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#### KALMYKS DEPORTATION AND REHABILITATION

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#### *Abstract*

The issue of eviction of some part of the population from among the peoples of the Soviet Union during the Great Patriotic War, their state and legal rehabilitation and restoration of national statehood is rather acute today. The issue has been paid attention to mostly from the point of view of ideology. It should be stated that it has passed a difficult path in its development. Much of what has been studied today needs to be seriously rethought and redefined in the light of modern realities and possibilities. Moreover, the interest and the need for information about the events of those years are growing in society, and there is a need for objective research. The historical and scientific literature of post-Soviet period favors a critical understanding of legal and subordinate laws adopted by the state authorities of the country in relation to indigenous population of liquidated autonomous entities. Many issues related to rehabilitation of the punished peoples have not been resolved yet and require additional development by the state authorities of Russia. As is known, Declarations of the RSFSR Congresses, and current legislation of the RSFSR and the USSR enshrining equal rights of the Soviet peoples and seeking to restore historical justice, the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR declared the repeal of all illegal acts adopted in relation to Repressed Peoples and adopted the law "On the Rehabilitation of Repressed Peoples" on 26 April 1991.

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## **1. Introduction**

Speaking about the issues of studying the history of repressed peoples it should be noted that deportation as a measure involving eviction, exile of a certain groups or people has evolved over time. From being the means of ethnic tension “unloading” it is gradually turning into a universal means of “punishing” of the so-called guilty peoples. At that time, both party and state leaders did not really think about the enormous damage that deportations could bring to the friendship of nations, their political sentiments, and national consciousness. The documents show who and how made the decisions “on the deportation of peoples”. Those documents had different name rather than the law and could lead to negative consequences.

## **2. Problem Statement**

Over the past decades, domestic and international scholars have published many works on the issues of deportation. Due to the discovery of many archival documents, as well as the publication of collections of documents and materials, we were able to give a true assessment of the scale of repression and deportations of peoples of our country during the Great Patriotic War. The first work devoted to the unlawful life of Kalmyk people in the places of their exile was a small monograph by Nominhanov (1967). A new stage in the development of the issue of deportation of the Kalmyks was the scientific works of Bugay (1991) and Ubushayev (Ubushaev, 1991, 2014; Ubushaev & Ubushaev, 2007). The analysis of legal framework that served as the basis for the eviction is considered in the works of Maximov (2004), Tsutsulaeva (2005, 2011).

## **3. Research Questions**

The topic of deportation of the peoples of the period of the Great Patriotic War carried out by the totalitarian Stalinist regime was in fact under an unofficial ban and remained a blank spot in the Russian historiography until perestroika. It became possible to study these historical tragic events of the deported peoples in the 1980s of the second half of the 20th century. Nowadays, after 75 years of deportation of the Kalmyk people, it is more important than ever to thoroughly examine the historical evidence of that period in order to have an objective understanding of the scale and nature of the crimes committed by the totalitarian regime during the Great Patriotic War. It is possible to design and implement a set of political and social measures aimed at strengthening of the country and society only having a real picture of the past.

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

The purpose of this article is to study the main stages of the process of deportation of the Kalmyk people to the eastern regions of the Soviet Union, political and legal rehabilitation, as well as restoration of their national statehood.

## **5. Research Methods**

Such principles as objectivity, scientificity and historicism, ensuring the study of facts and phenomena in all their diversity, in the specific historical conditions of their origin and development and

allowing highlighting both the positive and negative aspects of the problem under study were the methodological basis. An integrated research approach and the methods of objective historical comparison were the bases of this work.

## 6. Findings

The end of the first half of the 20th century in the history of the Soviet state is associated with a number of events that left a very negative mark on the fate of its peoples. Along with the Great Patriotic War, which affected the entire population of the USSR, a number of peoples were subjected to total, forcible resettlement from the territory of their primary residence in the eastern regions of the country by the decision of the highest state bodies. Some of them lost their national autonomies: Germans, Karachay, Kalmyks, Chechens and Ingush, Balkarians, Crimean Tatars. That is, in the midst of the Great Patriotic War in the Soviet Union the indigenous population of the abolished autonomous national formations, unjustly accused of the complicity with the enemy, and was subjected to physical genocide. That was more than three million people. Among these peoples were the Kalmyks, about whom it was noted in the Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR of 27 December 1943 that during the war many people "... joined the German troops to fight against the Red Army, they betrayed ... honest Soviet citizens, seized ... kolkhoz (rural) cattle, and after the exile ... of invaders they formed gangs and actively opposed the Soviet authorities ... and terrorized ... population" (Maximov, 2004, p. 58). All in all the following conclusion can be made. While completely ignoring the legislative process and the Constitution of the Soviet Union, the leadership of the country, part of the citizens of the USSR during the Great Patriotic War lost their constitutional rights and freedoms. For all that, the Article 123 of the 1936 Constitution proclaims that "the equality of citizens of the USSR, regardless of their nationality and race, in all areas of economic, state, cultural and social and political life is an immutable law", "the legal system of the Soviet Union did not have ... a normative provision ensuring collective responsibility and the application of punishment on the basis of nationality" (Sabanchiev, 2013, p. 191).

