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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20914644>**THE SITUATION OF JAPANESE MILITARY PERSONNEL
HELD IN PRISONER-OF-WAR CAMPS IN THE USSR****Simion CARP,**

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Abstract

The present study focuses on Japanese military personnel, as well as combatants of other nationalities integrated into Japanese troops stationed in Manchuria. The main objective of this article is to analyze the complexity of the detention regime within the Soviet concentration camp system, with particular emphasis on living conditions, abuses committed by camp administrations, and the devastating impact of the hostile environment on the psychological condition of prisoners.

At the same time, the investigation examines judicial proceedings initiated against war criminals, the dynamics of relations between the Soviet civilian population and Japanese prisoners, as well as the contacts of the latter with our compatriots detained in the same spaces of captivity. The study is based on rigorous documentation, making use of unpublished archival materials, the normative framework of the period, as well as an extensive body of specialized literature and memoirs of survivors published both domestically and abroad.

Keywords: military personnel, war crime, wounded, weapon, prisoner of war, forced labor, abuse, inhuman treatment, Japanese prisoners, detention, testimonies, human dignity.

**SITUAȚIA MILITARILOR JAPONEZI AFLAȚI ÎN
LAGĂRELE PENTRU PRIZONIERI DE RĂZBOI DIN URSS****Abstract**

Studiul de față se concentrează asupra militarilor japonezi, precum și a combatanților de alte naționalități integrați în trupele nipone dislocate în Manciuria. Obiectivul principal al acestui articol este de a

analiza complexitatea regimului de detenție din sistemul concentraționar sovietic, punând accent pe condițiile de viață, abuzurile exercitate de administrația lagărelor și impactul devastator al mediului ostil asupra psihicului prizonierilor.

Totodată, investigația vizează procesele judiciare intentate criminalilor de război, dinamica raporturilor dintre populația civilă sovietică și prizonierii niponi, precum și contactele acestora din urmă cu conaționalii noștri aflați în aceleași spații de detenție. Demersul este fundamentat pe o documentare riguroasă, valorificând materiale de arhivă inedite, cadrul normativ al epocii, precum și o vastă literatură de specialitate și memorii ale supraviețuitorilor, publicate atât în țară, cât și peste hotare.

Cuvinte-cheie: militar, crimă de război, răniți, armă, prizonier de război, muncă forțată, abuz, tratament inuman, prizonieri japonezi, detenție, mărturii, demnitate umană.

Introduction. At the beginning of the third millennium, the collective security of humanity is inconceivable without the fundamental contribution of international institutions gradually established throughout the evolution of society. It is difficult to estimate the scale of human losses in the absence of the International Red Cross Movement, founded in 1863, whose central mission remains humanitarian assistance and the protection of victims in belligerent states.

Armed conflicts inevitably generate the phenomenon of captivity. Considering that many combatants either voluntarily lay down their arms or are captured by opposing forces, the international community developed strict legal norms to ensure the protection of these vulnerable categories. The foundations of the legal regulation concerning prisoners of war, the wounded, and civilians were laid in Geneva in 1864. Subsequently, this framework was strengthened through the Hague Conventions (1899 and 1907) and, most importantly, through the Geneva Convention of 27 July 1929—an essential legal instrument for the protection of military personnel in camps and of the civilian population during armed conflicts.

However, the experience of the Second World War demonstrated the fragility of these norms. Belligerent states frequently neglected international provisions, imposing arbitrary detention regimes dictated by radical ideologies—Nazism and communism—which transformed prisoner-of-war camps into spaces characterized by the denial of human dignity.

Methods and materials applied. The methodology applied in the elaboration of this study is based on an articulated set of historical and legal research methods. The process included documentary and critical analysis through the rigorous examination of archival sources, official acts, and administrative documents concerning the organization of the Soviet camp system, as well as the comparative method, through which the norms of international humanitarian law were assessed against the actual realities of the detention regime.

At the same time, the analysis of narrative sources made it possible to integrate memoirs and testimonies of researchers from different ideological backgrounds, while historical synthesis and contextual analysis facilitated the placement of the phenomenon within a coherent explanatory framework related to the political and military realities of the period. In addition, systemic and classificatory methods were used to structure information concerning the hierarchy of the concentrationary space, alongside the interpretative method, essential for deciphering the deeper meanings of the events under study in correlation with national and international bibliography.

Discussions and results obtained. The global conflagration of the mid-twentieth century highlighted a profound crisis of international law, as the principal belligerent parties neglected the provisions of the Geneva Convention and replaced them with arbitrary

regulations derived from Nazi and communist ideologies.

Within the Soviet sphere, the authorities justified their disregard for international treaties by arguing that German soldiers and their allies, due to the atrocities they had committed, could not benefit from prisoner-of-war status. In reality, however, this position reflected the repressive nature of the Stalinist totalitarian regime, resulting in inhuman and degrading detention conditions throughout the USSR camp network.

A component of this system was deployed on the territory of the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic, with the activity of these units being directly subordinated to the decision-making center in Moscow. Although recent historiography in the Republic of Moldova has begun to explore the issue of wartime captivity, new archival sources indicate the existence of research gaps that require deeper investigation. Limited attention has so far been paid to the situation of prisoners captured in the Far East during the final stages of the global conflict, particularly Japanese military personnel and combatants of other nationalities integrated into Japanese troops stationed in Manchuria.

Starting from these premises, the present article aims to introduce new data into scientific circulation regarding the detention regime of Japanese prisoners. The research objectives include the analysis of abuses committed by the Soviet administration, the impact of the hostile environment on prisoners' psychological balance, judicial proceedings initiated against war criminals, and the social interactions between prisoners, the local civilian population, and our compatriots held in captivity. The study is based on rigorous documentation, making use of unpublished archival materials, the normative framework of the period, as well as journals and memoirs published both domestically and abroad.

The analysis of these materials revealed that Soviet authorities encouraged repressive bodies to apply inhuman and degrading treatment to prisoners of war detained in USSR camps.

Against this background, communist propaganda undertook systematic efforts to create a negative image of enemy soldiers in the eyes of the civilian population. Public trials against alleged war criminals were regularly organized, and severe criminal penalties were imposed.

Beyond the administration of justice, these actions pursued another objective: to erase from the memory of Soviet citizens the catastrophic defeats suffered by the Red Army on the battlefield during 1941–1942, caused largely by the physical liquidation of experienced military personnel during the purges organized by Stalin's repressive apparatus. At the same time, the crimes of the Soviet regime against its own population—repressions, deportations, and famines that depopulated entire regions of the Soviet Union before the war—also had to be obscured.

Propaganda also influenced society to forget relatives who had lost their lives for merely speaking against the regime and to accept as heroes the uniformed executioners who had long ceased to be human.

Thus, in order to glorify the Soviet regime, the enemy was demonized and hatred toward prisoners of war detained in the USSR was actively stimulated. As a result, camp administrations and guards applied violence and committed crimes against the individuals under their custody.

