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UNRESOLVED ISSUES OF REPRESSED PEOPLES

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Abstract

The paper studies the stages and features of the rehabilitation of the peoples of the former USSR repressed in the 1940s, which began in the mid-1950s with the relief of the regime of special settlements and the partial restoration of the civil rights of certain categories of the deported people. During the course of analysis of the provisions of normative acts aimed at the rehabilitation of repressed peoples in the 1950s–1960s, the main trends and features, causes and factors of the incompleteness of the rehabilitation process were revealed. Thus, the Crimean Tatars, Meskhetian Turks and Russian Germans were not fully rehabilitated as the process of their return to their former places of residence was difficult for a number of reasons. Also, the rehabilitation of Karachais, Balkars, Chechens, Ingush and Kalmyks was not fully performed; the issues of territorial and socio-economic rehabilitation remained unresolved. In the late 1980s, during the period of democratization and glasnost, the problem of rehabilitation of the repressed peoples was again actualized. The adoption in 1991 of the Law “On the rehabilitation of repressed peoples” became the key milestone in the rehabilitation of repressed peoples, solving the accumulated problems in the sphere of national politics. The authors, analyzing the experience and results of the implementation of the law “On the rehabilitation of repressed peoples” and other documents concluded that the rehabilitation process, despite all the adopted legislative acts and practical measures, remained unfinished.

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Keywords: Deportation, repressed peoples, XX Communist Party Congress, report by N.S. Khrushchev, rehabilitation, restoration of autonomies



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1. Introduction

In the period from the early 1920s to the 1950s, more than six million people from different parts of the USSR were deported to Central Asia, Siberia, and the Far East. Ten ethnic groups among them were subjected to total deportation (Polyan, 2001). Seven of them among them (Germans, Karachais, Kalmyks, Ingush, Chechens, Balkars and Crimean Tatars) lost their national autonomies as well. The representatives of the repressed peoples, especially the front-line soldiers, who believed in the groundlessness of the repressions, wrote letters and appeals to the state and party bodies of the country. By 1950 alone, the Kremlin received 70,717 applications from special settlers and in 1953 their number almost doubled and was 130,582 applications (Bugai, 2016). The rehabilitation process began in the 1950s, after the death of I. Stalin.

The XX congress became a turning point in the history of the repressed peoples: the policy of the state changed and a course towards the rehabilitation of the deported peoples was taken, the conditions for socio-economic and cultural development were created, the autonomy of the majority of the repressed peoples was restored, which was not accompanied by a return to the previous administrative boundaries, and therefore rehabilitation was incomplete. The adoption in the early 1990s of the Law "On the rehabilitation of repressed peoples" (04/26/1991) and "On the rehabilitation of victims of political repression" (10/18/1991) became the important stage in the rehabilitation of repressed peoples.

2. Problem Statement

At the present stage of development of the Russian state, the priority direction of its national policy is the gradual resolution of the existing contradictions in the field of interethnic relations. Particular attention is paid to the unresolved issues of the repressed peoples, primarily their consequences, which had a destabilizing effect on the socio-political situation in the post-Soviet period and preserves the potential for conflict.

3. Research Questions

The rehabilitation of repressed peoples has several stages and lasted for several decades. The decisions of XX Communist Party Congress laid the legal basis for the rehabilitation of the repressed peoples. The restoration of the autonomy of the repressed peoples contributed to their socio-economic and cultural development, but at the same time the peoples remained in the category of "unreliable" and especially "unreliable" (Crimean Tatars, Germans, Meskhetian Turks), who were actually deprived of the right to return to their homeland. The Law on the Rehabilitation of Repressed Peoples (1991) was aimed at the political rehabilitation of the repressed peoples. With the annexation of Crimea into Russia, the rehabilitation of the Crimean Tatars and other repressed peoples of the half-island began. Despite of all the adopted acts and practical measures, the rehabilitation process remains incomplete, which may become a source of political complications in the south of the country, especially in the North Caucasus.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the article is to study the stages, the specifics of the rehabilitation of repressed peoples, to show the current state and those unresolved issues as well as the reasons and factors of the incompleteness of the rehabilitation process.

