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**SOCIAL REFLECTIONS OF FORMER CIVIL WAR RED  
PARTISANS IN THE POST-WAR PERIOD**

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***Abstract***

The article is devoted to the little-studied problem of the post-war life of ex-combatants of civil confrontation of 1917-1920. For the first time the authors introduced personal documents into a scientific circulation (complaints, petitions, letters and claims), which humanize such a big historical period as the early Soviet era. The content analysis of ego documents of former Red partisans was carried out on the basis of regional archives. As a result of this work it was possible to reconstruct the material, psychological and political components of the daily life of Ossetian combatants in -1920s and -1930s. Letters helped understand a financial situation of combatants, as well as inability to get a job, to support a family. The authors of the letters appealed to the former commanders with a request to get a job, to study, and to apply for a personal pension. In their opinion, these circumstances could provide an upward career growth and social elevator. With the help of complaints and claims that were sent by their authors to different bodies, it was possible to identify the reasons for deprivation of status, the mechanisms for conducting regular “purges” in the partisan community. Especially a lot of information was obtained from the materials of the local and North Caucasus committees on the former Red partisans. The analysis of these documents made it possible to reconstruct the main trends in the social adaptation of combatants, their mental set and everyday problems.

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**Keywords:** Combatant, disenfranchised, complaint, committee, daily life.



## **1. Introduction**

The repressive policy of authorities in different years was aimed against certain segments of population, which was associated with the internal political and social and economic factors. The mechanism for the selection of victims at various intervals of the repressive policies is of the main interest. In general, a sufficient amount of research has been carried out on the issue of repressions; however, the problem of relations between the state and the former Red partisans, who were some kind of a tool for establishing Soviet power in Ossetia, remains poorly insufficiently studied.

## **2. Problem Statement**

To analyze the causes of repressions against former partisans and defeating methods of combatants regarding these persecutions. To identify the causes of deprivation of status, as well as mechanisms for conducting regular “purges” in the partisan community, the complaints and claims, sent by their authors to different bodies were studied.

## **3. Research Questions**

As part of this article, an attempt was made to study social reflections of former partisans on what was happening in the Soviet society. The analysis of the decisions of the Committee and partisans’ complaints would give an idea of the military path, merits of a particular participant in the revolutionary events.

## **4. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this article was to trace the causes, dynamics and changes in the priorities of the repressive policies from a regional perspective based on the archival materials.

## **5. Research Methods**

The goal set in this article has defined the research methods and specific approaches. The basis of the work is the general scientific objectivity standards, systematic, scientific and integrated approach. Along with the historical methods, the method of content analysis was actively applied, which made it possible to study the psychology of combatants, the forms of influence on their consciousness, etc.

## **6. Findings**

After the end of the Civil War, the combatants really hoped to have a brighter and more peaceful future. They also thought their social status would have changed. However, the new world was ruthless and uncomfortable. The picture of the world, which they had created during the war, was far too different from reality; the post-war life was harsh and full of hardships.

A glorious militant past did not become a guarantee for upward career growth for the majority of combatants. None of them was sure the Committee would keep those little benefits, which were granted by the State to its supporters. Those who were less fortunate and who were “scratched off the list” drew water to mill to return to the ranks of the former Red partisans and the Red Army men.

In this regard, such an unconventional ego-source as letters, complaints and claims of former Red partisans, seeking truth and intercession is of great interest. The letters and claims of veterans of the Civil War have not yet become the subject of the study. Although it should be noted that the complaint letters and begging letters provide excellent material for analyzing social status of the front-line soldier. If to generally describe the sources, it should be noted that the deferred document corpus is rather heterogeneous, as it includes a variety of documents different in form and content (Kutyreva, 1991).

The complaints about difficult financial situation of the families of former Red partisans are extremely informative and interesting sources. These letters and complaints were written in monotonous manner and included personal claims. Most of the complaints were written by hand and on the scraps of paper. At times the presentation was correct, but more often the number of errors was very great. All complaints had no particular format (Darenskaya, 2013). A comprehensive analysis of these complaints made it possible to conclude that the life of the former partisans was joyless and difficult. Each complaint was very emotional (Khubulova & Gagloyeva, 2018). These ego-documents revealed the relationship between the scale of “purges” and complaints as a form of social protest against such events.