Numerous cases were reported in which Soviet soldiers killed and robbed prisoners of war during escort. "In addition to those killed, many others died as a result of wounds, diseases, inhuman detention conditions, exhausting forced labor, malnutrition, lack of warm clothing, dystrophy, hypothermia, etc." [1, p. 51–52].

The cemeteries where the deceased were buried disappeared over time. Such re-

alities occurred because Soviet authorities followed their own internal normative acts concerning the treatment of prisoners of war.

According to Romanian scholars, “the international legal status of prisoners of war in the first half of the twentieth century was defined by the ‘Regulations concerning the Laws and Customs of War on Land’, annexed to the Fourth Hague Convention of 1907, and by the Geneva Convention concerning the Treatment of Prisoners of War of 27 July 1929” [2].

During the Second World War, these two normative acts of international law had different legal force. The norms established by the Hague Convention were mandatory for all belligerent states, whereas the provisions of the 1929 Geneva Convention were valid only among signatory states. The Soviet government refused to participate in the Geneva Conference of the summer of 1929. The USSR leadership considered that, under such circumstances, it should not assume obligations toward the “class enemy”. At the time of its adoption, the 1929 Geneva Convention was perceived in Moscow as an element of bourgeois justice, incompatible with communist ideology. In the Soviet Union, the legal status of prisoners of war, both during and after the war, was established on the basis of the “Regulation on Prisoners of War”, adopted on 1 July 1941 by the Council of People’s Commissars of the USSR. This regulation provided for detention conditions, forced labor obligations, and criminal and disciplinary liability for refusal to obey orders” [3].

Evidently, this document only formally ensured prisoners’ security under an extremely rigorous regime that human beings could barely endure. The situation was further aggravated by the fact that prisoner-of-war camps were subordinated to the NKVD of the USSR.

In April 1943, Soviet security structures were reorganized: „the NKVD was divided into the NKVD and the NKGB. In January 1945, within the NKVD, the Main Directorate for Work with Prisoners of War and Interned Civilians was established, under whose control were the camps for German soldiers and military personnel from the armies of Germany’s allied countries” [4 p. 50].

Russian authors specify that “the basic document regulating detention conditions and labor use of German prisoners was Resolution No. 1798-800 of 1 July 1941 of the Council of People’s Commissars, implemented through NKVD Order No.032 of 21 July 1941” [5, p. 497].

They also note that prisoners of war on Soviet territory were treated inhumanly because camp administrations did not observe the norms established by the Hague Convention of 1907 and the Geneva Convention of 1929. Soviet legislation did not include “norms prohibiting the use of prisoners in harmful and life-threatening labor” [5 p. 497-498].

Similar irregularities were identified by other scholars. It was also noted that “nothing was provided regarding the assurance of legal defense for prisoners of war under criminal investigation. At the same time, Soviet authorities ignored the obligation to inform the International Committee of the Red Cross and the government of the prisoner’s state of citizenship when a prisoner was sentenced to death during detention” [5, p. 498].

These realities indicate serious violations of the fundamental rights of prisoners and emphasize the discrepancy between declared norms and actual practices in Soviet camps. Japanese prisoners of war who arrived in such camps at the end of the Second World War also faced major hardships. They were escorted from Manchuria, where the final confrontations between the Soviet Army and Japanese troops deployed there had taken place.

Due to historical circumstances, among Soviet troops there were also our compatriots: “In the spring and summer of 1944, the Bolshevik authorities, having returned to the so-called MSSR, mobilized all men aged between 18 and 50 to the Eastern Front—people

who did not know the Russian language and had no combat experience—and sent them to the most dangerous areas of the front as ‘cannon fodder.’ In those battles, Bessarabians lost approximately 50,000 men. But for Bessarabians, the war did not end with Germany’s capitulation on 9 May 1945. Many of them were sent to the Far East, to the war against Japan” [7, p. 228]. One example is a resident of Baiuș village, Leova district: “Cernenchii Artiom. Veteran of the Second World War. He ended the war in Manchuria. Mobilized on 25 March 1944. Demobilized on 20 November 1945” [8, p. 233].

It is known that in 1945, “...on 6 August, the first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima... 9 August—the day when the second atomic bomb destroyed the city of Nagasaki... At 8:47 a.m. (Japan time), on 10 August, Tokyo sent telegrams to the Japanese legations in the neutral capitals of Bern and Stockholm to be transmitted to the Allied governments, expressing its agreement to capitulate, on the condition that the Emperor’s prerogatives be preserved” [9, p. 792].

Considering the authority enjoyed by Emperor Hirohito among the Japanese population, U.S. authorities agreed to preserve his status even after Japan’s defeat in 1945. Thus, “the American conquerors were surprised to discover how little Emperor Hirohito’s power had actually diminished. Given the chaos that could have resulted from abolishing the monarchy, and because he had played an important role in calming the conflict and unifying war-divided Japan, the Emperor retained his position.” Its ancient mission to “respect harmony” saved the tradition” [10, p. 50-51].

More than half a million Japanese soldiers isolated in the Far East were forced to surrender to Soviet troops. According to Romanian scholars Laurențiu Constantiniu, Ilie Șchipor, and Vitalie Văratîc, one Soviet report signed on 2 November 1945 stated that Red Army units had taken 608,360 persons prisoner during the war with Japan, including: “573,821 Japanese; 19,962 Manchurians; 7,032 Koreans; 3,699 Chinese; 2,345 Mongols; and 1,501 persons of other nationalities or ethnicities” [3 p. 574].

A group of Russian authors published an excerpt from the informational note signed by the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces of the USSR A.I. Antonov and addressed to V.M. Molotov on December 8, 1945, in which the following is reported: “I inform you about the number of Japanese prisoners captured by the troops of the Red Army in the Far East. According to the data provided by the NKVD, a total of 608360 prisoners of the Japanese army, including Koreans and Manchurians, were taken: generals – 158, officers – 18068, sergeants and soldiers – 590134. Of this number, 368478 Japanese were transported to camps in the USSR for labor, of whom officers – 8112 persons; 58500 Japanese remained for labor outside the territory of the USSR, including in Mongolia; 18500 Japanese are on the way to NKVD camps; 92784 Japanese are in the custody of the Soviet military command and will be escorted to NKVD camps...” [11].

The same authors write that: “Most Japanese ended up in captivity beginning on August 16, 1945, from the battlefields of Manchuria, North Korea, South Sakhalin, and the Kuriles [...] where the Japanese suffered heavy losses. On August 12, senior officers and army generals were captured [...]. A large part of the prisoners were sent to labor camps to be used in construction. In accordance with the Resolution of the GKO USSR of August 23, 1945, 500 thousand Japanese prisoners arrived in camps located on the territory of Primorye and Altai regions, the Chita and Irkutsk regions, on the territory of the Buryat-Mongol ASSR, the Uzbek SSR, for the construction of the Baikal-Amur railway line, etc.” [11].

