**THE PRISON CITY**

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Initially, as was common at the time of its foundation, Kherson was built mainly by convicts and fugitive serfs. At the beginning of the twentieth century, when the population of Kherson reached 67 673 people (as registered on the first of January 1910), there were seven correctional facilities in the city. At all times the authorities kept secret not only the fact of the construction of these institutions but also any information about the detainee population held there, detention conditions and the prisoners’ schedule.

The Provincial Prison (colloquially known as the Jailhouse Castle) was the first correctional facility in the city and that is where the Englishman John Howard was a visitor at the end of the eighteenth century when he arrived to observe the judicial proceedings and the detainees' living conditions in Russia.

Russia attracted Howard by being the only country in Europe where there was no death penalty. He arrived in Kherson in October 1789. Howard researched the convicts' detention conditions at the Jailhouse Castle (the complex of its structures has not remained to the present day). This building was located within the area of four currently existing streets: Ushakov Avenue, Gmyrev Street, Potemkinska Street and Pugachev Street.

Since the city’s foundation and right up to the October revolution 1917 a large number of military units were stationed in Kherson. One of them was the detention company (the convict labour gang) organized for the low-ranked servicemen who committed war crimes. The date of its creation cannot be clearly defined due to the lack of data (approximately: within the period 1835-1840). Later the detention company came to be called the Disciplinary Battalion. The barracks of the Disciplinary Battalion was located on the territory of the former Admiralty. Correctional Unit No.2 (for prisoners) was established in the building of the former Arsenal in 1884.

According to the reform of 1906, the convicts were no longer exiled to Sakhalin in the Russian Empire. They were held in penitentiaries, and this reform led to the transformation of Correctional Unit No.2 into The Kherson Temporary Hard Labour Prison. Convicts were shackled there and punished with rods for any daring deeds.

Each convict was obliged to work best of his abilities and potential at one of the workshops in the prison: weaving, carpentry, cardboard packaging, basketing, binding, blacksmithing, pottery, military uniform shoe sewing. In the prison there was a greenhouse where up to 5 thousand chrysanthemums were grown. The work was paid for at special rates or there were goods given on a barter basis in the special shop instead of payment.

At the prison there were orthodox and catholic churches, a synagogue, a hospital and a library. In the cells there was water heating.

Since then and until today, the building of the former arsenal has never changed its specialization. As for the remaining correctional institutions of Kherson the information about their history is meager and requires a painstaking research.

**Based on:**

***«Тюремный град» by Alexander Skorokhod//The New Favourite. - July-August 2004, p.13.***

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