

Postal Service during the Turkestan Governor-General's Period

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Abstract. *The article presents information about the state of the postal service during the reign of the Turkestan Governor-General, the establishment of the postal system in the country by the empire and reforms in this area.*

Key words: *Turkestan Governor-General, postal service, von Kaufman, F.K. Girs, M. Chernyaev, 1864, 1867, 1872, merchant Kuznetsov, N. Belyavsky, merchant Ivanov.*

In 1882, the secret adviser to the emperor F.K. Girs, who revised the Turkestan Governor-General, paid attention to studying the state of the postal and telegraph networks, along with other economic sectors. According to his information, the control of post offices throughout the country was under the jurisdiction of the Governor-General's office. Also, postal institutions in the Syrdarya and Fergana regions and Zarafshan district, which were part of the Governor-General's office, were under the control of the heads of the regional post offices. The management of the Tashkent city post office was subordinate to the city administration. The regional post office is also located here.

The first postal service in Turkestan was founded in 1864 by General Chernyaev. After the capture of Avliyoata and Shymkent, he ordered the establishment of a postal service from Shymkent to the Verniy fortress. However, the lack of Russian entrepreneurs with sufficient capital, the limited allocation of funds for postal services by the state, and the lack of full state control over postal stations hindered the development of this sector.

According to von Kaufman, “in 1865, due to the lack of funds allocated for the postal service, a decision was made to make the transport of mail a natural duty of the Kyrgyz and to reward them” [4; 419]. According to him:

- 1) the maintenance of the station was entrusted to the biys of the nomadic tribes in the vicinity, who were obliged to keep three pairs of horses and their attendants, build station rooms, light them and keep them in order;
- 2) three pairs of local horses, a cart, saddles and harness were allocated from the treasury to each station free of charge;
- 3) as a reward for maintaining the stations, the biy and his family were given 120 rubles for each pair of horses.

One of the imperial military officials, N. Belyavsky, referring to the conclusions of the Steppe Commission, wrote that “in 1867 the state of the postal service in Turkestan was deplorable. Initially, postal services were organized in the cities of Verniy and Tashkent of the Turkestan General Governorate” [3; 44]. Because these cities were considered important administrative centers of the General Governorate.

Also, the poor condition of the roads created difficulties in delivering postal items to their destinations on time. In particular, the road from Tashkent to Kazalinsk and from Shymkent to Verniy was unsatisfactory, which hindered the quality of postal services.

F.K. Girs inspected 14 offices (offices) and branches out of 22 postal institutions in the Turkestan region and found that the documents were in order, there were money, postage stamps, seals, envelopes, etc. At the same time, in Kokand, Kattakurgan and many other post offices, large amounts of money often accumulate, there are not enough boxes for storing them, although there have been no cases of theft of money items, he stressed the need to equip post offices with iron, fire-resistant boxes or cabinets to prevent such situations. FK. Girs, when studying the buildings of post offices, reported that most of them did not meet the requirements, that employees working in the field occupied the rooms of the buildings allocated for the post office for their own living, and only one room was allocated for the office, and that treasury funds were not spent on the repair of post offices, but for the benefit of employees living at home. [1; 178]

The amount of money spent on postal services in each region of the country differed. For example, 498 rubles were spent on the Samarkand-Panjikent postal route, and 650 rubles on the Samarkand-Kattakurgan route. The reason for this was that the number of mail horses was much smaller along the Panjikent route than on the Kattakurgan route. Girs wrote that the monopoly on the postal service network in the region was strengthened and large amounts of money were spent. [3; 44] During this period, 722,558 rubles were spent annually on the postal service network.

Until 1872, the postal service network throughout Turkestan was mainly carried out by the Kyrgyz. The income from this to the treasury was very small, not exceeding 320 rubles per year for a pair of mail horses. Since this situation did not satisfy Governor-General Kaufman, in 1872 the postal network in the region was transferred to one person, namely the merchant Kuznesov. This led to the beginning of a monopoly in the postal network. Kuznetsov owned the longest route of the postal service, Terakli-Tashkent and Shymkent-Avliyoata, but he committed abuses in the payment of taxes established by the state. In this regard, FK. Girs emphasizes that “the state treasury suffered losses of more than a million rubles due to Kuznesov’s failure to pay the state the amount established by the post office.” [2; 47] Later, the colonial authorities carried out a reform to end the monopoly in the postal service, and the decision to divide the postal service into specific branches and assign each to specific individuals was approved in February 1882.

There were individuals from among the local population who offered to work for the postal service cheaper than Kuznesov, but their efforts were fruitless. Because the documents submitted by local applicants did not meet the requirements of the law, they could not participate in the tender (local applicants were considered to have higher postal service prices). In general, the colonial administration did not trust applicants from among the local population and did not want to bring them closer to the postal service, since they had a strong chauvinistic attitude.

Lieutenant General Kolpokovsky, who temporarily held the post of Governor-General, considered it necessary to transfer the postal service to representatives of the local population, and proposed to the merchant Ivanov from Kazalinsky to conclude a contract for the postal service. After lengthy negotiations, Ivanov's conditions were accepted by the government. According to them:

- 1) The treasury was obliged to pay Ivanov and the campaign 550,400 rubles per year for the maintenance and care of 688 pairs of horses (800 rubles per pair of horses).
- 2) After the conclusion of the contract, to provide a loan in the amount of 550,400 rubles for the first two years.
- 3) After two years, to provide an advance payment of 275,200 rubles from the treasury every year for a six-month period.

On these terms, an agreement was signed with the merchant Ivanov and the company on June 28, 1883, and to secure the loan, the transferred station property, and the execution of the agreement, the mortgages consisting of real estate located exclusively in the Turkestan region were accepted [1; 179].

Having completed the inspection of the Girs post office, the government drew attention to the need to resolve by law the issue of accepting the common property of the region as collateral under agreements concluded with the treasury. Since 1875, the above-mentioned issue has not been fully developed, despite the request of the Ministry of War to submit its opinions on this issue.

At the same time, the lack of clear instructions and rules on the acceptance of pledges in the Turkestan region confused the institutions and individuals concluding contracts and endangered the interests of the state. When concluding a contract with the merchant Ivanov in 1883 for the implementation of the postal service, Lieutenant General Chernyaev gave his permission, taking into account the need to establish direct communication with Russia. In the opinion of the Governor-General, if the contractor failed to pay, the contract stipulated that his real estate would be seized from the merchant Ivanov. [1; 188]

Thus, in order to protect the interests of the treasury, it was considered important for the imperial administration to thoroughly resolve the issue of pledges, and attempts were made to fully align the reforms in the field of postal communications with the interests of the government.

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