It is known that Japanese soldiers who were in Soviet captivity did not prefer to write memoirs. This informational gap was supplemented by some Japanese writers, among

whom is also Haruki Murakami, who wrote about the detention conditions of Japanese prisoners in Soviet camps as well as about the situation of people convicted for political reasons in the Soviet Union, mentioning that the law of the camp was in fact: "...the law of the jungle according to which the strongest survived. When the workforce began to diminish, new wagons of prisoners arrived. Sometimes about twenty percent of them died on the way, but no one worried because of that. Most were Russians and Eastern Europeans brought from the West" [12 p. 635].

The same author writes about representatives of other nationalities brought to Siberia: "In the mine there worked not only Japanese prisoners, but also Russian criminals, political prisoners, and former officers rejected by Stalin's system. These were usually people with higher education and of exceptional quality [...] Besides Russians, the trains also brought Poles, Hungarians, and other foreigners, some of them with darker skin (Armenians or Georgians, I suppose)" [12. p. 613].

Analyzing what Haruki Murakami wrote, it is worth recalling the novel of the writer Nicolae Dabija published in 2009, "Tema pentru acasă", in which the drama of Bessarabians deported to Siberia and sentenced to forced labor in Soviet prisons full of: "spies, saboteurs, terrorists, right-wing deviationists, left-wing deviationists, Mensheviks, Socialist-Revolutionaries, anarchists, nationalists, White émigrés, prisoners of war, members of counterrevolutionary organizations, deserters, former bourgeois, former party activists, former military men, former-former-former...[...]" Most of them from the Baltic Countries, from Western Ukraine and from Bessarabia: hotel doormen, cemetery guards, tram drivers, firefighters, elevator operators, railway workers, taxi drivers, high school students, because of their uniforms, were declared fascist colonels, generals, or marshals and arrested right in the street, to be sent to Siberia" [13 p. 98]. In his work, Nicolae Dabija describes the reality of the Soviet GULAG mentioning that: "The camp had one thousand beds for more than one thousand detainees, being replenished every week, depending on the number of those who had died, with new occupants, who often slept standing up, waiting for someone to die so that they could have a bed in which to rest their bones after an exhausting day of work" [13 p. 74].

One of our compatriots who had the opportunity to communicate for a period of one year (1945–1946) with Japanese prisoners of war in those regions was Vadim Pirogan, sentenced in 1941 for political reasons by the Soviet totalitarian regime.

Reconstructing in his memoirs the events he went through, he writes: "From Taishet, toward the end of the month, they sent me an assistant—a soldier from the communications and signal regiment. A young 18-year-old – Igor Mihnin, who had completed some military telephone communications courses before being taken into the army. He was sent along the route, to me, so that I could train him and help him adapt to the conditions of the Siberian taiga. He was from Saratov, had grown up on the banks of the Volga, and had never seen forests in his short life. The war, that bloody war, had ended. Japan had capitulated. Now, every day, prisoners of war taken in Manchuria and other places began to arrive in Soviet camps... They arrived by freight trains from the cities of Chita, Khabarovsk, and other cities where concentration camps existed. The Taishet camp was now also receiving Japanese prisoners, distributing them through the deserted colonies along the route. The colony at kilometer 81 was crammed with Japanese, about 1500...

The guard was military, from the army that had fought on the Japanese front. In my little house, which was located outside the zone, three officers settled. Three Soviet officers from the regular army, returned from the front. They were responsible for administering this colony of Japanese prisoners. They occupied the large room without a stove.

Vasile, a man of about 25 years old, a senior lieutenant, was responsible for the accounting sector; he also received the food for the Japanese, which was brought by vehicles from Taishet. The prisoners had arrived with their unit, just as they had been on the battlefield, with their commander and all their officers. The agreement concluded between Japan and the Soviet Union provided that the prisoners would work here, thus paying through labor for the losses caused to the Soviet country. The term – three years” [14 p. 204].

In his memoirs, Vadim Pirogan testifies that the Japanese were very disciplined, but they were not prepared to face the harsh frosts of Siberia. At the same time, he relates that the camp administration initially pretended to respect the norms of international law and allowed high-ranking officers to keep their swords. In this regard, he writes: “Some of the officers kept their swords, they had them with them. Dressed in their military uniforms, wearing summer boots, they could not withstand the Siberian frosts. Few were wearing boots or felt footwear. They did not work anywhere; they stayed in the barracks, waiting for things to become clear...

Military discipline was introduced in the colony. The soldiers obeyed the officers blindly. Food products were brought from Japan. Their food was much better than ours. They brought rice, beans, millet, canned fish. They received 400 grams of bread per day, but at first, they did not even eat that... Translators were missing; no one understood what they were saying, what they wanted... In the entire Taishet camp, about 50000 Japanese had arrived. But there was only one translator, only one man who knew the Japanese language. He was taken from one colony to another...

Lieutenant Vada, the interpreter, tried to help the colony administration understand the prisoners and their commanders. The prisoners woke up in the morning, at 6 o'clock, went outside the barracks, and on their knees, said their prayers, bowed, facing the sun, in black underwear, standing motionless...” [14 p. 204-205].

From the information, we find that the prisoners' daily schedule began with waking up at 6 o'clock, during which they were allowed to observe their religious ceremony. They were supplied with food products by the Japanese Government. As in other camps, activities ended at 22:00, except for those involved in extended work schedules. The prisoners were permanently monitored by representatives of the secret services carrying out activities in the camps. The purpose was to identify persons who had committed crimes against the population of the USSR, spies, persons planning to escape, saboteurs, and the famous suicidal soldiers kamikaze, who threw themselves toward certain death in order to fulfill their combat mission.

The guards feared the *kamikaze*, and precisely out of fear they repeatedly opened fire on some prisoners of war, whom they killed by improperly using their weapons. The cases were reported as if the Japanese had attempted to attack the guards' lives, something that had nothing in common with reality, yet the Soviet soldiers, instead of punishment, were commended for “bravery”.

The officers of the secret services tried various methods to recruit agents from among the Japanese soldiers who might have feared death. They rarely succeeded because: “The Japanese have always been a people extremely conscious of the existence of death within the reality of their daily lives. However, the Japanese concept of death is simple and clear, totally different from the frightening and hideous way in which Westerners conceive death” [6 p. 99-100].

Recalling the sequence of events, Vadim Pirogan remembers how high-ranking Japanese officers fearlessly refused to fulfill the demands of the camp administration: “Great was the surprise and fury of the translator Vada, but especially of the Soviet administra-

tion, when they heard how the Japanese commander ordered those under his command not to work, to go on strike, to sabotage, to break tools, not to obey... Of course, after the speech, the Japanese commander was imprisoned, his sword was taken away, and someone else was appointed in his place... Among the Japanese prisoners there were also 'soldiers of death'. During the war, they openly went toward certain death, sacrificed their lives by order, sometimes performed 'harakiri', cutting open their bellies and thus dying for their homeland and for the sun-emperor. The NKVD sought to discover and isolate them, taking them to camps with a harsh regime. The Japanese had no desire to work and constantly sabotaged, especially in winter, during the frosts. They gathered around fires and it was no longer possible to move them from there to cut forests. As soon as the Japanese arrived here, all Soviet detainees were taken to other camps and colonies" [14 p. 205].