The representatives of deported peoples, including the Kalmyks, with the status of special settlers, could not fully implement their abilities "... the Kalmyk people, despite that they ... lost their historical territory, ... opportunities to speak and write in their native language, practice their traditional religion, study their history managed to preserve their historical memory". And that, sadly, could be attributed to all deported peoples, whose language was threatened with extinction because of the repressive policies of the state.

The issues of evictions of the indigenous population of the Republic by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Committee of State Security of the USSR were raised long before the appearance of official acts. So, L.P. Beria not even once raised a question in the State Defense Committee about their forced evictions in the eastern regions of the country. It was in the Decree of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR No. 1118-346 of 14 October 1943 that the regional executive committees and oblast executive committees of the Altai and Krasnoyarsk territories and the Omsk and Novosibirsk regions were recommended to think over the issues of receiving and settling future Kalmyk special settlers. In addition, a number of government bodies, i.e. the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs, the People's Commissariat of Communications, the People's Commissariat for Land Management, the People's

Commissariat of the Meat and Dairy Industry, the People's Commissariat of Procurement, the People's Commissariat of Health had to work out measures related to the fact of receiving a great number of Kalmyk people by the eastern regions of the country following the Decree.

Due to the fact that the main government documents were prepared by the leadership of the NKVD of the USSR soon after the Decree of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR was issued both District and Regional People's Commissars of Internal Affairs became responsible for the following "the citizens of Kalmyk ASSR ..., the Kalmyks ..., including members of All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks and All-Union Leninist Young Communist League, the workers of the Party and Soviet bodies ... were subject to the actions". In addition to the Decree the following was suggested:

"1. The NKVD representatives of the USSR were to organize and manage the operation. Special authorized executives of regional committee were sent ... to solve all economic issues.

2. Special commissions were established throughout the Republic and regions and authorized representatives were sent to all locations to manage the safety of livestock and other property. The operations in the ulus and hotakhons were carried out directly by the district ombudsmen ...".

The procedure related to the forced eviction of Kalmyks was called Ulus. The mobilized people were represented by more than 50 subordinate units of at least 10 thousand people. On 28 December 1943, based on a special instruction the military simultaneously launched the illegal act of evicting Kalmyks, mostly old people, women and children, who were put into cars and delivered to nearby railway stations. Here they surrendered after signing a document and were distributed among the trains, each of which had to accommodate at least 2 thousand people and contain of at least 33 cars. Each echelon was equipped with a separate car for the convoy group and an ambulance car. The special emissary under L. Beria was General I.A. Serov who was quite active during the resettlement of the Volga Germans (Ubushayev, 1991). The responsibility for preparation and conduct of the Ulusi operation was assigned to the Deputy Commissar of Internal Affairs of the USSR V.V. Chernyshov under whose supervision a task force was set up that was involved in the eviction of population, its transportation by rail and resettlement in Siberian regions.

It should be noted that the government acts based on which the forced deportation of nations was carried out were prepared and sanctioned in advance, since the consideration and adoption of such documents required longer than one day. Undoubtedly, the issue of deportation of the Kalmyks was a resolved matter and it was surprising that a decree "On measures to assist the Kalmyk ASSR, which had suffered during the Nazi occupation" was issued at the same time in October 1943. That is, everyone was aware that the elimination of the statehood of the Kalmyk people and their eviction was planned. Moreover, everyone knew that no measures to assist the Kalmyk workers would be required. However, for the sake of keeping the "special solution" secret everyone was silent.

The Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR of 27 December 1943 "On the liquidation of the Kalmyk ASSR and the formation of Astrakhan region within the RSFSR" of the Council of 28 December 1943 and the Resolution of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR were the basis for the Kalmyks deportation to the eastern regions of the country (Ubushayev, 2014). These government acts, which determined the fate of the Kalmyk people for a long 13 years, differ in their content according to their internal focus. After the New Year (2 January 1944) it was highlighted in the report of L. Beria to the State Defense Committee: "In accordance with the Decree ... an operation was carried out

to resettle persons of Kalmyk nationality ... In total, 26,359 families or, in another words, 93,319 people were placed in 46 trains ...”.

