p. 66.

<sup>18</sup> Shcherbinin 2005, p. 231.

<sup>19</sup> Author, article title???, *Yenisseyskiye*, 20 September 1916, p. 1.

The revolutionary period gave impulse to the development of the own union of the disabled. From 15 June till 27 June 1917, Petrograd received All-Russian Conference of Disabled Veterans I where 34 organizations sent their representatives. The disabled who lost their only capital – health – reported on total absence of attention or care for their needs, bureaucratic delays in case handling, inconformity of scanty pension with real needs and growing high cost of living. According to them, they did not intend to forgo the long-awaited after their wounds, “deserved by their blood” satisfaction of their insolvent needs.<sup>20</sup>

Temporary Government (March – October 1917) elaborated a project of the disabled state provision that included already tested by the tsarist government types of assistance: financial, curative, labour, social, legal and other types. All the arrangements with regards to the assistance were done by local government bodies. If some places did not have such bodies, there the assistance was arranged by temporary committees on help to disabled veterans. On 29 June 1917, a decree on foundation Temporary National Committee on the assistance to disabled veterans affiliated with the Ministry of State Care was issued. This body consisted of representatives of the All-Russian union of the disabled, All-Russian Union of Cities for assistance to sick and wounded soldiers, All-Russian County Union, Soviet of Workers’ and Soldiers’ Deputies, delegates from government control and all the ministries, as well as from various institutions and associations offering help to war victims (Main Military and Health Directorate, Central Medical and Health Soviet, Russian Red Cross Society, Siberian Society of War Victims Support, Caucasian Society of War Victims Support, Russian Technical Society, Committee of Military Technical Assistance).<sup>21</sup> Creation of local committees (of towns, districts, and volosts) took shape.

The work on the disabled social integration continued. Thus, Minusinsk union of disabled veterans that was founded during the revolution already on 15 June 1917 arranged short-term secretarial and record keeping courses for its cohort. It satisfied the requirements of the time in connection with introduction of volost zemstvo and rural administration reorganization. But the work in this direction was complicated by the “strong belief” of the most rural people that “reception of any knowledge or skills by the disabled and their entry on duty even in private institutions would deprive them of pension.” So, the explanatory work with the population on this issue was undertaken.<sup>22</sup> Care for the

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<sup>20</sup> SARF, fund A-3931, opis 1, delo 8, fol. 65.

<sup>21</sup> *Sbornik ukazov* 1918, p. 62–63.

<sup>22</sup> *Autor ??, article title ???, Sibirskaya Schneider* 1917, 9 July 1917, p. 11–12, 15.

disabled acquired more and more declarative character, rather than give real support to those who needed it.

### **Social crisis in action**

After Bolsheviks took the power the sphere of social assistance was declared to be state-centred. The state wanted to “break everything old” and organize provision of the disabled and the poor on socialistic basis instead.

The modern academic specialists call the years of the Soviet social policy formation from 1917 till 1921 “utopian.”<sup>23</sup> Lack of resources necessary for almost ceaseless war in 1917-1920 became a premise for the set of discriminative and paternalistic measures that made the basis for October social policy.<sup>24</sup> Lack of institutional integration and absence of sole legislation resulted in the renunciation of medical and social, socio-psychological, socio-pedagogical and legal assistance that had been developed in the social system during the imperial period.<sup>25</sup>

On 3 December 1917, the People’s Commissar of Government Care A. M. Kollontai signed the order on the abolition of charity institutions and associations of assistance to the disabled and on the handover of their responsibilities and finances to Temporary National Committee on the assistance to disabled veterans for finance redistribution between the committee’s local departments.<sup>26</sup> It should be noted that during 1918 the following pre-revolutionary organizations working in the sphere of disabled veterans and their families support were abolished: Aleksandrovskiy committee on the wounded, association of all-round assistance to suffered in war lower ranks of the army and fleet and their families, Skobelev Committee. According to the decree of the Council of People’s Commissars dated 26 April 1918, the People’s Commissariat of Government Care was renamed into the People’s Commissariat of Social Care. Provincial and district departments of social care became its local bodies.

In March 1918, Yenisseyanskaya Province faced the organization of care departments affiliated with provincial and district Soviets of Workers’, Soldiers’ and Peasants’ Deputies. The care departments were ordered to immediately take under supervision all the social institutions and bring them to the proper condition. Yenisseyanskiy Provincial Union of Disabled Veterans still remained an independent organization and had the support of the care department. In the same month provincial peasant congress of Soviets, together with representatives of the Union of Disabled Veterans

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<sup>23</sup> Leбина et al. 2007, p. 21.