It should be mentioned that many prisoners died during forest clearing work in Siberian conditions. The work tools were primitive, yet the Soviet authorities did not spare them: "A secret directive of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the MGB of the USSR no. 77/29 of April 2, 1946 provided the ways of using them for labor in production enterprises, emphasizing that they could be assigned to work in underground galleries, forestry operations, metallurgical enterprises, etc. Soviet leaders and local party activists tried to exploit the labor of prisoners to the maximum for the construction of housing and the building of new enterprises" [20].

Studying the destinies of Japanese prisoners of war in Soviet camps, the writer Haruki Murakami emphasizes in one of his works: "The norm gradually increased, for one reason or another, ... the number of accidents increased because of improper working conditions..." [12 p. 631].

Adding the following: "many people died daily and there were plenty of causes: malnutrition, overwork, collapses, floods, unsanitary conditions because of which all kinds of epidemics broke out, terrible frosts, the violence of the guards, the brutal repression of any resistance, however small. There were also cases of lynching of Japanese by their fellow countrymen" [12 p. 612].

Japanese prisoners who were part of the labor battalions of the People's Commissariat for Defense of the USSR also faced problems. The detention conditions were degrading: "...baths were lacking, the living spaces were in poor condition, there were no infirmaries, the duration of the working day was not respected... On January 1, 1946, on the construction sites and in the work sectors of the People's Commissariat for Defense there were...54 special labor battalions, in which 67809 Japanese prisoners of war were detained" [3 p. 570].

Eyewitness Vadim Pirogan also writes about the situation of Japanese prisoners in his memoirs: "The Japanese could not withstand the frosts and the diseases in the camps. They died like flies. In addition to everything else, their food was stolen... Now the prisoners were no longer the same as at the beginning, when they had arrived clean, well-cared for, neat... They had visibly deteriorated. They walked like 'ours,' hungry, dirty, unshaven, with torn clothes, dressed in old padded jackets, because their impressive uniforms had been sold, exchanged for tobacco, for food. They wrapped their heads and bodies with sheets, blankets, old scarves, burned through by the fire around which they huddled so as not to freeze..." [14 p. 206].

The Soviet authorities used Japanese labor for the construction and repair of railways, realizing that they worked well and would not endanger railway transport or people's lives. During this time, Japanese trucks transporting food products for the prisoners were attacked by local people who stole whatever they could from the trailers.

Some guards and Soviet officers also fed themselves with Japanese products, a fact mentioned by Vadim Pirogan: "By a decision of the Soviet leadership, the construction of the Taishet-Sovgavani railway, begun back in 1937, was resumed. For this purpose, the Japanese, the prisoners of war, were now being used. I continued to live in my little house together with three officers. I got up in the morning, cooked for them, and they were happy. I had plenty of food products. When the trucks with food arrived, I was allowed to climb into the truck and choose what I wanted and what was needed for the officers' food. The trucks were Japanese 'Isuza', 'Izuchi', and other brands. Next to the Japanese driver sat the Soviet sentry, because sometimes villagers stormed the trucks and stole the products transported here along the route... They lay in wait in places where the vehicles had to pass hilly roads. When they stopped near the gate of our colony, the accountant ordered me to take what I needed... At first the Japanese smoked only fine cigarettes, brought with them... When their tobacco ran out, they switched to Soviet makhorka, but even that was scarce... Then they began to sell their clothes, even exchanging food for tobacco. Our 'free men' and detainees were not ashamed, they traded heavily, acquiring for tobacco everything possible: military clothes, underwear, boots...

All these things ended up at the market, at flea markets in different cities. Many of our detainees walked along the route dressed in Japanese clothes... Seeing them from afar, you were sure you had Japanese before you, but when they came closer, you saw that the 'Japanese' was Russian, Ukrainian, or from other Soviet peoples... Black market dealers bustled everywhere—with or without permits" [14 p. 205-206].

Cases were documented when Soviet officers ordered tailors from among the convicts to sew them civilian suits from the fabric of Japanese uniforms: "This state of affairs could no longer continue, especially since now many commissions and various delegations were arriving, whose task was to study the living conditions of the prisoners.

It was checked how the prisoners were fed and clothed, because, as I said, all food products and clothes were provided by the Japanese government. The leadership of the Taishet camp urgently issued an order: within 24 hours, all items and Japanese clothes had to be returned to the warehouse, and whoever did not comply with the order would be tried.

At the wooden bed of each Japanese prisoner, a small plaque was now attached – here the daily food consumption norm was indicated" [18].

Because of deprivation and the harsh detention conditions, as well as the pressure exerted by propagandists during ideological training hours, some Japanese prisoners agreed to collaborate with the Soviet secret services. If they were exposed by their comrades, they were punished severely. The Romanian author Florin Constantin Pavlovici, a victim of political repression, writes the following lines in his memoirs: "Aurelian Gulan told us that in a prisoner-of-war camp in the Soviet Union there was a large group of Japanese soldiers. One of them informed the Soviet political officer about what his comrades thought and said. One morning, at the camp guardhouse, a Japanese prisoner appeared with a beautifully wrapped package, asked the duty officer to hand it to the commander, saluted, and returned to the barracks from which he had come. When the Russians opened the package, they found the informer's head inside it. Since white people have the impression that all yellow people look alike and since the only Japanese who could have identified the messenger had his head separated from his body, the authors of the execution remained unknown" [15 p. 265].

The Japanese writer Haruki Murakami also mentions such cases in his works: "... three more Japanese prisoners were found who had hanged themselves overnight. They

were hanging from the beams so that it would appear they had committed suicide, but it was obvious from a mile away that it had been a lynching carried out by their fellow countrymen. Most likely, the three had been informers..." [12 p. 621].

It is important to note that in the memoirs of Vadim Pirogan there is no information about Japanese prisoners who would have agreed to become informers for the Soviet secret services.

On May 25, 1946, our compatriot was released without having all of his belongings returned: "My mother's ring, which was taken from me when I was arrested, was never returned. 'It was lost', that is what I was told. As a rule, the NKVD did not return gold objects... On June 25, the day of my arrest, at two o'clock in the afternoon, after five years of humiliation, suffering, and degradation, dressed in a green cotton suit, with a wooden suitcase in one hand, I headed toward the gate" [14 p. 218].

Analyzing the situation, we cannot exclude the fact that the suit worn by Vadim Pirogan had been sewn from a Japanese military uniform, because he also had with him other things exchanged for tobacco with Japanese prisoners, a fact confirmed in his memoirs: "A few days later I arrived in Kuibyshev, a large industrial center. I also went out onto the platform to get something to eat. My food had run out and I had been traveling hungry for an entire day. I had some Japanese clothes, but the train kept going and going and I was afraid to go far away in order to reach some flea market.

