

In the Kirgiz steppes. John Willford Wardel

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John W. Wardel.

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The translation of several chapters of the book is presented to the readership. The author of the translation had the possibility to get the copy of the book in English in the library of Cambridge University. The history of the Kazakh land with the people called Kazakh is full with the events and agitated many generations. In the book complicated years in the history of Kazakh people when as a result of the policy of the tsarist ruling Kazakhs had to start the sedentary or half-sedentary way of life. Along with that, the author of the book John Wardel fixes for the history the start of industrial development of the Kazakh steppe, namely the Atbasar mines.

I would like to precede the translation of the book by John Wardel with several comments. During the first reading of the book in the process of translation the feeling of warmth and tolerance to the foreign way of life and unusual civilization with which the Englishman describes Kazakhstan at the beginning of 20 century did not leave me. Precisely in a century, while reading the press and turning on the television we often hear and see the scornful and sometimes humiliating attitude to the history of Kazakhs from our USSR friends, close neighbors.

100 years ago the culture of international communication of the British people was higher than most current politicians-outcasts, who do not wish to take into account the ancient history of the great Kazakh people.

I am reminding to the readers that all the writings of several words, names, and geographical names, historical vision of events described in the book are preserved in the author interpretation.

Preface

In the preface, firstly, I would like present myself to the readers and explain how I found myself in the under-investigated part of the world in the most interesting period of history, secondly, why I decided to gather all my notes, maps and photographs to write a book.

I served full time in office of the engineering training in the Directorate of Stockton works, Raytson and Company, where I have been working as the constructor during three years, specializing in the equipment on the mine exploration, and in my free time I studied the color metallurgy. Then, in November 1913 with the purpose to raise my knowledge on the given theme, and with the hope to get the practical experience I went to work to Walter J. Perkins, who was consulting the metallurgy branch in London, which was engaged with the working out of the projects for the Company Spassk ore deposits, British company with huge ore concessions in Siberia. These projects included the modernization of the copper factories at the Spassk plant, setting of the mining and processing factories in Sary Su for Spassk, and the equipment of mining and smelting works for new Atbasar ore deposits of the same company.

By the end of April 1914 all the machines for this project were ordered, and majority of drafts for the construction of brick and wooden buildings were completed, it was decided during the shortest period for the completion of works at the mines, for giving assistance in the building works and infusion into the functioning team, to send three engineers from the company Walter J. Perkins to the Spassk Company on the ore mining. Two of my colleagues were sent to Atbasar, and I was chosen to be sent to Spasskiy. We had to start from England on 16 May with the 3-year contract, and as I had already planned to marry, I was given the accord that my wife could follow me as soon as the accommodation was ready.

I had three chaotic weeks to order the equipment for three years, trips to the north for marriage, farewell with relatives and friends, return to London for the package of equipment, plans and papers, then participation in the farewell party with the collective in Sokho at the eve of great courageous travel.

The fact that it was adventure, courageous adventure was doubtless, but I thought little about the world war processing and its consequences can accelerate my departure from Siberia: the first thing that made me keep working abroad was the responsibility to work for Antanta and it made my return home almost impossible. It was just 2-day way to the deposits in peacetime, but my return home as soon as the circumstances allowed took four months of the difficult way on land and sea.

When my friends knew where I was heading they mournfully nodded their heads and drew horrible pictures because the average British citizen practically did not know anything about the vast territory which comprised the northern part of Asia, their mental interpretation of Siberia was limited by the snow vast expanses, grand woods, wolves and convicts. Today, thanks to the popularity, which Russia gained as a result of the World War I and preserves till now, it became understandable how little it was known about the Asian Russia and its inhabitants.

Fortunately or not, but my travelling to the North of Siberia coincided with one of the most critical periods in the Russian history when war and peace, revolution and counterrevolution one by one brought to the chaos from which eventually rose, appeared the new, powerful Russia. Majority of my time I spent at the Spassk factory or near in the Kirgiz steppes that are now called Kazakhstan, but dangerous circumstances once made me stop in Petropavlovsk, at the Trans-Siberian Railway, and in the end, made me cross Siberia from Atbasar mines to the Far East.

I returned to England by the end of November 1919, after five and a half years, and in February 1920 again started to work for the Directorate Raytson and Company. Due to the elaboration of the equipment on the mine processing during five years I had been working for the company as their representative in London, then was transferred for the work to Stockton on Tiz where during three years I had been working as an engineer and chief constructor, and the following thirteen years as the Director General.

During winter months in London I supplemented my notes about my Siberian adventures and their causes, predominantly for the generalization of the everyday and exhaustive notes for me

myself. At that time almost the whole world was praying for the fall of the Russian Revolution and if it happened the conditions in Kazakhstan would return to the former state, to that what was before. But, the Soviet Union now is 40, and such changes were least probable, that is why, upon retirement in January 1956 I started to prepare this book.

As I was one of a few Englishmen the last visitor to Kazakhstan (if someone in the end was there since the time of the Soviet Union creation), and the life conditions since then probably changed forever I believe that it is preferable to preserve the report for the residents of the country, for history, about that how the Kazakhs lived during centuries till great changes. To this I added the description of the country, its climate, and other details, noted of my impressions of those five years of life full with events about the life of the British society isolated in this separate part of world, first, is important for the understanding of the country in which my adventures occurred, second, I hope reflect my own insights.

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