Nevertheless, it was not the end of the story with the Kalmyks deportation: “According to the report of the NKVD Administration for the Rostov Region, 280 families (1,300 people) of the Kalmyks remained in areas closely located to the territory of the former Kalmyk ASSR, i.e. Salsk, Dubovsk, Orlovsk, Proletarsk ...” , f. 9401, op. 2, d.3, l. 340). All of them were evicted to the Omsk Region, which was confirmed in the order of the USSR People’s Commissar of Internal Affairs No. 00276 of 14 March 1944. The identification of persons of Kalmyk nationality and their eviction was carried out in the Stalingrad region, where according to the operational data 1,178 Kalmyks in 362 families and 534 children under 16 years old were recorded. All of them were sent to the Sverdlovsk region at Tavda station. However, it was not the end of the eviction actions since thousands of the Kalmyks continued to fight during the Great Patriotic War and, according to the country’s leadership, they were potential traitors who wished to go to the side of the enemy whenever it was convenient. To prevent that, they had to be sent to the eastern districts away from the western borders.

During the years of the Great Patriotic War by the decision of the highest state bodies some peoples were subjected to total, forcible resettlement from the territory of primary residence in the eastern regions of the country. At the same time, the Germans, Karachays, Kalmyks, Chechens and Ingushs, Balkars, Crimean Tatars had lost their national autonomies. Tens of thousands of them died from cold, hunger, abrupt climate change, hostile attitude of local population in the very beginning of their resettlement. Approximate calculations for the loss of Kalmyks were about 14.8% (Ubushayev, 1991). Some families completely died out on the way to the resettlement region.

The Decrees of state authorities that abolished national autonomy were at odds with the USSR Constitution since the Kalmyks were losing their civil rights based on these decrees. At the places of their special settlement, they were under complete supervision of punitive organs, i.e. the special commandant of the NKVD. In case of violation of the administrative regime and the public order in the places of settlement by special settlers the punitive organs were given the right to impose administrative penalties, i.e. a fine of up to 100 rubles or an arrest of up to 5 days; the commandants investigated the cases of escapes and other crimes committed by special settlers. The special settlers had to undergo a monthly humiliating procedure, i.e. they had to sign out at the place of residence in special commandant’s offices and could not leave the settlement area without notifying the commandant. An unauthorized absenteeism was automatically considered as an escape, which entailed criminal liability.

Since the abolition of autonomy and until its restoration, the Kalmyk people proved to be a full member of the union of the peoples of the Soviet Union, although their stay in the eastern regions did not pass without a trace. However, this could not break the spirit of devotion of the Kalmyks to the Motherland, who made a significant contribution to the common cause of restoring the national economy and its further development. The districts of the Kalmyk autonomy after the eviction of the indigenous population and the elimination of statehood were distributed among neighboring regions. Thus, out of the 14 administrative and territorial units, the capital of the Republic was the city of Elista, the Ulusas Troitsky, Ketchenerovsky, Yustinsky, Privolzhsky, Dolbansky, Lagansky, Ulan-Kholsky and Chernozemelsky were incorporated into the Astrakhan region, the new administrative and territorial entity in the Soviet Union. Sarpinsky and Malo-

Derbetovsky uluses were integrated into the Stalingrad Region, Zapadny and Yashaltinsky - Rostovsky, and Priyutnensky ulus - Stavropol Territory (Ubushayev, 1991). In the summer of 1944, when the front moved far to the west, new changes associated with the new zoning of the Astrakhan region, i.e. the former uluses of former Kalmyk Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic of the Trinity, Ketchenerovsky and Chernozemelsky Regions were merged into one Stepnovsky Region with the center in the city of Stepnoy (formerly Elista). Lagansky and Ulan-Kholsky uluses merged into one Caspian region with the center in the village of Caspian. The territory of three remaining uluses was included into other districts of the Astrakhan region (Ubushayev, 1991).

The personality cult of Stalin, his inhuman and anti-law nature was obvious. The eviction of punished peoples, the elimination of any opportunity for their independent and distinctive development within the framework of a single territorial national statehood, an unjustified change of administrative borders, by transferring areas to neighboring regions, could not but lead to an aggravation of interethnic relations in the localities. The death J.V. Stalin managed to set the priorities, and soon there the changes were faced. The Khrushchev (1989) Thaw, expressed in the restoration of the democratic principles of state and party life, should have given a certain relief to the repressed peoples, i.e. special settlers.

## 7. Conclusion

Thus, having decided to change the situation with the unjustly punished peoples who were deprived of their civil rights and condemned to physical extinction, the leadership of the Soviet government recognized the right to restore national statehood and thus provided the necessary conditions for the development of their national growth. The policy of arbitrariness and lawlessness, which was operated at the state level in relation to these peoples, was unlawful and offended the dignity of not only the repressed, but also all other peoples of the country.

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