5. Research Methods

During the course of research the general scientific principles of objectivity, historicism, and consistency were used. These methods made it possible to show the way how rehabilitation process was realized, the reasons and factors that determined the rehabilitation process in specific chronological periods (the second half of the XX - the beginning of the XXI century).

6. Findings

In the USSR, from the early 1920s to the 1950s, more than 6 million people from different parts of the country were deported to Central Asia, Siberia and the Far East. Ten ethnic groups among them were exposed to total deportation (Polyan, 2001). Seven of them (Germans, Karachais, Kalmyks, Chechens, Ingush, Balkars and Crimean Tatars) also lost their national autonomies. The total deportation was carried out in a matter of hours at different time intervals; the deported people were sent mainly to Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Siberia, i.e. to remote regions of the USSR, where they were settled in local small groups, mainly in rural areas. The deportation was carried out at a time when practically all the adult male population of these peoples fought on the fronts of the Great Patriotic War. The representatives of the repressed peoples from among the intelligentsia (writers, poets, journalists, teachers, workers of party and state bodies), from the very first months of deportation, began to write appeals and letters to Moscow addressed to I.V. Stalin and other statesmen, who believed that the forced evictions were initiated by statesmen. By the end of 1953, 130,582 appeals were received from special settlers (Bugai, 2016). Usually the authors of such letters and appeals were subjected to repressions. Thus, at the end of 1944, a member of the CPSU, Adilgeriy Sottayev, wrote a letter to Stalin, in which he outlined his views on the issue of resettlement of Balkars to Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan and asked to understand this tragic mistake. The investigative bodies of the Kyrgyz SSR, accusing the author of the letter of "bourgeois nationalism", sentenced him to imprisonment for 25 years (Sottaev, 2019).

After the death of I.V. Stalin, L.P. Beria initiated a review of cases of mass repression. The Presidium of the CPSU Central Committee, supporting the "initiative and undertakings" of L. Beria, adopted a resolution "On approval of the measures taken by the USSR Ministry of Internal Affairs to correct the consequences of violations of the law" (of April 10, 1953). The following was noted in this resolution: To approve the activities of comrade L.P. Beria to uncover criminal acts committed over a number of years in the former USSR Ministry of State Security, expressed in fabricating falsified cases against honest people, as well as measures to correct the consequences of violations of Soviet laws, taking into account that the measures aimed at strengthening the Soviet state and socialist legality (Artizov, 2000). According to Maksimov (2017), this resolution was adopted with the active initiative of a member of the

Presidium of the Central Committee of the CPSU, the first deputy chairman of the government of the USSR, Minister of Internal Affairs of the USSR L.P. Beria, who temporarily took leadership in the collective leadership and dreamed of participating in governing the country. In addition, in the initiatives of L.B. Beria were dictated by his desire to show his innocence and to shift the blame for the massive repressions to the USSR Ministry of State Security. Beria, together with the Minister of the Ministry of Internal Affairs S.N. Kruglov, in 1953 wanted to carry out preparatory work and release a large group of special settlers by the beginning of autumn. However, his arrest destroyed this plan (Maksimov, 2017).

In 1954, the Commission of the Central Committee of the CPSU was formed under the leadership of the chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR K.F. Voroshilov, who was supposed to give an objective assessment of the legal situation and life of the special settlers.

On July 5, 1954, the Council of Ministers of the USSR adopted a resolution "On the removal of certain restrictions in the legal status of special settlers", according to which persons registered with special settlements who were engaged in socially useful labor had the right to reside within a given region, republic, territory, the ones who were on business trips had the possibility of free movement to any point in the country on general rights. Special settlers had to register once a year with the bodies of the USSR Ministry of Internal Affairs and persons who changed their permanent place of residence were required to be deregistered in special commandant's offices and register at their new place of residence with the USSR Ministry of Internal Affairs. This was not applied to those special settlers who did not engage in socially useful labor and violated the regime and public order in the places of the settlement (Isakieva, 2016).