In Kuibyshev I stayed the whole day and right there, near the station, there was a flea market where you could find anything you wanted. But I had no money. A black rye bread cost 300 rubles. A mess tin of hot boiled potatoes was sold for 200 rubles.

I sold the clothes and bought a loaf of bread and potatoes, which the housewife poured into my fur hat, because I had neither a plate nor a mess tin. I ate with a wolfish appetite half of the bread and all the potatoes..." [14 p. 258].

In the following year, Japanese prisoners began to speak about the fact that soon they would be allowed to return home. From the information published by the Romanian authors Laurențiu Constantiniu, Ilie Șchipor, and Vitalie Văratîc, we learn that in one of the informative notes signed on May 7, 1948, it is reported that: "during the period January 1 – May 1, 1948, 25,912 persons (Japanese prisoners of war) were repatriated, according to Order no. 00374/1948 of the MVD of the USSR" [3 p. 682-683].

During their stay in Soviet camps, Japanese prisoners of war occasionally received from the Japanese government postcards with views from their homeland, which reminded them of their native places. Unfortunately, not all of these reached their destination because of the negligence of the employees of the secretariats of the "смл" ministries; at other times they were stolen by employees of the Soviet repressive organs.

In this regard, a top-secret letter was sent by the leadership of the Main Directorate for Prisoners of War and Interned Civilians within the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the USSR to the leadership of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the MSSR, requesting verification of whether, by mistake, a set of materials addressed to Japanese prisoners of war had reached Camp no. 198 located on the territory of the MSSR.

The following reply was provided to the inquiry: "To the Head of the Main Directorate for Camp Operations concerning Prisoners of War and Interned Civilians, within the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the USSR, Lieutenant General Comrade Kobulov. Moscow. Regarding No.52/2626 of 30.III.48. We inform you that in MIA Camp No.198, the 95,000 postcard forms with views for Japanese prisoners of war to which you referred were not identified. Such postcards for Japanese prisoners are not registered anywhere. At the same time, we note that there are no Japanese among the prisoners of war in the

camp. Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs of the MSSR, Major General Orlov. April 7, 1948 No.0/292" [16].

Thus, we learn that there were no Japanese military personnel in the prisoner camps of the MSSR; however, in some camps located on the territory of the USSR, among the prisoners of war there were both Japanese and our compatriots.

In the following years, the process of repatriation of Japanese prisoners of war intensified. In one of the documents published by the Romanian authors, signed by the Soviet authorities on January 18, 1950, it is mentioned that the following had been repatriated from Soviet prisoner-of-war camps: "574,718 persons from the former Japanese army" [3 p. 762].

We recall that before repatriation a large number of Japanese prisoners were forced to participate in political education lessons: "Carrying out the instructions of the Central Committee of the CPSU, the MVD organs carried out sustained activity for the political education of prisoners of war and for preparing from among them the antifascist activists. In the courses and antifascist schools that were organized, there studied... 21,137 Japanese" [3 p. 776].

Representatives of other nationalities held in Soviet camps were also obliged to participate in such lessons. One example is the camps located in Kazakhstan, about which the Romanian author Vasile Soare wrote, stating that: "In Karaganda three concentration camps were established for foreign military and civilian prisoners: Spassk No.99, Balhash No.37, and Jezkazgan No.39. Balhash and Jezkazgan were established in 1945 and functioned until the spring of 1948, when they were liquidated following the repatriation of prisoners. In the archives no data were preserved regarding the presence of prisoners of Romanian nationality, the majority being Japanese and Germans.

Spassk No.99, established in July 1941 on the structure of the Spassk division (section) of the NKVD Karlag, located 45 km from the city of Karaganda, on the territory of the former copper extraction plant 'Spassk', was the largest camp in the area.

During its entire operation, 66,160 prisoners (66,746 according to other data) passed through it, of whom: 29,777 Germans, 22,225 Japanese, 1,633 Austrians, 1,208 Poles, 1,088 Italians, 1,139 Hungarians, 195 Finns, etc.

To the figures mentioned above are added the 6,740 prisoners of Romanian nationality and more than 1,000 of other nationalities who fought in the Romanian army (Jews, Ukrainians, Armenians, 'Moldovans') [17 p. 46-48].

Ultimately: "During the carrying out of political activities and especially during the repatriation period, from German, Japanese, Hungarian, Romanian, and Austrian prisoners of war there were received over 4,000 letters of thanks and positive appreciation addressed to the Soviet Union and to life in the camps, signed by 834,562 prisoners of war. In these letters, the prisoners of war expressed their friendship toward the Soviet Union and thanks to Comrade Stalin and to the Soviet people for the humane treatment toward them" [3 p. 778].

It is known that many prisoners were forced to sign such letters, the content of which was written by Soviet propagandists. The process of repatriation of Japanese prisoners of war to their country of origin lasted until 1950: "...through a TASS communiqué of April 22, 1950, the completion of the repatriation of Japanese prisoners of war was announced.

After the completion of repatriation, only military personnel from among the prisoners of war convicted of crimes, those under investigation, as well as others withheld from repatriation for other reasons, remained in the USSR" [3 p. 778-779].

On January 1, 1953, from this category there were detained in camps and other institutions of the USSR: "1,476 Japanese, of whom 1,456 convicted and 20 without conviction. Interned civilians numbered 411, of whom 406 were convicted and 5 without conviction. Prisoners of war numbered 1,065, of whom 1,050 were convicted and 15 without conviction. Among the convicted prisoners there were 29 generals, 385 officers, 636 soldiers and non-commissioned officers" [3 p. 810].

In one of the judicial trials against war criminals, the Japanese general Yamada Otozo was targeted, accused of attempting to provoke a bacteriological war against the USSR. Studying the biography of this general of the Imperial Japanese Army, we learn that he was a veteran of several wars: the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905; the Sino-Japanese War of 1938; and the Second World War: "Born on November 6 in Nagano Prefecture. He pursued military studies in Tokyo. In November 1902, he graduated from the Military Academy of the Imperial Army, receiving the rank of second lieutenant. In June 1903, being assigned to service in the 3rd Cavalry Regiment, he was promoted to the rank of lieutenant. In February 1905, he was granted the rank of senior lieutenant and appointed instructor at the military college of the land army. In 1912 he was promoted to the rank of captain. In November 1912 he graduated from the elite Higher Academy of the Imperial Army, from which many famous Japanese military men graduated" [18].

He subsequently achieved a successful career, reaching the rank of General of the Army in 1940. From July 18, 1944, he was appointed commander of the army in Manchuria, being the last commander of the Kwantung Army: "He was preparing for the inevitable confrontation with the troops of the USSR, understanding that under the conditions of an army weakened after battles he would not be able to count on help. Thus, Yamada tried, within the limits of possibility, to strengthen the positions with the forces available to him, forming 8 new infantry divisions and 7 infantry brigades from poorly trained volunteers.