<sup>24</sup> Fedorov 2010, p. 70–71.

<sup>25</sup> Tevlina 2008, p. 402.

<sup>26</sup> SARF, fund A-413, opis 2, delo 151, fol. 1v.

worked out a project of giving assistance to disabled veterans: war victims, revolution victims and their families. To cover the scarcity of funds it was offered to introduce Stamp Duty imposition (20%) on theatre and other entertainment events on tickets, programmes and posters; to establish reductions from interest income of loan companies, penalties for bootlegging etc.; to “make a MAIMING Day” and organize fund raising in a benefit for the disabled on this day along the whole Yenisseyskaya Province.<sup>27</sup>

During the short period of the Soviet regime real condition of the disabled became worse.

### **Social policy evolution under anti-Bolshevist governments**

Since the summer of 1918 (from the moment of the Soviet regime fall in the east of the country) social legislature on the regional level was elaborated by Temporary Siberian Government (June – November 1918) and Temporary Russian Government of the Supreme Governor of Russia Admiral Kolchak (November 1918 – January 1920). They relied on the democratic bases of Temporary Government social legislature, followed the principle of the systematic character of the social reforms they introduced. It differed significantly from the Bolsheviks’ policy, whose social and economic reforms during that period took the path of acceleration under the influence of revolutionary impatience and extremism, which became a basis for “war communism” unique ideology formation. Nevertheless, the realization of gradual reformation strategy was complicated by the problems connected with the severities of the Civil War, with the society’s unwillingness to accept changes, with insufficient development of its institutional elements.

Members of Temporary Siberian Government supported private and public charity in every possible way. Due to the absence of state financing, most of the earlier functioning committees and associations ceased to exist, but initiative people, such as members of ladies committees, organized “passing the hat” for disabled and wounded veterans support.<sup>28</sup> Restoration of the activity of Siberian Society Krasnoyarsk Department allowed continuing work on the organization of disabled and wounded veterans health-giving treatment at Lake Shira. In the summer of 1919 the district medical department in Irkutsk granted the department with 50,000 rubles to arrange a health centre. The administrative body of Siberian Society Krasnoyarsk Department came to a decision to immediately transport all disabled veterans from nursing home to the society’s health resort at Lake

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., fund P-258, opis 1, delo 55, fol. 41–44.

<sup>28</sup> SAKT, fund P-258, opis 1, delo 29, fol. 91.



Shira.<sup>29</sup> Charity events embraced wide ranges of the population and proved that during the Civil War, notwithstanding its destructive character and marginalization of the society, people still kept up the social traditions of sympathy and compassion for the downtrodden.

Temporary Russian Government of the Supreme Governor of Russia Admiral Kolchak paid the main attention in its social policy to the protection of service families. They preserved the disabled veterans' benefit. The statute of the care for disabled veterans and their families (May 1919) stipulated the measures and forms of social assistance with financing from the government budget. This included pensions and allowances; alimentation of the disabled in public assistance facilities, resorts and health centres; arrangement of training workshops for the disabled who wanted to learn a trade or acquire applicative knowledge, free alimentation of children in public assistance facilities. Disabled veterans received supplementary pension for children and temporary 100% cost-of-living allowance.<sup>30</sup> Record keeping issues with regards to those who required government support, assistance giving (financial, material or provisional), and award of pension to disabled veterans before evaluation were poorly solved.<sup>31</sup>

Siberian Military and Charity Committee named after he Supreme Governor Admiral Kolchak was founded in April 1919. The money raised at charity events were collected in the Joint Committee of Public Associations. Donations continued coming, although they were not very large. In general, the position of the disabled in Yenisseyskaya Province leaved much to be desired.

### **Social partnership practice**

After the Soviet regime restored in in Yenisseyskaya Province (January 1920), the arrangement of social assistance departments started here. In the beginning of December 1920 during restructuring a subdivision for the disabled was formed. It had the tasks to organize the proper status report of the disabled in the province, to open new residential facilities and professional training workshops for this cohort. The starting period of the social assistance system establishment in the province was marked by numerous difficulties: poor financing and lack of experienced staff did not allow organizing the control, accounting and statistics in a proper way. In 1920 the assistance had a subsistence character, i.e. daily essentials were handed out (food, firewood, textiles, and matches).<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> SARF, fund 3850, opis 1, delo 12, fol. 96–97.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., delo 13, fol. 3.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., delo 1, fol. 27.