On March 10, 1955, the Council of Ministers of the USSR adopted Resolution No. 449-272 "c" "On issuing passports to special settlers". In accordance with the proposals of the ministries of defense and internal affairs of the USSR, the Presidium of the Central Committee of the CPSU on March 23, 1955, adopted a resolution on the conscription of certain categories of special settlers for military service and the removal of special settlements called up from the register (Maksimov, 2017).

The official criticism of the deportation was declared in the report of N.S. Khrushchev at the XX Congress of the CPSU on February 26, 1956, who accused I.V. Stalin in gross violation of the Leninist principles of the national policy of the USSR, expressed in the eviction of entire peoples and the elimination of their national-state formations (Akayev et al., 2014).

After April 28, 1956, a decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR was issued "On the lifting of restrictions on special settlement from Crimean Tatars, Balkars, Turks –citizens of the USSR, Kurds, Hemshils and members of their families, evicted during the Great Patriotic War", and on July 16, 1956 the decree "On the relief of restrictions on special settlement from Chechens, Ingush, Karachais and members of their families, evicted during the Great Patriotic War" (GARF. F. R-7523) was released.

After receiving the formal right not to be special settlers, many representatives of the deported peoples, without waiting for official permission, went to their homeland (Krinko & Cherkasov, 2014). The North Caucasian peoples were the most active ones and no force could stop them on the way to their homeland.

The authorities in the places of residence of the deported peoples generally did not object to their return home and expressed a desire not to restore their autonomy, and if they did restore it, then they restore it somewhere far from the Caucasus (Sabanchiev, 2017).

A significant disadvantage of the legislative acts of the late 1950s was the lack of a legal and political assessment of the Decrees of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, which served as the basis for deportation, especially their direct and indiscriminate accusations against the deported peoples. In the new Decrees, they were considered as “invalidated” and by no means criminal. The problems of returning the property confiscated during the deportation were also not resolved.

The autonomy of the Crimean Tatars and Germans was not restored. Moreover, they, like the Meskhetian Turks, were deprived the right to return to their places of residence before deportation. Crimean Tatars were rehabilitated in accordance with the Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR dated September 5, 1967 No. 1861 – VII “On citizens of Tatar nationality who lived in Crimea”, all charges of cooperation with the German invaders were dropped from them and equalized in rights with other peoples. On the other hand, this decree actually deprived the Crimean Tatars of their nationality, since they were Tatars living in Crimea, not the Crimean Tatar people. The ban on their return to Crimea also remained (Mikhailova & Savina, 2015).

The incomplete nature of rehabilitation in the 1950–1960s led to the end of the 1980s to a complex of problems in the political and socio-economic situation of the deported peoples. Thus, the Crimean Tatars and Germans did not achieve the restoration of autonomy, which caused a mass exodus of Germans from the USSR, the Meskhetian Turks did not get the right to return to their historical homeland and after the events of 1989 they went through the second deportation.

A huge role in the rehabilitation of the repressed people was played by the Law of the RSFSR “On the rehabilitation of the repressed peoples” (dated 26.04.1991). In the preamble to the Law of the Supreme Soviet, RSFSR condemned the arbitrariness of the authorities in relation to entire peoples and confirmed their complete innocence, recognizing the illegality of the policy practiced at the state level. The law restored historical justice: the document provided for five types of rehabilitation for all repressed peoples of the Russian Federation, affecting the aspects of restoring their political, territorial and social status quo, as well as compensation for material damage caused by the state when committing illegal repressive actions (Akkieva, 2011). However, almost 30 years after the adoption of the Law, many problems still have remained. The right of rehabilitated peoples to restore territorial integrity remains one of the difficult issues. Territorial rehabilitation of Balkars has not been carried out till present moment. Among 4 Balkar regions during the eviction of the Balkars, only Elbrus was formally restored in 1994, while part of its former territory was transferred to the Zolsky region.