During the campaign that began on August 9, 1945, in the Manchurian operations, the Soviet troops bypassed the well-fortified Japanese sectors and destroyed the Japanese military units that were isolated and left without the support of tanks and artillery, causing them enormous losses within a few days and considerably affecting the Japanese defense.

After several unsuccessful counteroffensive attempts, on August 20, 1945, the commander was forced to capitulate with the Kwantung Army. Among the 600,000 prisoners was also Otozo Yamada, who was escorted to the city of Khabarovsk. On December 25-30, 1949, the military tribunal of the district, in closed session, examined the case of the Japanese prisoners, including Yamada. The former commander of the Kwantung Army was accused of attempting to unleash a bacteriological war against the USSR.

He was sentenced to 25 years of detention in a corrective labor camp. On March 12, 1950, Yamada Otozo was escorted to Camp No.48 in Cherntsy. In July 1950, at the request of the government of the People's Republic of China, Yamada and other former Japanese military men were transferred to China to be tried for crimes committed on the territory of that country.

Yamada acknowledged guilt for the crimes committed by his subordinates and served five years of imprisonment in the city of Fushun. On February 22, 1956, at the age of 75, by Resolution of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the CPSU 'On the Early Release of the Japanese General Yamada', Yamada Otozo was pardoned and repatriated to Japan. He died in 1965 at the age of 83" [27].

Romanian authors also wrote about the judicial trial against General Yamada Otozo and other Japanese military personnel, stating that: "In connection with the trial of the

main war criminals in Tokyo, the former adviser to the German military attaché in Tokyo, Lieutenant Colonel von Petersdorf, was interrogated, and he testified at the trial as a witness for the Soviet prosecution. Also prepared were the testimonies of Major General Matsumura, Colonel Semidzima, and the former emperor of Manchukuo, Pu Yi—as witnesses for exposing the criminal Japanese military clique, who testified at the International Tokyo Trial [...].

The investigation was carried out, and at the end of December 1949 the Public Trial of Khabarovsk was organized against the former commander of the Japanese Guandong Army, General Yamada, the former commanders of the sanitary and veterinary directorates of the above-mentioned army, Kajizuka and Kawashima, and against a group of workers of the so-called 'Anti-Epidemic Detachment No.731', which was preparing bacteriological warfare against the Soviet Union.

In this case, 12 defendants were sentenced to various prison terms" [3. p. 780].

It should be mentioned that even General of the Army Yamada Otozo was forced to write a letter of thanks to the Soviet authorities for the good conditions he had benefited from during his detention in Soviet camps.

Soviet propaganda transformed the reading of thank-you letters by prisoners of war on the day of their repatriation to their country of origin into a ceremony. They were gathered on the railway station platform, where, at the command of the camp administration, several of them, stepping out of formation one by one, expressed gratitude to the Soviet authorities for the "humanism" shown toward them during detention.

These actions were organized at the instruction of the leadership of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the USSR. Thus: "On June 16, 1949, all camp chiefs were informed of the order signed by the Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs of the USSR, Colonel General I. Serov, which provided the following: 'to obtain from all prisoners repatriated to their country of origin letters of thanks addressed to the Soviet government. To organize assemblies and rallies during which prisoners should make entries with positive content in opinion books, etc. These actions are necessary to combat slanderous messages launched against the USSR from abroad'" [5. p. 512].

In reality, the thank-you letters could not cover up the information regarding the multiple deaths recorded among the prisoners because of the disastrous conditions in the Soviet camps. There were considerable losses among the prisoners of war as well.

As the Romanian author Florentina Dolghin mentions: "In 1945 about 600,000 Japanese ended up in captivity. Of them, 53,000 died, according to Japanese data" [19 p. 40].

Thus, the prisoners were repatriated, but the work concerning the exposure of spies of foreign secret services gained momentum in the USSR. The political leadership demanded that the fight against foreign agents be intensified also in the union republics. Repeated reference was made to letters previously sent to the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the MSSR, among them the top-secret letter No.52/3477 signed on April 19, 1948, by the Deputy Head of the Main Directorate for Prisoners of War and Interned Civilians within the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the USSR, Lieutenant General A. Kobulov, which had the following content: "In January 1948, in Moscow, the leadership of the employees of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and of the Directorate for the Administration of Camps for Prisoners of War was gathered in connection with issues referring to operational work with agents from among the prisoners [...] Taking into account that the German secret services created a network of agents from among traitors—Soviet citizens who had lived in the temporarily occupied territory—a priority task of our services consists in exposing them and liquidating German agents on the territory of the Soviet Union.

This is necessary because there is a risk of establishing connections between the German secret services and the Anglo-American ones. All the above mentioned regarding the German secret services applies equally to the struggle against the American and Japanese secret services acting against the Soviet Union" [20].

Under the cover of fighting spies of foreign secret services, a campaign of demonization of representatives of certain capitalist countries began. Among them were also the Japanese.

Paradoxically, activities of denigrating the Japanese were also carried out by Soviet propaganda on the territory of the MSSR. As a reason served the photographs placed in places of honor in the homes of some Bessarabians, which immortalized scenes from the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905, in which many of our compatriots had participated.

Thus, the Soviet repressive organs identified that the Japanese enjoyed the sympathy of many locals. We recall that: "Bessarabians under Russian military occupation were forced to participate in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905" [21, p. 10].

As author Florentina Dolghin states: "the period of the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905 remained in history through a remarkable chivalrous, humane attitude of the victors toward the defeated and captured prisoners. It was 'the last clash between gentlemen in history'" [28].

In this context: "in Bessarabian, Russian, and Japanese folklore, recruitment songs and poems appeared in which the Port Arthur fortress is mentioned, for which fierce battles were fought" [21, p. 15].

In order to impose a new interpretation of these events, Soviet propaganda requested that lectures be delivered in state institutions regarding the victory of the Soviet Army at Port Arthur in the summer of 1945, in order to cover up the shameful capitulation of Russian troops in December 1904 before the Japanese armies.

In the archival materials, the minutes of the meeting of the officers of the Militia School in the city of Chișinău, held on March 31, 1948, at the central headquarters of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the MSSR, are preserved. During this meeting, the deputy head of the school for education, Deomin, justified the delay in making the work Port Arthur available to the students, declaring the following: "Regarding educational work, I confirm that we correctly understood the tasks of the Central Committee of the Communist and Bolshevik Party concerning the raising of the level of ideological education in groups outside study hours. Probably the lecturers were not fully involved in this activity and thus we failed to achieve the expected results. At present, however, the reading of the book 'Port Arthur' and other books is taking place, books which enrich the volume of knowledge of the collective, and the students take an active part in discussions on these books" [22].

Later, in this educational institution as well as in others across the USSR that trained specialists for the Soviet repressive organs, substantial batches of books written by Soviet authors arrived, in which capitalist countries with developed economies, including Japan, were discredited.