However, the complaints and claim are not the only source on the history of the relationship of partisans and authorities. Other sources provide an opportunity to uncover the problems associated with the situation of the former Red partisans, to identify the most significant aspects of the “purges”, which ultimately led to the emergence of such sources as complaints and claims.

Regional archives (CSA RNO-Alania, Vladikavkaz; CDNHR, Rostov-on-Don; CSA RSO, Tskhinval) have great sources of materials on “purges” of the Red partisans. The documents issued by the committees were usually attached to the complaints. The minutes of the committee meetings, during which they considered the applications of the Red partisans, were based on the principle of personal consideration. Such source provides good material about the applicant’s personality. The minutes contain material that reveals the social status, political views of combatants and facts from the biography.

To recognize the participant of the war as a Red partisan, each applicant wrote a lengthy life history, including information about his/her military activities. In the instructions on “purges” for the period of 1932 it was noted that the committees had to be guided by special conditions of the region and carefully consider each specific case.

In other documents, the re-registration mechanism was specified in the following manner: ‘Each former Red partisan (Red Guard) who passes through re-registration procedure, as well as each person who reiterated his/her membership in the Red movement shall submit an application and at least two recommendation letters in the annexed form to the Committee. When considering the application, the Committee keeps a record’. In all government documents of that period the following was frankly stated: ‘To expose in the most merciless way any anti-Soviet, kulak and “decayed element”, who got into the ranks of the former Red partisans and Red Guards, carrying out special purging campaigns”.

Every year the partisans were tested by submitting a full package of documents to the Committee, allowing experts to make a finding. No one could be completely sure that during the next “purge” the rank and privileges would have been preserved. Any ambiguity in the life history, any trifle could put an end to the status of a partisan. So, because the Secretary of the Committee had incorrectly written down an answer of the partisan Bozhenov, his further presence in the ranks of the partisans was at risk. The partisan

Bozhenov had to prove the correctness of his testimony: ‘I told the Committee that I was in hand-to-hand fighting near the villages of Otrado-Kuban, Gulkevichi, Myasnyanskaya. Then I was in the rear of General Shkuro where I also participated in the battles. The Secretary did not hear all this and passed it off.

In the re-registration instructions, the following was stipulated: “those, who in 1917-1918 were in the ranks of the Red Guard and the Red partisan for several months, however, lapsed it without any good reason and remained passive (regardless of any territory), cannot be considered a Red partisan, except for some cases when comrades entered the territory of the Whites against their will, i.e. for a serious wound or captivity of the whole unit and when these comrades took the side of the Reds at the earliest moment”. This item was especially vulnerable to many Red partisans who at least once found themselves in the enemy territory. They had to provide irrefutable documents of their active work. Such a biography episode could result in the benefit loss. Therefore, it was necessary to get support of reliable commanders and prove one’s commitment to the new government: “When our battery retreated to the city of Tiflis, I also retreated and fell ill. After leaving the hospital, when I was still weak, I had to work for peasant in Kakheti to get a piece of bread in order to maintain my health. In April 1920, I returned to Vladikavkaz, which by that time was in the hands of the Reds”. Another former partisan appealed to the North Caucasian Committee of the former partisans and pointed out the following circumstances: “Currently, I have been denied the rank of partisan because I worked as a blacksmith in the Georgian army. But, we are the Red partisans and we worked on the initiative of the underground All-Union Communist Party (b) and not on our own initiative with the purpose of decomposing the army and preparing an uprising”.

A great number of decisions made by the partisan committee on refusal to recognize the applicant as a Red partisan have been preserved. The reason for the refusal could be serious deviations in the lifestyle of the combatant. For example, in the protocol of the Ardon-Alagir Commission for Assisting the Red Partisans Chekhoev Berd was refused, as “he opposes all the companies held by the authorities, calls the representatives the bandits, does not listen to anyone”. The following people failed the re-registration procedure, among which was the resident of the village Dur-Dur Koibaev Kh., who during the Civil War “was against the Whites, however, is not currently involved in the collective farm and opposes the collective farm movement”, and the teacher Baitsaev D., who in 1928 held a farm laborer.