The territorial issue also remains difficult in Dagestan, where the problem of the Aukhovsky region has not been resolved since the late 1950s. The Ingush and North Ossetian sides have different points of view on the Prigorodny region. The definition of subnational borders in the North Caucasus Federal District, which includes all the republics of the North Caucasus, also has a potential for conflict. Thus, in 2018, the establishment of subnational borders between the Chechen Republic and the Ingush Republic caused an ambiguous reaction from the Ingush side.

In connection with the annexation of the Republic of Crimea by the Russian Federation in 2014, the provisions of the Law "On the rehabilitation of repressed peoples" is applied to the Crimean Tatars and other peoples of Crimea. The Decree of the President of Russia of the April 21, 2014 was of great importance for the complete rehabilitation "On measures for the rehabilitation of the Armenian, Bulgarian, Greek, Crimean Tatar and German peoples and state support for their revival and development" (SZ RF, 2015). The decree as a whole was aimed at the rehabilitation of the Crimean Tatars as the most numerous and oppressed people by the state (Maslyakov, 2018). In order to solve problems of a social, cultural, economic nature, republican laws were adopted.

The Commission of the Republic of Crimea was created to restore the rights of rehabilitated victims of political repression, the main purpose of which was to control the implementation in the territory of the republic of the Federal Law "On the rehabilitation of victims of political repression" and other regulatory legal in the field of restoring the rights of the rehabilitated (Starchenko, 2016).

At present, only the Meskhetian Turks are not rehabilitated from the list of the repressed peoples. They live in several countries, including more than 100 thousand people in the Russian Federation. They have all the rights of citizens of the Russian Federation and are fully integrated into the Russian space. The collapse of the USSR caused significant ethno-political changes and severe consequences for the Meskhetian Turks. The rehabilitation of the Meskhetian Turks is complicated by the fact that they were evicted from the Georgian SSR. Russia, being the legal successor of the USSR, is not entitled to fully rehabilitate those deported from the Georgian SSR and the Georgian state does not recognize responsibility for the crimes committed by the Union bodies during the Soviet era (Usmanov, 2017).

7. Conclusion

Thus, the process of rehabilitation of the repressed peoples had two stages: 1950–1960s and 1990–2000s. At the first stage of rehabilitation, fateful laws were adopted aimed at returning them to their original places of residence and restoring their autonomies. A significant role in the restoration of autonomies and the rehabilitation of the repressed peoples was played by the civic activity of representatives of the repressed peoples, who, throughout the entire period of their stay in the places of eviction, appealed to the authorities of the USSR and raised the issue of rehabilitation. After the restoration of the autonomies of the repressed peoples, a set of measures was adopted aimed at the social, economic and cultural development of the repressed peoples. The autonomy of the Crimean Tatars and Germans was not restored, and they did not acquire the right to return to their homeland. In general, the first stage of rehabilitation was incomplete.

The second stage, characterized by the adoption of the Law "On the rehabilitation of the repressed peoples", resolved the political issue that the repressed peoples had been waiting for several decades. For the first time in the legislative practice of the country the preamble of this law reflected that the peoples were subjected to genocide. The practical implementation of the law fell on the period of socio-political transformations, difficulties in economy, but the law had enormous political, legal, material and moral significance. As a vital piece of legislation, it helped restore historical justice. The reunification of Crimea with Russia led to the rehabilitation of the Crimean Tatars, Greeks, Bulgarians and other repressed peoples of Crimea. There is no mention of the rehabilitation of repressed peoples in the Strategy of the

State National Policy of the Russian Federation until 2025, which does not seem entirely correct, since not all issues of territorial rehabilitation, repatriation of representatives of repressed peoples from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan to Russia have been resolved.

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