In the manual published by the Soviet author N.F. Kuznetsova, it is stated that: "Japan is a country in which crime increased catastrophically after it was occupied by the USA. In 1963, 1,557,809 crimes were recorded there. For every 100 thousand people of the population, 3,899 persons were convicted" [23, p. 219].

A different opinion in this regard is offered by author Ronald Dore, who states that after the Second World War, Japan faced major social and economic problems. Gradually, however, the situation began to improve.

Analyzing the factors that contributed to Japan's economic leap after the war, he mentions that: "Such a sudden improvement took place precisely during the period when Japan was occupied by American troops" [24, p. 149].

It is necessary to mention that some Soviet authors achieved remarkable careers due to their criticism of Japan and the Japanese. One example is author N.F. Kuznetsova, who published a series of such materials in her works, specifying that: "In Japanese prisons in 1963 there were 47% more people than in 1940... In Japan, crimes against property constitute 2/3 of the total number of crimes recorded... Japan occupies first place in the world in the number of transport-related offenses. Four times more people died because of these offenses than in the USA. At the same time, Japan occupies first place in smuggling, trafficking, and drug consumption" [23, p. 219-221].

After this follows that: "In Japan there are 5,000 gangster bands bringing together 170 thousand people" [23, p. 225].

Another Soviet author writes that: "Many cities in the USA, in the industrial zones of Europe and Japan, are expanding, forming gigantic urban agglomerations, 'megapolises'".

Under capitalism, this process of rapid urbanization leads to an increase in population numbers and to the uncontrolled growth of criminality in these large cities" [25, p. 119].

There were also Soviet authors who declared that only capitalist countries were characterized by crimes such as: "terrorism, illicit drug trade, counterfeiting money, crimes against property, concealment of wealth obtained through criminal means, following thefts from museums, art galleries, churches, as well as from the illicit arms trade. Around 60% (in Japan) and 90% (in England, USA) of the crimes committed are those against property" [26, p. 59].

Teaching staff in the educational institutions of the force ministries constantly instructed students in the field of fighting foreign spies. The same thing happened in the Militia School in the city of Chișinău. During the lessons, the possible ways of spies infiltrating the territory of the USSR were reviewed.

Japan was permanently included in the list of countries generating danger. In this regard, the Soviet authors V. Kurleandskii and M. Karpushin warned that: "In judicial practice there are cases when Japanese ships entered the territorial waters of the USSR because of bad weather. The crews of these ships declared that they had strayed from their route because of the storm. All crew members were obligatorily subjected to checks, and only if it was proven that they did not intend to cross the border illegally were they not criminally punished" [27, p. 162].

Analyzing these works, we find that the authors took some information from the Soviet press published by propagandists, without verifying its accuracy.

Thus, referring to the newspaper "Известия, 31 мая 1963 г.", N.F. Kuznetsova writes: "In capitalist countries, the crime of child kidnapping is widespread. The USA occupies first place in such crimes.

Japan, before being militarily occupied by the USA, did not know that such crimes existed and could not even translate their names into Japanese. However, in the last 10 years in Japan, 300-500 children are kidnapped annually. Five thousand children kidnapped over 17 years of the Americanization of the country—this is the bitter statistic of this type of crime in Japan" [23, p. 222].

In another case, taking information from the newspaper "Правда, 2 июля 1967 г.", N.F. Kuznetsova states that in Japan many people died because of poisoning from

poor-quality food products: "Around 90% of food products in Japan are sold without any information regarding origin. Very often the quality of the marketed milk leaves much to be desired. Water with synthetic fat is mixed into it" [23, p. 229].

In contrast to the statements of N.F. Kuznetsova come the assertions of the Romanian authors Constantin Bușe and Zorin Zamfir, who found that: "In the 1960s, the growth of the Japanese economy reached rhythms never before seen in any capitalist country. By the end of the 1960-1970 decade, Japan ranked first in the world in shipbuilding, the production of transistor radios, as well as in the production of automobiles, plastics, and synthetic fibers, and produced more steel than West Germany, England, and France taken together. Japan's influence and prestige in the world, due to its economic power, ultra-modern technologies, diligence and tenacity, the talent and discipline of the Japanese people, became incomparably greater than what its political and military leaders had wanted or achieved during the period between 1868 and 1945" [28, p. 369-370].

At the same time, the situation in the USSR deteriorated. Against this background, at the beginning of the 1990s, some Soviet authors began publishing books to offer useful advice to citizens on how to protect themselves from criminals in the country, specifying that the number had grown sharply of: "groups of professional criminals specialized in apartment thefts, vehicle theft, crimes committed in the street (violence, beatings, vandalism, etc.). A considerable part of the population became victims of criminality. People were afraid to leave their homes in the evening and could not lead a normal way of life. Many leave their native place and come to share the fate of refugees. In the country, more than 2 million crimes are committed annually. A number of criminologist scholars consider that the real figure is much higher, around 10 million. Unfortunately, estimates show that every citizen once or twice during life may become a victim of criminality" [29, p. 4-5].

The same situation can be observed today in the Russian Federation, where many authors continue to criticize Japan and the Japanese in their books. The authors L. Veden-skaia and L. Pavlova offer the following recommendations to lawyers: "In Japan, during a discussion, it is not customary to look each other in the eyes, whereas for us, in order to establish normal contact with a person, according to psychologists, one must look at the interlocutor 60-70% of the time during the discussion.

Shy people, who look aside or downward during conversation, do not inspire trust" [30, p. 40].

At the same time, in the opinion of other Russian authors, the psychology of contemporary Japanese is a reflection of the education received over many centuries in accordance with the provisions of the samurai code.

They are accustomed to honoring their given word so as not to lose their dignity. They are always ready to risk their lives to defend their country, their own honor, as well as the honor of the family to which they belong.

Reconstructing historical events, the Russian author E. Iakovlev states that: "In the 1890s... the samurai became the core of the reformed Japanese army and navy, occupying positions as officers and generals. More than 20,000 former samurai joined the police. Two-thirds of the central apparatus were occupied by former samurai and members of their families. Around 40% of teachers were former samurai. They occupied these positions ennobling them with the values on which they had been educated. They were distinguished by honor, dignity, incorruptibility, spirit of sacrifice, etc." [31 p. 240].

Qualities that were certainly lacking in Soviet leaders, accustomed to presenting crimes against the people as acts of heroism. Much more sincere were some war veterans who eventually admitted that some heroic deeds in their biographies were in reality

crimes.

At an event dedicated to war veterans that took place in 2012, retired Colonel Piotr Rudeaghin participated, born on July 7, 1925, in the village of Sergeevka, Krasnodar region, into a worker's family. After graduating from school, he was mobilized into the Red Army.

For a period, he was a fighter in a partisan detachment, after which he became a platoon sergeant of the rifle company of the Ukrainian Front. Later, he graduated from the military medical school and in 1945 was appointed medical instructor in the Motorized Brigade in Transbaikalia... in 1952 he graduated from the Faculty of Law of the University of Odesa... in 1966 he was appointed lecturer at the Militia School of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the USSR in the city of Chișinău, where he worked for more than 20 years.