However, even minor deviations from the standards could cause a refusal to issue a partisan book. So, being on the territory of the Whites for a month without any good reason, could be a serious reason for refusing re-registration. Therefore, the most far-sighted people tried to get proof of being not privy to the Whites. So, the Red Army soldier Bazalin received a document from Karsanov, the Head of the Detachment named after Terek People’s Council, stating that he served in the Red Army and on the way to the village Zamankul he together with 11 Red Army men were captured. He was convicted and sentenced to death in the anticipation of which he spent over one month on the territory of the Whites. He was not in the service of Denikin (Khubulova & Gagloyeva, 2017).

In his claim, Dzagoev K.D. stated the following: “I actively participated in all the South Ossetian uprisings, and during the treble purge of the Red partisans there were no withdrawals against me. The reason for not being included in the ranks of the Red partisans was not my position, but the denunciation that I was in the well-to-do list of the residents of the village Nogir. These enemies illegally included me into this list, about which I personally wrote to the Moscow CEC” (Khubulova, 2018).

There were cases when after the interrogation of a claimant, the opinions of the re-registration Committee were divided, and, in order not to be mistaken, the decisions were made not in favor of the combatant. Examining the case of Ilayev Dade, who told the audience about his revolutionary activities, the Committee members began to ask questions and debate, as a result their opinions were divided. So, one of the Committee's member noticed that Eliyev "worked diligently. He is a partisan; A. Bekuzarov objected to it, saying the following: "what Ilayev was talking about is not true. He wants to become a partisan in deed and not in name".

An even greater tragedy for the ex-combatant could be the deprivation of not only the status of a partisan, but also of voting rights. Not only well-to-do peasants, but also those who showed disagreement with the reforms that were carried out became disfranchised persons. The split of the partisan fraternity during the "purges" led to contradictions within this alliance. Since 1931, all partisans were separated into different groups; those who lost the status of the Red partisan because of various reasons (deprivation, crime, lack of confirmation of participation on the side of the Bolsheviks, etc.) became the most unprotected. The member of the revolutionary battles that took place in the village Khristianovskoe D. Takoyev, who later fell out of graces with the authorities and became disfranchised, wrote in despair: "It's better to blow out my brains or to bury me alive in the cold land than to bear such stigma ..." (Tsarikaev, 2009 ). It was not a rare case when the countless appeals to the Committee and to military commanders could not change the situation. In his letter to the Committee of the Red Partisans V.N. Tedeev pointed out the following: "Despite my participation in the partisan detachments both in the South Ossetia and in the North, and the confirmation of Army leaders, it took the whole year to confirm my enrollment due to personal attitude. It was delayed for different reasons, since my application stated that I "did not participate" and was signed as the Red partisan A.D. (Member of the Presidium of the Regional Council of Former Red Partisans). The question is, what is about A.D., as all necessary recommendations are in place".

It should be noted that the severe post-revolutionary financial and psychological state, political pressure during the party purging, unfair compilation of the lists of the Red partisans and benefit losses had a heavy effect on the whole society. All this led to a series of suicides among the partisans and communists. High mortality forced to hold special meetings of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks) of Georgia. The well-known public figure of the South Ossetia R. Gagloev noted with bitterness: "I, it seems, guessed about the causes of Alexander's death (and they said that he died of malaria). There is no doubt that he deliberately took his own life. Alexander, Efim, Ilas, Leo ... Good heavens! So many losses ..." (Bigulaeva, 2002).

## **7. Conclusion**

In the course of time, by 1935, the commissions of the Red partisans, having fulfilled the role of an executor were dissolved. The Red partisans, who seemed to be the most organized and unmanaged part of the Soviet social structure, as a result of the most severe "purges", were not any longer dangerous for the regime. Those who earned the trust of authorities had received an opportunity to get various social bonuses; however, the rest were treated as fringe element and were considered dangerous. The combatants' expectations were not justified, which instilled uncertainty and fears for the idea and actions they devoted themselves to and for the sake of which their comrades laid down their lives. The situation was heated up

and could end up with new social upheavals. The authorities were eager to avoid such situation and sought to nip in the bud any manifestation of the opposition. The Great Terror, unfolded in the -1930s involving partisans movement in its actions.

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