<sup>32</sup> Kattsina, Mezit 2018, p. 54–55.

By the beginning of 1921 Yenisseyskiy provincial social assistance department managed four homes for adult disabled (per 127 persons) and a camp for disabled former prisoners of war (per 1999 persons). The department possessed two central depots (a food store and a clothing store with distribution points), a large garden to provide the social institutions cohort with vegetables, professional training workshops (shoe, tailoring, linen sewing and hosiery) that taught the disabled a trade and also served and gave supply to homes.<sup>33</sup>

According to the managers of Yenisseyskiy provincial social assistance department, about 70% of the disabled had the second disability category and were in advanced years. The amount of monthly allowances for this category was established at 4 rubles in Krasnoyarsk, 3 rubles 44 kopeks in districts. Differentiation of payments depending on the place of living existed also for other disability categories. Payments in districts were delayed for three months due to the lack of funds.<sup>34</sup> A. Sumpf gives the data according to which the pension for total disability for the disabled of the Red Army was almost 33% higher than that for the World War disabled veterans.<sup>35</sup>

Due to the statistics absence, number of disabled veterans counted approximately. It was supposed that only in Krasnoyarsk there should be about 1,000 beneficiaries and more than 10,000 in the whole province. 615 of those people stayed in homes for invalids, including 121 persons – in Krasnoyarsk. A significant number of the disabled were kept by their relatives and received only pension from the government. Because of the very limited finances that the state appropriated for the homes for invalids keeping, the cohort of those institutions felt the sharp need for clothing and suffered from nutritional deficiency. There were cases of diseases occurring owing to undernourishment in Krasnoyarsk home for invalids.<sup>36</sup>

Due to the finance shortage, absence of a well-established network of government social institutions the young state had to search for efficient methods to realize its social policy. Arrangement of social campaigns would become one of such methods. Such campaign aimed at stimulation of public initiatives, attraction of extra finance.

The mechanism of the most events held during the social campaigns periods was taken from the working experience of pre-revolutionary charity associations and district councils (such as “passing the hat,” subscription lists, interest contribution form entertainment facilities income, giving fund

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<sup>33</sup> *Polgoda* 1920, p. 195–197.

<sup>34</sup> *Otchet* 1924, p. 39, 170.

<sup>35</sup> Zumpf 2014, p. 77.

<sup>36</sup> Kattsina, Mezit 2018, p. 57.

raising concerts, performances, etc.).

The efficiency of the campaigns was not high, because the financial situation of the provincial population was miserable after the Civil War and the authority of the new government was still insignificant. Under the conditions of crop failure in 1921 peasants did not feel trust to the started changes, so giving back even a part of their provision was felt as a calamity that threatened the existence of their own families. Komsomol members and activists of labour unions and other organizations became the main participants of social campaigns. As the Soviet regime strengthened, the necessity of such public events decreased.

Since 1923 political stabilization came about the country and the large-scale restructuring of the state machinery finished. Principles and mechanisms of social assistance to the disabled established: the state strengthened the material resources of homes for invalids, extended the cooperative union of the disabled, the network of associations of the disabled, etc. Social protection of the disabled was performed on a regular basis with strict allocation of functions between the participants of the process.

## **Conclusions**

So, during the “great headwinds” years (1914–1921) number of disabled veterans who needed support and care increased significantly. A dramatic change of the ideas of the government role in social assistance happened. The transfer from public assistance (that had a form of charity) to state supported social care for disabled veterans and their families (as well as other population categories included in the list by the government).

One cannot agree to Andrey Medushevskiy, who said that “every new regime in Russia cardinally denies the previous regime breaking the continuity of legal guarantees.”<sup>37</sup> As exemplified in Yenissey'skaya Province we see the continuity and similarity in the social policies of the tsarist, Temporary and anti-Bolshevist governments. The Soviet regime declared and realized the discontinuity of legal guarantees to disabled veterans (as well as to other categories of population in distress) that finally established in the region only in January 1920.

Under the hard social and political and economic conditions the government, local authorities and public organizations tried to solve the issues of the population social protection. But the measures of real social assistance were not taken to full extent and did not conform to the program statements.

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<sup>37</sup> Medushevskiy 2017, p. 101.

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