During military-patriotic education classes, he told students how, while escorting a train of Japanese prisoners of war, he had been attacked by a *kamikaze* who threw himself at him trying to neutralize him by applying martial arts techniques.

According to P. Rudeaghin, the Japanese prisoner caught him by surprise, but he managed to use his firearm, mortally wounding him. The superior of the train reported the incident to the leadership, mentioning the spirit of bravery shown by the young Soviet soldier Piotr Rudeaghin.

Generations of militia officers heard this legend, and only in 2012 did Piotr Rudeaghin admit that in fact, during service, he had accidentally pulled the trigger and killed a Japanese prisoner of war who was sleeping in the upper bunk of the railway car during transport.

He was saved from trouble by the head of the train, who presented the situation as an attempt on the life of the Soviet soldier by a Japanese prisoner of war. Unfortunately, this is not the only case when a crime committed by a Soviet soldier against a prisoner of war was presented as an act of heroism.

A great number of such falsifications were included in history textbooks published during the Soviet totalitarian regime. Paradoxically, the representatives of the communist totalitarian regime, who conducted political training courses and educated hundreds of thousands of prisoners of war in Soviet camps to become pacifists, over the years launched a series of wars of aggression against sovereign states.

The same criminal policy was also adopted by the autocratic regime in the Russian Federation, which at the present stage, violating the norms of international law, maintains under military occupation territories belonging to other countries.

In 2014, Russian military troops invaded Ukraine, killing with particular cruelty both soldiers and civilians. The war continues to this day. The international community is shocked by the barbarism displayed by soldiers of the Russian army, by the way the norms of international humanitarian law are violated, by acts of torture applied against the civilian population, as well as by video footage of the demonstrative beheading of Ukrainian prisoners captured by Russian troops.

The detention conditions of Ukrainians held in the custody of the authorities of the Russian Federation are degrading. It is evident that the criminal manifestations of the Kremlin leadership generate imminent risks for humanity. During military actions, cases of the use of chemical weapons and other weapons prohibited by international legal acts by Russian troops against Ukrainian soldiers have been reported.

In such a situation, we inevitably remember the judicial trial against the Japanese General Yamada Otozo and the workers of the so-called "Anti-Epidemic Detachment No. 731", as well as the biological and other types of evidence from the criminal case, which remained both in the USSR and in China. In this regard, we cannot exclude the possibility

that these were not destroyed but were used in experiments to create much more dangerous chemical and bacteriological weapons.

In this context, it is necessary to analyze for what purpose Russian propaganda spreads rumors such as: "The coronavirus has become an element of the trade war between the USA and China, a method of reducing the population on the planet, launched by the secret services..." [32, p. 90].

In reality, it is known that China cooperates very closely in many areas with the Russian Federation. Unfortunately, recently more information has appeared regarding the support provided to the Russian Federation by China in the war of aggression against Ukraine.

It should be noted that the autocratic regime in the Russian Federation and some of its allies present a danger to global security. They allow themselves to openly threaten certain states that they may be attacked at any moment by Russian troops. Among the targets, as usual, Japan is also included.

Former Minister of Defense of the Russian Federation Sergei Shoigu spoke about this at a meeting with North Korean leader Kim Jong-un, who visited Russia. Knowing about the recent provocations carried out by North Korea toward Japan, S. Shoigu, while presenting strategic bombers, remarked sarcastically: "They can fly from Moscow to Japan and back" [33].

The behavior of the rulers of the Russian Federation at the present stage does not differ from that of fascist leaders during the Second World War. At their command, Russian ballistic missiles daily make victims among the civilian population of Ukraine.

Both adults and children are being killed. These criminal actions can be stopped only with the involvement of all countries that advocate respect for international law and democratic values.

It is the only solution to demonstrate to dictatorial regimes that the Nuremberg and Tokyo trials were conducted in order to send a clear signal to the international community that no country has the right to threaten the independence and sovereignty of another country, to use force to militarily occupy territories that do not belong to it, and to commit crimes against the population of a foreign country.

At the same time, efforts must be strengthened to free Ukrainian civilians and military personnel held captive on the territory of the Russian Federation under inhuman and degrading conditions similar to those in the Soviet camps where hundreds of thousands of prisoners of war of different nationalities lost their lives, including around 50,000 Japanese.

Conclusion. The study of the legal regime and detention conditions of prisoners of war in the Soviet Union reveals a striking discrepancy between the imperatives of international humanitarian law and the realities of the Stalinist concentration camp system. Although the international normative framework, defined by the Hague and Geneva Conventions (1929), provided theoretical guarantees for the protection of captured combatants, the authorities in Moscow subordinated these obligations to ideological and political interests, leaving room for arbitrariness and systematic abuses.

The daily realities in Soviet camps, marked by forced labor under conditions of extreme exhaustion, chronic malnutrition, and severe deficiencies in medical assistance, transformed the experience of captivity into a mechanism of inhuman and degrading treatment. In this context, the Japanese contingent captured in the Far East represented a particularly vulnerable category, the high mortality rate being the direct consequence of an administration that ignored human dignity in favor of economic exploitation.

A defining aspect of this period was the use of propaganda as an instrument for legitimizing violence. Through public show trials, orchestrated letters of gratitude, and ideological re-education programs, the regime attempted to conceal the repressive nature of the system, constructing a façade of compliance with international norms. The analysis of the Japanese case demonstrates that these practices were not isolated incidents, but constitutive elements of a totalitarian system aimed both at exploiting labor and at the psychological disintegration of the enemy.

Ultimately, the treatment applied to Japanese prisoners of war and those of other nationalities remains indisputable evidence of the repressive nature of the Soviet regime. The lessons drawn from this case study reaffirm the imperative of strengthening international mechanisms for monitoring and protecting human rights. In a world marked by new instabilities, the strict observance of humanitarian norms remains the only guarantee for preventing the repetition of historical tragedies and for protecting human integrity in the face of any totalitarian ideology.

Proposal de lege ferenda. In order to prevent violations of the rights of prisoners of war, it is necessary to strengthen the international legal framework by establishing mandatory mechanisms for monitoring detention facilities under the direct control of neutral international organizations. This reform could include extending the powers of international tribunals so that they would not act only punitively, but would also actively monitor compliance with legal norms and the conduct of armed conflicts in real time.

It is also imperative to establish a stricter sanctions regime for states and individuals responsible for inhuman treatment, together with the introduction of a centralized and mandatory system for recording and reporting the situation of prisoners in order to eliminate the risk of enforced disappearances. At the same time, the legal framework must guarantee the inalienable right to legal assistance and communication with the outside world, combined with rigorous training of military personnel in the field of international humanitarian law. The implementation of these complex measures would contribute to the transition from theoretical protection to effective protection, preventing captivity from becoming an instrument of repression or exploitation.

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